

Fenwick W. English  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# The Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse

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With 45 Figures and 23 Tables

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## Preface

The *Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse* is designed to add a new dimension to the discourse in the field. Most handbooks are topical presentations and/or discussions of contemporary issues or problems. There is usually no deep probing or revealing interrogations of the foundations and assumptions upon which the topical presentations are made. There is rarely any tracing of where the ideas, concepts, or metaphors in use in topical discourse originated. For a field such as educational leadership and management, which is an applied body of practice, not knowing where ideas, concepts, or metaphors of practice originated leads to unintended consequences in an application, erroneous interpretations of alleged success or failure, or a dismal repetition of undiagnosed errors. One outcome is the complete lack of *reflexivity* in leadership practice. *Reflexivity* is different than reflection. Reflection of practice refers to asking such questions as, “Did we reach our goals, and if not, why not?” or “How could my leadership practice be improved?” *Reflexivity* asks instead, “How am I thinking about how I am thinking about leadership?”

For example, the word *accountability* is often applied to success or failure to produce specified learning outcomes. But the concept of *accountability* does not emanate from some theory of learning or theory of leadership that has anything to do with either teaching, learning, or leading. Rather, the root word *account* appears in about 1300 from the Middle English *acounten* or *acuten* which in turn was borrowed from Old French *aconter* or *acunter* which was derived from the Latin *computare* which means *compute* (Barnhart, 1995). When one is *accountable* for learning outcomes one is merely being responsible for counting or computing such results. It's not a failure to do anything but count or measure something. But in contemporary leadership jargon a failure to be accountable means an abrogation of “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions” (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 8). Within this shifting meaning of 700 years of linguistic history lies the concept that being responsible or accountable is an indication that one is only responsible or accountable for measurement, that is, computation. That is the only action implicit in *accountability*. Yet placed within a context where the measurement involves student learning or achievement, there is an unwarranted assumption that being accountable means knowing how to do something different for attaining better results within a specific context of learning,

teaching, or leading. From this view, principals and superintendents have been fired for only computational accuracy. Yet they were fully accountable when they were expelled from their responsibilities. This is a case of the absence of *reflexivity* which would ask, “How am I thinking about how I am thinking about accountability?”

The *Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse* is intended to be a historical trajectory of the multiple discourses (concepts, ideas, practices, theories) that comprise a field of knowledge. In this case, the field of educational leadership and management. In previous handbooks, trajectory histories consist of a search for continuities, patterns, or themes that can be presented as a sort of continuous progression of ideas thoughts, or practices that comprise a kind of conceptual or intellectual totality at any given moment in time. In his seminal book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, challenges this approach as a kind of sanctioned fiction. Such a history he avers translates, “. . .documents into monuments” (p. 7). To uncover a more complete and truthful account of the establishment of a field (something he calls an *enunciative field*), the perceptive observer must concentrate on the ruptures or discontinuities to show that “the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement” (Foucault, 1971, p. 3).

To do this when presenting history or commentary about a field one must include those ruptures and discontinuities. These events “suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut if off from its empirical origin and its original motivation, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities . . . towards a new type of rationality and its various effects” (Foucault, 1971, p. 4). These ruptures or discontinuities may serve as transformative events in the life of a discipline or field. They may signify a radical conceptual turning of the field itself.

This handbook attempted to identify such ruptures and discontinuities before presenting coherent chapter content. It also attempted to identify the critical assumptions involved in an overview of that content. To deal with the history of a field the handbook utilized Foucault’s three types of enunciative fields. They were:

*The field of memory* – those statements, ideas, or practices which are “no longer accepted or discussed, and which consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity” (Foucault, 1971, p. 58), but may have left traces in the vocabulary or metaphors of that field (in a kind of memory). *The field of presence* – those statements, understandings, concepts, practices, or ideas which are considered to be truthful “involving exact description, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presuppositions” (Foucault, 1971, p. 57).

*The field of concomitance* – those statements, facts, ideas, or theories which have originated in other disciplines or areas and have been transferred to educational leadership or management. Strategic planning, for example, is not from business or educational management but originally from biology.

The purpose of including the discontinuities and ruptures in a field is to show the dynamic and fluid nature of knowledge development. To show that it is not always linear, not always progressive, and is filled with contradictions and anomalies. The key element is the presence of transformations in the concepts, ideas, theories, and/or practices. This inclusion underscores that the nature of knowledge in a field is rarely

static. It significantly challenges the idea of a static “knowledge base.” Rather the knowledge itself might be better characterized as a “knowledge dynamic” (English, 2006) which is a truer portrait of the nature of the field and the many areas and disciplines which form both the *field of presence* and the *field of concomitance*.

Closely nestled within a “knowledge dynamic” is Bourdieu’s concept of a field as a social space of play and struggle (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The competition of ideas, concepts, and theories is a never-ending battle within that social space, in this case with its attendant vocabulary and contrasting metaphors. It is usually the case that a “knowledge dynamic” is connected to individuals, groups, agencies, and/or institutions jousting for dominance. Since there is never a force which can attain complete hegemony over such a contested social space, these forces are in a constant effort to preserve and expand their influence and power. That means there cannot be one final, irrefutable, permanent model, solution, or theoretical definition or outlook that remains unchallenged for very long.

The chapter authors and their perspectives certainly point to the truth of a “knowledge dynamic.” There were 142 authors who wrote over a hundred chapters. They were from nine different countries: Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Malta, New Zealand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Eighteen percent were scholars of color and 58% were females.

As the reader traverses the handbook it is hoped that the exposition of the chapter content placed within its *field of memory, presence, and concomitance* will encourage future scholarship that is more reflexive, historical, and transparent in its claims and conclusions. Asking more probing questions about the conjectures, discontinuities, ruptures, and assumptions which undergird research and inquiry will hopefully produce more transparent and reflexive results as well as accelerate the development within the field.

Muncie, USA  
August 2022

Fenwick W. English

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## About the Editor-in-Chief



**Fenwick W. English** is Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Educational Leadership at Teachers College of Ball State University (2018 to present). Formerly he was the R. Wendell Eaves Senior Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a position he held since 2001. He has served at five other universities in the capacities of professor and department chair, dean, and vice-chancellor of academic affairs. As a practitioner, he has served as a middle school principal in California, assistant superintendent in Florida, and as superintendent of schools in New York State. He also has experience in the private sector where he worked as a manager/partner for 3 years at Peat, Marwick, Mitchell (now KPMG Peat Marwick) in Washington, D.C., and as an Associate Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators in Arlington, Virginia. He was a member of the Curriculum Committee of the National Association of Secondary School Principals for over 10 years which published numerous position papers and pamphlets.

His record of publications includes over 42 books, 34 book chapters, 18 monographs and over 100 refereed journal articles. In addition, he has served as General Editor for the 2005 and 2011 *SAGE Handbook of Educational Leadership*; the 2006 *SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Leadership and Administration* (2 volumes); and the 2009 *SAGE Major Works Series in Educational Leadership and Administration* (4 volumes). He is also the author of recent texts including *The Art of Educational Leadership* (2008) released by SAGE; *The Anatomy of Professional Practice* (2009)

released by Rowman and Littlefield Education; and with Rosemary Papa, *Restoring Human Agency to Educational Administration* (2010) published by ProActive of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 2016, he published *Leading Beautifully: Educational Leadership As Connoisseurship*, a co-authored book with Australian colleague Lisa Catherine Ehrich based on 3 years of research in Australia and America. He was named as an Adjunct Professor in 2015 for a 2-year term at the School of Cultural and Professional Learning, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. At the present time, he is also serving as an Associate Editor of the forthcoming Springer *Handbook for Promoting Social Justice in Education* (3 volumes) and Associate Editor of the Oxford University Press *Encyclopedia of Educational Leadership*.

Dr. English has presented his research at the University of Council for Educational Administration (UCEA); AERA (American Education Research Association) Divisions A and L; NCPEA (National Council of Professors of Educational Administration and now ICPEL), and BELMAS (British Educational Leadership Management Association Society) as well as the Australian Association of Research in Education (AARE). He was a member of the Executive Committee of UCEA for 7 years and served as President, 2006–07, and served two terms on the Executive Board of ICPEL (International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership) and former President 2011–2012. In 2013, he received the *Living Legend Award* from ICPEL. With Rosemary Papa he also assisted her in the founding of *Educational Leaders Without Borders*.

He received his B.S. and M.S. from the University of Southern California and his Ph.D. from Arizona State University.

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**Part I**

**Foreword**



# Educational Leadership in Uncertain Times: A Foreword

# 1

Peter McLaren

Ever since the recent pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests in over 2000 cities have helped to expose the grave inadequacies of neoliberal capitalism in meeting the basic needs of Americans, we have been living in a state of integrated madness, exacerbated by an attack on the Capitol building by conspiracy-minded insurrectionists attempting to overturn a legitimate election. Over recent decades our public square has been hewn into a divisiveness by mutant digital algorithms now defining our political culture and disguised as democracy. We know this political culture under the name “social media.” The algorithmic view that is the predominant paradigm of modern science can, I believe, be contested by the ontology of praxis – a philosophy of being and becoming that is exercised under the principle that we are unfinished beings in search of our humanity – who have an ontological vocation of becoming more fully human, as Paulo Freire would put it. If left unchained, however, these recombinant digital technologies operate by turning truth inside out, constantly revising reality for dangerously reactionary sectors of the public infected with conspiratorial paranoia and who fear the truth. Social networks prioritize which content a user sees in the likelihood that they will find it to be ideologically and often irresistibly compelling. Digital propaganda has raised concerns that news manufactured in online platforms that deliberately spread false information is undermining the legitimacy of the democratic process, and the authority of science, including the social sciences. These platforms now constitute an increasingly fractionalized media ecosystem where users can pluck elements from various websites that expressly conform to their strongest political inclinations. Conflicting positions

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are not part of everyday digital information consumption in a world where the juggernaut of capitalism moves forward inexorably. Living at a time in which the governing episteme of our existence is in good measure that of mimetic rivalry and the root metaphor that of acquisition, the politics of moral agency is fading from everyday decision-making. Straddling the line between rightwing forces of fear and despair and the eliminationist discourse of cancel culture on the left, educational leaders walk a tightrope in institutions of higher learning that are filled with an overweening concern for optics and an obsession with rankings on the one hand and a preferential option for revealing truth and helping to exact accountability and justice, on the other. In such institutions, it appears that the inertial movement of critical studies is continuously backing up like matted hair in a kitchen faucet. The violent tendencies of acquisition culture is splaying its decadence across advertising websites, enabling dupery and filling the culture of predation with prosthetic sounds, panoptic space, and ethereal theories, precisely at the juncture where critical pedagogy and leadership studies need each other. Within our techno-galaxy of consumer fetishes and rust belt philosophies, ethical imperatives that accord with one's inner purpose have, tragically, become a forbidden pleasure. Attempts at insinuating a politics of truth within a culture of deception have so far left much to be desired.

Many look to our universities to bring some robust leadership and intellectual coherence and perspicacity to what has become a tinderbox democracy. However, by juggling inconvenient data, engaging in managerial code switching in the search for brand ascendancy, and avoiding administrative accountability, the inevitable ascent of neoliberal managerialism and metrics-based competition has proceeded apace. Universities have failed to live up to their promise. Lofty manifest objectives directed at educating for truth, equality, and enlightenment and redressing long-standing social inequities on campus have been unable to realize their own truth in practice because they reflect the racialized capitalist society in which they are situated. This is the unfortunate conundrum of what has been called the "hidden curriculum." Governed by their constitutive interest in the emancipation of the mind, universities make compulsory the language in which it is possible to state their principles and install the very language of democracy that makes their lofty goals unrealizable. In other words, they cannot carry out their aims and objectives and survive as an institution as long as they operate within the structure of capitalism and institutionalized racism and patriarchy. Thus, they are unable to abandon the promises that they cannot fulfill. The university becomes an institution parasitical upon itself. It becomes uniformly dependent upon self-deception. Saddling students with heavy loans and offering contingent faculty poor salaries with few, if any, benefits, universities make compulsory notions that it cannot make serviceable in a practical world.

Scholars and activists in leadership studies have often turned to social justice philosophers such as Paulo Freire to help redress the obstacles facing educators seeking advice in a society scarred by deep race, class, and gender divisions. Freire has always decried the fact that there exist social classes – that some live in opulence while others suffer. He opposed differentiating wealth – that some should be rich while others remain poor. During the Great Depression of 1929, Freire's family was forced into poverty, and Freire experienced the humiliation felt by his parents in their



attempts to feed the family. This was Freire's introduction into the culture of silence that helped to create the intergenerational social reproduction that condemned many Brazilians and their children to a lifetime of poverty. Yet over the decades, Freire was able to provide the poor with an ethical, ontological, epistemological, and pedagogical template from which to push forward in their fight for liberation, in their struggle for a right to live in dignity – a template for a partnership model of education that provides an important step in the direction of transforming a system of class exploitation that maintains privilege for a few at the expense of the many. The co-intentionality that pervaded Freire's pedagogy led to partnerships between teachers and students in which the teacher and student would co-construct their understanding of the world through dialogical encounters with the word and the world – and these acts of co-constitutive knowing are intended to calculate the curve of the arc of the moral universe in which we live. The arc of moral universe is not pre-bent toward justice. We need to bend it. That's the whole purpose of the critical pedagogy underlining Freire's leadership in the field of social justice education – to be able to divine the arc of our moral universe through our conscience and attempt to bend it toward justice through revolutionary praxis. Freire gives us a working conception of what justice could mean for the millions of people oppressed by ideologies, myths, lies, sociopolitical arrangements, social relations of capitalist production, and self-confirming rhetorical tropes. For some educational leaders Freire has been too militant. For other leaders, he has not been militant enough. Freire's work gains urgency, given the historical moment in which we live and the contextual specificity of our relationship to the world at that moment. And today, we are facing a global pandemic and a nation more divided politically than at any other time in recent history. But despite the various inflection points we encounter along history's tremulous path, Freire's work remains continually relevant to the larger struggle for human decency and dignity.

Leadership practice takes many forms, and the *Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse* edited by Fenwick English is path-finding in its approach. This collection of articles by contemporary educational leaders is truly an archeology in the Foucauldian sense, covering the general history of leadership and management discourse, its enunciative field, folk mythology and heroic practice, its scientific standing, the hard fought social advancement of its women administrators and its various political discourses bridging race, class, gender, and sexuality. Under the broad umbrella of diversity, inclusion, and equality, a wide array of themes and topics such as STEM and technology are addressed, including online education in the age of the pandemic. Its contributors tackle the scourge of neoliberal policy, including the corporatization, financialization, and privatization of education and the courageous struggles of LGTB leaders and those who take up ethically robust critiques of class exploitation, white supremacy, and institutionalized racism. Educational struggles involving Asian American, African American, and indigenous educators are approached from critical perspectives that the authors, with formidable verve, attempt to make central features of educating today's educational leaders. Transdisciplinary contributions to the volume range from discussions of leadership styles to international perspectives on leadership

while broad theoretical discussions address topics such as social class, constructivism, postmodernism, postcolonial critique, democratic versus distributive leadership and mindfulness. To adopt a Freirean discourse for a moment, this volume presciently lays bare the limit situations that hinder the intentionality of contemporary educational leaders and their ability to fully engage history. Yet the contributors also bring to the discussion what Freire called “untested feasibility” – a catalyzing element in the construction of hope, of discovering new, creative solutions that can bring about substantive social change for the betterment of humanity. This is what makes the *Palgrave Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management Discourse* an essential volume for contemporary leadership studies in these uncertain times.

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## Part II

### Introduction: About the Foucauldian Lens



# The Archaeology of Educational Leadership as an Enunciative Field

# 2

Richard Niesche

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the notions of archaeology and discourse as central aspects of Michel Foucault's method and considers how these concepts can be used to explore educational leadership. The work of Foucault has been increasingly used to understand and interrogate a number of issues related to educational leadership. However, there has been less writing "using" his approaches rather than simply applying some of his concepts. This chapter considers how one might go about drawing on Foucault's methods to educational leadership so that a number of overlooked and hidden assumptions of leadership can be critically interrogated and new and genuinely different approaches can be developed for theory building in the field. The power of Foucault's discourse, it is argued, lies less in the application of his concepts but rather in the methodology to his archival writing and research that can provide new insights and understandings of knowledge formation in the field of educational leadership.

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Educational leadership · Archaeology · Discourse · Michel Foucault

My books aren't treatises in philosophy or studies of history: at most, they are philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems. (Foucault, 1991a, p. 74)

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**Introduction**

The use of Foucault's work in the field of educational leadership has seen a range of incisive and complex tools and concepts with which to seek out new forms of knowledge. They can also provide different ways of interrogating this notion of educational leadership and how it has come into being. Numerous examples of this work exist, including analyses of principals' work and principals' subjectivities (Dolan, 2020; Gobby, 2013; Heffernan, 2019; Niesche, 2011, 2013), analyses of power and resistance (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Anderson & Grinberg, 1998; Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Longmuir, 2019; Niesche, 2013; Niesche & Keddie, 2016), development of discourse and discourse analyses of educational leadership (Gillies, 2013; Niesche & Gowlett, 2020; Niesche & Thomson, 2017), innovative genealogical methodologies and approaches (Mifsud, 2017), feminist approaches (Blackmore, 1999), leadership for learning (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003), and the intersection of education policy, Foucault, and implications for leadership (Ball, 1994, 2013). These examples of recent research are also only a fraction of the vast body of work in education generally from a Foucauldian perspective or drawing on Foucauldian ideas. There has clearly been substantial interest in the application of Foucault's work into education and educational leadership more specifically.

There is also a significant body of work in organizational studies drawing on Foucault that is relevant for educators looking at the nature of schools and schooling (e.g., McKinlay & Starkey, 1998; Mennicken & Miller, 2015). While this work has made a significant contribution to leadership and organization studies more broadly, given the extensive output of work from Foucault in the form of officially published books, collections of interviews and shorter works, and a comprehensive set of lecture series, there remains great potential in the exploration of ideas that have been given less attention and remain under-developed. Arguably, much of Foucault's early work prior to his specific and popular genealogical studies of prisons and punishment (Foucault, 1975) and sexuality (Foucault, 1976) remain a treasure trove of ideas that can further the field beyond the knowledge development already published. It is some of this earlier work that is taken up in this chapter as a way to move forward the field of those undertaking Foucauldian analysis of educational leadership.

One of the areas that have been less explored relates to Foucault's work on his methods of inquiry or his methodology works in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

(Foucault, 2002a) and also various shorter pieces looking at the notion of discourse. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is considered Foucault's "method book" (O'Farrell, 2005; Sheridan, 1980). As such, if one is interested in drawing on Foucault's ideas or to undertake genealogies themselves (Sawicki, 1991), then it makes sense to closely attend to how Foucault went about his investigations in his particular brand of historical and philosophical inquiry. That is the focus of this chapter.

In the first section of the chapter, I explain the methods and methodologies as discussed by Foucault in a number of shorter works (Foucault, 1991a, 2000, 2002b) and also the book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Next is a brief discussion of his complex development of the notion of discourse that has so widely been adopted for a variety of means in education and educational leadership. Discourse is a term that has become ubiquitous and used to refer to almost anything, but Foucault did have a specific ensemble in mind when using this term. Also, importantly, he changed his views and usage of the term discourse between different books and chapters, thus making a clear and succinct definition more challenging. To understand and use Foucault's work requires an understanding of his methods, and hopefully this chapter will provide a basis upon which scholars, researchers, and thinkers in educational leadership can continue to draw on in order to further their own thinking and inquiries. This may be for the purposes of critically interrogating the often overlooked and sometimes hidden assumptions behind many of the models and theories developed for educational leadership – usually referred to in the form of adjectival models, leadership competencies, and standards, models of "best practice" and "what works" approaches that are so widespread in current thinking in the field.

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## Foucault's "Methods"

Scholars often refer to taking a Foucauldian approach to their research or analysis. Usually this involves some Foucauldian concepts (e.g., disciplinary power and governmentality) and applying them to a particular issue, field, or problem. In fact, Foucault also wrote about the desire to see others use his books and ideas like "toolboxes" (O'Farrell, 2005). While there is no problem with doing so, as many of the scholars cited at the start of the chapter have done, but it may lead those unfamiliar with Foucault's work to infer there is a template to follow. This is certainly not the case and adds to the difficulty of using Foucault's work in an applied manner. The following are a number of "basic principles" as devised by Clare O'Farrell to think very carefully about when looking to apply Foucault's work:

1. *The first assumption that Foucault makes is that it is possible to produce and describe all human knowledge and culture in an orderly manner, but at the same time, human attempts to create order are always limited and crumbling at the edges. All forms of order should be challenged at every opportunity, so that people can understand why current orders exist and reflect on whether or not they should be changed.*

2. *The best tool to examine and dismantle existing orders is history. Every human action, idea, and arrangement exists in time: everything has a beginning and an end. No aspect of human existence escapes from history.*
3. *Foucault also consistently maintains that truth is a historical category. It is also a notion that has been of particular importance in Western history which has been marked, particularly since the Enlightenment, by a struggle between two mutually opposed methods of gaining access to the truth. On the one side there is the “intellectual” or “scientific” method which has gained ascendancy since Descartes and on the other hand an older method involving spiritual self-transformation and limit-experiences. Foucault deals with the opposition between these two approaches to truth in a variety of ways throughout his career, and consistently champions the non-Cartesian approach.*
4. *Foucault also holds that knowledge is always shaped by political, social, and historical factors – by “power” – in human societies. It is absolutely essential to examine the relationship between knowledge and the factors that produce and constrain it.*
5. *Finally, for Foucault, social justice is an essential ethical consideration that requires close and consistent attention, examination, and action (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 54).*

These assumptions have been inserted here in detail as they provide a much more useful way to “become” more Foucauldian rather than simply adding on his concepts for superficial analytic use. Therefore, what is important to note, in addition to this explicit recognizing of using particular theoretical concepts, is an implicit thinking and approach underlying Foucault’s work. Foucault did talk about this openly in a number of essays and interviews (Foucault, 1991a, 2000, 2002b; Lotringer, 1996; Pearson, 2001). That is, his approach to method and the notion of *problematization*. This is not a concept to be applied in the same way that disciplinary power might be but is more akin to a critical disposition of problem posing rather than problem solving. For instance, Foucault famously claimed that:

I have absolutely no desire to play the role of prescriber of solutions. I think that the role of the intellectual today is not to ordain, to recommend solutions, to prophesy, because in that function he [sic] can only contribute to the functioning of a particular power situation that, in my opinion, must be criticised. (Foucault, 2002b, p. 288)

It is in this way that Foucault worked to pose problems and to illustrate issues so that their complexity might be revealed and understood. The notion of *problematization* while reasonably self-explanatory is at the same time a little more of a complex balance than a simple questioning of what may be taken for granted. There is a fine line between posing problems, showing complex sets of power relations at work, and then allowing possible solutions to be devised. It was in historical analysis that Foucault avoided the need for prescribing solutions to the problems or issues he framed. Foucault explained that he was interested in a history of problems rather than providing solutions or in fact, writing a comprehensive history of any particular period or institution (see Foucault, 1991a; O’Farrell, 2005).

It was specifically the problem in its historical constitution that Foucault was interested in describing. Gillies (2013) writes about the use of Foucault's trident of scepticism, critique, and *problematization* that can provide powerful tools for examination of educational leadership as discourse. These elements are key components of Foucault's approach and his "method." This kind of approach leads one to examine questions of "how" rather than necessarily the "why" or "what" of issues and events. This is a key point of differentiation of Foucault's work from some others. Of course, this is not exclusive to Foucault but is more characteristic and stylistically what he was interested in through his research.

One of the other ideas Foucault referred to is that of the importance of events or *eventalization*. For Foucault, this term means "a breach of self-evidence" (Foucault, 1991a, p. 76) with reference to historical analyses whereby the temptation for many historians is to understand events within their continuity and historical constant and situation. However, Foucault is more interested in the pluralization of causes or understanding the event "according to the multiple processes which constitute it" (p. 76). This is an important element to Foucault's overall project and links in closely to the notions of *archaeology* and *discourse* which are discussed in the next sections. By way of brief summary, Foucault's approach is one that is more deeply rooted in the notion of *problematization* and this needs to be acknowledged through the adoption of his ideas rather than a simple adding on of his concepts.

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## Archaeology

*The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002a) is a challenging book but one that also unlocks much of Foucault's thought in terms of how he goes about his intellectual labor. Published after the hugely successful book, *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1970), Foucault sought to clarify much of what he wrote in that book by detailing what Sheridan refers to as a "theoretical postscript to the earlier work" (Sheridan, 1980, p. 89). *The Order of Things* was a huge commercial and also critical success for Foucault and he became a household name in France, which is hard to imagine these days for such an intellectual providing a very difficult and complex look into the history of science and knowledge, or certainly Foucault's particular brand of historical inquiry. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* set out to clarify what were misunderstandings about Foucault's work as set out in *The Order of Things*, particularly in relation to his relationship with structuralism and also how he undertook his work. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is a deeply theoretical elaboration of the approaches and concepts he used in *The Order of Things*, many of which were present in later works too. As such, it is important to engage with these ideas to understand what is entailed in a "Foucauldian approach" rather than simply applying decontextualized concepts of power, governmentality, and so on into other fields. Perhaps it is due to the book's complexity and perhaps even inaccessibility that few in education and certainly in educational leadership have deeply engaged with this



book and Foucault's methods therein, but there is much to be gained from a deep and ongoing reading of this important text.

In the beginning of the book, Foucault describes theoretical problems in relation to what he terms the history of ideas, of thought, science, or knowledge. Foucault writes of the continuities of historical inquiry and how he is shifting to one of a general history rather than a total history. For Foucault, more traditional historical approaches are interested in locating events and phenomena around a single center to provide meaning and context, establish periods and sequences that are "logical." However, a general history is more concerned with the displacement of the continuous, an investigation of the pluralification of elements, statements, discourses, and meanings to establish the emergence of a diversification of events. This is where it is possible to see Foucault shift away from structuralism (although he was sometimes charged with being a structuralist), although structuralism was more the object of Foucault's work and not the method to the work – a significant difference. With respect to this point, Foucault writes, "this book, like those that preceded it, does not belong—at least directly, or in the first instance—to the debate on structure. . .it belongs to that field in which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle and separate off" (Foucault, 2002a, p. 18).

The bulk of the book then goes on to examine in great detail the notion of discourse, especially the statement and discursive formations which comprise the archive. Those are explored in the next section, but it is important to briefly outline this notion of archaeology that Foucault returns to in the later section of the book. For Foucault, the term archaeology refers to an historical way of ordering and analyzing discourses. It is his particular way of approaching a history of knowledge. The word archaeology itself invokes notions of digging away the sand or soil to uncover the history of the present. Like many of Foucault's terms he often shifts between various meanings of the term whereby he was less explicit about his interest in power and truth in his earlier works, although he has reflected back to say he was interested in these issues without explicitly referring to power, for example. Foucault claims archaeology was concerned with examining discourses themselves in their emergence, not for the purposes of arguing for a "better" one but rather how they come into being; what was said, how and under what rules they operated, and practices formed through them. Foucault talks of the notion of re-writing or "a transformation of what has already been written" (2002a, p. 156). As Foucault explains:

Archaeology – and this is one of its principal themes - may thus constitute the tree of a derivation of a discourse. . .it will place at the root, as **governing statements** (original emphasis) , those that concern the definition of observable structures and the field of possible objects, those that prescribe the forms of description and the perceptual codes that it can use, those that reveal the most general possibilities of characterization, and thus open up a whole domain of concepts to be constructed, and lastly, those that, while constituting a strategic choice, leave room for the greatest number of options. (Foucault, 2002a, p. 164)

Thus, Foucault's attempts to describe this history of ideas, of emergent discourse is not for the purpose of periodization or claiming a continuous line of history and development but rather for pluralizing events and of alternative questions and

discursive shifts; an alternate approach not a normative one that seeks to provide a better or truer account. To date there has been no real attempt to undertake this in educational leadership.

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## Discourse

There are few more used terms in social theory than that of discourse. Even to the point where it has become ubiquitous and may mean almost anything. However, Foucault uses the term discourse in both specific and also quite different ways (even with himself using various definitions across books and essays) and thus eluding a fixed definition at times. Nevertheless, it is commonly accepted that Foucault uses the term discourse to designate “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002a, p. 54). In other words, for Foucault, discourse refers to a certain way of speaking or a group of verbal performances, but more concisely is comprised of:

- That which was produced by groups of signs
- A group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences or propositions
- A group of sequences of signs, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence (Foucault, 2002a, pp. 120–121).

This is essentially what comprises a discursive formation for Foucault. These general comments regarding discourse and discursive formation indicate more than just language but are focused on practices and as a result it is what discourses do that becomes important. Discourses make certain truth claims that frame what is said, what can and cannot be said in relation to particular phenomena. How it is that certain statements are privileged over others and under what conditions they are uttered and linked to certain claims to truth. Of course, language is an important element of this, but it is the power effects that Foucault studied in prisons, health, sexuality, and madness among other areas. The term discursive practices is illustrative of trying to pin down more closely the workings of discourse in this sense rather than staying at a more abstract level. Foucault worked at length on these historical manifestations of discourse, indicating that they must be studied, historically rather than to make them prescriptive. It is in this sense that Foucault referred to discourses also as “verbal traces left behind by history” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 78). Taking the notion of educational leadership as a form of discourse (Gillies, 2013) or multiple discourses (Niesche, 2011) would introduce instability and discontinuity into the notion and its general propositions and understandings. As such, to do this kind of historical tracing reveals the formation of certain truths and power effects in the field and would establish how certain ideas, concepts, and approaches have come to be privileged over others at different times. Different from a form of continuous history making, this sheds light on leadership as an effect of discourse (Lingard et al., 2003), to show the constitution and effects of educational leadership discourse or discursive field.

Educational leadership discourse exists through certain conditions rather than the changing object of discourse itself. Its existence depends on conditions in which complex sets of relations occur at a particular time and place. It is the revealing of these relations that becomes important for an analysis of discourse. It is not so much the “truth” of discourse or the identification of a fixed object itself that is important, rather it is:

To define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance. (Foucault, 2002a, p. 53)

Bringing this back to the notion of educational leadership, then it is not the aim to find out what leadership is, to define it, to find the ultimate truth of it, but to examine its constitution, the rules of its formation as a discourse, what is said, when it is said, and what its intended and unintended effects have been. This then links back into the notions of *eventalization* and *problematization* and also the key themes or methods of Foucault’s investigations that are different from other forms of inquiry. **A Foucauldian approach to analysing educational leadership is not to define it, to develop a new model, or to provide (reduce) it to a solution for education (usually as a form of best practice), but to investigate its formation as discourse.**

Some key questions are required to do this type of analysis. For Foucault, these are in the *formation of enunciative modalities*. By this Foucault refers to the role of statements in discourse that imply complex sets of relations, or those that multiply, diversify, and form pluralities of discourse rather than working toward a unifying theme or whole. Foucault offers a range of questions in getting to the formation of these enunciative modalities:

- Who is speaking? Who is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so?
- What is the institutional site from which this discourse derives?
- What is the position of the subject in relation to the various groups of objects? (Foucault, 2002a, pp. 55–58).

These questions are examples of how Foucault interrogates discourse and discursive formations. While these questions and ideas have been used specifically in educational leadership elsewhere to form particular lines of inquiry (see Niesche & Gowlett, 2020; Niesche & Thomson, 2017), there is broader utility and purpose to consider these across many domains and fields. Considering these questions is important in the formation of discourse. For example, Foucault uses the example of the doctor in the formation of medical discourse. Clearly the doctor has a special place and status in the formation and enunciating of medical statements and claims. The doctor has a privileged status – one need only look the recent example of Covid-19 and the importance of expert opinion of epidemiologists in policy and strategy formation tackling the pandemic. Who is speaking is clearly of importance to the formation of discourse. Further, the institutional site from which the individual makes their

discourse is also relevant. This is particularly apparent for the academic in terms of their institutional status accorded to a particular university or research organization. There are a whole range of hierarchies, qualifications, registrations, accountabilities, and sources of verification that lie behind the individual speaking from an institution. The third question Foucault lists above relates to the distance or relationship the individual has between themselves as speaking subject and the domain or group of objects. As a questioning, listening, observing, and seeing subject there is some maintenance of “impartiality” to the topics or issue that needs to be maintained or seen to be maintained for their views to be respected and valued.

Following on from the above questioning in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault then moves to explaining the formation of concepts and strategies as key elements in the historical formation of discourse. He does this by further refining down the scope of analysis to the statement, of which he defines as “the atom of discourse” (Foucault, 2002a, p. 90), or “that which enables groups of signs to exist, and enables these rules or forms to become manifest” (p. 99). Without delving into detailed structural linguistics here, it is important for Foucault to delineate, at the level of the statement, how discourse is formed and also its rules of formation. This then is the level at which discourse functions, and needs to be analyzed, to provide the critical tools for archaeological investigations that Foucault is most well-known for. This seems to be the element that is missing from detailed use of Foucault’s work, or to actually **do** archaeology or genealogical investigations. There are many studies drawing on Foucault’s concepts but few that actually undertake his approach into other fields or disciplines. It is less the point about more studies or research needing to draw on Foucault that is being advocated here, but those that do use Foucault should be “more Foucauldian” in approach and not simply adding on Foucauldian concepts.

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## Educational Leadership as Discourse

So, what is this all got to do with educational leadership? Well arguably not very much if, by educational leadership, one is only interested in school effectiveness and improvement and more instrumentalist accounts of educational leadership. However, as explained in Foucault’s approach and methods, if the interest is in how knowledge domains such as school effectiveness and improvement have come about, historically and in terms of the formation of particular discourses, discursive formations, and enunciative fields that use particular statements, then Foucault’s ideas may have something substantive to offer in terms of interrogating how these knowledge domains and formations have come to be the way that they are. This may be for the purposes of understanding or problematization. The same could be said for any of the knowledge domains or traditions – for example, Helen Gunter (2016) has undertaken an excellent analysis of intellectual histories of school leadership and research using the categories of:

- Educational administration
- Educational effectiveness and improvement

- Entrepreneurs and popularizers
- Critical educational policy and leadership studies

While there are numerous other useful categorizations of the “field” of educational leadership (e.g., Culbertson, 1988; Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995; Eacott, 2018; Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Gunter & Ribbins, 2003; Willower & Forsyth, 1999), one could undertake Foucauldian analyses of any of these intellectual histories to examine how the associated discourses have emerged, under what rules and conditions, and how they have formed and changed to the point that we are today. In other words, a history of the present of educational leadership. However, what is less studied is the broader conditions or environment in which educational leadership discourses manifests. Rather than analyzing the objects of leadership themselves, one could analyze the formation of leadership discourse within the recent movement of neoliberalism into education and educational leadership.

As was stated at the start, there are numerous scholars who have employed both Foucault’s methods and his concepts in the field of educational leadership. However, it seems that at the present moment there are particular tensions for educational leadership in a time where neoliberal influences on education policy and reforms (as they have been for a few decades now) are still a persuasive force. If discourse formation needs to be studied if and when it occurs and is influenced by their social cultural and political contexts (Blackmore, 1999), then to understand educational leadership discourse, one must examine the contexts with which it is not only intersecting but also that helps constitute it as a particular kind of discourse. In addition to approaching an analysis of educational leadership as discourse during neoliberal influences, one must also seek to understand the history of neoliberalism, the history of educational leadership, study their discursive formations, policy context and reform (e.g., Brown, 2015; Dardot & Laval, 2013). This is important work that underpins much of what counts as educational leadership today in terms of those exercising educational leadership in all education settings and also those researching educational leadership – not that they are necessarily two distinct entities, as they certainly are not.

Scholars in educational leadership are prone to emphasizing the importance of context in defining leadership practice, and yet then make a shift to prescribing how things should be or done accordingly. While this is problematic on a number of levels, it also indicates a narrow approach to that of context, usually described as a school or school system. What is much less analyzed and understood within educational leadership (it is much better understood and theorized in education policy, education sociology, and other disciplines) is how leadership is constituted through particular neoliberal discourse. Some exceptions tend to be in the more socially critical approaches to educational leadership but is vastly absent from other domains. A closer inspection of neoliberalism and its role in crafting particular approaches to leadership would help illuminate how and under what conditions or circumstances these particular versions of educational leadership become privileged and others constrained.

An example might be the role of school autonomy and leadership whereby shifts to more autonomous schools have had profound effects on what educational leadership is and how it is positioned and constructed in policy documents and academic discourse. The early days of school-based management (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988)

were more about transformational leadership whereas more recently there has been a focus on distributed leadership (with the acceptance that the job is too big for one person at the top, e.g., school principals) and also instructional leadership. Even more recently is the notion of “system leadership” as being key across more autonomous schooling systems (e.g., see NSW Department of Education, 2020). However, underlying these leadership discourses are pressures of workload, health and well-being and work/life balance issues, restrictive accountabilities, school choice policies and competition and large administrative burdens (Heffernan & Pierpoint, 2020; Ontario Principals Council, 2017; Riley, See, Marsh, & Dicke, 2020). These factors are shaping educational leadership in ways that are in tension with formal academic discourse and the desires of school leaders about what the role should or should not be. It is these spaces, where discourses form that of which it speaks, that there needs to be more interrogation and analysis. The chapters in this handbook, while not necessarily using Foucault’s ideas explicitly (or at all for some), are interested in at least probing into some of these issues and questions in different domains within the field. These are just a few possible lines of inquiry or critique that do need to be undertaken, with less attention given to capturing fads, fashions, and finding quick and marketable solutions under the guise of leadership.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The aim of this chapter was to introduce a number of Foucault’s methods and ideas that have been less explored and used in educational leadership research. These approaches are also key elements to the formation of this edited collection and so it has been necessary to briefly discuss the importance of the ideas and approaches behind Foucault’s more commonly understood and utilized concepts so that readers and users of this collection can better understand and target their approaches to their respective disciplines and fields. Keys to this work include notions of *problematization* and *eventalization* along with *archaeology* and the commonly used notion of *discourse*. In the final section of the chapter, there was a brief discussion of how these approaches might be put to work in looking at the role of neoliberalism and its relationship and intersection with various educational leadership discourses drawing on the mapping from Helen Gunter. The power of Foucault’s discourse lies not so much in the application of his concepts or tools, although this is still a useful appropriation to understanding many issues, but rather in his broader approach or methodology that can provide others with new insights and understandings of knowledge formation in the field of educational leadership.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [A Foucauldian Analysis of Teacher Standards](#)
- ▶ [Foucault’s Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism: Structured Doubt Within Leadership Certainties](#)

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## **Part III**

# **The Landscape of Leadership**



# A History of Leadership Thought

# 3

Scott Eacott

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## Abstract

While leadership is the contemporary focus of what is known as educational leadership, this has not always been the case. In the past educational administration and educational management have been the orthodoxy. In trying to capture the history of this field, it is commonplace to chronologically lay out the changes in labels and discuss the many different iterations of leadership (e.g., instructional, transformational, servant). While this can be a useful introduction to the field, it does require an uncritical acceptance of the idea that leadership, management, and administration are distinct analytical categories. To offer a distinctive account of the history of leadership thought in education, this chapter focuses not on the content of research (e.g., types of leadership) or a chronological account of themes but instead on the underlying generative assumptions of knowledge claims. The choice of labels from administration through to management and now the contemporarily popular title of leadership is not as distinct as many would argue or are led to believe. The choice of labels says more about the temporal conditions of claims and the pre-existing normative assumptions of authors than anything else. To that end, this chapter illuminates the assumptions of major approaches (adjectival,

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co-determinist, conflationary, relational) to educational administration and leadership thought and the impact of those assumptions.

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**Keywords**

Leadership · Management · Administration · Organization · Organizing · Relations · Relational · History · Theory · Empirical · Normative

**The Field of Memory**

Earlier labels for the field such as “educational administration” and “educational management” have been relegated to history or are now viewed as deficit or less than the contemporarily popular label of “educational leadership”. Despite this, many of the underlying assumptions of administration and management prevail.

**The Field of Presence**

Educational ‘leadership’ is the dominant label for the contemporary field. Not only is it contemporary, but for many it is seen as necessary for organizational improvement and/or high performance. Irrespective of what are considered the desired outcomes of education, there is a form, type, descriptor for leadership that meets that requirement.

**The Field of Concomitance**

From its very inception, educational administration and leadership have borrowed explanatory resources from other fields. Even the contemporary focus on leadership has its roots outside of education. Almost all major concepts in educational leadership thought originate in other fields and are at best appropriated into educational leadership and at worst simply borrowed and applied.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

Leadership thought in education has experienced many ruptures in shifting from great man/heroic approaches through to trait, behavioral, practice orientations, the pursuit of a science of educational administration though the Theory Movement, Greenfield’s humanistic intervention and then the broader social critical critiques. Each of these ruptures have accompanying assumptions that germinate new lines of inquiry but not necessarily within field dialogue and debate.

**Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Rather than provide a chronological snapshot of the history of leadership thought in education, this chapter focuses on the underlying generative assumptions of different positions on leadership. The key argument being that rather than focus on labels – those which change with the times – there is greater explanatory value in illuminating the assumptions of different positions and the implications of those assumptions for understanding leadership in education.

## Introduction

The first Departments of Educational Administration were established at universities in the USA during the early decades of the twentieth century (Callahan, 1962; Tyack & Hansot, 1982), with Commonwealth nations a few decades later (Baron & Taylor, 1969). This creates a lengthy history on a global scale. However, despite this presence in universities, research has not necessarily been a high priority for educational administration and leadership professors (Hills, 1965; Immegart, 1975), with William (Bill) Walker (1964) – the pioneering Australian scholar of educational administration – noting “[I]n some quarters, the necessity for any formal study of administration on the part of educators is seriously questioned” (p. 12). While in recent decades, the generation of knowledge through research has taken on greater importance for those employed in universities (Tschannen-Moran, Firestone, Hoy, & Moore Johnson, 2000), the enduring tension between research and experiential based knowledge claims – often pitched as theory and practice (although that is an inaccurate label) remains strong in educational leadership (Eacott, 2021). The field has been prone to following fads and fashions (► Chap. 9, “‘The Next Big Thing’: A Delineation of ‘Fads’ and ‘Fashions’”), many from outside educational leadership (Peck & Reitzug, 2012). Taken together, these factors have a significant influence on the history of leadership thought in education.

There have been many attempts to capture the history of research on educational administration and leadership (Burgess & Newton, 2014; Culbertson, 1988; Leithwood & Duke, 1999), including its epistemological assumptions and knowledge claims (Eacott, 2017; Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Oplatka, 2010) and the field in general (Boyan, 1988; Leithwood et al., 2002; Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger, & Hart, 1996; Murphy & Louis, 1999). As with all domains of knowledge production, particularly in the social sciences, educational administration and leadership have not been immune to issues of credibility within the academy. In pursuit of scientific status, the field experienced what has come to be known as the Theory Movement, a US-centric movement in the 1950s influenced by (Vienna Circle) logical positivism where knowledge claims were based on hypothetico-deductive structures derived from observational statements based on (natural or curated) experiments. This served the field well in seeking to establish credibility but also raised many questions about what constitutes useful knowledge in educational administration and leadership.

The paradigm wars of the late twentieth century did not exclude educational administration and leadership (Waite, 2002). Impact on the field is best captured in the germinal work of Thomas Barr Greenfield (1973, 1974), a pioneering Canadian scholar who opposed logical positivism and argued for an humane science of educational administration (e.g., Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). Subsequent disruptions, although to differing degrees of impact, include a Critical Theory of educational administration from the likes of Richard Bates (1980) and William Foster (1986), Colin Evers and Gabriele Lakomski’s (1991, 1996, 2000) naturalistic coherentism, and various forms of post-modernism (English, 2003; Maxcy, 1993), post-structuralism (Niesche, 2014; Niesche & Gowlett, 2019), feminism (Blackmore, 1999; Fuller, 2022),

anti-racism (Diem & Welton, 2020; Lopez, 2021; Miller & Callendar, 2019), post-colonialism (Samier, 2021), and relationality (Eacott, 2018). In short, since the 1970s there has been great diversity in educational administration and leadership thought.

More than just diversity of thought, the last 40 years has witnessed the further partitioning of school effectiveness and school improvement, and educational change away from educational administration (e.g., Chapman et al., 2016; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan, & Hopkins, 2009) and the seemingly uncontested rise of leadership as the core focus of the field (Thomas, 2006). The shift, almost exclusively, to leadership in the field has been met with some critique (e.g., Eacott, 2018; Lakomski, 2005; Lakomski, Eacott, & Evers, 2017), but questioning or querying of leadership remains not just peripheral but marginalized in the field as the core continues to proliferate literatures.

To offer a distinctive account of the history of leadership thought in education, this chapter focuses not on the content of research or a chronological account of themes but instead on the underlying generative assumptions of knowledge claims. The choice of labels from administration through to management and now the contemporarily popular title of leadership is not as distinct as many would argue or are led to believe. The choice of labels says more about the temporal conditions of claims and the pre-existing normative assumptions of authors than anything else. To that end, this chapter illuminates the assumptions of major approaches to educational administration and leadership thought and the impact of those assumptions.

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## Complicity with the Label of the Day

Pointed out by John Dewey (1902) and then later by Richard Bates (2010), it is easy to separate the administration of schooling from education. As schooling moved from the single room schoolhouse to larger sites and ultimately systems with the spread of mass schooling in the twentieth century, educators were forced to grapple with the need for administrative oversight. The uncomfortable marriage of education and a potentially bureaucratic administration was and continues to be an uneasy one. For a fledging field without any core disciplinary specific knowledge base, it meant that the key actors and policy makers of the time were somewhat forced to look elsewhere for insights. At the same time, Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) was advocating his principles of scientific management developed in the pig iron factories of Bethlehem Steel Mill, and they proved popular with the early professors of educational administration (many who had backgrounds outside of education themselves) and carried on throughout the first half of the twentieth century (Callahan, 1962).

Looking outside of a core disciplinary knowledge base or what Fenwick English (2006) labels a “knowledge dynamic,” contemporary educational leadership faculty and professional associations have sought less the counsel of other fields but instead the reformers (Waite, 2016), consultants (Gunter & Mills, 2017), gurus, and social media influencers (Eacott, 2020) promoting their version of educational change and reform. There has become a lucrative – professionally and personally – career path for the players on the international keynote circuit

who travel the world outlining their solutions to solve enduring problems (e.g., structural inequities) as though no-one has ever thought of the problem or been working on it previously. In doing so they promote the latest buzzwords for what it takes to be a thought leader, agile, influencer with little regard for what such labels mean or their relationship with expertise.

The importance of labels and language comes to the fore when discussing the history of leadership thought in education. There is little doubt that leadership is the core focus of the contemporary field. The shift from educational administration through to management and now leadership confirms its primacy. Academic journals, as a key artefact of a field's knowledge production and core claims, are a useful site to look at changes in a field (Thomas, 2010). Table 1 displays the major journals in educational leadership, management, and administration with particular attention to the titles and year of establishment (including changes in titles).

While administration remains in the titles of the five longest serving journals in the field, by the 1980s management (and even organization) crept into titles or was even used instead of administration. The 1990s onwards has seen the rise of leadership and it would be difficult to see any publisher supporting a journal or book series that does that use the contemporarily popular label – educational leadership. The most overt example of a journal seeking to match the titles of the times is the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society's flagship journal – *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership* published by SAGE and currently edited by Tony Bush, who himself has published many textbooks in the field (e.g., Bush, 2011). After launching under

**Table 1** Major journal titles (and changes) over time in educational leadership

Journal title (previous titles)	Establishment decade				
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Journal of educational administration	1963				
Educational administration quarterly	1965				
Journal of educational administration and history	1968				
International studies in educational administration		1970			
Educational management, administration & leadership					
Educational administration		1972			
Educational management and administration			1982		
Educational management, administration and leadership					2004
School leadership and management					
School organization			1981		
School leadership and management				1997	
International journal of educational management			1987		
Journal of school leadership				1991	
International journal of leadership in education				1998	
Leadership and policy in schools					2002

the title “Educational Administration” in 1972, the journal added “management” in 1982 and then “leadership” in 2004. In explaining the latter decision, Bush (2004) notes, that while leadership had been garnering increasing attention in the previous 15 years, and the choice of label was related to geo-spatial location (e.g., management being preferred in Britain, Europe and Africa, and administration in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), there is “little evidence of any substantive differences in the meaning of these concepts; it is simply a question of national custom and practice” (p. 6).

What remains is a challenge to explore the underlying generative assumptions rather than necessarily engage in countless debate over the definitions. This is particularly the case given there is no empirical referent for leadership, yet its centrality in the social world creates an ontological complicity in researchers (and others) that makes it difficult to epistemologically break ordinary language. The uncritical acceptance of leadership as not just a thing, but a thing worthy of study grants it ontological status. Despite the absence of an empirical referent, there is a belief that leadership exists, and researchers draw on socially constructed resources such as categories of leadership to then correlate and coordinate their accounts with the accounts of other researchers and practitioners in a constantly emerging narrative of the importance of leadership based on original constitutive beliefs in its own importance.

Gaston Bachelard (1984 [1934]) denies science the certainties of a definitive heritage and reminds us that it (science) can only progress by perpetually calling into question the very principles of its own constructs. Therefore, to understand something (e.g., educational leadership), not just uncritically accept the categories and constructs of the ordinary language of the everyday, one must pay attention to the underlying generative assumptions. Educational leadership (although no more than any other domain of social scientific inquiry) functions only in so far as it produces a belief in the value of its product (e.g., organization). As Simon Kelly (2008) argues, debates around the definitions or categories of leadership are futile as they are the product of a design problem. Leadership owes its existence to the currency of public concern over particular social issues (e.g., improving student outcomes) and the belief that leadership – not administration or management – is the solution.

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## Leading as Organizing

Peter Gronn (2010) argues that leadership is part of the equation because above a certain numerical threshold, the self-organization by small collaborating groups/individuals proves difficult. Although using a different language, and resulting in a more structural narrative, Max Weber’s (1978 [1922]) pays particular attention to how groups organize at scale leading to his description of the bureaucracy. Focusing on leadership, Brian Caldwell (2007) makes the claim that ‘leadership must result in change. If no change occurred then either leadership failed or leadership was not needed’ (p. 225). Working with Caldwell, Gronn, among

others, Eacott (2018) proposes two core underlying assumptions guiding educational leadership research:

- i) A group (i.e.,  $n \geq 2$ ) requires some form of organizing.
- ii) If there is leadership, there is change

The genesis of leadership is found in a social group (of two or more individuals) undertaking some activity that requires a form of organizing. In the absence of such organizing there are just disparate groups or individuals working in parallel. Distinctions in this organizing, beyond individual preference, between leadership, management, and administration have no definitive resolution or analytical criteria unless a desirable outcome or criterion is imposed upon them. Leadership is not a self-contained idea. Put simply, leadership is the advocacy of a particular form of organizing.

The linking, or conflating, of leadership with change is common. However, once again there are issues of advocacy for a particular version being granted status. In other words, leadership researchers go out observe empirical evidence to support their pre-existing normative assumptions about what is leadership. When the change that is desired is evident, these data confirm and validates the original assumptions. Alternatively, if there is no evidence to support the original assumption, then it can be dismissed as non-leadership. In doing so, leadership is conflated with positive or desired change as defined by the observer. The difficulty with such a position, paraphrasing Eacott (2018), is that while change is a requirement or essential property of leadership, leadership is not necessarily a requirement for change.

To avoid defaulting to advocating for a particular outcome or a form of organizing, it is possible to shift the focus of inquiry to the underlying assumptions of organizing embedded in claims of leadership. In centering organizing the key assumption of interest becomes how do different positions conceptualize social relations. These relations may be between, among or even constitutive of and emergent from what we come to know as things or organizing itself.

Table 2 provides a transition between the chronological account of the history of leadership thought in education to categories of assumptions of organizing. The somewhat timeless accounts of great men/heroic leaders, captured in at least the work of Thomas Carlyle (1841), and arguably many others before him, have been central to historical accounts of just about every civilization. History is very much a biography of great men and the decisions they made. While to some extent an outlier in its assumptions around organizing – as they remain very much grounded in the work of an exceptional individual – these great man/heroic leader accounts are just as common in the contemporary educational leadership thought as they were 100 + years ago. Ross Thomas (1998), long-time editor of *Journal of Educational Administration*, used movies with his classes to demonstrate how this was one of the common ways in which school principals were portrayed in popular culture. The study of turnaround leaders or those leaders generating better than expected outcomes, without attention to the various social, cultural, political, spatial, and historical relations impacting on organizational outcomes continues this line of inquiry.



**Table 2** Major developments in the field

Leadership thought	Time period	Description	Assumptions of relations	Analytical category
Great man/heroic	Late nineteenth century (timeless)	Concerned with advocacy for a particular version of how things ought to be	Adjectival	Adjectival
Trait theory	Early twentieth century	Concerned with identifying the traits of effective leaders	Co-determinist	Scientific
Structural	Early twentieth century	Concerned with identifying the structural arrangements of effective organizations	Co-determinist	Scientific
Human relations	Early-mid twentieth century	Concerned with identifying the behaviors of effective leaders	Co-determinist	Scientific
Humanistic	Mid-late twentieth century	Concerned with the generation of organizational reality through subjective perception	Conflation	Conflationary
Social critical	Mid-late twentieth century	Concerned with the simultaneous constitution and emergence of organizing activity	Relational	Relational

Borne out of these great man/heroic leader narratives is a focus on traits shared by leaders. The shift is subtle but significant. Whereas the great man/heroic leader focuses on the individual and seeks to advocate for a normative version for others, trait-based approaches sought to identify the elemental traits shared by effective leaders. Such an approach was designed to enable the timely identification of leaders and potentially as a basis for improving or harnessing those pre-disposed gifts. Optimizing these traits would be through recognizing the co-determination of desirable outcomes courtesy of the collection of traits.

Alternate approaches around the same time focused less on the individual and instead on the structural arrangements (e.g., Taylor, 1911) or behaviors of leaders (e.g., Mayo, 1933; Stogdill & Coons, 1957) later including context through contingency approaches (e.g., Fiedler, 1967) or situational leadership (e.g., Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) and often linked with Douglas MacGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y for motivation. It is worth noting that Elton Mayo and colleagues' work, particular the Hawthorne Studies (which focused on the behavior of workplace groups), is considered as a counter argument to Taylor's structural arguments. The former focused on the management of employees and seeking to maximize profits for both employer and employee, the former focused on the workers as individuals. That said, as with trait-based approaches, structural and behavioral approaches assume a co-determination of factors leading to outcomes. Optimizing organizations is made possible through manipulation of organizational components (e.g., structural) or behaviors (e.g., behavioral) to achieve the desired outcome. Nowhere is this more evident than in the work that aligns with, follows, or builds upon William

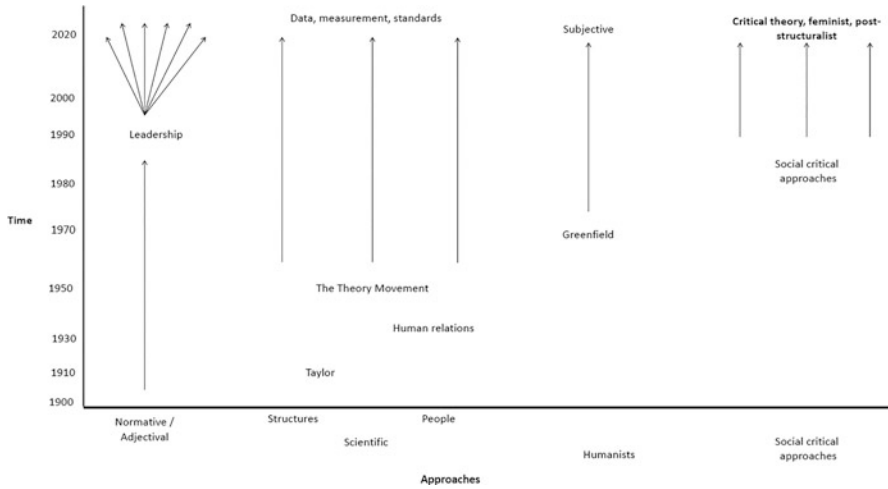
E. Deming (1982, which built on the work of Walter Shewhart of Bell Laboratories in New York) and his Plan-Do-Study-Act which focuses on the role of data to inform decision making.

To this point, the origins of explanatory approaches (great man/heroic leaders; trait; behavioral) have been from outside of education. Even if we take the Theory Movement to be the field specific appropriation of broader scientific approaches to understanding organizing and organizations, it does not find its genesis in educational administration and leadership. Despite pursuing a science of educational administration, as espoused by key figures at the time such as Andrew Halpin (1966), Daniel Griffiths (1959), and Jack Culbertson (1981), it was unable to deliver on the promise. Put simply, there were too many variables to capture the nuance of educational organizations. Evers and Lakomski (1991, 1996, 2000) have, however, consistently argued that it is not science that is the problem, but the kind of science (e.g., logical empiricism) taken up in educational administration.

Thomas Barr Greenfield's work was an intervention for the field that was grounded within the field. Influenced by the work of Max Weber, Greenfield brought a philosophical position to educational administration and leadership that blurred the boundaries between structures and individuals. He argued that human will, and values were fundamental to educational organizations and that such organizations were generated by organizational members rather than separate to them. This conflating of entities previously thought of as separate (e.g., the organization, organizational members) by denying their original separation was a major explanatory disruption to the field – one more welcomed by Commonwealth nations and by USA based researchers. Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, and to lesser extent British researchers were more comfortable with the subjective and interpretivist approaches than USA-based colleagues you were still deeply influenced, even if second generation, by the Theory Movement and its pursuit of an objective science.

Blurring the boundaries between organizing activity and broader contextual matters, including issues of race, gender, place, colonialism, history, among others are relational approaches. This array of approaches is concerned with the unfolding societal relations that are shaped by and shaping of the work of education. Working within and beyond educational administration and leadership, these approaches make the unfolding relations of the social world their focus and educational organizations an empirical example of broader issues. These approaches see education and educational organizations as both embedded in and embodying society. In doing so, they add a messiness to discussions as discrete things are not possible and instead the key message systems of education (teaching, curriculum, and assessment) and issues impacting upon staff, students and communities are all part of wider discourses and not bounded to the organization. Taking various forms, these relational approaches have long been marginalized in educational administration and leadership as they infrequently offer concrete actions to be implemented or applied. Rather than problem solving, they are more likely to problem pose, inviting questions and reflections on what is done and what could be done.

Although the various analytical categories provided in Table 2 (adjectival, scientific, humanist, relational) came into conversation with educational administration and leadership at different times over the past 120+ years, they all remain active – to



**Fig. 1** Historical mapping of explanatory approaches to organizing in educational leadership

varying degrees – in contemporary thought and analysis. As Fig. 1 shows, the normative/adjectival approach that underlies the great man or heroic leader narratives is the basis for much of the leadership discourse of the field. The proliferation of books on how to be a certain type of leader – with fast evolving adjectives is commonplace. Structural, behavioral, and trait-based approaches which sought to bring a scientific approach to the identification, leveraging, and optimizing of organizational assets to maximize outcomes is evident in the continued attention to or rise of data, evidence informed practice, measurement and dashboards, and professional standards for leaders and educators. A humane science remains a marginalized pursuit but has reached become a viable alternative in the field, even if not employed in the way Greenfield may have intended. Social critical approaches in all forms similarly remain marginalized as they ask many questions of accepted norms and behaviors, yet they have reached enough of a critical mass internationally that an increasing number of outlets have provided a network for researchers even if their collective impact is not as great as desired.

## Implications for Leadership Thought

The diversity of underlying assumptions has implications for scholarship in the field. Distinctions in the ontological, epistemological, normative, and ethical assumptions of the adjectival, scientific, conflationary, and relational approaches shapes the empirical and explanatory problems they conceive, the solutions they seek and the ideas they reject.

Adjectival approaches are concerned with advocacy for a particular version of how leadership ought to be. There is a belief that leadership is an external knowable

reality and that knowledge claims can be either empirically verified or simply linked to an aspirational goal. The normative appeal is that leadership is good, a path to something better for both the individual and society and that it would be unethical to not pursue such an endeavor. To achieve this, the author or presenter has not only a vision but the superior vision of how to deliver on the promise. Adjectival positions consider educational organizations as not performing as well as they could be. The proposed solution is to copy the path outlined by the author or presenter. There is frequently an appeal to the moral obligation to either copy what great leaders have done or follow the outlined path towards a utopian version of the future.

Scientific approaches assume that organizational outcomes are the product of the relationships between two or more entities (variables) within or beyond the organization. These relationships and entities are considered to part of an external knowable reality where objective knowledge claims can be empirically verified through inquiry. The normative assumption is that improvements can be achieved through objective knowledge of what works, and it would be unethical to not do so. These approaches can work across ideas of structure and agency through co-determination of outcomes. Co-determinist assumptions means that these scientific approaches consider educational organizations to not be performing optimally. The underlying belief being that through systemic understanding of the components of organizational performance, educational organizations can be more effective, efficient, or whatever marker is desired. Ideas that are rejected include the idea that high performance is not universally possible, that explanation cannot be empirically verified, and the subjective or context-specific insights are of lesser value as they cannot be scaled. Approaches and then the problems seen, the possible solutions and what is rejected.

Conflationary approaches grant a single identity (if such a thing is even possible) to two or more concepts or constructs that have previously been thought of as separate. For example, the educational organization not as an external knowable entity but as something constantly constructed through the thoughts and actions of individuals. Knowledge claims can be supported by many forms of data or evidence, depending on the nature of the claim. Put simply, conflationary approaches are based on the belief that you cannot break the social world into smaller parts and that multiple interpretation of events is not just possible but the norm. As an approach it is concerned with the conflict between individual and collective values and whose values become dominant and why. Ideas rejected include the prospect of understanding anything through data or objective social structures as organizations are not a thing external to individuals. A significant difficulty of conflation is that it reaches a point where almost anything goes and that reduces its utility and perceived value for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

Relational approaches, at their broadest, are concerned with the constitution and emergence of organizing activity through social relations (e.g., race, class, gender, among others). These relations are considered to have a reality of their own, not simply derived from something else (e.g., co-determinism), nor psychic or merely in the minds of observers (e.g., conflationary). There is less concern for right and wrong and greater attention to describing unfolding activity and why it took place in particular social conditions. This is not to say there is not an ethical or emancipatory

goal but advocacy is not the primary purpose. Instead, the key problem they seek to address is how existing explanations of organizing activity are limiting the possibility of alternatives. In other words, contemporary attempts to move beyond orthodoxy (e.g., the sole focus on leadership as the solution) do not provide alternatives but iterations of existing theories (e.g., administration and management). In doing so, relational approaches reject the uncritical acceptance of the ordinary language of the everyday, static and forevermore conceptualization based on entities, the separation of activity from time and space, analytical dualism (e.g., structure and agency, universal and particular, and individual and whole), and most importantly, critique without the provision of alternatives (Table 3).

The intellectual history of leadership thought has led to a diversity of positions. However, these positions are not necessarily developed in dialogue with one another and are more likely to actually advance as parallel monologues (Eacott, 2017).

**Table 3** Underlying assumptions of different analytical categories

Analytical category	Ontological assumptions	Epistemological assumptions	Normative/ethical assumptions	Theory of subject
Adjectival	Social relations/organizing is an external knowable reality.	Knowledge claims can be justified through empirical evidence or an aspirational goal.	Leadership is good. Organizations can be better, and I/we have a path to achieve that.	Leadership is a positive and I/we have a superior version
Scientific	The world is an external knowable reality.	Objective knowledge is empirically verifiable.	Improvements can be achieved through objective knowledge of what works.	Leadership is real and organizational outcomes are a mix of individual agency and structural arrangements.
Conflationary	There is no separation of inner and outer worlds.	Knowledge claims are justified in relation to the perceptions of the observer.	It is difficult, if not impossible, to impose a single version of reality.	The social world can take many forms based on perception.
Relational	Relations have a reality of their own, not simply derived from something else (e.g., interaction) nor psychic or merely in the minds of the observer.	Knowledge claims are generated through relations with the social.	Less concern for right/wrong and instead with describing unfolding activity and why it took place in spatiotemporal conditions.	Activities are generated and not separate to assumptions (individual and shared)

Anthony Riffel (1986) argues that if debate in educational administration and leadership is to ultimately become fruitful, it must extend to include critical attention to the assumptions of others. English (2006) claims that advancing scholarship of educational leadership requires criticism of it philosophically, empirically, and logically. Despite attempts to understand the variety of traditions within the field (e.g., Gunter, 2016), making sense of the heterogenous contributions of the various approaches to educational administration and leadership research is a complex task. Competing theories of leadership in education are frequently incommensurate ontologically and epistemologically and the possibility of any form of equivalence is limited to artificially merging or conflating positions without due attention to the distinctions in their underlying generative assumptions.

Throughout the history of leadership thought in education, the lack of meaningful engagement across traditions (Blackmore, 2010) has led to a situation where researchers or research communities ignore (rather than critique) those with whom they disagree creating an insular and self-confirming knowledge base (Donmoyer, 2001; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). Not only does this thwart the development of critical dialogue and debate, as Don Willower (1981) warns, the absence of constructive controversies means a field loses its vitality.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The genesis of educational administration and leadership as a field of inquiry was grounded in the practical problem of how to organize education at scale. In doing so, it was easy to de-couple the organizing of education from the act of educating. Since its establishment, this decoupling has created many problems and possibilities for the field.

Historically, major contributions and disruptions to leadership thought have come from outside of the field. Many of the original professors had backgrounds well outside of education (see: Bates, 2010), the Theory Movement was arguably a response to issue of credibility in the broader academy, and even Greenfield's intervention aligned with broader discussions within the paradigm wars. Even calls to put the 'education' back in educational leadership have often been little more than appropriations of ideas, concepts, and explanatory resources from outside the field. The difficulty of establishing a distinctive knowledge dynamic has been conceived as a negative it need not be. Education is an interdisciplinary space, sitting at the intersection of many fields. As education has become increasingly complex with a wider array of actors influencing decisions a fruitful endeavor is to explore the myriad of explanatory resources and analytical techniques from across the social sciences. If education is embedded in and embodying of society, then it only makes sense to draw on the widest range of explanatory and empirical resources to better understand its leadership.

Education is ubiquitous to contemporary society. This creates a need for educational administration and leadership thought at scale. At the same time, global discourses of leadership in education remain dominated by major powerhouses such as the USA, UK, Canada, and to a lesser extent Australia, and New Zealand. Voices

from Africa, Asia, Latin America are often crowded out, excluded entirely, or used in a tokenistic way. This can play out in several ways, but two common ways are: (i) the silencing or exclusion of alternate voices through systemic structures of the field and its processes of knowledge generation; and (ii) in the imposition of the intellectual resources of the dominant anglophone/Western culture (e.g., the focus on leadership) in different contexts. This latter phenomenon, a form of epistemic imperialism means theoretical, conceptual, or empirical arguments may not be reflective of different values and culture or even sensitive to the local contexts and needs of groups they are imposed on (Asuga, Scevak, & Eacott, 2016). In doing so, the potential diversity of ideas is lost to the field in its attempt to achieve global reach.

Attempts to curate a distinctive knowledge field of leadership thought in education requires an uncritical acceptance of the importance of leadership and an at scale commitment to advancing that cause. While advocacy is built into all forms of social scientific research, this poses both a problem and a possibility. The imposition of a master narrative means the field loses its sense of reflexivity, expanding through a never-ending array of adjectival leaderships to meet different needs without ever calling into the question the underlying assumptions of knowledge claims. The potential loss of a diverse range of voices makes the possibility of critical engagement with the core assumptions of the field less likely. The marginalization of critical dialogue and debate, at least that which seeks to generate possibilities not just critique, is a major challenge for leadership thought in education. The enduring value and contribution of the field will be dependent on its ability to provide useful resources to describe and explain the organization of education. Paying attention to the underlying assumptions of knowledge claims is the path to renewal as it is a basis for understanding how things are now and how they can be different. If leadership is to offer hope of something different, then the scholarship of leadership should enable not constrain the possibilities of alternatives.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Is a Science of Educational Leadership Possible?](#)
- ▶ [Leadership, Leaders, and Leading](#)
- ▶ [‘The Next Big Thing’: A Delineation of ‘Fads’ and ‘Fashions’](#)
- ▶ [The Search for Science and Scientific Standing](#)

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# Leadership, Leaders, and Leading

# 4

## Myths, Metaphors, and Myopias

Tanya Fitzgerald

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### Abstract

This chapter critiques leadership as both a discourse and practice. The core of this critique is focused on leadership as a set of organizational practices and the presumed division of labor between leadership and those that are led. Preoccupations with leadership as the antidote to address organizational shortcomings and leaders under the gaze of the educational bureaucracy of the state contribute to the disciplining of the act, actions, as well as individual actors. Accordingly, leadership has become codified and mandated that render leaders as little more than organizational technicians, or indeed servants of the polity.

### Keywords

Leadership · Leaderships · Structure · Individual · Practices · Myths · Metaphors · Disruption · Discourses · Configurations · Assumptions · Seductions · Decolonization

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**The field of memory**

Notions of a stable and heterogeneous understanding of concepts such as “leadership” and “leadership practices” are redundant. Scholars and practitioners continue to use terms such as “leadership” and “practice” in both conservative and hegemonic ways. Hence, leadership discourses and practices are legitimated through the convergence and reinforcement of these ideas, concepts, and constructs. What has occurred therefore is a reinforcement of what is known rather than sustained attention to what is not known.

**The field of presence**

All fields and forms of practice and knowledge are open to scrutiny and debate. There is an almost hegemonic insistence on evidence-based practices that are underpinned by an adherence to theoretical concepts and constructs that are relatively static. Central to this is the absence of the complex interplay of leadership and management, as well as knowledge, knowing, and professional practice.

**The field of concomitance**

Histories of the field point to its provenance and the shifting emphasis on administration, management, and leadership. Initially linked with the science of administration and subsequently drawing on the business management literatures, leadership has taken on a new ascendancy and positioned as the antidote for educational reform and the repositioning of principals, head teachers, or superintendents as policy servants.

**Discontinuities and ruptures which form the different viewpoints of this area or field**

There have been significant debates on the origins, development, and contested nature of leadership. In the main, leadership has been constructed as if it were a singular word or action. Although leadership might be conceptualized as a set of practices, it is timely to reconsider how leaderships (plural) might be theorized, deconstructed, and decolonized.

**Critical assumptions or presupposition**

This chapter offers a critique of the leadership literatures and the assumed connection between discourses of leadership and organizational practices. An immediate inadequacy of this standpoint is that lexical confusion exists between leadership and management and a presumption of a division of labor between those who lead, and those who are led. As noted, the concept and construct of leadership is part of a well-used vocabulary that seeks to create an almost apostolic myopia about the role and impact of individuals who bear the title “leader,” the impact of their work or “leadership,” and connections between the “led” and “leaders.” The term leader and the act of leading, leadership, is deeply seductive. It suggests that an individual can exercise a level of agency and working through others (labeled at times “followers” or in other words, the “led”), and “distributing” leadership as if it were a good or service, can bring about organizational change. The paradox is that leadership cannot operate in a vacuum, and while there might be a single word to describe

actions and activities – leadership – ultimately *leaderships*, the work of more than one individual, is discursively more accurate.

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## Introduction

Implicit in the abundant educational leadership, management, and administration literatures is that concepts such as “leaders” and “leadership” are relatively uniform and stable. In the main, terms such as leaders and leadership have been used to signify formal organization-wide roles, structures, and practices. More recently, sociologically informed scholarship has offered rejoinders to these debates and pointed to the need for more nuanced understandings of leadership as theory and leadership as practice (Eacott, 2013). Leadership, leaders, and leading have become terms linked with a single set of activities, actions, or a term ascribed to an individual (Gunter, 2001). Indeed, in the past three decades labels such as educational administration and educational management have been replaced with the term leadership. The net effect has been that administration and management are now relegated to the dialogic periphery and leadership now the canonical center. As Gunter (2001, 2013) points out, “leader,” “leading,” and “leadership” are now the discursive reality to describe what occurs at the apex of a school organization. Is an alternative or set of alternatives possible? How might we conceptualize moving away from the reverence that leadership is frequently afforded? And importantly, why has leadership become no more than a metaphorical legend to what describe what an individual might do and how s/he/they might act? I am therefore troubled by the ascendancy of leadership studies that appear to reinforce the notion of the leader as an individual, that there are followers to be led, and that leadership is ultimately beneficial for an organization. Leaders and leadership are not a set of neutral identities, actions, or activities.

The potential exists to set aside these orthodoxies and to recognize leaderships; the accumulation and convergence of the diversity of individuals, identities, perspectives, activities, and actions (Fitzgerald, 2003). This chapter begins with an overview of the leadership literatures and suggests that there is a level of folklore and mythology embedded in both the concept of leadership and leadership practices. I suggest that there is a hegemonic adherence to key texts and concepts and that it might well be timely to reconsider the complex interplay between leadership, leading, and leaders and that in order to connect theory and practice that leaderships might usefully be considered. The plural use of this term implies an overlap in terms and terminology, and that *within* the act or exercise of leadership, there are acknowledged axes of power, authority, influence, and coercion.

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## Content

Vital to contemporary understandings of educational leadership, management, and administration as a field of knowledge and a field of practice is an intellectual archaeology of core terms. In essence, leaders, leading, and leadership have become

part of the standardized knowledge base in the field and integral to professional practices (Gunter, 2010). This chapter considers ways in which descriptions of “leadership” that denotes an activity, “leading” as a technique of practice, and “leader” as a form of positioning have occupied a level of ascendancy in the literatures. Leadership, leaders, and leading have been discursively co-opted to describe, if not prescribe, the work of some individuals within an organization. Thus, it occupies an explanatory, descriptive as well as conceptual space to explain, if not cajole, individuals to act in certain ways, that is, exercise “leadership.” How might this contested space be opened up further and new conceptualizations emerge? Would it indeed be a heresy if “leadership” as a set of presumed actions, activities, and conceptual strategy were scaled down or dispensed with? What might be possible if the mythologies of leadership, leading, and leader were viewed through new lenses.

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## Myths as Metaphors and Metaphors as Myths

Metaphors are discursive devices that serve as a means to connect ideas and offer a broader understanding of a phenomena (Alvesson & Spicer, 2010). Although this might suggest that metaphors act as neutral descriptors, the reality is that in the field of education, metaphors offer a persuasive image that draw heavily on one type of concept or construct (Guilherme & Souza de Freitas, 2018). A myth is a symbolic conceptual image to draw in our imagination and which further offers a narrative that creates a mythology of an individual or event (Alvesson & Spicer, 2010). Myths and the mythologies that are created can be appealing as they work to offer an explanation of an event, phenomena, or individual act. In similar ways, metaphors can render unfamiliar ideas, terms, or constructs as familiar and in doing so provide a frame of reference that connects experiences and knowledge. Certainly, as Guilherme and Souza de Freitas (2018) illustrate, metaphors abound in education and condense complex ideas into familiar ones. Educational leadership and management research have long drawn on metaphors as an analytical tool to explore and explain leadership attributes, behaviors, and practices (Eacott, 2013). Metaphors can advance thinking about leaders and leadership in education and can offer a level of sense-making about how leaders perceive their work and identities. Long used across the field of educational leadership, management, and administration, metaphors such as the heroic leader and the heroism of leadership have resulted in a level of myopia around these dominant concepts. Just as metaphors might open up our thinking as Alvesson and Spicer (2010) suggest, it is equally important that these metaphors do not become orthodoxies.

There is a long history of the evolution of theories of educational leadership, management, and administration. In its first stages, the term “educational administration” was connected with the work of Taylor (1911) and the principles of scientific management. The science of educational administration was the focus of the work of Simon (1945) who introduced scientific inquiry to the study of administration. Accordingly, terms such as objectivity and reliability were used and fundamentally suggested that a more rational technique of inquiry was required. Simon’s work was

extended further by the *Theory Movement* (Culbertson, 1981) that sought to define the underlying generative principles of the field as well as the formalization of educational administration as a field of study (Walker, 1964). In the 1970s Greenfield fundamentally challenged the origins of the field and argued for the rejection of objectivity (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). And while Evers and Lakomski (1991, 1996) have consistently argued that the narrow conceptualization of educational administration as a science is problematic, Bates (1980, 1983) and Gunter (2013), on the other hand, have maintained that sociological approaches should be deployed. Importantly, English (2006) suggested that it was critical to contest the epistemological and ontological claims of the field itself. In other words, the defining myths and metaphors.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leadership was linked with meritocratic principles. Rather than birth and heritage being markers of a leader, individual skills, knowledge, and professional mastery were the hallmarks of leadership in the professions (Perkin, 1990). In the later decades of the twentieth century, it was the (sole) leader in an organization who was both responsible and accountable for its effectiveness, financial stability, quality, performance, and attractiveness in the educational marketplace (Fitzgerald, 2008). That is, leadership was vested in a single and identified individual whose task it was to refocus and improve the organization via their transformational style of leadership. From this discourse emerged the idea/ideal of the heroic leader; the leader who turned around poorly performing or failing schools, and by inference poorly performing teachers and students as evidenced by national and international league tables. As a metaphor to describe what may have initially occurred in schools, the notion of heroic leader developed a level of policy ascendancy. This was the leader who could, it was assumed, deliver on the objectives of school self-management and whose work was tangential to the changed policy environment of accountability (Gronn, 1996, 2003; Gunter, 2010; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2017).

The term “leadership” has been and continues to be used to denote a strategic role at the apex of an educational hierarchy (in schools, colleges, or universities). The label “leader” signifies the identified and identifiable individual at the helm of an educational organization. Consequently, leader and leadership have been assumed to be one and the same in both definition and practice. It is their presumed superior knowledge and access to information sets leaders apart from their followers, and potentially places followers in a subordinate if not co-dependent relationship with their leader (Eicher, 2006). Those with the necessary qualities, dispositions, skills, and understandings are looked to as leaders and leadership assumed to be the solution to organizational problems (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Gunter, 2005; Robinson, 2002). A powerful imagery that emerged from these timeworn assumptions is the myth of the strong, heroic, or charismatic leader as the antidote to organizational problems (Brown, 2014; Burns, 1978; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003; Hunt, 1999).

The leader-as-hero myth and mythologies of heroism that draw individuals into a leadership orbit; an orbit in which change is normalized and leadership is connected with vision, purpose, and mission. This leadership paradigm solidifies the construct and conceptualization of the leader as an individual and connects the act of leading and exercising leadership with one source of influence (Alix, 2000; Gronn, 2010). In essence,

and in a conventional sense, leadership and leading ostensibly differentiate the actions and activities of the leader from the non-leader (or follower). The leader as the central figure in leadership narratives is simultaneously projected as a hero destined to undertake heroic tasks. Hence, heroic leadership is positioned as transformational for both the individual and the organization (Bush, 2020; Gronn, 2010; Leithwood & Day, 2007).

The metaphor of the heroic leader and the presumed heroism of leadership is deeply seductive. An individual with exceptional qualities (of leadership and as a leader), who acts in heroic and mythical ways to transform (read: save) an underperforming school, and whose visionary and charismatic style draws in followers and adherents (see here Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Gabriel, 1997). Narratives that support the leader-as-hero model identified “best practice”; a somewhat reductionist term that was used by policymakers to cajole leaders into imitating each other thereby reinforcing further the heroic myth. The official assumption is that the heroic leader, the superman or superwoman of the organization, can transform, can disrupt any rhetoric or metric that points to failure or under performance and can succeed where others have not. As Dutro (2011) humorously points out:

An individual with the capacity to step in to save the day, . . . the opposite of a social movement for change; . . . the ultimate rugged individual, standing tall with cape flying, fists on hips, wearing the confident half-smile of a job well done. No problem is very complex for Superman . . . arrives out of nowhere, quickly disposes of the fiercest of obstacles, and leaves with the unfailing gratitude of the people. (p. 1)

The language, power, and imagery of the super-heroic leader suggests a level of adventure, challenge, temptation, response to adversity, transformation, and, ultimately, a level of heroism. Canonizing heroic leadership renders any form of debate or counter-narrative difficult, if not impossible (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Sinclair, 2007). In effect discourses of power and control are normalized as a result of the inculcation of the myth of the hero-leader and heroic leadership. Missing from the imaginary of the heroic leader is the social and relational contract between leader and his/her/their constituents; those whom s/he/they leads. The question to raise at this point is – for what reasons has a normative assumption emerged that leadership is the remit of an individual? With emergence of neoliberalism and managerialism in the 1980s, heroic leadership became somewhat redundant, although the canon of the individual leader has remained.

Leadership as a contemporary term has metamorphized further with the inclusion of a number of adjectives such as transactional, transformational, servant, teacher, instructional, distributed that appear, on the surface, to suggest a spectrum of possibilities about how leadership might be conceptualized and enacted (see, e.g., Alix, 2000; Gronn, 1996; Hunt, 1999; Lambert, 2003; Meindl, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Youngs, 2009; Yukl, 1999). While these terms might signal a shift toward collective leadership and more inclusive practices, the realities of managerial pressures and constraints continued to place both organizational accountability and responsibility in a single individual (Bush & Glover, 2012).

These are no more than metaphors that have served to popularize both leaders and leadership as a necessary ingredient within an organization. These metaphors have



given rise to normative and conceptual assumptions about how leadership might be configured, structured, and operationalized. That is, the individual head of an organizational entity such as a school, unit, and department is its leader with authority to act, to exercise leadership (Robinson, 2002). There is a discursive grip here whereby leaders and leadership are standard linguistic categories that describe a division of labor (leader/follower) as well as a category of activity (leadership/led). A fundamental difficulty here is that being a leader is connected with a specific and formal organizational role, and leadership ascribed to a set of dispositions, behaviors, or actions enacted by an individual (Gunter, 2005). Leaders and leadership are part of a binary; it is either one metaphor or another, one person or another. The role and importance of leadership, leading and the leader are further amplified in texts that work to suggest that these are neither mundane nor ordinary roles and activities (Fitzgerald & Savage, 2013).

Descriptive terms and metaphors are seductive insofar as they persuade leaders, practitioners, scholars, and the wider public that there exists a set of rules, a recipe, to follow that will inevitably bring about success (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Kellerman, 2012; Robinson, 2002). But leadership ought to be more than heroic tasks, capes, images, and costumes. Perhaps these images, imagery, and props are taken up as both discursive and persuasive tools to attract, or even lull, individuals into being a leader. A sobering reality is that leadership, leading, and being a leader is predominantly depicted and theorized as a positive set of practices. Myths and metaphors might well be counterproductive as they do not necessarily offer a view of the reality of being a leader in the twenty-first century. What would be helpful would be to invoke new concepts and practices to assist with understanding new knowledges and experiences.

While there are critiques of each of these terms and interrogations of the epistemological underpinnings, less attention has been paid to critiques of “leadership” itself. The canon of leadership has remained uninterrupted as too has its intellectual origins. In many ways, leadership, leading, and leaders have provoked a level of nostalgia about what it means to be a leader, to lead, and to enact leadership. Discursively at least these terms are used interchangeably to describe a set of practices. Adjectives such as “distributed,” “transformational,” and “instructional” appear to suggest that from the outset a descriptor is required to signify a performative aspect of the role (Gronn, 2003). That is, as a leader I am going to be “transformational” in the way I act (lead) and interact with those I lead (followers). It is conceivable that these adjectival descriptors do no more than position a leader as an influencer who, for example, does little more than “distribute” and “transform” presumably based on a level of charismatic inspiration.

An observation to be made at this point is that while adjectives have been inserted into leadership discourses, there appears to be little attention to the word “leadership” itself. And while terms such as “administration” and “management” have been replaced with “leadership,” leadership as a sociocultural activity (Bates, 2010) remains linked with administrative goals and managerial pursuits (Fitzgerald, 2008). Perhaps it is timely to consider a hybridity of approaches that recognize situational practices as well as differing ways in which leaders and leadership might be configured (Gronn, 2003, 2010). This opens up the possibility of leadership, leaders, and leading being less about the privileging of certain practices and labels, and more about emerging patterns of enactment.

Less recognized is that leadership and power are inextricably linked. Being a leader and exercising leadership in an institutional context is embedded within a configuration of power relationships (Haslam et al., 2011; O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). Perhaps what is needed is a re-framing, a re-thinking about leadership, or even a theoretical disruption.

## Disruptions

A study conducted by Henry and Pringle (1996) with Māori and non-Māori women-run organizations concluded that Māori women in leadership roles predominantly correlated their understanding and descriptions of their leadership practices within a Māori-centered framework. This framework moved beyond thinking about leadership by an individual, to thinking about leadership as a set of relational activities that are culturally responsive. As the framework below shows, *connection* in terms of their leadership identity is critical to understanding “women” and “leadership.” That is, circumstances of family, genealogy, and connection with the land matter, particularly for Indigenous peoples.

Term	Leadership
Kuia (elder grandmother)	Wise leader; authoritarian
Whaea (mother)	Guiding and leading from behind
Rangatira (tribal leader)	Autocratic and confident leader
Tohunga (expert)	Analytical and leading by expertise
Tuakana (eldest sibling)	Directive; leader-in-waiting
Wahine toa (warrior woman)	Leading by example and power of convictions
Teina (younger sibling)	Tentative; leading through friendship
Potiki (youngest sibling)	Daring; leading by force of personality
Tauwiwi (foreigner)	Tentative leadership exhibiting a lack of confidence

Source: Henry and Pringle (1996)

Within this Māori-centered framework leadership for/by Māori women is relational as well as generational; that is, as a female grows older and as her life experiences expand, she adopts different roles at different times. Here, leadership is derived from within the whanau (family) and hapu (tribal group) and related back to that structure. Becoming a leader and leading are therefore conceptualized according to age, experience, skills, knowledge, and status. Affiliation, the connection between the individual, her past and her present determines how leadership is enacted. As Bhabha eloquently outlines:

The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self-fulfilling* prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. (1994, p. 45)

Broadly what is being suggested is that connections that are familial and linked with physical, spiritual, and geographic space and place offer more embodied

ways of looking at leaders and leadership. Connecting leadership with self and the identities that are carried merges past, present, and future; histories and memories. It is not about self-importance, self-reference, or perfecting self. Crucially, leadership occurs within a framework of identity and culture that emphasizes connectedness and generational survival. What becomes important then is not leadership traits, characteristics, and behaviors but how leaders connect with community and exercise leadership in terms of their relationship with that community. In essence, it is about recognizing the distinctiveness each leader brings to the role and contesting myths of “sameness” that *naturally* assign the leader a gender, class, ethnicity, and race. What is being called for here is thinking about leaderships; that a leader might inhabit one of more roles based on their influence and agency and that leadership is not a singular activity exercised by a single individual. Crucially, Henry and Pringle’s (1996) theorization poses a challenge to think about leadership as a construction of Whiteness (see also Fitzgerald, 2006, 2010) and to now contest metanarratives of leadership that reinforce dominant narratives and uncontested norms of White privilege. Debates have surfaced that examine schools (e.g., Christie, 2020; Molepo, 2017), schooling (e.g., Bishop, Vass, & Thompson, 2019), curriculum (e.g., Arday, Belluigi, & Thomas, 2020), professional practice (McNabb, 2017), and the field itself (Samier, 2017). Less attention has been paid to how leadership and leading might be deconstructed and decolonized. It is timely that the theorizing and practices in the field is disrupted and that we collectively begin to discuss how leadership can be decolonized and new leaderships emerge. Simply put, moving away from the myopias that have long dominated the field.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The core purpose of this chapter is to shift the gaze away from some of the myths and myopias that have long shaped the history of the field and to look for ways in which theorizing can be “grounded” (Eacott, 2015). That is, that leaders, leadership, and leading are connected with the social and familial world and that there is recognition of this interconnectedness in the way that leadership is theorized and enacted. This is no less than a call to researchers and practitioners in the field to continue to problematize the field of educational administration, management, and leadership, look beyond their own epistemic boundaries and decolonize our theorizations and practices.

One of the immediate consequences of shifting our thinking is that the myths and metaphors of leadership that have been perpetuated can be abandoned and new ways of thinking about leaders, leadership, and leading can be re-imagined. It is hoped that this will bring a vibrancy to the field and that new theorizations that emerge speak to ways in which leaderships might occur in the twenty-first century. Thus, this chapter advocates for new beginnings and new imaginaries, and that the myths and myopias of the past are part of the history of the field, not its present or future.

## Cross-References

- ▶ Foucault's Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses
- ▶ LGBTQ+ Leaders in Thought and Practice: Portraits of Courage and Change
- ▶ Neoliberalism, Education Policy, and Leadership Observations
- ▶ The Global Challenge of Educational Reform

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# The Rise of the Global Education Industry: A Discursive Account

# 5

Chris Dolan

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## Abstract

This chapter aims to describe and explain the unprecedented levels and global reach of private interests in school education. Using Foucault's theoretical work on power/knowledge, a discursive account unfolds from the neoliberal logics of governance, human capital, and the enterprise form. Each of these logics is shown to orient power relations towards certain truths about the private provision of educational services, thus bringing a type of discursive patterning to the relations of free enterprise and schools. Foucault's notion of the apparatus (*dispositif*) is subsequently used in analysis of more tangible relations and affects. The apparatuses of marketization, economization, and commercialization are identified and explicated, with Deleuze's (What is a *dispositif*? In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp. 159–168, 1992) “map” of Foucault's apparatus used to orient conceptual possibilities towards a method of analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of whether the apparatus as a tool of analysis includes disruptive

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possibilities that oppose, ignore, or look away from the aggregations and uniformities of current arrangements.

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### Keywords

Global education industry · Power/knowledge · Neoliberalism · Dispositif · Apparatus · Foucault · Deleuze · Educational leadership · Neoliberal governance · Human capital · The enterprise form · Marketization · Economization · Commercialization

### The Field of Memory

The ideal of education as a public good rendered schools as democratizing civic institutions and established a broad entitlement to a liberal public education that sought to induct students into active citizenry and to promote fairness and equal opportunity. This idealized formulation has, for a long time, been conjoined with various private interests in education. Practices such as fee-paying, fundraising, using private tutors, and choosing a “better” school, all became strongly established in western democracies during the twentieth century as parents and students sought individual advantage through education.

### The Field of Presence

Neoliberalism, as a political project, is grounded in an understanding of all aspects of society in economic terms. As such, it problematizes public institutions as ineffective, inefficient, and inept and shapes and supports various forms of private investment and business involvement, even in traditionally non-business activities such as education. The neoliberal logics of governance, human capital, and the enterprise form make school education more susceptible to the various entreaties of free enterprise by favoring the privatizing and directing of state institutions and policy in ways that promote competition in the market, privilege the economic functions of schools, and encourage profit-oriented private actors to make their investments in education.

### The Field of Concomitance

The neoliberal political project imposes on education the values, concepts, and processes of the business and corporate world. Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge can be deployed to show how these impositions, when interpreted through market-infused neoliberal logics, become established as regimes of truth that pattern the relations of private interests and schooling and constitute the subjectivities and direct the conduct of leaders, teachers, and students.

### Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field

Theoretically, the tendency to aggregation and uniformity in the various apparatuses of privatization may be disrupted by turning the heterogenous and contingent qualities of the apparatuses to processes of problematization and critique and to



practices of opposition and resistance. Historically, these theoretical possibilities have not translated smoothly or easily into practice.

### Critical Assumptions or Presupposition

A critically oriented exploration of the incursions of various private interests into school education presupposes the continued existence and influence of the intentionality, will, and freedom of the individual. Such an exploration also recognizes the potential for dissonance between centralized directives and local action, the ongoing possibility of non-conforming and dissenting subjectivities, and a continued capacity for groups of like-minded people to organize and caucus around issues in common.

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## Introduction

A primary aim of this chapter is to contribute to the existing library of critical texts about an escalation and intensification of the involvement of multiple private interests in school education in what is popularly termed *the global education industry* (see Ball, 2012; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Thompson & Parreira do Amaral, 2019; Verger, Steiner-Khamsi, & Lubienski, 2017). Now operating at unprecedented levels, the privatization of schools and schooling exceeds nation-based designs for dividing private schools away from public education, to focus on “the transnational dimension of education marketisation and on the emergence of new global businesses specialising on education services and products” (Verger et al., 2017, p. 326). In the first section of the chapter, the various intrusions of the market and businesses into schools are analyzed through the broadly framed logics of neoliberalism. Called *Seeing the patterns*, this section takes these logics as functioning strategically to make certain truths visible – by shining a light on an array of favored practices, discourses, and knowledges – while confining others to the dark. Working from Foucault’s (1977) treatise on power/knowledge relations, this strategic function relies on market-infused neoliberal logics promulgating ways of knowing that advance their claims to truth and deploying the various power techniques of discipline, subjectification, and surveillance to inscribe these claims in reality. In simultaneous operation, these knowledges bring an epistemic context to the lines of force on which the escalation of industry and business involvement relies while depending on these lines for their production, necessity, and standing.

Against a tendency to universal and fixed categories, these power/knowledge arrangements are taken as creating “spaces and locations where policy is performed and disposed in particular ways” (Bailey, 2013, p. 807), thus creating a patterning effect in the relations of business and school education. In discerning new patterns and regularities, neoliberal logics of *governance*, *human capital*, and *the enterprise form* are taken as orienting power relations into a certain configuration while doing the normative work of (re)shaping the institutions and subjectivities in which they are embedded.

Shifting the emphasis of analysis from the idea of marketization and globalized business involvement contained in neoliberal logics to actual existing practice, the

second section of the chapter identifies three *apparatuses of privatization* and argues that each helps define, shape, and promote what Thompson and Parreira do Amaral (2019) call “the penetration of economic rationales into the education sector” (p. 8). In this section, titled *Untangling the lines*, apparatuses of *marketization*, *economization*, and *commercialization* are explicated by using the work of Deleuze (1992) to turn the conceptual possibilities of Foucault’s *dispositif* (or *apparatus* as its close English equivalent) to methodological and analytical purposes. The explanatory focus remains on a pairing of power/knowledge “that effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false” (Foucault, 2008, p. 19). However, this section pursues the more tangible and “instrumental” (Bussolini, 2010, p. 93) componentry of the global education industry while also tracing the emergence of what Brenner (1994) terms “a cluster of functions” or “tactics” aimed “towards the same set of targets” (p. 691).

As part of the chapter’s orientation to leadership in the schooling context, the constitutive influences of policy on school leaders and their work is an area of specific interest. To this end, an understanding of the apparatuses of privatization also involves linking the “policy discourses of neoliberalism” (Dolan, 2020) to power/knowledge effects that make school leaders, and often teachers and students, a target of their tactics. Foucault’s (1972) conception of discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 54) is used to focus on the constitutive effects of policy discourses of *choice*, *excellence*, and *entrepreneurship*. Each of the discourses is shown to illuminate the language, principles, and thinking of privatization that inform and permeate them and, by extension, to reveal and produce certain power effects, policy emphases, and favored subjectivities.

The chapter concludes by testing the value of the apparatus as a tool of analysis in terms of the possibilities it facilitates for the detection of weaknesses and fractures in the current order and for disrupting established certainties and continuities. While this conclusion works in part as a corrective to earlier forceful representations of private enterprise involvement, it stops short of advocating reactive forms of critique or providing instrumentalized versions of resistance. Rather, it diagnoses possibilities at the break “that separates us from what we can no longer say and what falls outside our discursive practices” (Foucault, 1972, p. 147) and uses Deleuze’s (1992) interpretive work, to plot new orientations and new lines of flight that emanate from reworking “the map of apparatuses” (p. 161).

The task of theorizing a fluid, ever-changing and polymorphous set of ideas, processes, and practices is, by definition, always partial and incomplete. In response, in this chapter, depictions of variegated and contingent processes are generally preferred over normative truth claims, with illustrative examples, leading questions and generalized observations variously used to concede the impossibility of a full and detailed coverage. The reader is thus invited to build a picture of their own in the spaces created and to recognize, following Bailey (2013), that education is “always in a process of becoming, constituted in different ways at different times” (p. 812).

## Seeing the Patterns

The historically specific logics of neoliberalism bring both meaning and materiality to the relations of private interests and school education. An inclination towards neoliberal logics and their effects in contemporary schooling is here interpreted as *patterning* the composition of private involvement. Emphasis is not sought in the representation and reification of neoliberalism as an all-embracing societal shift (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, & Thaning, 2016, p. 276) but rather in the visible regularity that emerges from an arrangement and connection of logics directed to certain unified purposes. Three neoliberal logics are now described – *governance*, *human capital*, and *the enterprise form* – with references made not only to their patterning effects as they fit together as part of a broader ensemble but also to the conceptual support they lend the balance of the chapter.

## Governance

Brown (2016) describes governance, as “the key administrative form of neoliberalism,” and claims that it “indexes a specific fusion of political and business practices” (p. 5). In neoliberal times, this fusion is a joining of the public good with private interests, invoking circumstances of decentered government and reconfigured relations between the state and the market. The concept of *contemporary neoliberal governance* provides a resource that connects the incursions of business with governmental aspirations for schools to make themselves more competitive in the market, to orient their capability and function to economic ends, and to become a more receptive market for the profit-oriented businesses waiting at their doors. Amos (2010) in accounting for the rise to prominence of governance in educational policy and research alludes to some of the central concerns of this chapter. She points to “profound changes in education” noting specifically, “the instruments and ways of steering . . . that bring order to a population of actors” and “new forms of providing and organizing educational services, and the emergence of new actors in educational policy” (p. 24).

As a mentality of rule, this form of governance aligns with Foucault’s concept of *neoliberal governmentality* in inciting people to govern themselves inside of confected freedoms and in answer to individuated and incentivized calls to become autonomous, entrepreneurial, and self-monitoring and self-possessed. Applied to practice, this summoning of the active involvement of “auto-regulated or auto-correcting selves” (Springer, 2012, p. 137) includes the necessity for individuals to enthusiastically embrace policy preferences for parental choice and competition between schools, to actively participate in seemingly apolitical steering processes of measurement, appraisal, and comparison and to adopt preferred subject positions and commensurate priorities and practices. Furthermore, the individual freedom attached to self-government and to the entrepreneurial and competitive instincts of the school marketplace, under these conditions of governance, are not taken as being opposed to government but rather become a *strategy of governing*.

Understood in this way, the formulation of subjects involves a requirement and obligation to adopt a certain set of freedoms that are made possible and shaped within government.

Both the take-up of business-oriented practices *by* schools and the incursions of private interests *into* schools exemplify the benign and rational qualities of neoliberal governance. De Lissovoy (2015) claims “this new logic of governance internalizes the market and competition as its inner matrixes of intelligibility in place of government as old-fashioned statecraft” (pp. 16–17). Such a makeover is not shaped out of hostile transformation or an attack on the state, but rather follows the normative reason of neoliberalism, with government configured as a commonsense political rationality favoring business principles and metrics and rendering older versions unsuitable and outdated. The active participation of schools in the marketplace can thus proceed as natural and taken-for-granted, with increased corporate involvement in schools and schooling occurring as a logical extension of broader guiding principles of marketization and competition. Brown (2016) likens the state to a firm that can elicit required conducts and subjectivities:

as neoliberal rationality remakes the human subject as a speck of capital, there is a shift from a crude earlier rendering of the human being as an interest maximizer to a formulation of the subject as both a member of a firm and as itself a firm, and in both cases appropriately conducted by the “governance” strategies relevant to firms. (p. 3)

The patterning that neoliberal governance brings to relations between businesses and schools includes consideration of knowledges propagated by government and their imbrication with governmental power. Governmental knowledge can be taken to reside in broad policy discourses such as choice, excellence, entrepreneurship, and managerialism and in the policy technologies on which they rely such as standardization, efficiency, data-driven improvement, and external accountability. Importantly, this ensemble of governmental knowledge production works to obscure ruler aspirations and power plays so that neoliberalism “is not seen as a dangerous form of governance” (de Saxe, 2015, p. 7), but rather as a commonsense truth based in the rationality of the market. Foregrounding the crisp and reliable metrics of business, fashioning freedom and autonomy as unencumbered and emancipatory, and prizing the entrepreneurial and competitive spirit in individuals, all work to hide *governance at a distance* as a very complex and specific form of power.

## Human Capital

In neoliberal times, individuals in schools are summoned to market with the expectation that they will inculcate market-based values into their decisions and practices. The notion of *human capital* surfaces as these values are enacted, for example, by reframing schools as sites where knowledge production is directed to economic growth and in expecting schools to respond to the needs of the workplace by developing a clearer view of how to transform young people “into useful,

employable human assets” (Kim, 2019, p. 89). After De Lissovoy (2015), human capital “seeks to comprehend the range of human capacities within the context of economic processes of investment, production, and competition” (p. 3). A patterning effect can be discerned in De Lissovoy’s insight, marked out by a neoliberal rationality that posits a pure connection between capital and people and that values amassing of human capital in the interests of the economy.

As a conceptual resource, human capital brings new emphases to an understanding of the globally scaled privatization of schools and schooling. In consideration of the analytic interests of this chapter, it most obviously supports a line of inquiry into “the economization of education” (Spring, 2015) and, more exactly, the privileging of the economic purposes of schooling. De Lissovoy’s (2015) describes how human capital is given expression in schools:

privatization and chartering of schools at the system level, as well as scripted curricula and test-based pedagogies at the classroom level, seek to eliminate the noise in this market, to clear away the interference of the public and its commitments, and to create the possibility for the pure expression of teaching as private investment in human capital and learning as the pure expression of that capital’s valorization’. (pp. 18–19)

The effect of this valorization of human capital is to commodify school education according to purposes associated with preparing students to be productive members of society and providing individuals with competitive advantage in the workforce. Accordingly, this commodification of the learner as knowledge worker ushers in seemingly inarguable neoliberal refrains about *data-led reform*, *continuous improvement*, and *excellence for all* while, at the same time, only privileging the knowledge that inheres to the capacity of each individual to capitalize on themselves.

The drive of individuals to take responsibility for accruing and investing their human capital also reveals what is subjugated and left out when schooling is turned over to market forces. Holding a mirror to this intrusion of market rationality shows how the socio-moral concerns of schooling are reframed inside of a neoliberal imaginary about meritocracy. Shamir’s (2008) “neo-liberal epistemology” can be applied here to the way the practices of market actors in schools are pushed into the gap created by the neoliberal retreat from social justice responsibilities. These practices, as part of “a general neo-liberal drive to ground social relations in the economic rationality of the market” (Shamir, 2008, p. 3) are authorized inside of an assumption that the socioeconomic circumstances of individuals can be folded into a *success for all* mantra. In this reading, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not taken as penalized by their circumstances, but rather suffering a reduced ability to be competitive because of a lack of credentials, knowledge, and skills – a failure to accumulate the required human capital.

Bound up with contemporary applications of governance, and further illuminating lines of power and subjectivity, is the connection Foucault makes in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) between the production of human capital and the scarcity of educational investments. Foucault notes that “human capital only becomes relevant for economists inasmuch as this capital is formed thanks to . . . the alternative use of

scarce means for a given end” (p. 229). In neoliberal times, the need for austerity in education is created and fed from an extensive discursive field of claims about scarcity. Knowledge claims that allege wasteful and excessive bureaucracy, profligate spending and ruinous national debt, fuel popular narratives about governmental failure, a paucity of enterprising solutions and the necessity for cutbacks and efficiencies.

In different and intersecting ways, these various claims and stories assert that educational resources must be considered as scarce and, by extension, that it is incumbent upon government to find different and more efficient ways of using them. For schools, operating under burdensome conditions of scarcity and austerity, following economic principles about efficiency, economic accountability, and return on investment becomes a necessity as “they adhere to standards of performance that are adjusted to the reality of an all-encompassing market environment” (Shamir, 2008, p. 6). In economic terms, the joined-up ideas of scarcity and austerity not only foreground concerns about returns on educational spending but also, after Foucault (2008), make it “possible to calculate, and to a certain extent quantify, or at any rate measure . . . the possibilities of investment in human capital” (p. 230). The ushering in of elements of quantification presupposes that *being* can now be measured as capital and, by extension, that freedom, against the *laissez-faire* economics of traditional liberalism, can be turned into a calculative power of government that conducts the conduct of individuals as it invites and binds them to imperatives of enterprise, competition, and survival.

This reading of the measurement and accumulation of human capital not only applies to servicing of outside interests of employers and the economy but also to the ways that individuals’ position and exalt themselves inside of a marketized school environment. In reaching into “the most intimate levels of the self” (De Lissovoy & Cedillo, 2017, p. 3), individuals are drawn to seeing and judging themselves as human capital and all that they do as in the cause of its accumulation.

## The Enterprise Form

Closely tied to governance and human capital, the neoliberal logic of *enterprise* helps to pattern the global education industry in more productive and material terms. Foucault (2008) claims that “the multiplication of the ‘enterprise’ form within the social body is what is at stake in neo-liberal policy” and that “it is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, the formative power of society” (p. 148). Leveraging from this expansive claim, the enterprise form emerges as a pre-eminent discursive logic shaping schools and school leaders, not only by dint of its prominence in the material landscape of neoliberal languages and practices but also in the constitutive force it exerts to make the individual into “a self-maximising productive unit operating in a market of performances” (Ball, 2010, p. 126). This enterprise logic permeates the school market. At the nexus of competition and school choice, it ensures that the work of competing to be chosen is sheeted home to the effective execution of enterprising practices and policies in

schools. In this, the enterprise form shifts from logic to operating principle by suggesting that schools themselves must become small enterprises bent on raising their own productivity as a matter of survival.

Arguably the most telling effects of this logic of enterprise are in its shaping of individual subjects. Dardot and Laval (2017) describe “the set of enterprises of the people” that demand that “individuals must no longer regard themselves as workers, but as enterprises that sell a service in the market” (p. 266). In schools, the discursive call to leaders and teachers is one with “individualising, economic and responsabilising tones and effects” (Bailey, 2013, p. 817). Recalling aforementioned logics of governance and human capital, this call carries requirements to govern their own conduct and to continually enhance the measured value of their work. In the non-discursive realm, the enterprising subject is appraised, valued, and compared in an accountability regime that claims data-driven objectivity and a rationale of verifiable improvement. Dardot and Laval (2017) describe, in these arrangements, the emergence of new contract where “the individual’s activity in its entirety is conceived as a *process of self-valorization*” (p. 266 italics in original).

The individual is bound to the enterprise form by the power/knowledge arrangement emerging in these discursive and non-discursive elements. Matters of self-maximization and personal productivity are rendered both transformative and essential, with the privileges and seductions of membership ensuring alignment of the practices of individuals with the requirements of neoliberal policy and the aspirations of its makers. The related technologies of *responsibilization* and *performativity* appear prominent in this shaping of individual conduct to the enterprise form.

*Responsibilization* folds the capacity of individuals to take responsibility into a governance regime based on compliance and obedience. Brown (2015) claims that responsabilization uses responsibility as a tool “to constitute and govern subjects” and to organize and measure their conduct so that they are remade and reoriented “for a neoliberal order” (p. 133). Through responsabilization, the enterprise form becomes another iteration of human capitalization – a “bundling of agency and blame” (Brown, 2015, p. 134) that urges individuals to fend for themselves and realize their potential as capital while continuing to submit to outside judgments of their economic contribution and worth. Following Davies (2005), the technology of responsabilization renders the enterprise form that shapes the neoliberal subject as “both vulnerable and necessarily competitive” and is inclusive of the responsibility to survive. Concomitantly, it also marks the dawn of a “new disposability” for the irresponsible (p. 9).

*Performativity* equates success to the recognition and relevance that can be detected in public displays of performance. Contributing to the idea that the enterprise form targets and values the agile individual, performativity renders the neoliberal subject, according to Ball (2010), as “malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled – essentially depthless” (p. 126). Performativity also detaches the enterprise form from the notions of freedom and agency that it promulgates by making clear to the individual the results that are anticipated and required and the neoliberal values and conducts that must be embodied to get those results. Fielding



(2006) references this detachment in performative acts as a type of “emotional assent” where “contributions are enhanced through your carefully managed ‘ownership’ of what others desire for you” (p. 357). Ball and Olmedo (2013) affirm Fielding’s position and add a seductive element in noting that “performativity works best when we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us; when our sense of purpose is aligned with its pleasures” (p. 89).

The enterprise form and the technologies that give it momentum and shape are not static and fixed, but rather have a processual quality that is transformative and emergent. In neoliberal times, this quality is seen, for example, in the rise and refinement of business-like practices of school marketization and in the shift of emphasis in learning, within and beyond school, to that which is directed to internalizing the entrepreneurial spirit. In the process, the enterprise form has become essentialized, so what once may have “seemed radical, even unthinkable” has “become more and more possible, then normal and then necessary” (Ball, 2010, p. 129).

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## Untangling the Lines

In responding to a question about the meaning and methodological function of the *dispositif* (apparatus), Foucault (1980) says:

What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. (p. 194)

While Foucault’s formulation of the *dispositif* is typically arcane in terms of any actual methodology, he does note that the work of trying to identify a *dispositif* becomes one of “looking for the elements which participate in a rationality, a given form of co-ordination” (Foucault, 1980, p. 197). In the previous section, some rational and coordinated qualities of the globally scaled involvement of private interests in school education were suggested in the patterning work done by various neoliberal logics and their effects. In this section, these qualities are applied more pragmatically as an untangling of the lines in three apparatuses of privatization – the apparatuses of *marketization*, *economization*, and *commercialization*.

Towards a more schematic rendition, the three apparatuses are analyzed using what Deleuze (1992) calls a Foucauldian version of “fieldwork” involving “preparing a map, a cartography, a survey of unexplored lands.” He claims for this method of analysis a depiction of the many and various lines in each apparatus that “follow directions (and) trace processes that are always out of balance, that sometimes move closer together and sometimes farther away” (p. 159). In this section, this array of lines and their “curves,” “tensors,” and “vectors” are taken as a metaphorical opening for inquiry into the technologies and practices of policy and the way they are realized (and contested) in local school settings. In keeping with the contingent and diffuse qualities of the apparatus, *policy* is taken, after Ball (1994), to include a multiplicity of “action,



words and deeds” that functions as “an economy of power” even as it is rendered incomplete by a “wild profusion of local practices” (pp. 10–11).

Deleuze’s (1992) “untangling the lines” (p. 159) is therefore oriented to tracking the discursive work that policy does in laying down versions of schooling that are business-like, that respond to the calls of private actors, and that smooth the way for their inculcations and intrusions. Gridded over this map, and helping to deploy the concept of an apparatus more heuristically, are possibilities for new exploration held in Deleuze’s (1992) references to “curves of visibility and curves of utterance,” “lines of force,” and “lines of subjectivation” in an apparatus (pp. 159–60). Against the impression of a schematic organization and formulaic analysis, the desired effect is not a reductive and clipped account of each apparatus, but rather a holding open of complex and multidimensional dynamics both in the way each is composed and in how its lines pass through it and transform it and how it perpetuates and is permeated by “innumerable points of resistance and strategy” (Bailey, 2013, p. 811).

## **The Apparatus of Marketization: Buying and Selling School Education**

The apparatus of *marketization* recognizes a policy shift towards making schools into businesses and, more pointedly, an orientation of policy towards the buying and selling of school education. The origins of this shift can be detected in Foucault’s (2008) account of American neoliberalism when he observes that the “supply and demand” of the market has come to function as “a schema which is applicable to non-economic domains” (p. 243). Working from Deleuze’s (1992) map of the apparatus, this schema of the market can be construed as the “regimen of light” that works to make the marketization of schools visible, truthful, and necessary. Deleuze describes “curves of visibility” illuminated by a light “that falls, softens and spreads, distributing the visible and the invisible, generating or eliminating an object, which cannot exist without it” (p. 159). The task is not, therefore, to highlight the marketization of schools as a pre-existing object, but rather to show that it shines a light on truths that may previously have gone unseen and un contemplated.

The visibility of marketization, as one of the apparatuses of privatization, is joined with what Deleuze (1992) calls the “lines of enunciation” and the “regimes of utterance” (p. 159). Deleuze describes how articulable utterances are distributed along lines of enunciation and how their differential positioning provides theoretical support to Foucault’s interest in the relations of discourse, the emergence of new regimes of truth and the governing of meaningful conduct and practice. The enunciations in the marketization apparatus include the joining of attendant neoliberal logics of competition, excellence, and accountability to purported truths, for example, about improved efficiency (Springer, 2012, p. 136), greater responsiveness of schools to their communities (Buras & Apple, 2005, p. 556), higher standards and strengthen accountabilities (Lingard, 2010, p. 132), and more enterprising approaches that anticipate and satisfy the expectations of education consumers

(Angus, 2015, p. 396). In the non-discursive realm, “patterns of action” (Bühmann & Schneider, 2007, p. 5) are enunciated, for example, in documents specifying certain processes and priorities, in measures and artifacts that assume importance, in the problems to which policy responds, and in favored routines for administration and decision-making. Under the spreading light of the apparatus, these non-discursive practices become “symbolically charged actions or gestures within a discourse” (Bühmann & Schneider, 2007, p. 6) that add and support the visibility of certain truths about the relations of schooling and business and work to subjugate, hide, and ignore conflicting truths the alternative practices they suggest.

Arguably the most prominent of the neoliberal policy discourses that enunciate and mark out the terrain of school marketization is the discourse of *school choice*. As a discourse of neoliberal policy, school choice surfaces and speaks the market logic that parents and students, as consumers of schooling, should be free to choose the school they think is best for them. Buras and Apple (2005) add a corollary to this logic founded on the assumption that schools work better when they “are motivated and disciplined by market forces” (p. 551). The discourse of choice presupposes a standardized and apolitical field of judgment that all consumers are equally free to access. Regularity of this field is assured by the production of a competitive environment in which all schools must develop and continuously improve their educational product in ways that attract the best possible share of parents and students.

In terms of Deleuze’s (1992) enunciations and utterances, the discourse of school choice focuses attention not just on market vernacular and the concepts and language of business but also on the discursive production of domains of knowledge, fields of operation, and the modalities of various subjects, such as teachers and principals. The suggestion is not that these discursive practices and available subjectivities coalesce around school choice as a new idea, but rather that various utterances – as acts of speaking, writing, thinking and doing – become possible and permissible as they intersect with and organize themselves along lines of enunciation and create the possibility of a break from what has gone before. This discursive field includes the outside construction of the schooling “problem” in a way that serves a governmental preference for school choice and competition between schools, with choice posited as a solution to perceived problems of underachievement, lack of initiative, complacency, and ambivalence. In turn, solutions held in promises of greater efficiency, improved community responsiveness, higher standards, and strengthened accountability create the important precept that there is nothing political about school choosing. As Angus (2015) notes, school choice is constructed as “just atomized, self-interested, rational choosers dispassionately acting to maximize their individual advantage in ways that are ostensibly equally open to all right-thinking and conscientious people” (p. 404).

Certain practices emerge as “discursive regularities” (Foucault, 1972) from the lines of enunciation and regimes of utterance that form in the interactions of marketization and school choice. For example, in the:

- *Multilevel inculcation of the language of business into schooling* – in the processes and documents that support systemic and local efforts at visioning,

strategic planning and managing performance, the setting of targets and key performance indicators, and references to school principals as CEOs, learning as a quantifiable product, schools as businesses, and parents as clients

- *Interactions with various third-party educational services and providers* – local, national, and global interactions that further elicit the practices and language of private enterprise as well as allowing in new solutions (often to previously unrecognised problems), rendering existing educational practices and structures as outdated and uncompetitive, and normalizing the “for-profit” motive of private actors, mostly inside of publicly funded institutions
- *Aping of business models in schools* – in systemic moves towards cost-effective privatization and chartering of schools, local emphases on managerially oriented ways of leading and classroom teaching that must submit to technologies of standardization (e.g., in curriculum and pedagogy) and new accountabilities based on students’ performance in standardized tests

These practical expressions and manifestations of the marketization of schooling dotted along lines of enunciation are made more distinct and secure by a “discursive power apparatus” (Maesse, 2017, p. 909), or what Deleuze (1992) refers to as “the lines of force,” circulating in an apparatus. Deleuze says these lines, as a “dimension of power” are “ubiquitous, variable, invisible, unspeakable and ‘composed with knowledge’” (p. 160). Following the argument developed in Foucault (1978), the dimension of power is enabled by the simultaneous investments that “techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse” make in it (p. 98). In the marketization apparatus, these restructured power/knowledge arrangements allow for new “matrices of transformation” to emerge (Foucault, 1978, p. 99) that normalize and catalyze the fitting of schooling to the market and impose business-like models of schooling whose power is composed in conjunction with the very mode of knowledge these models naturalize and privilege.

Applied to the visible and enunciated lines of marketization described above, these power/knowledge effects are located in the way the neoliberal logic of governance ushers in decentered and dispersed lines of force. The technologies and institutions of governmental power now develop, conjoin, and operate in the guise of the more benign and apolitical processes. They steer the performance of individuals and groups by processes of measurement, appraisal, and comparison and incite people to govern themselves and posit an “artificially arranged” liberty (Lemke, 2012, p. 45) by championing entrepreneurial and competitive instincts. This type of governmental power is not marked by a withdrawal or retreat from state control and intervention, but rather by new acts of subterfuge, incentive, and “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1991 in Ball, 2006, p. 10).

In competing to be chosen the school marketplace becomes a “quasi-market” (see Ball & Youdell, 2007) in which educational governance is directed to the operationalization of market principles. As Dardot and Laval (2017) note of competition under neoliberal conditions, “(i)t is no longer a question of postulating a spontaneous agreement between individual interests, but of creating the optimal conditions for the interplay of their rivalry” (p. 47). Against any notion of a free

market environment, the school market is mediated, controlled, and manipulated by government with competition central to its mercantile policy interests. Accordingly, one of the important pre-conditions of marketization and school choice is that schools are expected to willingly submit to various inducements, inspections, and accountabilities, imposed by the state through its legislation, policy, and funding arrangements.

At the nexus of the specific knowledges produced, and the particular relations of power in which they are enmeshed, technologies such as impression management, performativity, and standardization operate to hold these discursive arrangements in place. Such technologies manifest in the workings of business plans, advertising campaigns, and promotional signage. They are found in formally allocated responsibilities for marketing and publicity, in efforts to use data to put the most positive spin on student achievement, and in activating communications directed to improved productivity and comparative advantage. The effect of these technologies, as “moves in a power game” (Maesse, 2017, p. 913), is to render participation in the school market as necessary obvious and natural and to hide the power relations that reside within its discursive and non-discursive workings.

While these power/knowledge arrangements evoke governance, the instrumental forces circulating in and across the marketization apparatus – and the enunciations it draws from the neoliberal policy discourse of school choice – also require adherence to an order of discursive practices that sort symbolic differences into material hierarchies and inequalities. As *symbolic capital*, these practices work to change and restructure power and knowledge (see Maesse, 2017), for example, by turning test scores into favorable rankings and classifications, by treating the attainment of excellence as a triumph over other competitors and by spruiking high achievement for all as an antidote to persistent obstacles of equity and social justice. These are “excellence myths” (Maesse, 2017) transformed into material reality and used for social, economic, and political ends. As symbolic capital, they yield legitimacy and, in turning back on themselves, affirm the neoliberal status quo and fix the discursive as living proof of its truthful existence. These myths also work from a premise that while every system and every site can be induced to want to construct valuable symbolic goods, not every system or site can do so. Accumulation of symbolic capital thus involves a bifurcating and hierarchizing set of sorting processes that plays to the aspirations of all – whether they can be realized or not. This sorting function is tethered to the truth of the broader neoliberal project through processes of ranking and comparison and, in a school market driven by competition, the need for winners and losers. As such, it is an exercise of power that favors systematic processes of division and difference and interpolates broader societal patterns of privilege and poverty into schools.

As this brief analysis shows, dimensions of power are connected quite directly to Deleuze’s fourth dimension of the apparatus concerned with “a process, a production of subjectivity” (p. 161). The marketization of schools and associated policy discourses of choice, competition, and excellence brings individuals under the constant influence of a power/knowledge arrangement that confers them with particular freedoms and imbues them with certain knowledge and expertise while hiding the

impositions it makes on what can be thought, said, and done. Furthermore, the apparatus mobilizes the technology of responsabilization, so that individuals assume responsibility for their own subjectivity and enact it as if an obvious and conscious choice and a matter of their own free will. Responsibilization describes a requirement for school actors in a marketized schooling system (e.g., principals, leaders, and teachers) to do business and to accept the commodification of schooling and take responsibility for improving the value of their school as an education commodity. Moreover, it assumes a willingness to become business savvy – to develop and adopt the traits, behaviors, processes and dispositions associated with success in a competitive marketplace.

### **The Apparatus of Economization: Privileging the Economic Purposes of Education**

The second of the privatization apparatuses draws from Hirtt's (2008) claim that "the neoliberal offensive" now configures the school as "a machine serving global and international economic competition" (p. 214). The idea of schools "adapting to the expectations of the business community" (Hirtt, 2008, p. 220) is used as a macro-interpretive for looking into how school education has become increasingly *economized* by its privileging of economic purposes associated with meeting workforce needs, maximizing the economic participation of students, responding to "economically fruitful policies" (de Saxe, 2015, p. 2), and driving wealth production and economic growth.

The economization apparatus is illuminated by the popular notion of the knowledge economy – the idea that "countries and continents that invest heavily in education and skills benefit economically and socially from that choice" (Schleicher, 2006, p. 2). The knowledge economy lights up a range of intersecting ideas and practices that feed the assumption that schools should function as drivers of economic growth and, therefore, are productively configured as merchant organizations who make education into a commodity to serve the outside interests of business.

Historically, linking the knowledge economy to schooling emerges from a broad critique of education as failing to satisfy the needs of the labor market in a changing economy. A new educational imperative accompanies this critique, directing attention to maximizing economic participation by promoting schools as sites for the acquisition of utilitarian knowledge and the accumulation of human capital. The notion of the knowledge economy lends a certain inevitability to a tightened connection between schooling, employment, and profitable business. Schools are enticed away from concerns about their narrowed purposes in neoliberal times and towards becoming more "economized" (Shamir, 2008) through effective tailoring of their offerings to better meet the demands of outside interests.

Continuing with Deleuze's map, it is the various lines of enunciation and curves of utterance in this part of the business apparatus that work to normalize the idea of an economized school and consolidate this idea in an array of discursive and non-

discursive practices. Among the differently positioned utterances, the following help to more precisely define and clearly enunciate the economization apparatus:

- A shift in valued knowledge emphasis to that which connects more directly with post-school options, for example, in the teaching and certification of specific industry skills and in the privileging of the math/science/technology curriculum and work-related ICT skill acquisition
- Positioning of students as consumers of knowledge, thus reducing learning “to a series of teaching inputs designed to meet prespecified outcomes” and directing the ends of schooling to the “creation of the knowledge worker” (Patrick, 2013, p. 4)
- A homogenizing effect emerging from an emphasis on employer-valued knowledge, scripted curriculum and standardized assessment, and a tendency to a means/end teaching model based on “the assumption that learning can be *caused* as an *effect* of teaching” (Webster, 2017, p. 62).
- Outside voices of business, the media and employers become more audible and influential in schools so that much of what is taught is surrendered to the control of non-educators, with schools, communities, and systems handed responsibility for value judgments about which information and knowledge are most useful in maximizing students’ economic participation
- The marketable individual is separated from and exalted over others by converting their measured outputs into specific qualifications in the form of certificates, diplomas, degrees, etc. This inherent and systemic credentialism ties the learner to “an economic empirical base” (Patrick, 2013, p. 3) and, quite possibly, to a “false sense of accomplishment” founded in the premium placed on a neoliberal version of self-meritocracy (de Saxe, 2015, p. 2)

While the above list brings some clarity to the visible and the utterable, it provides largely descriptive and apolitical insights into the economization of schools. To move beyond this semantic space, and towards the lines of force and lines of subjectivation, it is necessary to engage with the constitutive power of discourse and the “will to truth” – the desire to speak “inside” of the discourse that is attached to power by its truth claims (Foucault, 1981, p. 56) – it engenders. Under “steering at a distance” requirements of neoliberal governance, this power forms a set of instrumental logics – the rules and conditions of possibility – that enable prevailing discourses to govern meaningful practice through claims to truth and the assumption of a natural and taken-for-granted status. As the list of enunciations above suggests, the governing and enacting of the rules and conditions of economization makes intersecting discourses of marketization, school choice, and entrepreneurialism more prominent. However, in championing the economic function of schooling and in maximizing the economic potential of students, the discourse of “excellence” is arguably most pertinent.

As a policy discourse of neoliberalism, excellence responds to negative perceptions of a school-based workforce that is accepting underachievement and mediocrity and where the entrepreneurial qualities of the individual are thought to be driven out by “bureaucratization” and “rigid hierarchies” (Peter, 2018, p. 39). Gillies (2007)

account of the historical emergence of excellence as a “crisis narrative” aligns this problematization more closely with the creep of corporate influences and the privileging of the economic functions of schools. Using historical examples from various times and locations, Gillies describes “the periodic emergence of excellence” as “a corrective solution” to the perceived risk that education systems as not properly geared “to continued economic success” (p. 24).

Relatedly, the discourse of excellence also connects directly with the economization of schooling through a “social mobility approach” that presupposes “the better one does at school, the more possibilities become available’ in higher education and in the workforce” (de Saxe, 2015, p. 3). In neoliberal times, such an approach chimes with more pressing and urgent concerns for schools and school personnel as it shifts excellence away from traditional notions of “striving for success” and “everyone can do it” and towards a powerful and discerning discourse coordinated by the market on behalf of the state. “Unmistakably shaped by the semantics of neoliberalism” (Peter, 2018, p. 38), striving for excellence is now transformed from an egalitarian value of the masses to the responsibility of self-governing individuals as they harness their personal creativity and enterprise in pursuit of economic success.

The shifting of excellence from rhetorical marker of high achievement or grand aspirations to a regime of truth that works as a constitutively powerful neoliberal discourse relies on processes of *quantification*. Bansel (2015) describes a policy preoccupation “with an empiricism that fetishes numbers” and a concomitant insistence that the measurable indicators of excellence are the only ones that count, matter, and have meaning (p. 6). Extrapolated further, the power *effects* of excellence as a policy discourse are derived from its capacity to elicit knowledge about schools and, concomitantly, for experts to institutionalize that knowledge into an accredited and “truthful” system of measurement, appraisal, and accountability. In the economization apparatus, the discourse of excellence not only ties the functions of schooling to metrics of economic success and improved workforce participation but also links these functions directly to the successful performance of schools in the marketplace. Measures of excellence – most often relying on student achievement data from high stakes testing – become de facto indicators of school quality and the grist of competition and comparison, of success and failure.

The forces that “move through every place in an apparatus” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 160) are also subject to an immanent ordering in the practices, strategies, and interventions of government. Governmental intrusions into a quasi-marketized school environment produce their own truth claims against which efforts to be and become excellent can be judged. Institutional policies, directives, processes, and technologies, conjoined with the self-governance requirements of the neoliberal subject, work to ensure that individuals pursue particular subjectivities that signal excellence and that they measure, order, and articulate their efforts to be excellent.

Out of these tangled lines of force that seem to produce an overdetermined politics of excellence, a certain “process” or “production of subjectivity” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 160) can be discerned. The discourse of excellence shapes available subjectivities by aligning with neoliberal tenets of individuality and self-interest. The subject, as policy



actor, is made more vulnerable to incitations to perform in the market and to willingly pursue the economic ends of schooling. In particular, excellence puts a premium on self-meritocracy, rendering the individual subject as knowledgeable, market-savvy, and entrepreneurial, while binding them to the precarity of market forces and to the accumulation of their own human capital and quantification of their economic contribution. For leaders and teachers in schools, the aspiration to become excellent in the marketplace brings a vigilant and suspicious gaze to their everyday encounters. It asks that they become endlessly adaptable to levels of change and insecurity and renders, as necessary for survival, less savory tendencies to self-aggrandizement, exaggeration of achievements, and disparaging of rivals.

However, the lines of subjection in this segment of the business apparatus extend beyond the efforts of leaders and teachers to become excellent by shaping themselves as meritorious, agile, and marketable policy subjects. Privileging the economic purposes of schooling also repositions *learner excellence* within a framework of economic utility. Student subjectivities are located inside of functional aspirations about creating successful knowledge workers and “shaping the individual as economically responsible and entrepreneurial” (Patrick, 2013, p. 3). Students, as subjects of the knowledge economy, come to embody a conceptualization of knowledge as skills for knowledge intensive work. Thus, as a measurable commodity, excellence is evidenced in the performance of individuals in those subjects best fitted to their future economic participation and in the credentials they accumulate as proof of their marketability.

## **The Apparatus of Commercialization: Schools as Markets**

The apparatus of commercialization creates conditions for making schools into profitable markets for outside interests. Importantly, previous enunciations in the marketization and economization apparatuses remain in play, with the corporate form that private involvement brings to education transfiguring schools “to act as if embedded in a competitive environment where the laws of economics reign” (Shamir, 2008, p. 2). In striving to become a school of choice in a broader marketplace, key actors look to private enterprise and its products for a new narrative (e.g., see Anderson, Cohen, & Seraus, 2015) and new solutions that will differentiate them and make them more competitive. A more ubiquitous commercial presence may, for example, tempt school leaders to fold long standing interests in equity and social justice into broader concerns about favorable comparisons with market rivals, with the needs of disadvantaged individuals and cohorts “perceived as *non-economic*” (Manteaw, 2008, p. 124 italics in original) and outside of the current purview. The commercialization of schools also connects directly with the previous discussion about schooling as an asset in economic growth. Foregrounding the economic function of schooling creates the conditions and confidences that businesses need to make their investments. Along these lines, Manteaw (2008) claims that the emphasis on math, science, and technological innovation in the partnerships that big corporations form with schools points to their desire to “enhance market advantage” by having a say in the skill development of a future workforce (p. 123).



In shifting emphasis directly to possibilities for making money out of schools, Verger, Lubienski, and Steiner-Khamsi (2016) note the broad terrain of business interests in “the emergence of the idea of education as a sector for investment and profit making, where organizations, practices and networks engaged in these endeavors take on an increasingly global scale” (p. 3). Commonly gathered under the portmanteau “edubusiness,” profit-making interests in schools can be considered as three sets of commercial practices – selling *to* schools, selling *in* schools, and selling *of* schools. As Molnar (2013) observes, schools have been transformed by commercialization into “centers of profit benefitting private interests . . . as markets for vendors, venues for advertising and marketing, and commodities to be bought and sold” (p. 16). As arguably the most visible segment of business involvement in schools and schooling systems, the globally influential process of commercialization directs a concerted effort by various outside enterprises to own and control education in ways that yield a handsome financial return.

Returning to Deleuze’s (1992) map, in consideration of businesses looking to capitalize in schools, it is the sway of market logic that continues to provide the apparatus with its curves of visibility. However, the spotlight now shifts away from the marketing *of* education and education *for* the market to illuminate education *as* a market. The rhetoric and discourses of neoliberalism remain influential. In describing scarce resources and depicting bureaucratic spending as wasteful and ineffective they light a path that leads away from welfare and state reason to new and promising destinations built from business ideas about profit, efficiency, individualism, and agility. In this vein, Cassell and Nelson (2013) claim that “perhaps the central effect of neoliberalism” is:

To open key public services to various forms of private involvement and the influences associated with it. This invariably involves a preference for and promotion of the values and imperatives associated with business activity and corporate culture as well as the character markers associated with them. (p. 249)

In moving from the visible to the enunciated and the utterable in the commercialization apparatus, many more “derivations, transformations, mutations” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 160) are revealed. The multiple and complex lines crisscrossing the apparatus are not confined to enunciations of commercial presence or utterances about the economic importance of free enterprise involvement. Nor are they fully understood in a list of services and goods that are produced, exchanged, and consumed or in numerical representations of profits gained or value added. Supporting a more complex reading, Au and Lubienski (2016) acknowledge the significance of “profit seeking corporations . . . in the rise of the global education industry” but also note, along a different but intersecting enunciative line, that “non-profit entities” such as philanthropies, foundations, and advocacy organizations have also “played a substantial role in shaping emerging education markets” (p. 27). Further enunciative possibilities are found at various intersections, for example, as schools and outside providers of standardized testing notice a mutual benefit in a more comprehensive approach to test preparation and readiness, as technology companies mine the

“inevitability” discourse about ICT take-up in schools in order to capitalize on community and school priorities about twenty-first century learning, and as schools configure teaching and learning as their core purpose, thus creating a rationale for outsourcing the organization of extraneous activities and events.

The breadth, complexity, and contingency of “the multiple privatizations” of schools (Ball, 2007) makes a full depiction of the field extremely difficult. While avoiding any claims to completeness, this enunciative field is here represented in a summary version of the main players and some of the categories of their involvement.

**Edu-philanthropists:** While edu-philanthropy is traditionally associated with charitable contributions to educational needs and services that cannot be met by the state, commercialization ushers in a *new* philanthropy that incorporates business logic and is directed to reshaping and supplanting state policies and practices. Avelar and Patil (2020) describe a philanthropy that operates on a global scale, adopting innovative and disruptive practices, using technology to further its purposes, and “blurring the lines between profit and social purposes” (p. 9). The new edu-philanthropists not only carry business and investment techniques into schools but also become new and influential voices that invoke a “money is power” principle to shift the purposes of schooling into tighter alignment with their own educational vision and values. For example, Au and Lubienski (2016) speculate that the significant money provided by the philanthropic Gates Foundation to publicly funded but privately managed charter schools in the United States is “because they represented a relatively easy, politically palatable route for introducing market mechanisms such as choice and competition to public education” (p. 31).

**For profit schools:** In “a lively market in private educational organizations” (Ball, 2012, p. 24), a diverse group of private and quasi-private schools operating for profit is emerging across the globe. Verger et al. (2016) describe “chains of private schools, such as GEMS, ARK, Bridge International Academies, and the Omega schools,” that bring a new diversity to schooling in their countries of operations (p. 12). The philosophies and practices of these global chains are directed to reforms that make money. As Molnar (2013) observes, “the selling of schools – privatization – transforms public education into a segmented collection of private products and services sold for the profit of investors” (p. 122). Evidence of the profit motive is found, for example, in student selection processes that widen the disparities between rich and poor, in transforming and homogenizing curriculum and assessment to suggest a match to global economic aspirations, and in forming networks of “influential connections” to “convey and maintain credibility” as part of a sophisticated marketing approach (Ridge, Kippels, & Shami, 2016, p. 268).

**Product and service providers:** Under the edu-business banner, this diverse group of vendors gains new prominence inside of neoliberal logics about the school marketplace as they penetrate traditionally public spheres with new ideas, services, and products and an accompanying evidence-based case for their necessity. Anderson et al. (2015) describes “cafeteria services, data management and warehousing, educational software, tutorial services, educational design and management, professional development, and transportation services” (p. 353) as among the wares being

sold into schools. Including the big educational corporations and conglomerates such as Pearsons, Microsoft, and Hewlett Packard in this category adds a broad range of texts and learning materials, curriculum and assessment resources, and ICT hardware and software to the products and services on sale. Additionally, the size, wealth, and global reach of these companies also hints at the considerable capacity for their business to penetrate public spheres of influence and for their solutions to supplant those typically provided through the knowledge and resourcefulness of educators in schools.

**Edu-consultants:** Most conspicuously represented by the large consultancy firms such as McKinsey and Price Waterhouse, but also including a “wide but disparate constellation of individuals” (Verger et al., 2016, p. 12), edu-consultants are in the business of marketing expert knowledge – of defining and epitomizing the importance of knowledge, acquiring, and imparting their expertise, and convincing clients and customers of the need for their know-how and its suitability as a legitimized solution to their perceived problems. Governments are a major client. Ball (2010) describes a new generation of consultants “for whom policy is a business opportunity and from whom governments are increasingly purchasing ‘policy knowledge’” (p. 127). The proliferation of companies and individuals dealing in knowledge coupled with the ubiquity of expert knowledge means that the success of edu-consultants is now more tenuously linked to matters of knowledge, expertise, and problem-solving and increasingly influenced by image and impression management, building international reputation, and the capacity to convince clients that large fees are to be expected when professional knowledge is utilized (see Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011; Brown & Lauder, 2012).

**Policy influencers:** While privatization reforms in education are most typically and visibly displayed in the various involvement of the private sector in provision of money and resources, following Fontdevila and Verger (2019), this sector “increasingly plays a diverse range of roles in the policy field” (p. 67). Members of this broad category of corporate actors and organizations, including advocacy groups, lobbyists, consultants, philanthropists, and business corporations, are interested in exerting “a growing power in the politics of education as agenda-setters” (Fontdevila & Verger, 2019, p. 67). While not having direct involvement in the provision of education, they work to smooth the policy path – or to get policy out of the way – so that the interests of businesses are less encumbered and can be advanced from a more powerful position.

**Agents of technological change:** Linked to the global growth of various categories of free enterprise involvement, private actors and businesses driving technological change have become central in servicing and supporting schools as profitable markets. In terms of the products and services sold to schools, provision and replacement of computer hardware, software, and peripherals have emerged as a burgeoning market and a major financial consideration for schools and schooling systems. More expansively, Thompson and Parreira do Amaral (2019) claim digitalization as “a key driver of the global market in education” and go on to describe the capacity of digital technologies to open new markets and new customers in the education sector by using “powerful imaginaries and objectives” (p. 7). The

transformative potential of technology and the apparent inevitability of its take-up work to naturalize the intrusion of outside commercial interests into schools and make schools susceptible to their ardent and inviting claims, for example, about new environments for learning, improved social participation and knowledge management, and a greater capacity to store, analyze, and evaluate learning data in ways that contribute to measuring school effectiveness and competitiveness.

Given these various and intersecting lines of enunciation depict an array of subject positions and the global incursions of businesses into the local operations of schools, an explanation of lines of power and lines of subjection might usefully proceed, in the tradition of policy sociology, as a bringing together of macro- and micro-political interests. Translated to the apparatus of commercialization, one iteration of a macro-/micro-explanation emerges from an analysis of the power/knowledge effects of policy discourses on the triumvirate formed by business, government, and education.

While a hybrid set of intersecting discourses are in play, the policy discourse of *entrepreneurship* is one which both provides explanatory possibilities in this three-dimensional analysis as well as certain preferred subject positions for key actors. Harvey (2007) alludes to the present-day centrality of entrepreneurship in describing neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework” (p. 2). The discourse of entrepreneurship provides claims about the truth that divide the innovative, agile, and enterprising practices of the entrepreneur away from older depictions of stolid and sedimented bureaucratic solutions.

The discourse of entrepreneurship smooths the way for what Ball (1998) calls the “policy entrepreneurs . . . who ‘sell’ their solutions in the academic and political market-place” (p. 124). While knowledge companies may shine the light of commercialism ever more brightly on schools, Verger et al. (2016) point out that the global education industry “is not simply an organic phenomenon in the economic sphere” but is also shaped by political actors and “enabled by public policy making” (p. 4). Drawing close to Mazzucato’s (2018) notion of “the entrepreneurial state,” the commercialization of schools does not happen in an unregulated market or entirely at the behest of private interests, but rather, relies on a type of state involvement that invites, shapes, and directs private interests and investments.

In a “complex interweaving of the public and private” (Lingard & Sellar, 2013, p. 272), policy reforms aimed at making educational activities more saleable in the market rely on a conception of the state as the institutional framework which nurtures and enables entrepreneurial freedoms while also creating the bounded and structured social space in which these freedoms are exercised. However, policy reforms sanctioning an expanded role for outside providers effect a shift in power relations – with an array of constitutive effects – as policy making itself is subject to private interests and incentives and pressures are exerted on public sector providers to use private sector services. For example, the state enamored with promoting entrepreneurial freedom becomes more susceptible to the strategic involvement of nongovernment think tanks, advocates, and financiers in processes

of policy reform. Verger et al. (2016) describe various “individual policy entrepreneurs and boundary spanners” (p. 12) dotted over the policy-making terrain that operate and mobilize the “cognitive frames” (p. 14) that constitute schooling in terms of commercially oriented and business friendly ideas and solutions.

In terms of macro-/micro-political interests, the flow-on effect into schools of injecting nongovernment expertise into policy making are expansive as new knowledges and discourses about education that follow neoliberal tenets of commercialization and entrepreneurialism are generated, popularized, and bedded down. This new orthodoxy is both transformative and seductive, invoking Ball’s (2006) chronotype of the “fast, adventurous, carefree, gung-ho, open-plan, computerized, individualism of choice, autonomous ‘enterprises’ and sudden opportunity” (p. 72). Along lines of power in the apparatus of commercialization, just as the discursive realm shapes the willing acceptance of a new commercial presence and new ideas about the purposes and practices of schooling, it is also articulated within the concrete enactments of non-discursive practices. For example, schooling practices traditionally under public control, such as school structures and funding, teacher training, school leadership/administration, professional development, classroom pedagogy and intervention, and curriculum development are, in varying degrees, facilitated by outside experts, infiltrated by business interests, or outsourced to private providers.

Along lines of subjection, the influence of the discourse of entrepreneurship relies on the quality of neoliberal governance that takes individuals as mobile policy actors interested in working on themselves and “facilitating ‘private’ forms of authority” (Shamir, 2008, p. 6). In connecting “mechanisms of coercion and contents of knowledge” (Foucault, 1997, p. 59), entrepreneurialism constitutes educators, and often those being educated, as subjects that identify with being entrepreneurial and who are thereby drawn to reproducing the entrepreneurial practices that define them. Personal qualities are configured as entrepreneurial potentialities to be instrumentalized and applied to better results in the school marketplace. To support its normalization, the discourse of entrepreneurialism harnesses various technologies of responsabilization and (self-)surveillance, third-party renditions of required standards of professionalism, and the rewards of recognition and performance embodied in a multiplicity of ceremonies, awards, and professional opportunities.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The mapping of apparatuses in the previous section, while necessarily partial and selective in its coverage, worked to convey a shift in emphasis towards deeper intrusions and more comprehensive involvement of private interests in school education. In keeping open a non-reductive characterization of this involvement (while trying to avoid portraying an inexorable invasion and take-over), the aim was to depict processes of aggregation and tendencies to uniformity in each of the apparatuses while steering away from representations of pervasive and categorical truths fixed in the current epoch.

In such a depiction, one question not fully addressed is whether it remains possible to oppose, ignore, or look away from the disciplining tendencies in neoliberal policy effects. This question of disruptive possibilities further tests the analytical potential of the apparatus by asking after its non-essential qualities and its functionality as a tool of problematization and critique. Certainly, the potential for resistance, non-conformance, and contingency seems to reside in Foucault's (1980) attribution of heterogeneous, relational, and modifiable qualities in the *dispositif* (apparatus) and his explicit references to its various functions of "justifying," "masking," and "re-interpretation" (pp. 194–195). Further references to this expanded functionality and non-essential qualities can be detected in Deleuze's (1992) apparatus map, where he describes the subject as eluding lines of force and taking "a line of flight" that "escapes the previous lines" (p. 161).

In applying these theoretical references from Foucault and Deleuze to the apparatuses of privatization, as well as ideas from a body of related secondary literature, three insights into possibilities for disruption emerge. Firstly, while the apparatuses may indeed "produce submission and compliance to the demands of governance" (Jackson & Carter, 1998, p. 60) their interconnected, dynamic, and expansive qualities open possibilities for a more "controversial dialectic" (Maesse, 2017, p. 910) between discursive calls for compliance and local action. Legg (2011) maps the general terrain of these possibilities in noting that apparatuses in "their very multiplicity necessarily opens spaces of misunderstanding, resistance and flight" (p. 131), while de Goede (2017), in mobilizing the discursive and material parts of the apparatus, claims there are "likely to be many stumbling blocks, non-conformities and changes between the plan and the eventual building" (p. 360). By introducing the dialectic of "central input and local inflections" (Clarke, Bainton, Lendvai, & Stubbs, 2015, p. 15) assumptions about the linear flow of policy knowledge and the smooth and untroubled entreaties and intrusions of private interests into schools are interrupted. In the space that opens, the apparatuses of privatization may appear as more contingent and contestable as "lively materialities" emerge that do not conform (de Goede, 2017, p. 360) and the more critical and discerning work of local evaluation and decision-making gains a greater hold.

Secondly, subjectivity emerges as a key site of disruption and resistance in an apparatus. This interpretation relies on understanding subjectivity not as emerging as an after-effect of the power arrangements and tactics of the apparatus, but rather being active in their shaping. Such an understanding opens the possibility of non-conforming and dissenting subjectivities, for, as Raffnsøe et al. (2016) note, the apparatus does not rule out, but indeed presumes, the existence and influence of intentionality, will, and freedom (p. 286). In consideration of the apparatuses of privatization, the revitalizing of more agentic possibilities for leaders, teachers, and students in schools helps conceive a different set of power arrangements and new subjectivities that fall outside of the neoliberal order. Binkley (2009) provides a relevant insight in his claim that "top-down" readings of neoliberal governance that "consider how neoliberal subjects work to optimize, individualize and entrepreneurialize themselves and their conduct" are also "shadowed by a certain

ambivalence and instability, a technique of subjectification that remains open to the potential for being otherwise practiced” (pp. 63–64).

Thirdly, the apparatus in revealing a strategic intent and a set of tactics oriented to particular targets simultaneously maps a field of resistance in which different strategies and tactics might be organized. Here, the possibilities of critique, counter-conduct, and agonistic resistance merge in the collective actions of the like-minded. When applied to the apparatuses of privatization, a process of liberating individuals such as school leaders and teachers from the constraints of neoliberal policy discourses is suggested. In practice, the possibilities for action span a broad field which includes:

- Working against the forces of economization by emphasizing and privileging the broader purposes of schooling and recasting excellence as an egalitarian value that includes an understanding of the school’s social justice responsibilities beyond economic utility
- Resisting market forces and measures by creating new coalitions as an antidote to damaging rivalry and competition, critiquing centralized processes that rank and compare schools, and replacing the metrics of the market with broader and more inclusive measures of school success
- Privileging the professionalism of leaders and teachers in ongoing critical assessment of the value, impact, and sustainability of private enterprise involvement in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

Notwithstanding the many merits and seductions of a diverse and powerful group of privatization apparatuses, the need to test, critically evaluate, and sometimes oppose their strategies and tactics remains important and urgent work. Of course, matters of disruption do not proceed easily, especially against such a formidable machinery operating at unprecedented levels. Anderson et al. (2015) describe an array of “increasingly contested” neoliberal and managerialist reforms, many of which fall squarely inside of business interests in schooling, but they also note the “uncomfortable necessity” of resistance is, in its organisation, “largely diffuse and inchoate” (p. 350–351). For scholars and researchers interested in this work of disruption (see also Anderson & Cohen, 2015; De Lissovoy, 2015; Longmuir, 2019), the apparatus, as a tool of analysis, holds open a theoretical space in which to propose new ideas and practices, not necessarily in the tight and reactive dichotomous relations of power and resistance, but as a contribution to shifting, modifying, and redistributing current arrangements.

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# Governing the International University

# 6

## The Intellectual and Ethical Challenges of Leadership

Ravinder Sidhu and Mayumi Ishikawa

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### Abstract

By the end of the twentieth century, many universities worldwide were describing themselves as international or global in vision, mission, and reputation. In doing so, they came to be represented in normative discourse as instruments of progressive cosmopolitanism. Under the guise of establishing “world class” status, university leaders have drawn on international benchmarks and models of good practice without sufficient regard to the persistence of colonial imaginaries of empire and nation in their revisionings. The chapter interrogates the global reach of governing rationalities such as “corporatization,” and “world class” reputation-making and the ethical and intellectual challenges they have presented for universities. Michel Foucault’s ideas of critique provides the analytical lens from which to interrogate normative understandings of the international university in Japan and Australia. Lessons learnt from two sets of crises, a natural disaster and a health pandemic, guide the discussions on using Foucault’s conceptualization of critique to consider university leadership anew.

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**Keywords**

International university · Globalization · Techno-nationalism · Critical leadership studies · Problematization · Voluntary insubordination

**Fields of Memory**

Universities have been crucibles of paradox, simultaneously reinforcing and interrogating colonial approaches to knowledge discovery and application. Large-scale, epistemological projects instituted by Euro-American hegemony have cast a shadow over the modern university through a complex blend of mimicry, accommodation, and creative adaptation. Modern scientific expertise produced in colonial centers of knowledge has traveled elsewhere providing the intellectual and ethical grounds for dispossession, oppression, and domination of people and places. Universities and their leaders have been unable to break free from the legacies and effects of colonial conquest, empire, war, and nation-building.

**The Field of Presence**

With the end of formal colonialism, many universities were enlisted into capitalist or socialist-driven modernization projects. Confronted by the contingencies of postwar development, national universities were called on to foster a nationalist sense of purpose and to contribute to addressing complex societal problems. The USA was regarded as an exemplar of a superior scientifically driven modernization process. Inspired by social psychology research and the support of US defense funding, centers like Harvard University's Social Relations Unit produced various leadership theories. Bales and Slater's (1955) leader behavior theory is a case in point. Leadership theories helped legitimize putative liberal virtues such as individualism and meritocracy, leaving the structural antagonisms from colonial and imperial projects uninterrogated. The circulation of theories and knowledge practices was helped along by scholars and students traveling to the centers of knowledge in eminent universities. Local norms and contingencies mediated the uptake of these practices producing converging and diverging patterns. Confronted by policy-driven demands in the name of postwar reconstruction and development, university leaders presided over a series of distorting (as well as productive) effects from their emulations of scientific modernization and techno-nationalism.

**The Field of Concomitance**

For close to four decades now, universities have embarked on cycles of change, in response to ideologically driven policies. Ideas and imaginaries from the corporate world have been increasingly influential in shaping university administration and governance. Market rationalities have informed university teaching, research, and service. At the same time, in a series of parallel and paradoxical developments, public universities have been subjected to increased state scrutiny. From the competitive allocation of research funds to persistent evaluations into the performance

and quality of institutions, practices of surveillance and benchmarking have become a feature of university administration. University leaders both in Japan and Australia have presided over audit architectures and “new public management.” Leaders have (unwittingly) endorsed isomorphic mimicry. Leadership theories in this era of audit have remained wedded to social psychology, based on the assumption that leadership – the conduct of individual leaders, is crucial for system-level change. The emergence of new fields such as critical leadership studies have focused on analyzing the power relations inspired by various leadership theories. Drawing on sociological, historical, and philosophical insights, contributors have attempted to interrogate agenda-conforming reforms in organizations such as universities and through these forms of inquiry, the ontologies of leadership have been broadened.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The field’s ruptures can be traced to various developments to sharpen the analysis of power relations in organizations and societies. Investments of excessive hope in transformative leadership at the hands of individual leaders are subjected to scrutiny and immanent critique is foregrounded. The thrust of this work, as exemplified in critical leadership studies, is to unsettle the “tripod” ontology of leadership theories which focuses on “leaders,” “followers,” and “shared purpose.” Critical leadership studies, put simply, seeks to de-essentialize leader-driven theories and practices and the forms of normativity they inspire. For example, the critical school of leadership draws on feminist and postcolonial theories to show the enduring connections of capitalist, colonial, and masculinist logics in contemporary organizations. Leader-based theories are subsequently reread as discursive resources that normalize individualism, elitism, and widening inequality within organizations and beyond.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presuppositions**

Current developments are paving the way to recognize leadership as a political project. This approach to leadership restores an analytic of power into understanding roles and relationships within organizations and in the wider social and geopolitical domains. Structural and historical antagonisms are brought to the fore. New lines of inquiry are embarked on including how and why it is that some countries/cultures lead and others follow? Why are the countries deemed to be worthy of emulation concentrated in the West/Global North?

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## **Introduction**

Governments routinely produce and circulate certain truths about their internationalized universities. For example, by portraying their institutions as instruments of progressive cosmopolitanism, where students learn about “global citizenship.” Using insights inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, this chapter explores the normative understandings of the international university in two national settings, Japan and Australia. In both contexts, universities have performed internationalization through specific histories that speak to narratives of conquest, empire, and nation.

Notably, these fields of memory rarely find a place in the deliberations undertaken by university leadership. Yet, this historical background is vitally important if universities are to be creative forces for the public good in the future. The chapter examines the global reach of governing rationalities such as “‘corporatization,’ new public management” and “world class” reputation-making, paying particular attention to the ethical and intellectual challenges presented by these developments. Foucault’s conceptualization of critique is then used to consider university leadership anew, drawing on the lessons learnt by two sets of crises, a natural disaster and a health pandemic.

The chapter begins with historical snapshots of university internationalization – loosely defined as institutional processes of incorporating international influences – in Japan and Australia. Interspersed with this snapshot are outlines of two events: the Fukushima Daichii Incident and the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on Australia’s education industry. Both crises provide a moment to examine the limits of existing leadership practices. In the final section, the Foucauldian concept of critique is introduced as a vital component of ethical leadership. Problematization, refusal, and the courage to unveil one’s complicity in the exercises of power are discussed as vital elements of ethical leaderships.

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## **Problematizing International Education in Japan**

Japan first embarked on internationalizing its universities at a time of drastic social and political transformation as the nation faced contact with, and mounting pressure from, the West. The arrival in 1853 of a US naval contingent demanding access to Japanese ports by American merchant ships was followed by incursions by other Western powers – Russia, Britain, France, and Holland – to pressure Japan into “free” trade treaties.

Japan was prompted to modernize itself in order to retain its sovereignty and stave off the imminent threat of Western dominance. Necessitated by external and internal forces, a new system of governance emerged in the wake of the Meiji Restoration (in 1868). Japan’s leaders opted for open-door, vigorous, and proactive Westernised “scientific” modernization to establish a full-fledged nation-state to join the European “family of nations” (Yamamuro, 2017, pp. 279–281). The country would be the first to do so in East Asia. Part of the pull was a desire to reconfigure Japan’s peripheral position in what was then a Sinocentric Confucian order (Yamamuro, 2001). Wholesale internationalization efforts were embraced to emulate Western political, economic, technological, and military systems and social norms. In short, a comprehensive adoption of the ways of European “civilisation” was embarked on. Everything “from railways to parliaments, from hair style to philosophy” was adopted, including a Western system of education (Beazley, 1972, p. 311; Yamamuro, 2017).

The country’s first university, Tokyo University, was established in 1877 and renamed “Imperial University” in 1886. In the period immediately following its establishment, Tokyo University adopted a radically “global” approach. Most classes were taught in foreign languages, with English occupying a prominent position. Only nine out of 32 professors were Japanese, though the balance was reversed in

1881 (Amano, 2017, p. 150). The experience of studying abroad in an approved Western university was a prerequisite to obtain professorship. The primary mission of modern Japanese universities during the Meiji period (1868–1912), led by the University of Tokyo, was to “go global” and import advanced Western knowledge (Sato, 2017, pp. 173–174; Amano, 2017). Returning academics and their colleagues were expected to translate imported knowledges into the Japanese language, and thereafter recontextualize or “localise” ideas for adoption.

These first moments of internationalization drove profound domestic social transformations and geopolitical changes. Domestically, opportunities were opened up for nonhereditary leaders from all walks of life (cf. Beasley, 1972). Japan established itself as an exemplar in Asia, a modern state that succeeded in resisting formal colonization. By the start of the twentieth century, it would become a major study destination for students from the East and Southeast Asia. Threatened by European imperialism, Japan had responded with an aggressive engagement with science and modernization to internationalize its governance and very identity. It harnessed science and technology toward industrialization and militarization, altering the balance of power vis-à-vis the West and the politics of the Asian region. The recalibration of geopolitical power brought with it a series of unresolved consequences which continues to confront the region.

Postwar internationalization of Japanese universities was largely a matter of outbound mobility of students and scholars. In-bound international student mobility started to take hold with Japan’s increased prosperity and global presence. The first major internationalization initiative (*kokusaika*) was *The Project on Welcoming 100,000 International Students* introduced in 1983 by the Nakasone government during a period of economic prosperity. Its official goal was to raise Japan’s prestige, promote national security, and facilitate its integration into the emerging international society (Ota, 2003, p. 36). In the context of rampant international trade disputes and frictions with its economic partners, cultural diplomacy and “capacity building” through human resource development in developing countries were adopted as policy priorities (Ninomiya et al., 2009). Subsequent policies such as the *Global 30* (FY2009–2013), *Go Global* (FY2012–2016), *Reinventing Japan* (FY2011–), and *Top Global University* (FY2014–2023) were all introduced during periods of economic and national tumult (Ishikawa, 2014; Rose and McKinley, 2018).

For the *Global 30* project *kokusaika* meant opening up Japan through inbound mobility of international students and scholars. A target of hosting 300,000 international students was announced, and university overseas centers were opened to aid recruitment. An aggressive policy of English medium instruction in undergraduate and graduate courses was initiated to make Japanese higher education attractive to international students and international scholars.

*Go Global*, which succeeded *Global 30*, saw a slight shift in emphasis, by also including outbound mobility of Japanese students. This was part of a national goal to “re-invent Japan” by fostering the development of “globally active” citizens. Universities were exhorted to “upgrade the quality” of education through strategic alliance with overseas institutions (MEXT, n.d.).

Importantly, policy platforms to internationalize universities coincided with other policy reforms which increased their surveillance. In 2004, all national universities were “incorporated,” ostensibly to increase autonomy (Amano, 2008). They were also subjected to rigorous evaluation regimes on goals achieved over a six-year period by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). Even universities with impressive performance records experienced reduced financial support in a policy context of national fiscal austerity (Kaneko, 2013, pp. 177–180). Reflecting on these changes, a former president of a national university lamented:

The corporatisation of national universities was first celebrated as an educational reform. Then it started looking more like an administrative reform. As time went by, it became apparent that it was nothing but a ‘fiscal reform’, which is the way it was really intended. [When] our budget is controlled, all is controlled (Kuroki, 2009, p. 125).

Status competition soon became a driving force, steering Japanese universities to internationalize or “perish.” At the University of Tokyo, the leadership team announced to alter its academic calendar to “go with the world” but after protests fell short of implementing the change. The University’s actions, however, ignited a national debate, marked by concerns about the “vulnerability” of Japan’s institutions. Its most esteemed institution had been driven to consider administrative mimicry, aligning its academic calendar with the “international standard.” Teaching in English, another internationalization initiative, saw a marginal increase in inbound international graduate students, but other problems arose, most notably, the segregation of international students into Anglophone bubbles, reducing opportunities for intercultural relationships with Japanese students (Rose and McKinley, 2018, p. 118; Ota and Horiuchi, 2018). Requirements to teach in English were also unpopular with the professoriate. All in all, these extravagantly symbolic gestures insisted on by the education ministry and university management were not well received.

Summing up, contemporary cycles of internationalization that have followed have been rationalized as necessary to help “solve” the country’s economic and demographic challenges. Restoring the reputation of Japanese universities has been narrowly interpreted as improving rankings in the Times Higher Education and QS league tables, which since 2010 has become an explicit national policy objective (Ishikawa & Sun, 2016, Ishikawa, 2014, Morita, 2015).

## **Fukushima: A Loss of Faith**

On 11 March 2011, Northeast Japan experienced an earthquake and a tsunami which led to the explosion of nuclear reactors in Fukushima prefecture. The series of catastrophic events which followed left deep scars in Japan’s topography, shaking citizens’ faith in its political leadership, its business community, media professionals, and its science and technology experts, many of whom were located in the nation’s premier universities.

Business and political leaders and university experts had over the years articulated a narrative of absolute safety to neutralize public wariness of nuclear



power (Low, 2015; Friedman, 2011). The use of atomic weapons against Japan to hasten the end of the Second World War killed close to a quarter of a million citizens and exposed generations to fatal radiation-related illnesses (Southard, 2015). This destructive history and its related moral and existential failures were replaced by a vastly different set of social imaginaries: Nuclear power would enable national reconstruction. Universities joined state and market actors to reset the calculus of power and scientific knowledge through which nuclear energy came to be seen as inevitable for furthering Japanese industrialization (Kinefushi, 2015; Low, 2020).

A broad umbrella of protective legislation, introduced over time, enabled companies to use academic assessments to neutralize and deflect their management of risk analysis (Friedman, 2011; Kinefushi, 2015). TEPCO, the company in charge of the Fukushima nuclear facility, enjoyed these legal protections to limit liability. The company was one of many companies that embarked on building nuclear reactors in areas deemed to be dangerously vulnerable. In the case of Fukushima, long-held local knowledge about the risks of earthquakes and tsunamis was forgotten or ignored.

In the wake of the 2011 disaster, experts including university-based scientists appeared untrustworthy, evasive, and defensive (Kinefushi, 2015). This was a key moment in which public confidence in the universities might have been boosted had they been seen to provide frank and fearless scientific leadership. Initial briefings by TEPCO and government officials appeared to minimize the scale of the disaster. The Internet enabled the rapid circulation of (mis)information and journalists were left scrambling to vet expertise and manage the large quantities of information (Friedman, 2011).

The Fukushima crisis revealed the downside of close links between the energy industry, the state, and Japan's most prestigious institutions of higher education. The disaster raised questions about the integrity of science and engineering experts at leading research universities such as the University of Tokyo. Professors were labeled *goyo gakusha* or scholars who serve the interest of the government and industry by "uncritically singing their tune" (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2011, July 24). They had proliferated *gempatsu anzen shinwa* – the myth about unconditional nuclear safety (Brasor, 2011). By adopting a pro-industry stance in their analysis of risk, researchers compromised their responsibilities to support the regulatory roles of governments, and to uphold the public good (Kinefushi, 2015).

A broader failure of leadership can be said to have occurred with universities, media organizations, and the business sector cooperating to effectively censor experts who held opposing views. Pronuclear experts were courted by the powerful Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry and the nation's media organizations. Scientists opposing nuclear energy were consistently denied a public profile by media and the state. Many were also refused recognition by their institutions, sidelined in promotion opportunities and locked out of lucrative grants. One such group was the "Kumatori Six" – six nuclear scientists at Kyoto University's Research Reactor in Kumatori, Osaka. All remained in junior faculty positions until retirement, denied public and corporate research funding for the duration of their careers (Hosomi, 2013).

Nuclear power technology became a national project in Japan's postwar reconstruction and effort was "re-branded" through a range of practices. Public acceptance of "safe atoms" was helped along by the combined influence of business, political, and media actors. Japanese department stores hosted exhibitions that were directed at housewives on the utility of atomic power in everyday lives, "women were seen as important to achieving a national consensus about the need for atomic energy" (Low, 2003, p. 204). Even children were socialized into a pronuclear stance through formal curricula in schooling, popular children's TV shows, and through poster competitions and science museum exhibits. Japan's seven former imperial universities played their part. Dubbed "nurseries for nuclear power," they were responsible for producing a stable of pronuclear experts and expertise, invested in assuring a public that nuclear power was safe. The safety myth was also supported through suppression of oppositional voices. Techno-nationalism – the tying of national identity to technological prowess – also helped to consolidate state and popular support for nuclear energy (Low, 2020).

The crisis was a critical moment of questioning the politico-economic-intellectual conjuncture that had sustained Japan's postwar development. This conjuncture had institutionalized a number of truths: the safety of the country's nuclear energy policy, the probity of its regulatory systems and processes, and the neutrality of its scientific elite. State capture by corporations – namely their capacity to shape the formation of laws, policies, and regulations to their advantage – was helped along by a combination of forces in which universities were also implicated. On many fronts, the disaster sparked off a broad crisis in leadership which briefly galvanized Japan's long-standing antinuclear activism and swung public sentiments toward policies for alternative energy sources. But hegemony is hugely difficult to overturn. Rationales of "necessity" and "righteousness" helped to reinsert a "system of acceptability" toward nuclear energy (Kinefushi, 2015). Turning now to Australia, what might be learnt about leadership practices from the historical processes through which universities were objectified and made international?

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## **Situating the Internationalization of Australia's Universities**

The engagement of Australia's universities with international students really began in earnest in the postwar era when universities were drawn into Australia's international relations objectives. A high point of internationalization was the Colombo Plan, a postwar intergovernment development assistance program involving some 26 countries initiated in 1951 at the height of Cold War animosities. The Plan enabled Western countries to exercise moral leadership by instituting economic, technical, and social cooperation projects with the decolonizing countries of the Asia-Pacific. Some 20,000 students were supported to study in Australia over three decades. The Plan has been described as a milestone in the reconfiguration of Australia from an enthusiastic advocate of a racialized immigration regime and aspiring colonial power in the Pacific, to a humanitarian country in the new moral landscapes of a decolonizing world order. The Colombo Plan is credited for setting

the foundations for Australia to become a desirable study destination for Asia's burgeoning middle classes (Auletta, 2000; Oakman, 2010).

Australia universities were involved in other international exchanges that predated the Colombo Plan, most notably scientific and scholarly exchanges with Britain and the USA. American philanthropic foundations empowered by the peculiarities of US taxation policies extended their largesse to Australian universities. The Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation were just two bodies that provided funds to nascent Australian universities going back to 1926. Their support during the Great Depression constituted "...a cultural lifeline..." (White, 1996). These foundations were instruments of "soft diplomacy," charged with furthering liberal internationalism, then a key US national policy. In the postwar era good science and good scholarship were promoted to be codependent with Western liberal values (Bu, 1999).

A number of historical elements inform the contemporary leadership practices of Australian universities. First, it is noteworthy that its universities, like other instruments of the state, are strongly influenced by national identity-making projects drawn from Australia's settler colonial history. A largely romanticized view of British "settlement" has celebrated Australia's British roots and produced a narrative of settler heroism. In parallel with this founding sentiment, the country's foreign policies for a good part of the twentieth century has centered on an imagined identity of Australia as a trustee of Western civilization in the Pacific. The violence of colonial conquest and the forced assimilation of indigenous Australians remains a difficult topic, intruding every so often into university-state relations through "culture wars" so declared by the country's conservative political class. There is little appetite to defend the internationalized public university.

Second, the country's egalitarian self-image and the impact of human capital-driven social policies has created expectations that universities are a means for social mobility. University leadership has to balance desires for "useful knowledge" that stands to increase employment prospects, with the inherited knowledge of earlier generations and learning that is not yet recognized as useful knowledge (see, for example, Boulton and Lucas, 2011; Forsyth, 2021). Third, liberal democratic politics in Australia has offered qualified support for cultural and linguistic diversity, instead, yielding to an economic framing of Australian multiculturalism and limiting its emancipatory prospects. University leadership has followed suit. This background has rendered multicultural policies vulnerable to populist nationalism. The role of universities and support for international education in fostering cultural and public diplomacy has remained unappreciated by the public at large (Collinson and Burke, 2021; Rizvi, 2020).

Fourth, the embrace of market-oriented rationalities by the state to "re-form" the public sector has steered universities toward "New Public Management" (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Yates et al., 2016). University funding grew from 0.9–1% over two decades from 1989–2017 (Universities Australia, 2019). In 1989, the state met an average 78% of the costs of a student's university education; by 2017, that figure was down to 58% (Universities Australia, 2019,

pp. 10–11). New Public Management has presided over an increasingly expansive governance regime that progressively led to a weakening of academic self-governance (Marginson & Considine, 2000). University academics have become the targets of surveillance and intervention: assessed, evaluated, differentiated, and ordered into hierarchies of competence (Shore and Wright, 2015). Academic disciplines have been on the receiving end of political pressure to demonstrate relevance and economic utility (Forsyth, 2021; Jayasuriya, 2020; Yates et al., 2016). Government-instituted legislative changes have reconfigured the character of university governing bodies (University Councils), with corporate expertise in finance and management privileged ahead of experience in public service (Marginson & Considine, 2000). University councils have thus insulated themselves from the broad swathe of concerns clustered under the umbrella of public good: the development of an informed, engaged citizenry, well-educated and ethically grounded professionals, truth, and justice (Forsyth, 2020; Rizvi, 2020).

The characteristics of university marketization initiated by government policy led public universities to direct their energies toward a host of entrepreneurial activities such as the recruitment of full fee-paying international students from Asia, with China as a major source country (Rizvi, 2020). A “2-step migration” policy enabled Australia educated international students to apply for permanent residence; this policy maneuver positioned Australia favorably in the competitive global education market (Robertson, 2013). Income from international student fees helped neutralize the effects of funding cuts by a retreating state (Jayasuriya, 2020; Rizvi, 2020). University leadership teams supported the recruitment of an ever-increasing number of international students but fell short of directing resources toward teaching and learning support. Few academics were able to utilize the student diversity in their classrooms in pedagogically meaningful ways (Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marginson et al., 2012). The inherent precarity of the international student experience received little institutional attention. That a worrying proportion of international students were absorbed into circuits of precarious work, often underpaid and subject to poor treatment was news nobody wished to hear (ABC, 2015; also Marginson et al., 2012; Robertson, 2013).

## **A Crisis of Global Proportions: Universities and COVID 19**

In 2020 with borders slammed shut to control the spread of the novel Coronavirus 19, a perfect storm was brewing. Here was a university sector highly dependent on international student fees for its core business with tuition revenue channeled into vital research activities and other discretionary projects (Jayasuriya, 2020; Rizvi, 2020). An indifferent, if not hostile policy environment, allowed successive governments to neglect public universities with little electoral concern. In media and political circles universities were criticized for cosying up to China and failing to uphold academic freedom. Having abided by market-driven policy rationalities universities were now victims of their success. It was argued that they had sacrificed their responsibilities to domestic students by privileging international students; that

teaching had been sacrificed by universities' staking their reputations on securing a ranking in world-class league tables (Tudge, 2021). Border closures initiated unsuccessful lobbying from the international education industry for students to be allowed to return to Australia. The "value" of international students had rested on their objectification as a consumer of education, tourism, retail, and real estate (Rizvi, 2020). But nationalist fervor trumped economics (Collinson and Burke, 2021; Jayasuriya, 2020). Universities had devoted little energy to fostering public diplomacy, festering resentment grew toward international students and the international education sector (Rizvi, 2020).

The pandemic threw the inherent precarity of the international student experience into sharp relief. Persistent lockdowns and economic disruptions (at home and in Australia) exposed students to food and housing insecurities, extreme social isolation, and racial harassment. International students were denied any kind of income support from the Australian government, unlike their peers in the UK and New Zealand (Berg, 2020), leaving universities to work with charities to meet student needs for their most basic amenities.

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## Critique as a Leadership

Crisis or its Greek variant *krisis* first appeared in the field of medicine to capture a medical event – a decisive moment between life and death. The crisis was "an intrinsic condition" involving the "judgement" or *leadership* of the physician (Kollesck, 2006, p. 399 cited by Prozorov, 2020, p. 4.) Over time, crisis acquired a profusion of meanings and uses: "The concept of crisis, which once had the power to pose unavoidable, harsh and non-negotiable alternatives, [was] transformed to fit the uncertainties of whatever might be favoured at a given moment" (Prozorov, 2020, p. 4).

From Plato's philosopher kings to the accounts of social theorists such as Weber and Gramsci, Western thought has a long history of exploring ideas about "leadership" and leaders. These historical trends have inspired contemporary lines of inquiry about the traits that are associated with effective and authentic leadership (Learmonth and Morrell, 2020). In contrast, studies inspired by Foucauldian thought reject the idea of a coherent, unified, sovereign subject whether that of "leader" or "follower" (O'Farrell, 2005, pp. 27–28). Foucault's ideas about subjectivity are at odds with leadership theories informed by social psychology or phenomenology. Foucauldian-inspired leadership rests on a broad conceptualization of power and its relation to practices of governance. Power, according to Foucault, is distributed, relational, and exercised in, and through, the social body. Power is omnipresent, it unfolds at macro-levels and through micro-practices. Power cannot be contained in the position of vice-chancellor or president of a University, nor is power concentrated in a singular entity called the state. Instead, power is *exercised* in and through knowledges, experts, techniques, technologies, and emotions. Sovereign power – whereby individuals exercise power in the way that a king once did – literally by "make or break," or "life or death"-type decisions, does still exist but is less commonplace.

The wider topic of governance is well canvassed in Foucault's vast archive of writings, appearing in his deliberations on power, discourse, and subjectivity on the intricacies of European statecraft. His reflections on pastorship – an individualizing power exercised by the discursive figure of the shepherd in Hebrew societies, have contemporary resonances for how leadership is understood, “. . . [this] strange technology of power [that] treat[s] the vast majority of [people] as a flock with a few as shepherds” (Foucault, 1994, p. 303). Without the shepherd's immediate presence and direct action, he observed, the flock would scatter. In contrast, in the Ancient Greek polis, the king was responsible for upholding the law (nomos) and did so by “binding together different virtues, contrasting temperaments, gathering lives together into a community based to assure the unity of the city” (p. 307).

Postcolonial, feminist, and Foucauldian-inspired approaches from the variegated school of critical leadership studies have contributed to “problematizing” the discourses and practices of leadership by exploring how these practices objectify students, educators, and administrators and managers (see Alvesson, 2020; Learmonth and Morrell, 2020; Liu, 2021; Nkomo, 2011). A host of empirical studies have examined how school leaders are disciplined to perform principalship like a “CEO” (see Niesche, 2011; Mifsud, 2017). More recent work has examined the manner in which leadership is assembled and made governmental. For example, through the training of leaders through leadership preparation programs (see Drew et al., 2008) and through performance-based measurement of leadership effectiveness (Deem, 2004; Loveday, 2021). Other lines of inquiry have interrogated the manner in which leadership education and the plethora of popular literature obscure the capture of the state by corporate interests producing in their wake structural antagonisms that blight the lives of people. As Alvesson (2020, p. 2) notes, “. . . social reality and popular leadership theories [are] moving in different directions.”

It is important to also see Foucauldian literature as offering productive strategies to address these problems, for example, by examining how ethical leadership might be exercised. For Foucault, ethical leadership involves practices of critique (“critical attitude”), which he describes as “a will not to be governed thus.” Foucault enjoins his audience to strive for an “aesthetics of existence.” To practice ethical behaviors and make ethical choices is difficult and ongoing (Liu, 2021; Nkomo, 2011). It demands perseverance, attention to detail, and curiosity, practices that are also found in artistic practice. Similar parallels have been identified elsewhere in studies of leadership where ethical leadership is understood as an artistic practice (English & Ehrich, 2016).

An ethical leadership is exercised through “critique.” But,

critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kind of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. . . . Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult (Foucault, 1988, p. 154-155).

Put another way, critique involves a person exercising “the right to question truth on its effects of power, and to question power on its discourses of truth.”

Foucault's work highlighted three dimensions of critique: "the activity of problematisation, the art of voluntary insubordination and the audacity to expose one's own status as a subject" (Lemke, 2011, p. 27). All three dimensions are crucial to the practice of ethical leadership.

Problematization – "thinking problematically" – goes beyond "critical analysis" as performed in social science research. Problematization involves identifying and interrogating the logics that inform a particular practice; it extends to the social imaginaries that shape and enable such logics to take hold and acquire legitimacy. Problematizations "... establish a certain distance from existing forms of acting and understanding while also [remediating] and [recombining] these forms" (Collier, 2009, p. 80). Crucial to problematization is attending to the manner in which persons are invited toward particular subject-positions and identities in and through forms of thought and actions. Problematization also involves questioning universals. Institutions such as "the university" are not regarded as coherent, integrated, monolithic entities. Rather they are experienced as "systems of heterogenous elements made up of connections, encounters, plays of forces, strategies and barriers" (Lemke, 2011, p. 31). Thinking of institutions as regimes of practices, that are held together by encounters, connections, and plays of forces, opens possibilities for unsettling the power relations that institutional authorities seek to impose. Fault lines are revealed; the edifice of the "neoliberal university" stands to be shaken.

Normative writings on ethical leadership are not usually framed around actions of refusal. Foucault's critique in sharp contrast flags "the art of voluntary insubordination" as part of being ethical. It is a call "to refuse to be governed thusly," "... like that, by these people, at this prices (Foucault, 1997 in Lemke, 2011, p. 33). The dangers involved in such an undertaking did not go uncommented; Foucault wrote persuasively about embracing risk by questioning established norms and having the 'audacity to expose oneself as a subject'" (p. 33). Critique, in short, involves questioning one's own ontological status through processes of self-distancing and self-examination. Performing critique, though, presents problems for those exercising executive leadership. The academic manager has been quick to comply with the values, aims, and routines more commonly associated with the corporate world than that of the university.

In the remainder of this chapter, the practices that define the world-class university are problematized to open up imaginative spaces for ethical leadership. By tracing the policy configurations which have constructed international education, it is possible to read the international student experience as "the canary in the coalmine." International education markets have sponsored forms of normativity that have reached the wider student body, exposing them to the vicissitudes of the market, to hardship and social inequality. Universities are in a strong position to promote alternative modes of international education, and to reject, or at the very last mediate the values of corporate capitalism. From the payment of commissions to education agents, shrouded in commercial-in-confidence agreements, to partnerships with questionable private sector bodies, and to the inflated wages of its leaders, the ethical conduct of universities has been under scrutiny for some time (ABC, 2015; Jayasuriya, 2020).

By using problematization as a tool, a number of practices undertaken by Australian universities can be interrogated. Universities invested heavily in



recruitment and marketing activities, above and beyond supporting the teaching, learning, and pastoral care of international students. Efforts in internationalizing the curriculum have been notably sluggish and piecemeal, making it difficult for socially immersive and participatory pedagogical teaching. Fee structures were three to four times greater for international students compared to domestic student, placing burdens on Asia's middle classes, where most students were drawn from. Large class sizes and heavy workloads meant many academics were constrained in their teaching of and learning from international students (ABC, 2015). Racialized tropes disguised system-wide problems; the "problem" was located instead in the "calculating," instrumentally driven Asian student seeking to "purchase" a degree. The international student came to be seen as an oppressive force, subjecting exhausted academics to plagiarized prose; their very presence seen as harmful to the revered reputation of the university. International students have also been considered victims, the objects of compassion and pity, lacking agency and necessitating ever more support, placing further demands on institutional resources (Indelicato, 2018). Problematization relocates the failures of accountability, away from the least powerful – the individual international student – onto to Australia's institutions. Through problematization, opportunities are opened to build solidarity with the cultural other, the international student.

Similarly, problematization uncovers the assumptions implicit in university-industry partnerships. One set of assumptions concerns the role of experts and their expertise. Experts are expected to *serve* industry and the national economy. Epistemologies are valued for their utility to industry, placing science and technology-oriented disciplines ahead of other disciplines in order of importance. University promotion systems are designed to reward service to industry. As revealed by the Fukushima disaster, experts were rewarded for supporting the objectives of Japan's energy industry. They also received recognition from the state for enabling techno-nationalism. In performing this role, other responsibilities fell aside, for example, being a critical public intellectual. A starting point for ethical and intellectual leadership would require universities to support different expertise, discursively and materially, such that different fields of knowledge might flourish.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Many universities strive or claim for themselves an "international" status. They point to various international engagements, the recruitment of international students, the presence of international faculty, and an "online" presence. Rarely are international universities examined for their commitment to civic contributions, both to national societies and to distant others. A study of leadership under conditions of crisis present opportunities to revive the importance of the civic functions of universities. Problematization and involuntary subordination can act as correctives to the normative, managed, and corporatized international university. Too many university leaders have played into the logics of competition and choice, claiming that their



institutions' survival has demanded their complicity (Loveday, 2021). Many have allowed their institutions to be censored by market need; what is difficult, innovative, or intellectually or aesthetically demanding has been easily discarded. Refusing such leadership may be a step in the right direction. For, "an easily governed university is no university at all" (Boulton and Lucas, 2011, p. 2515).

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# Devolution, Disruption, and Denigration

# 7

## The Common Good and Education Markets

Sean M. Baser , Matt T. Dean , and Amy E. Stich

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### Abstract

This chapter provides a wide-sweeping overview of the evolution of the education marketplace and the devolution of the common good values of public education. In doing so, it aims to highlight the market-based mechanisms that have accelerated the development of the contemporary neoliberal education system – a system that has grown increasingly removed from the early goal of serving the public good. This chapter places an emphasis upon the consequences for K-20 leadership and why these issues should receive sustained, targeted attention to reimagine a more equitable, democratic future of education.

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**Keywords**

Education markets · Leadership · Common good · Public education · Privatization · Neoliberalism · Politics of education · Social change · Collectivism · Individualism

**The Field of Memory**

The values, structures, and ideas of American education and the market largely originated from Enlightenment thinkers. Religious denominations – Catholics, Quakers, Anglicans, and Puritans – were an essential force behind the purposes and structure of the educational market. The American founders brought new educational purposes in civic virtue, the common good, and vocational training, which would be carried forward in the common and normal school movements. Industrialization and the Civil War led to new purposes and the expansion of compulsory education. The progressive era that followed advanced the often-competing goals of efficiency and democratic and child-centered education. As the economy and the state's role therein evolved following World War II, so too did the economy as consumerism, economic efficiency, and market-based reforms began to emerge.

**The Field of Presence**

Several terms have been used to describe the all-pervasive market-related discourse that cuts across contemporary K-12 and postsecondary education. Marketization, commercialization, commodification, corporatization, financialization, and privatization all signal massive shifts that have contributed to the transformation of education into a neoliberal field of presence. These forces have shaped the US education system into an expansive but highly stratified field in which consumers compete for education as a private, valuable form of capital. Within such a system, wherein access and inequality grow, leadership faces several competing challenges to institutional survival and serving the common good.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Education's market orientation has been heavily influenced by many disciplines, among them economics, business, sociology, political science, and anthropology. The global public management revolution and New Public Management principles have been embraced by educational leaders and policymakers to improve the standing of schools and colleges in the market. Policymakers and leaders have adopted the market-based reforms, business structures, and practices championed by Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and other neoliberal economists – all to compete in a *free* market.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Though much about our public system of education has remained intact over time, including the notion that education is a common good, discontinuities have developed alongside this early belief put forth during the common school era. This chapter

illustrates that market influence has shaped public education from its early inception but was not apparent as an explicit force until the emergence of neoliberalism and market-based reforms of the post-war era.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The devolution of public education in the name of the market is based on several imperfect assumptions, including the most efficient and effective market is a free market in which competition and deregulation produce innovation and support the common good. Yet, these assumptions presume a perfectly free market in which leaders, parents, and students are rational consumers with information operating in a marketplace. The market not only fails to address the inequities in education but also reproduces them at all levels.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter examines how market-based efforts have devolved, disrupted, and denigrated public education and the common good in the United States; how educational leaders (tacitly) support and challenge the threats to public education; and why these issues should receive sustained, targeted attention to reimagine a more equitable, democratic future of education. This chapter focuses on the evolution of the values, rationales, structures, and reforms of formal education markets in the United States, underscoring the implications for state-supported education and the devolution of education's position as a common good. The chapter ends with a discussion on several contemporary market-based challenges facing K-20 leadership.

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## **The Evolution of Education Markets in the United States**

American education has long been characterized as a series of interconnected markets of formal, informal, and nonformal types of education. This chapter draws upon a sociopolitical foundation to define education markets as the social structures, arenas, institutions, and arrangements that facilitate the exchange of education (i.e., knowledge, information, training) between parties (Dill, 1997; Fligstein & Dauter, 2007; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In recent years, education markets have been conceptualized as a convoluted system of institutions (schools, colleges, and universities), consumers (students and parents), workers (teachers, faculty, administrators, and staff), the state (local, state, and federal governments), corporations, and other organizations (Levin & Belfield, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Market-based reforms have been the central point of contention. Pro-market advocates argue the marketplace is the most effective way to provide education, whereas critics contend these shifts impact equity, public education, and education's promotion of the common good.

Although education's status as a common, private, and public good is constantly changing with the market (Dorn, 2017; Marginson, 2016), this chapter focuses on

how the recent market provision of education has affected the common good values of education. Herein, common goods refer to collective political goods with qualities of shared community, such as democracy, equality, equity, and knowledge.

In higher education, the market encompasses the for-profit behavior of colleges as well as “institutional and faculty competition for monies, whether these are from external grants and contracts, endowment funds, university-industry partnerships, institutional investment in professors’ spin-off companies, student tuition and fees, or some other revenue-generating activity” (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001, p. 154). K-12 education has also felt the full force of the market and market-based reforms, including the adoption of government performance regimes, shifts in curriculum, voucher programs, charter schools, and tuition tax credits (Apple, 2000; Labaree, 2010; Levin & Belfield, 2003). In K-12 and higher education, the education marketplace has evolved alongside a set of ever-changing values, structures, and rationales of schooling. Indeed, education markets have been heavily influenced by educational stakeholders internal to operations, in addition to external political, social, and commercial interests. Ultimately, these shifts have significant implications for equity and education’s role as a common good.

## Origins of the Education Market

The roots of American educational thought and the market can be traced back to Europe, Mesopotamia, and beyond. In Western thought, education, as a concept, is inexorably linked with the concept of the polis. Questions exploring education and the role of the state have been asked in one form or another in philosophical thought dating back to the Hellenic states. In *The Republic*, Plato lays out a foundational argument for the place of education in society, including the idea of enlightened philosopher kings who value knowledge, concepts of civic virtue, and the allegory of the cave (Lawton & Gordon, 2002/2019). Though divergence existed on pedagogy and the purpose of education, the underpinnings and values of the current educational marketplace can already be perceived in the different educational practices of the Greek city-states. For example, the Athenians viewed education as a central element to democratic citizenship, whereas the Spartans valued education for its practical, military training (Lawton & Gordon, 2002/2019).

The Catholic Church was integral to the expansion of the educational marketplace. Contemporary universities emerged out of a “need for institutions to educate priests and monks when it was considered by the Church authorities or other leaders that the monastic or cathedral schools were not providing education at a sufficiently high standard for future clerics and administrators” (Lawton & Gordon, 2002/2019, p. 52). The Church’s influence on education traditions, purposes, and markets in Western educational history is evident throughout the classical antiquity and medieval periods, including monastic education, scholasticism, and the development of medieval universities in Europe.

The Scientific Revolution and thinkers like Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes laid the groundwork for an Age of Reason. The Enlightenment was a move away from dogmatic faith toward empirical, rationalist thought and helped to establish the Western understanding of law, property, and liberty (Locke & Filmer, 1689/1884). Empirical experimentation and education served as the primary mechanisms of promoting reason and freedom. Several notable Enlightenment thinkers greatly influenced the American educational marketplace.

Aligning with other empiricists in the Enlightenment era, John Locke wrote on the role education should play in developing reasoned and free citizens. As Lawton and Gordon (2002/2019) highlight, Locke emphasized “the importance of ‘environment’ rather than ‘heredity’ in education” (pp. 83–84). In other words, a child’s brain begins as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, that can be molded with practical education and different experiences to build character and instill particular virtues (Locke, 1689). Locke understood children as living in a state of nature, who could not yet have the capacity for consent and self-determination of their freedoms within the law (Locke & Filmer, 1689/1884).

Education was a careful balancing act of fostering a free and engaged mind while also instituting enough control to develop strong habits and build character. Consequently, Locke emphasized the role of the parent and teachers in the education of children. Locke also published ideas around the purposes and forms of education. He believed that the purpose of education lies partly in developing one’s vocation, particularly for poor children. For instance, Baldwin (1913) writes that Locke “advance[d] ideas on object teaching, manual training, trade schools, and school gardening, [though] he neglect[ed] the cultural subjects of arts and music” (p. 187). Ultimately, Locke’s influence on education is best characterized by his understanding of child development and the role of vocational learning, which became instrumental in the development of the Common School Movement and the American educational marketplace.

Although both men developed similar thoughts regarding the importance of education on a child’s upbringing, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s departure from Locke can be found in his approach to the provision of education. In *Emile*, Rousseau initially “advocated a child-centred approach to education rather than a teacher-centred or curriculum-centred programme. The teacher’s task was to observe the child, identify needs and provide experiences to meet those needs” (Lawton & Gordon, 2002/2019, p. 95). While his early beliefs favored learning as an activity free from society’s evils, Rousseau later advocated for the state’s right to educate its citizenry in a manner it deemed appropriate to fulfill the social contract (Rousseau, Dunn, & May, 2002).

Adam Smith further built upon these two views to argue for the public provision of a compulsory education system with private contributions. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith (1776/1976) argued that “the education of the common people requires, perhaps, in a civilised and commercial society the attention of the public more than that of people of some rank and fortune” (p. 419). It led Smith to support a quasi-public educational market. As Viner (1927) describes, “Smith supports the participation of the government in the general education of the people, because it



will help prepare them for industry, will make them better citizens and better soldiers, and happier and healthier men in mind and body” (p. 227).

These Enlightenment thinkers offer an early glimpse of two fundamental trains of thought that frame the ongoing debate over the purpose of education and the state’s role in the education marketplace. Locke’s perspective on the inalienable right of individuals and education as training and Rousseau’s ideas on the transference of individual rights for the common good are foundational to the American education market. Additionally, Smith’s *invisible hand* and advancement of deregulating markets heavily influenced contemporary market-based reforms in education. Enlightenment thinking sparked an education transformation by effectively setting the stage for education’s role to support the common good in a burgeoning democratic nation.

## The Beginnings of the Education Marketplace in America

The colonial education system was a hodgepodge of regional and religiously based forms of education, with the most developed systems (e.g., Puritans and Quakers) in the Northeast and the least developed in the South. For Puritans, education served to teach children, who were viewed as inherently bad, how to behave and read the Bible to fulfill their covenant with God, receive salvation, and improve society. In contrast, the Quakers embraced William Penn’s Frame of Government, which had provisions requiring “all parents to provide their young with elementary learning to address spiritual concerns” and “vocational education opportunities” (Lauderdale, 1987, p. 12). Concurrent with centuries of colonization worldwide, the ideas embedded within Penn’s thinking served as an essential development in the state’s role in supporting a more equitable education marketplace.

Early colonial education, specifically higher education, was rooted in Puritan and Anglican parochial training and a classical curriculum (Thelin, 2019). For example, Harvard University was founded to train ministers, and the College of William & Mary expanded the purpose of education to disseminating their Anglican teachings upon the Native Americans. The colonial colleges adopted their curriculum, residential structure, and other traditions from the fifteenth through eighteenth century British and European universities, an early indicator of a global nature of the education marketplace.

Although religious schooling continued to influence a budding educational marketplace, the founders shifted the rationale by incorporating Enlightenment thinking into a new republican ideal. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, and Noah Webster, among others, all expressed the importance of education in the developing nation. Combining Locke and Rousseau’s ideas, Jefferson considered schooling as an important check and balance to republicanism, yet he also viewed the state as the appropriate provider of education to the masses. Like Jefferson, Rush described the need for a new form of education to ensure the viability and longevity of the burgeoning republican form of government. Rush (1786/1965) declared:

The business of education has acquired a new complexion by the independence of our country. The form of government we have assumed has created a new class of duties to every American. It becomes us, therefore, to examine our former habits upon this subject, and in laying the foundations for nurseries of wise and good men, to adapt our modes of teaching to the peculiar form of our government. (p. 9)

Franklin viewed education in the new nation as a chance to move beyond aristocratic traditions, with an opportunity for social mobility based on meritocratic ideals. Franklin (1749) wrote:

Something seems wanting in America to incite and stimulate Youth to Study. In Europe the Encouragements to Learning are of themselves much greater than can be given here. Whoever distinguishes himself there, in either of the three learned Professions, gains Fame, and often Wealth and Power: a poor Man's Son has a Chance, if he studies hard, to rise, either in the Law or the Church, to gainful Offices or Benefices; to an extraordinary Pitch of Grandeur; to have a voice in Parliament, a seat among the Peers; as a Statesman or first Minister to govern Nations, and even to mix his Blood with Princes.

The ideas and practices of the enlightenment, colonial, and early national periods laid the foundation for an American education system marked by a public-private nexus as well as liberal and vocational forms of education. It established the need for a reasoned (white) citizenry to support a democratic republic and combat the dogmas of religious monarchies of the past.

## The Making of an American Education System

The rise of widespread state-based schooling emerged in the early and mid-nineteenth century. As a response to a fast-growing market economy and the desire to preserve the Protestant republic, the Common School Movement aimed to strengthen a citizenry and “train the rising generation in morality, citizenship, and the basic skills represented by the three Rs” (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001, p. 529). The newly formed free and public institutions would constitute what Horace Mann referred to as the “great equalizer” by providing “equality of educational opportunity that would lead in turn to fair competition in the quest for achievement in later life” (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 530). Although the market was not central to the Common School Movement's rhetoric, it would be central to shifting the narrative toward the relationship between public education and social mobility. As Labaree (2010) argues,

Compelled by the need to survive and the ambition to thrive in a market economy, citizens quickly began to think of education as something more than a politically desirable way to preserve the republic; they also saw it as a way to get ahead in society. (p. 20)

Common schools, however, were not common to all. Indeed, “the desire to establish public schools as a means of creating a common culture was heightened by increased immigration” and was, “in part, an attempt to halt the drift toward a

multicultural society” (Spring, 2018, p. 106). Protestant fears of “minority” cultures drove the Common School Movement as Spring (2018) contends:

Self-proclaimed protectors of Protestant Anglo-American culture worried about the Irish immigrants streaming ashore, the growing numbers of enslaved Africans, and the racial violence occurring in northern cities between freed Africans and whites. Also during the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson implemented his final solution for acquiring the lands of the southern Indians by forcing the tribes off their lands and removing them to an area west of the Mississippi. The Indian removal was called the “Trail of Tears.” Upon completion of this forced removal, the government was to ‘civilize’ the southern tribes through a system of segregated schools. (p. 146)

By 1879, the federal government opened its first boarding school, which led to the coercion and forcible removal of Native American children from their homes to assimilate them into the Protestant Anglo-American culture (Spring, 2018). Thus, as early public schooling formed during the common school era and rapidly expanded under a discourse of increased access, inequality of opportunity and outcome defined its foundation. Arguably, this was partly due to a growing market rationale that shifted the value of education from a common good to a private good (Labaree, 2010).

Within higher education, the Morrill Act of 1862 helped establish land-grant institutions – the nation’s “people’s” colleges that “still serve as a metonym for the promises and potentials of public higher education” (Stein, 2020, p. 212). As an early expansion of access to higher education, states were provided federal land to establish and maintain at least one college that would provide educational opportunities to learn the “practical arts alongside ‘other scientific and classical studies’” (Geiger & Sorber, 2013, p. x). However, some have argued the “land grant mission serves as a foil to critique the relationship between education and corporate interests” which “works counter to the larger social good by perpetuating a consumer society that creates a two-tiered economic structure, constructs more barriers to access, and more efficiently destroys environments” (Brown, 2003, p. 328). Notably, several scholars have challenged romanticized views of the land-grant university as primarily motivated by hegemonic economic interests (Brown, 2003; Geiger & Sorber, 2013) and colonial conquest of indigenous peoples and lands (Stein, 2020) rather than reinforce the rhetoric associated with egalitarian ideas for increasing access to higher education. As Stein (2020) asserts, “the ‘public good’ of land-grant institutions depended from the outset on profits made from capitalist markets and thus on processes of continuous accumulation” (p. 216). Indeed, both the Common School Movement and Industrialization, a primary antecedent of the Morrill Acts, moved education toward an increasingly stratified market. Widespread social inequities persisted in education throughout the Common School Movement and the Industrial Revolution.

Significant changes to the American education market occurred in the nineteenth century. In higher education, the Dartmouth Case clarified the public and private postsecondary education market. Many education reforms of the era embraced the egalitarian and democratic ideals of Penn, Franklin, and Jefferson

(Lauderdale, 1987). Education leaders, such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, advocated for a “universal” education during the Common School Movement, which affirmed the “state’s responsibility for tax-supported elementary education” (Guttek, 1970, p. 77). These efforts were furthered by westward expansion, urbanization, and commercialization, which led to the proliferation of schools offering more practical and vocational education. The education market expanded for women with Normal School movements for teaching led by Catherine Beecher and others. While formal education opportunities for Black Americans were limited, particularly in the South, the prospects began to (sluggishly and not without major challenges) improve following the Civil War. Education was viewed both as an equalizing tool of social mobility and as a way to prepare citizens for an industrialized and capitalist economy. This philosophical distinction between practical and classical education that emerged in the Colonial era continued to shape the structure of the education market into the Progressive era.

## The Progressive Era

Several social movements and reforms had implications for the marketplace in the first half of the twentieth century, including the widespread proliferation of compulsory public education, the expansion of the American high school, and the progressive movement. As the public education system expanded with the development of the public high school, “educational consumerism emerged as an unintended consequence of the invention of public high school in the nineteenth century” (Labaree, 2010, p. 21). Using Central High School, established in 1838 in Philadelphia, as a case study of the development of educational consumerism, Labaree (2010) argues that this early American high school:

introduced a form of educational distinction that was highly visible (Central was the only school of its kind in a large city), culturally legitimate (it was open to anyone who could meet its academic standards), and scarce (it offered a degree to only one in a hundred of the students entering the school system). These characteristics made a Central diploma quite valuable as a way for students to distinguish themselves from peers. . . . But by the 1890s, when growing clerical and managerial jobs created a market for high school graduates, the enormous political demand for access forced the school system to expand from two high schools (Central and its female counterpart) to a whole system of community high schools throughout the city. The newcomers ended up in the lower tracks of the newly expanded high school while the students from the high school’s older, middle-class constituency ended up in upper tracks, which helped accommodate both access and advantage in the same school. (pp. 21–22)

Propelled by increased demand, the expansion of secondary schools, and an efficiency rationale during the Progressive era, schooling became increasingly stratified between and *within* schools – moving students into particular academic or vocational tracks to take their appropriate place within the labor market. Segregation within and between schools was ushered along by the intensification of the market economy and corresponding shifts in public education that soon functioned

as a zero-sum game (Labaree, 2010). Thus, the structure of this efficient system “was geared to produce failure” for students from low-income and minoritized backgrounds (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 531).

As a strand of the larger progressive movement, particular progressive reformers built upon and broadened the appeal of John Dewey’s experimentalist and instrumentalist philosophy of education (Guttek, 1970) and continued a tradition of rejecting a classical curriculum. With progressive reform efforts seeking to broaden the school’s role, education became a crucial mechanism of political, social, and economic progress. In addition to a vocational curriculum, this strand of the larger progressive movement argued for a more democratic classroom where the “teachers were seen as guides rather than taskmaster; and they were held responsible for the emotional, physical, cognitive, and psychological well-being of children” (Lauderdale, 1987, p. 21).

The impact of these reforms took years to materialize, and efforts faced stiff opposition by essentialists, such as William Chandler Bagley and Isaac Kandel. Guttek (1970) explains that for essentialists, “the most efficient means of cultivating an intelligent citizenry was by systematically training its children in the basic subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, history, English, and foreign languages” (p. 199). This debate represents another example of a tussle around the purpose and forms of education in the marketplace. The essentialist arguments align more closely with a classical curriculum, whereas some progressives continue a tradition of promoting a practical education that allows children to explore their interests and direct their learning freely and independently.

## Post-War Period

Following World War II, the education market expanded as President Roosevelt and Congress used higher education as a tool to help soldiers reintegrate into the labor market (Thelin, 2019). For example, the inclusion of educational benefits within the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill, helped to facilitate the postsecondary education system’s massification. This massification led to an increase in access, shifting postsecondary education from a privilege of the elite to something available for the broader population. While postsecondary enrollments ballooned, the benefits of the G.I. Bill and massification continued to exclude Black Americans and other underserved populations. The call for increased participation and equity in education was furthered when President Truman’s Presidential Commission on Higher Education released *Higher Education for American Democracy* in 1947, which “devoted substantial attention to the public community college” (Thelin, 2019, p. 269).

The federal government embraced an important nationalization role in the 1940s and 1950s. The success of large-scale applied research projects on the war effort had a profound effect on the mission and funding of higher education, including the creation of the National Science Foundation (Thelin, 2019). In 1957, Sputnik’s launch created a national fervor by highlighting the disparity between United States and Soviet technological advancements. This, along with the growing escalation of

the Cold War, further entrenched federal dollars within the higher education marketplace with the passage of the National Defense Education Act.

Amid growing attention to civil rights and existing social inequalities, questions surrounding access to educational opportunities that would allow for social mobility were of growing public importance. In the post-war era, the push for a more equitable, integrated education system was partly made using consumerist principles that involved notions of individual opportunity (Labaree, 2010). For example, in challenging “separate but equal” schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, Labaree (2010) cites remarks made by Chief Justice Warren that emphasize the role of public schools in facilitating individual social mobility:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments...[I]t is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. (pp. 28–29)

This emphasis upon the role of public schooling in individual social mobility (as a private good) captures a market-based shift in rhetoric from the original political purpose of public education in the common school era – that is, strengthen the larger citizenry (for the good of all). As Labaree (2010) writes,

For the desegregation movement, schools were critically important as a mechanism of social opportunity. Their purpose was to promote social mobility. Politics was just a means by which one could demand access to this attractive educational commodity. In this sense, then, *Brown* depicted education as a private good, whose benefits go to the degree holder and not to the society as a whole. (p. 30)

Thus, equitable education was driven by a market rationale, with the individual consumer pursuing education as a private good. However, within an education system driven by competition and built upon a foundation of racial segregation and inequality, the individual consumer would never be created equal.

The federal government’s role in education markets continued to expand throughout the 1960s. Education was crucial in the war on poverty, including President Johnson’s Great Society programs, which had the ambitious goals of eliminating poverty and racial injustice. For example, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided substantial federal funds to support minoritized and low-income students at schools, colleges, and universities. The Job Corps, Federal Pell Grant, TRIO, and Head Start programs were all established during the ‘60s. These programs perfectly illustrate the paradox of the emerging education marketplace in America. On one hand, the federal government was nationalizing education with an influx of funding and programs to support access, research, and equity. On the other hand, many of the programs also characterized students as consumers within a marketplace, a philosophy that continued to grow in influence over the next few decades.

## Contemporary Thinking on the Education Markets

Following several decades of an ever-growing state-based and publicly supported education system, the 1980s ushered in a new period for American education exemplified by the growing prominence of market-based reforms and systems of education (Dill, 1997; Levin & Belfield, 2003). This transformation emerged for several reasons, including the perceived failure of the public education system, the role that played in America's competitiveness in the new global economy, and an embracing of neoliberalism by governments, corporations, and other organizations. Following Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, his administration chartered the US National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1981 led by Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell. The Commission released its historical report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, which is perhaps the most tangible mark of the monumental shift in American education. Much like Sputnik, *A Nation at Risk* put education in the national spotlight and framed the issue around global economic competitiveness. Yet, the competition was not against the Soviets or a single country, but rather with a "global village." *A Nation at Risk* declared that America's schools were of low quality and failing to meet a competitive workforce's needs, thus needing substantial reform. Recommendations included strengthening graduation requirements and expectations at schools and colleges and increasing accountability.

*A Nation at Risk* was partially the result of an alliance between neoliberal and neoconservative movements on education, aiming to provide the "educational conditions believed necessary both for increasing international competitiveness, profit, and discipline and for returning us to a romanticized past of the 'ideal home,' family, and school" (Apple, 1993, p. 227). Apple (2000) characterizes the goals of the "conservative modernization" of education as:

The dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside the school; the lowering of people's expectations for economic security; the "disciplining" of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of Social Darwinist thinking. (Apple, 2000, p. 3)

In addition to the neoconservative movement, neoliberalism and complementary theories (e.g., agency theory and human capital theory) have been the preeminent perspectives used by policymakers and academics to advance and explain the market discourse of education. In its simplest form, neoliberalism is a political-economic philosophy that suggests "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). With a foundation in economic liberalism, rational choice, and human capital theory (Friedman, 1962; Harvey, 2005; Spring, 2018), neoliberalism advances market-based policies and practices driven by individualism, consumerism, and the notion that the prosperity of society depends on the competition and innovation that only a free market can produce. It represents a revival of classical



economic liberalism, albeit with several differences. For example, classical economic liberalism advances a laissez-faire approach to the market, with the government primarily protecting life and property. However, neoliberalism embraces contradiction, using government as a tool to enact and implement policies to support a free market.

Numerous politicians, academics, and authors helped to encourage this educational shift toward the market during the post-war era, including Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, Ronald Reagan, and Ayn Rand. None had a more significant impact than Friedman. Friedman was a key figure in the emergence of the second Chicago school of economics, which rejected Keynesian economics and advanced a neoclassical school of thought based on “a deep commitment to rigorous scholarship and open academic debate, an uncompromising belief in the usefulness and insight of neoclassical price theory, and a normative position that favors and promotes economic liberalism and free markets” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 133). The Chicago school of thought’s pro-market values were embraced by politicians and policymakers across the United States, particularly in education.

Friedman was a major proponent of neoliberal education policies, such as school vouchers, parental choice, merit-based pay, and shifting subsidies away from colleges and toward individuals to be spent at the institution of their choosing (Friedman, 1962; Spring, 2018). Friedman wrote extensively on vouchers and the role of government in his classic text, *Capitalism and Freedom*. On vouchers and parental choice, Friedman states, “governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on ‘approved’ educational services” (Friedman, 1962, pp. 77–78). Friedman went further, suggesting denationalizing schooling would offer consumers (parents) greater choice:

Denationalizing schooling would widen the range of choice available to parents. If, as at present, parents can send their children to public schools without special payment, very few can or will send them to other schools unless they too are subsidized. Parochial schools are at a disadvantage in not getting any of the public funds devoted to schooling, but they have the compensating advantage of being run by institutions that are willing to subsidize them and can raise funds to do so. There are few other sources of subsidies for private schools. If present public expenditures on schooling were made available to parents regardless of where they send their children, a wide variety of schools would spring up to meet the demand. Parents could express their views about schools directly by withdrawing their children from 1 school and sending them to another, to a much greater extent than is now possible. (p. 79)

Friedman’s advocacy of consumerism and competition extended into the higher education market as well. Friedman (1962) suggested the following about college subsidies and the implications for competition:

Any subsidy should be granted to individuals to be spent at institutions of their own choosing, provided only that the schooling is of a kind that it is desired to subsidize. Any government schools that are retained should charge fees covering educational costs and so compete on an equal level with non-government-supported schools. . . . The adoption of such arrangements would make for more effective competition among various types of schools



and for a more efficient utilization of their resources. It would eliminate the pressure for direct government assistance to private colleges and universities and thus preserve their full independence and diversity at the same time as it enabled them to grow relative to state institutions. (p. 85)

Friedman and other neoliberal academics and policymakers were highly influential in shifting the discourse around education markets and market-based reforms. This thinking departed from earlier paradigms that valued a prominent state in the nationalization of the education marketplace. The advancement of market-oriented reforms in education occurred alongside a global public management revolution. For instance, Hursh (2007) discusses the implications of market-based education reforms within the rise of global neoliberal policies that promote the private good:

The shift toward promoting corporate over social welfare redefines the relationship between the individual and society. Because governments are less responsible for the welfare of the individual, the individual becomes responsible for him or herself. As Peters (1994) described, within neoliberal societies the goal becomes creating the competitive, instrumentally rational individual who can compete in the marketplace. Not only does society become less responsible for individual welfare but also, as Marx observed, under market systems workers, which includes all those who must sell their labor to survive, are reduced to commodities. Under market-oriented education systems, students and teachers also become commodities. (pp. 17–18)

Despite the prominence of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology in academic writings and government policies and practices, detractors have suggested neoliberalism has significant implications for the common good, equity, and equal access to education. Theorists have embraced a range of perspectives to understand the implications of neoliberalism, including Marxist, neo-Marxist, neo-institutional, political-economy, social movement, accountability regimes, and elite theories, among other sociological and political theories (Giroux, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Contemporary discussions about neoliberalism and the market are often framed in relation to the state. Some scholars have argued the intertwining of the state, market, and professional systems have led to a neoliberal state. Concentrating on how external actors and networks interact to initiate change in higher education, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) posit the theory of academic capitalism to explain universities' integration with the new, political economy, which has served as one of the preeminent theories about higher education markets and the knowledge economy (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Slaughter (2014) summarizes the theory of academic capitalism:

[It] attempts to tease out the ways in which new institutional and organizational structures that link state agencies, corporations, and universities develop to take advantage of the openings provided by the neoliberal state to move toward the market. Segments of all sectors—state agencies, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and universities—are involved. Universities are not simply acted upon by outside forces. Segments of the university, including faculty, administrators, and students, embrace market activity and its associated competition, while other segments are resistant (or neglected).

Despite the historical position of markets in American education, the market's role in formal American education has expanded following decades of neoliberal reforms advancing free-market competition, privatization, deregulation, and marketization principles within public education, governments, and other inter-related markets (Giroux, 2014; Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism, which has been positioned as the dominant socioeconomic paradigm in education over the past 40 years, has refocused the market to commodify education and value the private (individual) benefits over the public (society) benefits of formal education. It has cultivated an education system that values market-based reforms seeded in accountability, competition, and free markets. It encouraged state disinvestment, the contracting out of services, and the rise of academic capitalism.

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## **Educational Leadership in the Contemporary Marketplace**

Within the contemporary market-like conditions of education, leaders face a continuous onslaught of challenges related to, competition, doing more with less, and often, survival. Across all sectors, several shared mechanisms function to produce these market-like behaviors. Although it is beyond the scope of one chapter to capture a comprehensive analysis of all mechanisms at work across the US education system, this section discusses a few contemporary market-related forces that continue to challenge K-20 leadership and why these issues should receive sustained, targeted attention to reimagine a more equitable, democratic future of education.

### **Accountability Regimes: Performance-Based Funding**

The pursuit of excellence has led to numerous performance-based policies implemented in K-12 education. Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, performance-based accountability policies were eulogized as a solution to America's failing schools, a notion that corresponds to the larger accountability movement within the field of public administration. Accountability-centered reforms have increasingly used output measures (e.g., student achievement outcomes) to hold teachers and schools accountable, a striking shift from previous eras in which inputs (e.g., resources) were the primary consideration. Policymakers have employed top-down, performance-based accountability approaches to evaluate and hold schools accountable for performance. Schools and districts have been required to meet certain state and federal performance thresholds or face sanctions. Controversial sanctions have included reductions in state support, the removal or transfer of ineffective teachers, and the ultimate closure of schools that have consistently performed poorly. These reforms have stymied teacher autonomy in the classroom as the focus is placed on meeting state and federal performance requirements. It has led to "teaching to the test" and the eradication of teacher professionalization.

As K-12 leaders continue to face accountability regimes that regulate teaching and learning, dominate policymaking, and are closely linked to institutional competition and survival, so too do postsecondary leaders. As Mehta (2014) argues, over time, “calls for accountability in both sectors have intensified” (p. 882). In fact, K-12 leaders are no longer alone in the struggle for performance-based funding as universities and colleges are increasingly “subject to pressures from policymakers to improve their performance” (Kelchen, 2018, p. 702). In the 1980s and 1990s, higher education became subject to what was deemed a “new accountability” movement that linked funding and resource allocation to institutional performance (McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006). In K-12, high-stakes testing and other outcomes-based or performance-related accountability measures have long been criticized for exacerbating racial and class-based inequality. Within higher education, the same critique has been made (Dougherty & Natow, 2020). Notably, this shared mechanism presents persisting challenges for leaders, particularly for those serving students of color and encountering tensions between meeting the goals of equity-based institutional missions and the requirements of performance-based funding.

### **Accountability Regimes: Rankings**

The competitive nature of the accountability regime in education has also led to an influx of and greater reliance on ranking systems, both public and private. In K-12 education, many states have implemented A-F grading scales or ranking systems to accompany their performance-based accountability efforts. In higher education, rankings have become an integral aspect of the education marketplace, particularly non-public ranking systems, such as U.S. News and World Reports. Rankings may, to varying degrees, serve as an indicator for institutional quality for students, parents, and employers. Importantly, they influence institutional practices around admissions, tuition, and financial aid as college leaders are rewarded for accepting wealthier and better prepared high school students. Consequently, ranking systems have exacerbated concerns around stratification and limits on social mobility because traditionally underserved and minoritized populations are tracked into community and technical colleges.

Rankings have long drawn the ire of higher education scholars as a poor way to measure institutional quality. Despite the many criticisms of ranking systems, they are likely to remain an integral part of higher education through the foreseeable future. They have certainly shifted institutional priorities and practices as colleges and universities compete in a globalized academic arms race. Scholars and ranking organizations should emphasize that these rankings are rough estimates and consider different indicators of institutional quality. When possible, institutional leaders should reject competitive norms and embrace the values that best fit their institution’s needs. For ranking systems to hold value, a reevaluation of criteria is needed to improve validity and move away from arbitrary popularity contests. This likely means increasing the focus on what happens during college rather than the admissions’ process, the aspect that college leaders have most control over.

## Intermediaries, New Philanthropy, and Neoliberal Reforms in Education

There is also evidence of the rise of intermediary organizations across all sectors (Cantwell, 2018; DeBray, Hanley, Scott, & Lubienski, 2020; Orphan, Laderman, & Gildersleeve, 2018). Intermediary organizations are “boundary spanning” groups that translate, mediate, and connect two principal actors, such as state policymakers and school district personnel or academic researchers and philanthropists. Intermediary organizations serve a number of functions, including building capacity, overseeing network design and operations, providing technical assistance and coaching, facilitating collaboration between intermediaries, and communicating and advocating for initiatives. In education, intermediary organizations focus on numerous issues that move education toward the market, including postsecondary student success (e.g., pathways, predictive analytics, advising, equitable outcomes) and K-12 reforms (e.g., charters and vouchers). Intermediary organizations emerge in many forms, such as foundations, state higher education agencies, advocacy organizations, think tanks, and interest groups. In recent years, philanthropic foundations and affiliated intermediary organizations have pushed a powerful agenda in K-12 and postsecondary education.

Within K-12, “intermediary networks (IONs) have been instrumental in producing and disseminating research to advance agendas of K-12 school vouchers, choice and charter schools” (Aydarova, 2020, p. 2) – all of which constitute significant market-based, neoliberal educational reform efforts. As influential *invisible hands*, IONs also connect corporate, market-based interests to the postsecondary level. For example, Slaughter (2014) argues, “philanthropic policy organizations often intermediate among public, nonprofit, and private sectors to initiate policy that facilitates the entrepreneurial activity of universities” (p. 12). These activities include “university funding of research parks and incubators as well as curricula and student market activity; for example, e-learning and recruitment of full-fees-paying overseas students, academic tourism” (p. 12). Still, other philanthropies provide funding to universities and think-tanks to produce research that facilitates the entrepreneurial activity for the corporate interests of the foundation. For example, the Koch family foundations funded a network of institutions, organizations, and intermediaries to support the interests of their company, Koch Industries. This network targeted limited government, personal and corporate tax cuts, fewer social welfare programs, and rollbacks in government regulations (*viz.*, environmental protections).

Venture philanthropists, as part of a powerful political economy, have contributed largely to the reshaping of urban schooling. Lipman (2015), among others (deMarrais, Brewer, Herron, Atkinson, & Lewis, 2019; Saltman, 2009), argues that “entrepreneurial corporate philanthropy is a leading force reshaping public education in the USA” (p. 241) and places emphasis upon the inequality-producing nature of neoliberal reform efforts. For example, Lipman (2015) reveals the ways in which corporate philanthropists have exploited “disinvestment in urban schools and the fiscal crisis in the state to insert themselves into education policy and governance, operating as part of the ‘shadow state’ with particularly serious consequences

for African American, Latino, and other students of color” (pp. 241–242). Philanthropists have advocated for policies in which “failing” public schools can be replaced by charter schools, and advanced policies surrounding the standardization of a national curriculum (e.g., Common Core Curriculum), standardized testing, and merit-based pay for teachers.

Contemporary philanthropies have used new strategies to influence their largely neoliberal agenda to strive for excellence and provide greater choice. For example, the Lumina and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations have focused more attention toward advocacy and policy engagement, whereas older funders focused on capacity building. Higher education philanthropists’ IONs have forged a new purpose and public priority in higher education based on improving student success (Cantwell, 2018). The success of these reforms remains to be determined, particularly related to scaling reforms to large populations. Nevertheless, student success reforms often share values of academic capitalism and neoliberalism. Institutions and administrators have increasingly measured student success outcomes based on competition and profited from student success practices and programs, such as predictive analytic programs for advisors or luxury housing for students. Akin to institutions’ pursuit of prestige by marketizing processes in pursuit of research funding and accolades, institutions use the public priority of student success in hopes of becoming a national model of student success (Cantwell, 2018).

Leading at all levels of education in an era of pervasive neoliberal discourse and academic capitalism presents unique difficulties, forcing leaders to navigate new responsibilities and intensified challenges. Importantly, these challenges include reconciling tensions between engaging in market-driven behaviors and serving the common good. At the postsecondary level, increasing pressures have been described as “emanating from beyond the confines of campus” where, in this case, deans of education must “spend more time and energy pursuing new student markets, cultivating donations, advocating policy changes, and marketing their programs” (McClure & Teitelbaum, 2016, p. 794). Deans, presidents, and other administrators have felt this incessant need to serve as a cheerleader for the institution, proving to policymakers and the public that it is worthy of support. Relative to university administrators, Bok (2003) asks, “How can they decide when to heed the call of the marketplace and when to refuse its allure” (p. 32)? Within public education across sectors, perhaps one of the greatest struggles is how to compete within the current marketplace with fewer resources and while working toward more inclusive, equitable institutions.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

This chapter has provided a review of how the evolution of the education marketplace relates to the devaluing of the common good values in education and devolution of public education. In the end, however, this chapter only scratched the surface. An entire volume could be dedicated to the history of education markets (Beadie, 2008), their impact on civic virtues and other purposes, and the role educational

leaders play in supporting or rejecting the marketization of education. Our review highlighted the role of Enlightenment thinkers in laying the foundation for the American education system and society. These ideas were incorporated into a quasi-public education market based on reason, liberty, and the common good. However, many leading educators, politicians, and theorists supported the expansion of education to a broader set of citizens to support the common good and democratic ideals. Over time, the education market has grown with reforms expanding state-financed schools, requiring attendance up to a certain age, and providing access to children traditionally left out of education.

The education marketplace, a steady feature of American education, has grown in prominence as education has increasingly been privatized, marketized, and faced significant austerity cuts (McClure, Barringer, & Brown, 2020). Neoliberal reforms and the emergence of the internet have reshaped the structure and delivery of education in the United States and globally. Significant reforms observed in K-12 and higher education, such as No Child Left Behind, vouchers, anti-union policies, charter schools, standardized testing, and performance-based funding, can all be attributed to the market's shifting inclination toward neoliberal, neoconservative, and New Public Management ideologies (Apple, 1993; Giroux, 2014). Despite claims that a typical marketplace is efficient and equitable, education markets have historically been neither free, efficient, nor equitable. The common good values of education will continue to be denigrated until education is valued in the marketplace as more than a private commodity, competitive tool, or driver of economic change during financial crises. And, while publicly supported schools and the common good are not synonymous, the devolution of both appears not to be a coincidence. Prior to the emergence of neoliberalism, the American education system had steadily increased state-based and publicly supported schooling, despite significant shifts in the values, purposes, and practices of education since the Common School Movement. Educational leaders will need to be intentional and persistent in order to revive the common good and democratic values of education.

While neoliberalism has become the dominant socio-economic paradigm of the past 40 years, numerous scholars have argued neoliberalism has been operationalized poorly and inconsistently. The normative perspective, which Ong (2007) describes as neoliberalism with a big "N," casts neoliberalism "as an entity, a unified state apparatus totally dedicated to the interests of unregulated markets" (p. 4). In this perspective, neoliberalism is an overwhelming force that supports efforts to privatize government operations "by selling off public holdings and services to private entrepreneurs" and "enmesh[ing] public agencies in 'quasi-markets' by creating fiscal incentives for those agencies to compete with each other to become more efficient" (Dougherty & Natow, 2020, p. 3). The term's broad overuse removes its explanatory power. How can one distinguish between the market-based reforms of classical economic liberals and neoliberals? More importantly, it leaves educational leaders with the impression they are powerless. However, operationalizing neoliberalism as a technology allows for a more refined theory and enables educational leaders, from the street to the capitol, the opportunity to challenge market-based reforms that undermine the common good. Leaders should view neoliberalism as a little "n" problem to

pinpoint and address the specific neoliberal policies and practices that hurt public education and the common good (Ong, 2007). Doing so might allow leaders to target the localized, embedded neoliberal mechanisms that reproduce inequality. For example, educational leaders and academics have advocated for measures of equity to be incentivized in performance-based funding systems for higher education. Others have highlighted specific forms of administrative academic capitalism that are applicable to all sectors of education, including cultivating major donations, building an endowment, and developing contracts with corporations and intermediary organizations.

While cracks in neoliberal and complementary free-market theories have begun to emerge, the mechanisms continue to be embraced by policymakers and education leaders across the country. Over the next few decades, education leaders at all levels have a key role in re-establishing the public's trust and proving the value of education to society writ large. They can combat neoliberal policies that remove the autonomy of teachers and faculty, create an education environment conducive to critical and creative learning, and restore education's role as a beacon of social mobility with values in equity and the common good.

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# Demystifying Rural School Leadership

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James E. Wortman

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## Abstract

Rural school leadership has its own complexity and nuance that differs from school leadership in the nonrural setting. The lack of scholarly research on rural school leadership relegates it to the shadows and creates a mystery about what is necessary for leaders to effectively serve the one in five students in the USA who attend a rural school.

## Keywords

Rural school leadership · Rural context and history · Rural foundations versus urban challenges · Leveraging school culture · Leveraging context

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The chapter begins by exploring the historical and cultural roots of the rural setting and recognizing the power structures that underpin rural stereotypes and the systematic marginalization that lead to the deficit-based thinking about “rural as a problem to be fixed.”

After presenting a brief history of the increasing challenges and complexity of school leadership and the development of professional standards of leadership, the focus turns to how to apply the standards to rural school leadership. Using Hallinger’s (2016) school contexts as a foundation, a visual framework and model using a fulcrum and lever displays community context as one of the most significant context accelerators of effective rural school leadership.

The chapter concludes with the context-based leveraging role that school culture and research based rural leader practices play in demystifying rural school leadership.

### **Field of Memory**

The idea of rural school leadership in the context of a one room schoolhouse and with a single teacher for all. The rural school leader and teachers on par with one another. The “principal teacher” serving as another classroom teacher. Efficiency as the singular measurement of school leader performance. A “one-size-fits-all” scientific management approach for school leaders with management superseded by leadership, scholarship, or attention to context. Power structures initially favoring rural landowners even to the point of building the school calendar around the agrarian community context. Power structures transmitting to the wealthy and urban industrialists. “Rural as a problem” with cultural deficits needing to be fixed and brought to urban-centric standards. Systemic marginalization and cultural stereotypes in the rural setting. Trait-based perspectives of leadership as the dominant theory: “*Leaders are born not made.*” An education system with significant local control in the school setting.

### **Field of Presence**

Research, policy, and school leader practices directed toward the urban and suburban school settings. Education reform based on the urban and cosmopolitan America and education impact aligned with urban-dominated state governments. School consolidation as the major focal point for education reform in rural settings. A paucity of research with rural school or rural school leader focus. School leadership in general gaining in complexity. The development of empirical-based professional leadership standards. Lack of differentiation in the leadership standards or in principal preparation for the challenges associated with the unique rural context. School leader *what to do* as explicit, but *how to apply* with context specificity only recently emerging. Trait-based theory and situational theory of school leadership synthesizing and opening opportunity for the influence of context. Emphasis on collaborative leadership in the school setting with shared vision, mission, and core values built on a rural place-based foundation.

### **Field of Concomitance**

Metrics, measurement, data analysis, and international quality control standards from the business setting migrating to the education system. Mergers and acquisitions from the business world influencing rural school consolidation in the name of

*“bigger is better and simply a part of progress.”* Systems thinking, an emphasis on culture, and attention to whole-part-whole as a means of leaders seeing the big picture. The concepts of leverage, fulcrum, force, and acceleration originating in physics and applied to the language of leadership. The metaphor of vision as a true north compass point borrowed from astronomy.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

The advent of globalization and “the flat world” bringing international benchmarking and high standards for all to the education system – inclusive of the rural setting. Increased scholarly attention to rural education – rural matters when equity and social justice focus is on high standards for all. School leader accountability within the education system as a result of the plethora of student performance data and the ease of data analysis. Increased scholarly attention to the role context plays in school leader effectiveness.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presuppositions**

The assumption that rural school leadership is a mystery borne out of a historic backdrop of marginalization, deficit-based thinking, and lack of focus on the unique advantages in the rural context. The idea that a visual framework of Demystifying Rural School Leadership will serve as an integrative model to show how context and culture contribute to leader effectiveness. The use of specific research-based rural leader practices as the leverage for school culture. Rural school leader’s leveraging of school culture is effective only to the degree context – particularly community context – is considered.

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## **Introduction**

The purposes of this chapter are to explore the history of the rural setting and school leadership in order to discourse some of the mystery associated with rural school leadership in light of the paucity of research. The chapter uses the concepts of context and culture as foundational ingredients of a visual framework designed to assist rural school leaders with the complexity of leadership in the rural setting and to help them leverage their practice.

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## **Demystifying Rural School Leadership**

The idea of demystifying a concept carries with it the underlying assumption of the concept being currently shrouded in mystery. That rural school remains somewhat mysterious in the twenty-first century can be attributed to a number of factors including a “paucity of research on this specialized focus” (Preston & Barnes, 2018, p. 6). Part of the mystery then is why the context of rural leadership has been relatively ignored given that over 20% of the population of the United States

lives in areas classified as rural (Statistica, 2021) and more than 9.3 million – or nearly one in five students in the USA – attend a rural school. This means that more students in the USA attend rural schools than attend the nation’s 85 largest school districts combined (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson, & Klein, 2019). Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2013) honed in on this lack of attention in his remarks at the Rural Education National Forum when he told attendees: “Inside the Beltway Bubble, rural education is still often treated as the poor second cousin of education reform.” Rural areas are often directly correlated to poverty and disconnection. To demystify rural leadership educational leaders must finally recognize the desperation this inattention fosters and commit to serving rural education with the resources, progressive approaches to education, and effective school leadership that it deserves. Answering the challenge of demystifying rural school leadership requires exposure to the roots of rural identity as well as history of the journey traveled.

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## **Rural Foundations and the Urban Challenge**

An unfortunate rural stereotype that is wide-open for laughs, put-downs, judgment and bias creates barriers to rural education concerns and compounds the low level of consideration and attention and research from the educational community. Reality TV shows, comedians, and politicians have all contributed to creating a “less-than” and “second-class” standing for many things rural; and rural inhabitants themselves may have unwittingly contributed to their plight by way of passive acceptance of the narrative.

This current cultural dynamic, however, has deeper and more insidious roots in an American history that reveals intention and purpose around the re-defining of rural communities and schools. By examining the root of the rural story, we can trace power structures in European history that eventually transmit to colonial times and the origins of the United States itself (Surface & Theobald, 2014).

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## **A Brief History of the Rural Status**

Centuries ago, during the classical and medieval times of Europe, rural communities ruled because power and control rested with large aristocratic landowners that included the royal family. During the Feudal Era of the early and central Middle Ages rural interests held the upper hand when it came to political decision making because of the wealth and influence that resided in the land barons, counts, dukes, and other royalty who ruled these large swaths of land where farmers lived and contributed to their rulers.

Eventually, as the Industrial Age began to change customs and seats of power, the wealthy and urban (i.e., bankers, skilled craftsmen, factory owners, etc.) sought power in the policy arena. This led to a series of events in nineteenth-century England that tipped control to the industrialists and “the ‘captains of industry’ were elevated to a high status while the status of farmers and rural dwellers dropped precipitously”

(Theobald & Wood, 2010, p. 20). As status shifted so did references to the rural dwellers by elites from “the commons of England” to “the lower orders.” These new references soon became part of the everyday language and were in practical usage well beyond the urban and wealthy in English society (Hammond & Hammond, 1920).

A parallel power struggle between urban and rural played out in America. As was the case in Europe, rural agrarian dwellers initially held leverage over the urban industrialists. Notable patriarchs Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson provide the visible and recognizable leaders of a competition between the New York City lawyer supporting a national bank versus the rural Virginia born landowner, farmer, and author of the Declaration of Independence. Prior to the colonies’ first Constitutional Convention in 1787, the rural versus urban power struggle manifested itself in Shays Rebellion in Western Massachusetts when the longstanding bartering system that was farmer friendly met with a new law requiring that debt be paid in specie (gold). Foreclosures and imprisonments of farmers for indebtedness ensued and farmers united and seized courtrooms and a state militia armory under Revolutionary War Captain Daniel Shay. Boston merchants formed a militia to end the rebellion by Shay’s unified farmers. However, the absence of a national army to oppose the rebel farmer set the stage for a pattern for urban commercialists to wrest power from the rural agrarian. The first of these moves involved creating a new form of government to prevent anything like Shays Rebellion from happening again (Theobald & Wood, 2010).

And so, delegates from each state met in Philadelphia and developed the Constitution under the leadership of urban ambassadors Alexander Hamilton and James Madison and absent of rural advocate Thomas Jefferson, who was in Paris as America’s Ambassador to France. Rural agrarian interests – the lifestyle of the significant majority of at the time – were missing a major force for their vision. The resultant and durable Constitution balanced power between three branches of the government but also insured that the elite would be ever prominent in policymaking; so obviously so, that America’s first Supreme Court Justice John Jay, one of the co-authors of the Federalist Papers, stated that “those who own the country ought to govern it.” Theobald and Wood (2010) described the tensions and differences between urban and rural interests in American history as follows, “. . . the differences created struggle, and the struggle created culture marked by mutual suspicion—and in some cases outright antipathy” (p. 22).

This mutual suspicion continued from the founding of America throughout its development. For instance, when Thomas Jefferson became President, he abolished the national bank created by Alexander Hamilton. This meant that America’s farmers no longer needed to contend with an institution they saw as profiting the urban elite and negatively impacting them. The power struggle continued when James Madison was elected President and reestablished the national bank. This was short-lived once the rugged and rural born American Revolution General Andrew Jackson become President and once again abolished it. Jackson’s nickname of “Old Hickory” led to his supporters being called “hicks” by urbanites, a derogatory label that still holds firm in the twenty-first century as a negative reference for rural inhabitants (Surface & Theobald, 2014).

For the greater part of the nineteenth century, residents in rural America were beholden to policies that favored urban, industrial, and commercial interests.

The twentieth century brought education impact policy that aligned with urban-dominated state governments. The once powerful landowners had given way to the urban industrial class and the language of “backward,” “hick,” and “living in the past” set the stage for legitimizing this urban control. Indeed, America’s dominant treatment over rural communities from the outset was driven by a belief in rural cultural deficits and a focus on problems associated with place – the rural place.

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## Rural Schools as a Problem

Policy du jour in the early twentieth century urged consolidation of small rural schools much as small rural farms were swallowed up into income maximizing industrial agriculture models (Bonnano, 2014). Incentives abounded on both fronts for consolidation in the name of “bigger being better” and “progress being necessary.” Changing social and economic contexts over the course of the twentieth century led to efforts to make sense of the unique educational needs and challenges of the rural community. Rural schools became a natural focal point and Ellwood Cubberley (1912), a notable urban education reformer, deplored the state of rural schools, referring to the issue as the “rural school problem” (p. 75). Cubberley’s problem-centric perspective was shared by many of his peers and years later DeYoung (1987) described education reform of that era as “in essence based on a notion that rural ways of life were, and would increasingly become, archaic in emerging urban and cosmopolitan America” (p. 124). Acceptance of the “rural schools as a problem” construct behind the power of the largely urbanite early educational reformer contingent still echoes in the field today (Biddle & Azano, 2016).

Demystifying rural education and the leadership of rural schools begins by recognizing the role that cultural stereotypes and systematic marginalization played in this historical journey (and continues to play). It is against the backdrop of the history of rurality and the view of rural schools as a problem to be fixed that the historical evolution of the complexity and challenge of the school leader position unfolds and should be examined.

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## School Leadership as Increasingly Challenging and Complex

The school leader position (i.e., principal, assistant principal) in American public schools is complex, contradictory, and misunderstood. The rural school context poses an even greater challenge for school leaders (Hazi, 1998; Spillane & Lee, 2014). In fact, of the many organizational changes in public education that occurred during the turn of the last century, few have had greater impact on the school than the development of the principalship (Rousmaniere, 2013a). Therefore, a brief look at the evolution of the position is important for contextualizing the present challenges associated with the role of principal in general and, subsequently the unique challenges associated with rural school leadership.

The idea of the principal serving the district central office and the school classroom from a position in the middle of both is two centuries old (Rousmaniere, 2013b; Spring, 2011). The power associated with the early school leader position was on par with that of teachers. In the early nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution popularized scientific management, or “Taylorism,” and advanced the idea of management from the factory floor to the schoolhouse. Accordingly, efficiency became the mantra, and school became a hierarchical organization with top-down decisions based on scientific studies and cost effectiveness as the professional focus for school leaders (Spring, 2011). The standardization and lock-step orientation of grade levels, teaching materials and curricula, and curricula tracking comprised the framework used in training generations of administrators dedicated to a “one size fits all” approach. There was no attention to differentiation of any kind, and certainly not to the rural context.

The rural one room schoolhouse with a group of students supervised by a single teacher was anything but “efficient,” and rural school consolidation became the norm. Rural schoolhouses advanced to a collection of teachers supervised by one administrator – at that time, a teaching administrator. In the early twentieth, the administrator served as the principal teacher and as recently as 1958, 17% of principal survey respondents remained teaching principals (Spring, 2011). A commitment to scientific management and professionalization placed emphasis on administration and bureaucracy in lieu of the personalized teaching and learning in the rural school house.

Over the last two decades principal responsibilities have increased enormously in all settings. Rural schools and their leaders face environmental influences and challenges similar to their suburban and urban counterparts. Research on the role of the principal as school leader falls well short of capturing the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of the rural principal that are distinct from their nonrural counterparts (Budge, 2006; Hill, 2014; Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014; Lynch, 2012). And while changing educational policies, federal and state accountability, financial constraints, poverty, and community engagement are common to all school leaders (Preston & Barnes, 2018); these challenges are compounded by unique rural context influences for rural school leadership.

These compounding influences include geographic isolation (Klar & Brewer, 2014), teacher recruitment and retention (Brenner, Elder, Wimbish, & Walker, 2015), district consolidation (Edwards & Longo, 2013), low levels of academic expectations and motivation (Budge, 2006), and lower levels of staffed teaching and administrative positions and organizational capacity (Parson, Hunter, & Kallio, 2016). Holding dual roles (e.g., principal/teacher or principal/superintendent) and divergent responsibilities (e.g., substitute teaching and teacher evaluation) limit the rural principal’s ability to focus on instructional leadership (Parson et al., 2016). The challenges and responsibilities rural leaders face in managing increasingly complex roles and fractured focus creates a context ripe for a standards-based leadership framework that may be modified to accommodate a rural environment.



## What We Know to Do: School Leadership Standards Emerge

In light of the complexity and significant influence of school leadership, efforts have been made to shape and focus the development and performance of all school leaders. In the late twentieth century, there was growing pressure to reform the quality of America's schools and their leaders. So much so that in 1994 the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) commissioned the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to provide a set of empirically grounded principles and best practices to shape and clarify the development of school leaders. The resultant document – the ISLLC Standards for School Leaders – became the “gold standard” which most states use for K-12 administrator credentialing and performance criteria (Murphy, 2003; Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). Background and context for the ISLLC Standards and the more recent ISLLC replacement standards – the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders published by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in October of 2015 – are critically necessary for effective rural school leadership.

Leadership standards establish the principled practice for school leaders. Demystifying rural school leadership requires the use of these principles as a lens, unwaveringly focused on a detailed threefold understanding of the rural context as relationship oriented, uniquely advantaged, and wholly collaborative. Nonetheless, application of the standards remains a complicated challenge for rural school leaders.

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## The “Know to Do” Versus “How to Apply” Gap of Rural School Leadership

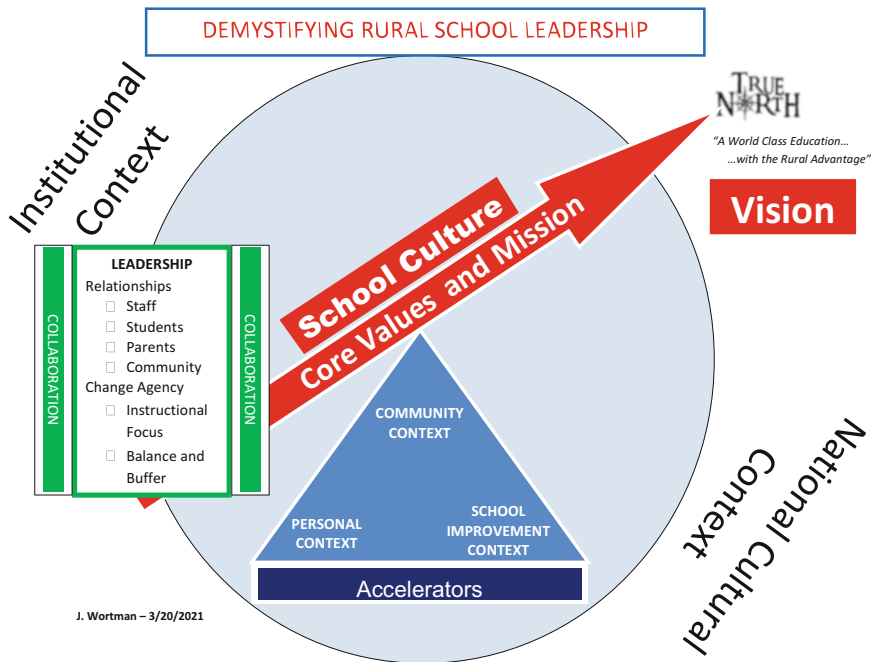
*“If you want to make small changes, work on your behavior; if you want quantum-leap changes, work on your paradigms.”* –Stephen R. Covey.

There is no mystery about what effective school leaders do – their behaviors paint a clear picture. At the same time, Hallinger (2016) points out: “Metaphorically, by placing the spotlight on leadership, researchers have unwittingly relegated the context of leadership to the shadows” (p. 6). The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership provide a compelling *what to do* for rural school leader effectiveness. But leadership must share the spotlight with school context if the application of the known universal leadership principles has any chance for success in the rural environment. Therefore, the *how to apply* leadership principles with context specificity looms large in demystifying rural school leadership. As Covey (2005) suggests, the right mental map is crucial and demystifying rural school leadership requires a deep appreciation for the rural context. Fortunately, at the very same time that there is renewed interest in rural education, contextual leadership is also appearing more frequently in the leadership literature.

Hallinger (2016) examined several types of school contexts and what has been learned about how they shape school leadership practices. The work of Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) offered a foundation of external, principal, and district context. Hallinger extended Bossert's work to include community, institutional,

national cultural, political, economic, and school improvement contexts. Bossert advanced leadership context beyond the early scholarly assumption that leaders are unrestrained by their context (Bridges, 1977). And why shouldn't rural context have a seat at the leadership table as well? Kai Schafft, Director of the Center on Rural Education and Communities at the Pennsylvania State University, put it this way, "All of a sudden, rural is on everyone's mind" (cited in Pappano, 2017). Absent some of Bossert's context model limitations, Hallinger provides an applicable list of contexts necessary to examine the discourse associated with rural school leadership. These context features along with researched based leadership actions and behaviors are captured in a visual framework to allow for a clearer explanation of the demystification of rural school leadership (see Fig. 1).

In this framework (see Fig. 1), rural school leadership is situated within the *institutional* context – the education system – and *national* or *socio-cultural* contexts. The *community* context intentionally lies at the apex of the fulcrum due to the prominent impact of unique geographic location. *School improvement* context and *personal* context are also key components of the fulcrum. Each rural school has its own unique history and performance trajectory and the rural school leader possesses job knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences. These three contexts represent potential accelerators with utility for the leader to leverage advantages that influence consequences. Collectively, context drives the school vision which, in turn, guides



**Fig. 1** Visual framework: Demystifying rural school leadership. Incorporating Hallinger's (2016) context elements

strategy leading to decisions and actions (NISL, 2017). It is crucial for the rural school leader to avoid the temptation to lead with strategy in a *ready-fire-aim* sequence.

The National Institute for School Leadership (2017) defines a lever as internal and external actions that can be used to influence behaviors or to create consequences that might not otherwise occur or that might not otherwise be so powerful. Accordingly, the framework displays school culture as a powerful lever for an effective rural school leader. An extensive review of the literature by Preston and Barnes (2018) concluded that successful leadership in the rural school setting requires a culture of collaboration with relationship-centered change agent actions and an instructional focus. In essence, the rural school leader employs context-based strategies and actions that permeate the school culture with purposeful attention to a shared mission and core values.

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## The Big Picture Impact of the Institutional and National Cultural Context

Hallinger (2016) defines the *institutional* context as the “education system as well as the state, regional, and district units that comprise it” (p. 8) and asserts that the system operates within a specific *national* or *socio-cultural* context. Both of these big picture contextual concepts emerged as significant to rural school leadership with the advent of globalization. Preglobalization rural school leaders worked in somewhat of a silo with significant autonomy and primarily their school district’s vision, mission, values, initiatives, size, and norms as context. Accountability policy for the education system at the national level and the focus on international benchmarking were previously a “given,” for all school systems, regardless of their environmental context, but both have impacted role definition and behavior of rural principals. More than ever, an effective rural school leader balances educational system reforms and a nationalized interest related to quality, accountability, and equity in tandem with the life-world of the local community. And, in some cases, buffers and paces the impact of these reforms.

Metrics and measurement from business practices have migrated into the education system as a data extreme means of accountability for quality control of student performance. National level reform policies involving accountability and business practice type statistical analysis have reshaped school leader practices (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). The rural school leader is effective with these mandated changes by acknowledging the importance of institutionally determined state assessment goals; buffering and balancing them against community tolerance and understanding; all the while embracing the prominent social justice and equity platform that is permeating the education system – the *institutional* context. When used effectively, the priorities within the *institutional* and *national cultural* contexts create a sense of urgency for the *community* and *school improvement* contexts and produce creative tension and leverage opportunity for the rural school leader. Jackson (2010) asserted that globalizing trends in some rural communities compel members invested in the community into fierce resistance to threats to their rural identity. A rural leader’s failure to carefully confront community resistance to globalization while

simultaneously honoring local values, beliefs, and customs “can, in turn, limit the lives of the people whom that very resistance attempts to protect” (p. 73). The *community* context is a tightrope walk that requires personal skill and balance as well as understanding of the school’s improvement trajectory.

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## Community, School Improvement, and Personal Contexts as Accelerators

*“Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.”*

– Archimedes

### Community Context

To continue the metaphor, demystifying rural school leadership involves leveraging with a secure fulcrum of potential accelerators with demonstrably positive results. The rural school is situated within a *community* context, has a trajectory of student performance – the *school improvement* context, and a designated leader – the *personal* context. The community context is the central pivot point of the strategically placed fulcrum in this model (see Fig. 1). Bossert et al. (1982) asserted that “optimal leadership strategies are crafted in a *community* context” (p. 11). Rural activists and scholars are confronting the generic and standardized approach to schooling that rose from global capitalism and instead suggest a collective “argument for contextual sensitivity and place connections. . .an argument for the central consideration of community in the planning and conduct of education” (Corbett, 2016, p. 275).

Local history, heritage, unique assets, and challenges are all part of the community context. The socio-economic status of parents and parent and community involvement in the school are part of community context as well. Effective rural leaders embrace the idea of place-based education that connects youth to their community in lieu of explicitly or implicitly expecting them to eventually leave their rural setting (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Theobald, 1997). Places are not static; rather they are complex and ever-evolving spaces that invite a nuanced understanding of rurality. Instead of viewing rural areas as lacking the resources and amenities of suburban or urban schools and communities, a place-based approach creatively embraces unique and available assets. Place-based education in the community context addresses one of John Dewey’s (1959) central concerns about classroom learning as separated and isolated from daily life. Cultural theorists contend that local places provide specific contexts from which reliable knowledge of global relationships can emerge. Local place focus does not preclude interest in the globalized, multicultural world (Greenwood, 2012). When practiced well, local place focus enhances interest in the world at large.

Economy and politics are unavoidable aspects of the community context and effective rural school leaders recognize, work within, and mitigate associated

constraints. Both offer different sets of opportunities, resources, needs, and challenges. For example, state funding lags and does not make up for the lack of funding rural schools receive from local sources (Johnson, Strange, & Madden, 2010). However, doing more with less is a hallmark of rural schools and the per pupil expenditure rate is lower in rural communities than in urban centers (Smink and White, 2008). It is a challenge to attract highly qualified teachers to rural communities (Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, & Salgado, 2005). Nevertheless, there is increased advocacy for place-conscious rural teacher preparation “that is grounded in place building for sustainable and vibrant rural communities (p. 91)” with a new paradigm emphasizing the uniqueness and assets of rural places (Eppley, 2015; Green, Noone, & Nolan, 2013; Walker-Gibbs, Ludecke, & Kline, 2015). Furthermore, despite the American public discourse that historically asserts education is an “apolitical public service” (Spring, 2016), the political context does shape the behavior of school leaders.

Rural expert Michael Corbett (2016) maintained, “if you’ve seen one rural community, you have seen. . .well, one rural community” (p. 278). With an understanding of and belief in a particular community context, the rural school leader can effectively apply research-based leadership principles with greater effectiveness. Perhaps the best way to demystify rural education lies within rural school leaders themselves who increasingly champion their context to turn rural place deficit discourse inside-out and capitalize on their unique – though often overlooked – rural advantages.

## School Improvement and Personal Contexts

The business of school is learning and every school has a historical context that Hallinger (2016) referred to as the *school improvement* context and further described as an improvement trajectory and culture. The rural school leader faces a trajectory that empirical studies have broadly characterized in at least four ways: effective, improving, coasting, or ineffective (Ball, 2000; Day, 2005, 2009; Thomas, Peng, & Gray, 2007). Each trajectory defines the leader’s challenge and calls for a different set of strategies and actions, albeit a consistent vision for student learning. For example, an ineffective or turnaround school – poor and/or declining performance in student learning over time – initially commands a unilateral and directive leadership style prior to capacity building and eventually more of a distributive style (Day, 2009). The approach for an improving or successful school will differ. An effective rural school leader recognizes and understands the school improvement trajectory and culture and then adapts and refines leadership style and strategy to the school’s capacity and performance over time.

The rural school leader comes to the principalship with an individualized history and trajectory – a *personal context*. Personal context is the final component of the fulcrum context triad (see Fig. 1). This person-specific context embodies job knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience and Hallinger (2016) notes that it “serves as a prism through which information, problems, opportunities, and situations are filtered and interpreted” (p. 7). In contrast to all other contexts, the locus of control for this person-specific context rests squarely with the school leader; therefore, preparation, professional development, ambition, and effort contribute heavily toward leader effectiveness and impact.

Zaccaro's et al. (2004) definition of leader traits grounds this personal context: "leader traits can be defined as relatively coherent and integrated patterns of personal characteristics, reflecting a range of individual differences, that foster consistent leadership effectiveness across a variety of group and organizational situations" (p. 104). The early scientific research tradition of traits as innate or heritable qualities (Galton, 1869) has shifted to include all relatively enduring qualities that distinguish leaders from nonleaders (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). This broad interpretation suggests that some of the leader attributes (i.e., personal context) will be more stable and cross situational and others will be more context bound.

Longstanding debate exists pertaining to situational and personal attributes related to leader practice. Fiedler (1974) captured the tension between contextual and individual influences but his views allowed little room for interplay between these different factors. Contingency and situational leadership theory argues that an effective leader makes their practices and/or behaviors contingent upon the situations in which they work. Yukl (1981) emphasized that leaders must be flexible and adaptable to their environments or jeopardize their chances of success. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) concurred that individual skills are necessary but insufficient without adapting leadership style to context.

Successful leaders are sensitive to context and apply contextually sensitive combinations of basic leadership practices (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Coherent and enduring traits still allow the rural school leader to vary actual behavior and still allow the necessary agility to adjust to both the community and the school improvement contexts. A major part of demystifying rural leadership extends beyond what Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) described as "an amalgamation of attributes reflecting cognitive capacities, personality orientations, motives and values, problem-solving competencies, and general and domain specific expertise" (p. 120). Personal context and leadership attributes are essential and act as another potential accelerator but only within strategic application toward a common vision and with complete attention to all other contexts. Context drives vision and vision guides strategy toward decisions and actions. Ultimately, the accrual of decisions and actions create the powerful lever of school culture.

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## Leveraging School Culture in the Rural Setting

Amid the aforementioned contexts, the model in Fig. 1 displays school culture as the lever for rural school leaders. It is not a mystery that leadership sets the tone and strongly influences the culture in any organization (Elder & Paul, 2012; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Schein, 2010). To continue the metaphor, the rural school leader *leverages* specific principle-centered actions and behaviors that accommodate for context. These actions and behaviors hold purpose and intention toward a shared vision – *what is aspired*; mission – *what is done on a daily basis to reach the vision*; and set of core values – *the rules of engagement*. Leadership expert John Gardner (1990) describes vision as "seeing where the system fits in the larger context... a description outlining a possible future that lifts and moves people... or a discerning, in

the clutter and confusion of the present, the elements that determine what is to come” (p. 130). Mindful that the rural school is situated within the larger institutional context and national cultural context, a world class education is the only acceptable vision. At the same time, there are distinct and unique rural advantages within the community and school improvement context that are available to leverage. In combination, this creates a compelling true north vision for the rural school leader to leverage in the manner suggested by Gardner as the “possible future that lifts and moves people.”

Blaine Lee, author of *The Power Principle: Influence with Honor*, offers the following insight: “The principles you live by create the world you live in; if you change the principles you live by, you will change your world” (1997, p. 1). The principles of collaboration, relationships, and change agency exert the force that drives the school culture to the established true north vision (see Fig. 1). The rural school leader focuses on relationships; effects change as an instructional leader within a balance between local, state, and national policy; and relentlessly fosters a culture of collaboration among all stakeholders (Preston & Barnes, 2018). To be sure, these principles are important in all school settings; however, they deliver the research-based difference for effective rural school leaders.

The effective rural school leader fosters and leverages a culture of collaboration as the foundation for relationships and change agency. There is significant and longstanding agreement that leaders need others to help accomplish a group’s purpose and need to develop leaders across the organization (Gardner, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Yukl, 2012). The rural school leader is the critical figure in making certain that a school vision is created (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). That said, others are more likely to support a school vision and the invitation to change that comes from a relationship-oriented collaborative process (Licata, Teddlie, & Greenfield, 1990). Collaboration is fundamental to the obvious challenge that exists to accomplish goals, carry out the mission, and make progress toward an ambitious vision.

The rural school leader also leverages relationships and recognizes people and not programs as the essential ingredient to success (Whitaker, 2020). The broad issue of leadership, school culture, and change is dominated by discussions and markers that measure actions, interactions, and relationships associated with the adults in the school setting (Gallucci, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Louis Seashore, 2008). In rural areas, the school has a central social, institutional, and economic role. Rural schools function as centers of the community. The effective rural school leader takes full advantage of this and establishes healthy relationships with staff, parents, students, and the community.

School size enhances relationship opportunity since almost 64% of rural schools have 400 or fewer students, compared with only 39% of urban schools (Schafft & Biddle, 2014). School size advantages also allow rural school leaders to apply a personalized touch with students – even knowing them by name – and, in turn, create a learning environment responsive to their unique needs. The effective rural school leader communicates with, welcomes, listens, and responds to parent groups associated with school improvement efforts (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Irvine, Lupart, Loreman, & McGhie-Richmond, 2010). A collaborative and team-work style, strengthened with the principle of trust, mitigates some of the well-



documented isolation experienced by many rural school leaders. Rural school leaders strive for collegiality not simple congeniality (Fullan, 2011) and they nurture strong relationships and interpersonal connections with staff members. More so than urban principals, rural principals make themselves available to teachers when needed (Preston, 2012).

As change agent catalysts, rural school leaders are intentional about teaching and learning as the focal point of their effort (Fullan, 2006; Kondakci & Beycioglu, 2014). Some of the national culture and education system reforms may meet with resistance in the rural community. As an example, curricular changes for efficiency, uniformity, and a common body of information and skills may or may not carry knowledge, proficiencies, and values that have relevance to life in the rural community (Corbett, 2007, 2010). Accordingly, the effective rural school leader balances and buffers the current community context against pressures at the national cultural and education system level. The longstanding educational reform approach of standardizing and modernizing rural schools because “rural was a problem” (Biddle & Azano, 2016) requires the rural school leader to adeptly recognize the root cause of reform policy and, as the primary change agent, adjust instructional decisions in the best interest of students and the rural community they serve. Timing and the community context matter and the effective rural school leader wisely chooses when and how to make the most relevant instructional improvements.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

### Demystifying Rural Leadership is Grounded in Context and Culture

Unraveling the mystery of leading rural schools in the flattened world of this twenty-first century requires that rural school leaders embrace the richness of the community context and leverage the school culture. The rural story in America illustrates an imbalance of power, resources, and attention that can easily invite passive acceptance of the “rural school as a problem” narrative that dominated the twentieth-century education reform landscape (Biddle & Azano, 2016). However, rural communities, rural schools, and the one in five students in the United States that attend a rural school deserve better. Effective school leadership is one means of changing the narrative. Rural families and rural youth have a different landscape than their counterparts in the city but it is no less important or complex. The same is true for rural school leadership – distinctive yet equally significant.

How significant is rural school leadership? Rural expert Michael Corbett (2016) announces it intensely: “The broad argument is that educational struggles and orientations in rural schools should be understood in relation to the crucial global challenges of sustainability and survival (p. 270).” Fortunately, the metrocentric and hegemonic vision of rural schools in a “discourse of decline” (Corbett, 2016) is experiencing a challenge from scholars and activists who refute that narrative and argue that rural continues to matter. Increasingly, the deficit-based, rural as a



problem, and urban as both answer and destination for anyone seeking success thinking is under appropriate scrutiny.

The great theoretical physicist Albert Einstein said: “*Genius is making complex ideas simple, not making simple ideas complex.*” The current education system that competes on the world stage is complex. High expectations for all students and equity of resources and opportunity regardless of circumstance are complex aspirations. Accordingly, the rural school leadership position is complex. Demystifying or simplifying rural school leadership fully recognizes these complexities and frames them within the school culture where the rural school leader has the greatest locus of control to identify unique advantages. Herein, an effective rural school leader nurtures a collaborative and relationship-centric culture as an agent of change for teaching and learning with a detailed understanding of the total context. In a very real sense, as Corbett expresses, “sustainability and survival” are at stake in solving the rural school leadership mystery.

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# 'The Next Big Thing': A Delineation of 'Fads' and 'Fashions'

# 9

Helen Gunter and Stephen Rayner

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## Abstract

The field of educational leaders, leading, and leadership is rife with folderols, fads, and fashions, from “Management by Objectives” to ‘Transformational Leadership’. This chapter identifies the dominance of corporate approaches rooted in Taylorism and the Hawthorne experiments, where there is evidence of novel innovations in organizations and research that actually demonstrates the endurance of control technologies. By examining labor, work, and action by educational professionals, the argument is made that the field of presence is one of absence, the field of concomitance is one of dissonance, and the field of memory is one of forgetting. The dominance of fads and fashions for labor and work generates activity but not action, where the analysis reveals possibilities for *activist natality* in ways that demonstrate *educative* rather than *corporate* 3Ls.

## Keywords

Folderols · Fads · Fashions · Corporate leader · Corporate leading · Corporate leadership

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**The field of presence**

Educational professionals are corporatized by Taylor-Hawthorne determined folderols, fads, and fashions in ways that render them *absent* from thinking and strategizing.

**The field of concomitance**

Educational professionals are required to accept the need for structures, cultures, and identities to be corporatized through folderols, fads, and fashions in ways that create *dissonance* between innovation and professional values.

**The field of memory**

Educational professionals are required to adopt folderols, fads, and fashions in order to remember and so enact corporate imperatives based on *forgetting* that there may be alternative ways of practice.

**Discontinuities and ruptures which form the different viewpoints of this area of the field**

Taylorism and Hawthorne provide resilient continuities that have been reworked and modernized by educational professionals, researchers, business, and policymakers. The standpoint taken in this chapter is located in a long established research and practice tradition of plural knowledge production, and professional values. The discontinuities and ruptures are located in professional practice that promotes values and activism within communities and with researchers who undertake projects that are independent of corporate funding/influence, and who seek to present the situation and work on activist agendas for change.

**Critical assumptions and presupposition**

The chapter is based on a wide reading of both mapping and analysis of the evidence for and trends in folderols, fads, and fashions in a range of social science disciplines, educational policy initiatives and reforms, and professional identities and practices. The chapter draws on and provides perspectives in regard to the themes of this book (fields of presence, concomitance, and memory) and goes further by using Arendtian scholarship to not only examine the evidence for a relationship between folderols, fads, and fashions with labor and work, but to also present activist natality as way of thinking about change agendas.

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**Introduction**

Evidence and debates about “fad” and “fashion” bandwagons rolling through research design and professional practice are evident in the natural and social science disciplines (see Abrahamson, 1991, 1996, 2009; Bort & Kieser, 2011; Dunnette, 1966; Peng, 1994; Starbuck, 2009a, b), with studies about the impact on national policymaking (e.g., Chwiero, 2014; Naim, 2000). The field of educational leaders, leading, and leadership is no exception and is replete with “fads” or within-

profession/organization innovations such as the “self-managing school” (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988), and an accumulation of connected “fashions” or outside-of-profession/organization innovations such as “transformational leadership” (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Studies about knowledge production in the field have examined the evidence for and impact of such bandwagons (e.g., Eacott, 2013; Gunter, 1997), with specific focus on particular leadership models (e.g., Lumby, 2016) and on the transfer of noneducation models from business settings (e.g., Peck & Reitzug, 2012). Importantly, critical analysis demonstrates that the study of “fads” and “fashions” is not a trivial matter but speaks to deeper concerns about research design and everyday practice in schools and universities.

The focus of this chapter is on the production and endurance of *corporate* leaders, leading, and leadership (3Ls) for educational services. The knowledge claims for fads and fashions are historically located in Taylorism and the Hawthorne Experiments. The argument developed is that the field of presence is in effect a field of *absence*, the field of concomitance is a field of *dissonance*, and the field of memory is a field of *forgetting*. Arendtian (1958) scholarship enables new understandings of the relationship between fads and fashions in the construction and enactment of labor, work, and action. The dominance of fads and fashions for labor and work generates activity but not action, where the analysis reveals possibilities for *activist natality* in ways that demonstrate *educative* rather than *corporate* 3Ls.

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## Knowledge Production in the Field of Educational Leaders, Leading, and Leadership

The 3Ls are focused on formal leader roles, to the thinking, speaking, and doing as leading, and to the exercise of power with and over others as leadership. Globalized reforms to the 3Ls in public-services education are increasingly *corporate*, where the focus is on organizational structures, cultures and systems with line-management and data-determined practices that are enacted in the name of but separate from authentic educational purposes (Gunter, 2012).

The main features of corporate 3Ls are: first, ideas are primarily from a for-profit context and are focused on securing organizational hierarchy and unity, where values are framed according to branded distinction in a competitive market; second, processes are leader-centric based on the assumed causal relationship between the postholder and the efficacy of leading in order to exercise leadership powers over others as followers; third, change is controlled outside of the production site, where acceptance is enabled by the techniques of organizational psychology; and fourth, outcomes are planned, delivered, and measured, with data that demonstrate excellence, efficiency and effectiveness as a unified system. The intellectual and wider cultural traditions are located in the positivist and behavioral sciences as illustrated by Taylorism and the Hawthorne Experiments.

Taylor (1911) presented an organizational science based on ergonomics undertaken by a segregated workforce of management and design or production-line delivery. The worker is motivated by pay, and so time and motion audits required

effectiveness data to be used to improve the conditions in which outcomes are produced. The Hawthorne Studies (1924–1933) reported on a series of experiments designed to optimize working conditions on a production line (see Mayo, 1933), where the researchers found that group norms mattered to system efficiency. This revealed the need to take into account the relationship between production targets, micropolitical cultures, and emotional connections with work and supervision. Characterized as behaviors, the workplace became understood as a site of potential production failure unless leaders and managers understood how to engage with the worker.

In summary, the corporate 3Ls are rooted in Taylorist systems thinking and Hawthorne human relations approaches and are evident in the drive to find one best way of running a school or university known as The Theory Movement from the 1950s (see Gunter, 2020). This search for *the* theory has been updated through the adoption of transformational leader-follower vision and mission (and hybrids such as “distributed and “instructional”), that have been adopted and adapted from non-educational leadership models that would appeal to but also control educational professionals (e.g., Leithwood et al., 1999). The underlying ontology and epistemology remain Taylor-Hawthorne, but the field produces new models for the 3Ls that are each claimed to be novel and necessary to secure innovative change. Consequently, research of and practice within the field of corporate 3Ls is subject to “folderols,” “fads,” and “fashions.”

Folderols are defined as “those practices characterized by excessive ornamentation, nonsensical and unnecessary actions, trifles and essentially useless and wasteful fiddle-faddle” (Dunnette, 1966, p. 343). They may serve as etymological decoration: for example, delegation replaced by distribution, established professional titles replaced by the universal application of leader titles, practice is taken up with writing mission statements, and the field itself is subject to ongoing relabeling (Gunter, 2004). Such folderols are integral to “fads” and “fashions” where the bandwagon is more than a lexical change and offers problem definition and resolution. Hence, fads are “practices and concepts characterized by capriciousness and intense, but short-lived interest” (Dunnette, 1966 p. 343), and as such they are internally generated within an organization such as a school or a network such as a professional group or epistemic research community (Abrahamson, 1991). For example, fads for the corporate 3Ls include “the self-managing school” (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988) and “system leadership” (Hopkins & Higham, 2007) that fit with the business autonomy Zeitgeist, where there is a sense of belonging (Millar, 2009) through networked imitation (Bort & Kieser, 2011; Starbuck, 2009b). Researchers are located in fad production, where a commissioned project may be undertaken on the basis that the data and ideas can be easily diffused through training and second/third-hand transmission, and a principal may attend that training day and be required to cascade the content and experience with staff. Fads have to make sense because as Miller and Hartwick (2002) argue they fit the recognized crisis and so attract funding, and tend to be “prescriptive,” “one-size-fits-all,” and are easy to “cut and paste” from one context to another. In addition, the focus is on novelty, particularly by spurious claims of innovation, where integrity is based on acclaim recognition or “the status



and prestige of their proponents or followers, rather than the empirical evidence” (unpaged). The durability of fads is independent of its quality or effectiveness, and so there are “cycles,” “swings,” “stages,” and “bell-shaped” activity regarding take up and moving on (Abrahamson, 1996; Peck & Reitzug, 2012).

Studying corporate 3Ls demonstrates that there is something more in evidence than fads as packaged solutions, where “fashions” is used to describe changes to “supply and demand in a knowledge market” (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2008, p. 720). In other words, while a fad is when “groups imitate other organizations within that group,” a fashion “assumes that organizations in a group imitate other organizations. . . that reside outside that group” (Abrahamson, 1991, p. 597). Such externalized solutions combine fan-fared novelty with responsiveness to urgent professional needs, and so fashion is “those manners or modes of action taking on the character of habits and enforced by social or scientific norms defining what constitutes the ‘thing to do’” (Dunnette, 1966, p. 343). Fashion-setters as influencers in the form of corporations, intellectuals, politicians, philanthropists, consultancies, and social-media stars and owners simplify and supply corporate 3Ls, and fashion-followers as researchers and professionals (plus children and parents) have activities to engage with. For researchers, the thing to do is to produce data that demonstrate causal relationships between a leader, followers, and/or student learning outcomes, and for the professional the imperative is to be seen to practice on the basis that leader activity will causally impact even if there are no data to prove it (see Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2008).

The fashions in corporate 3Ls focus on the exercise of power in order to structure and hence control individual agency, where a range of corporate techniques have been bought in and brought into schools and universities, for example, Management by Objectives (Drucker, 1954), and enabling the organization to shift from, Good to Great (Collins, 2001). These move beyond faddishness because, as Abrahamson and Eisenman (2008) argue, “fashions connect and cumulate, rather than constituting individual and unpredictable responses to breakdowns in institutional constraints” (p. 725). There is a need for a new fashion to be connected with previous fashions, through the logic of the crisis and the corporate 3Ls as the solution, but also to be distinctively progressive and novel (see Béland & Cox, 2013). Hence, fashions in corporate 3Ls are political and sociological – it is about decisions regarding what the knowledge agenda is, which knowledge is worth knowing and funding, and which knowers can be trusted to know in preferred ways. For example, the Ambition Institute in England offers a Masters in Expert Teaching where “Charlie” provides a soundbite of acclaim based on how the program focuses “on teaching excellence, not writing extended essays or dissertations” (Ambition Institute, 2020, unpaged). The product is distinguished from that offered by research-intensive universities, and where eligibility is not based on accreditation but on the need to “be receptive to feedback and be hungry to improve” (Ambition Institute, 2020, unpaged). What matters are fashionable providers who guarantee training for identities and purposes that are presented as “innovative” and “empowering,” but are actually designed to routinize practice and dispose of those who demonstrate originality (e.g., contract renewal/termination) (Gunter, 2018). Hence, there is a need to understand not only

how fashions are packaged but how they are diffused with “*social* bandwagon effects” (Newell, Robertson, & Swan, 2001, p. 7, original emphasis), and in ways that have authority.

## Innovation in the Field of Educational Leaders, Leading, and Leadership

Folderols, fads, and fashions are integral to creating and sustaining a faux innovation agenda in the corporate 3Ls field. Innovation is a folderol label for noneducational reforms of public education, enabled by within-profession fads but largely driven by external “business-located” fashions encoded in reform imperatives to change power structures, particularly to discipline and rework notions of professionalism. Taking a case study example, the UK government reforms for education in England have been examined at school (e.g., Hughes, 2019), system (e.g., Courtney, 2015; Rayner, Courtney, & Gunter, 2018), and government (Gunter, 2018) levels, and the approach has been to: first, remodel, through the construction of a preferred type of school principal; second, responsabilize, through rewards (performance related pay) and “name and shame” punishments (school closure); third, redesign, through the focus on policy delivery practices; fourth, restructure, through the dismantling of local democratic control and replacement with autonomous businesses; and fifth, reculture, through controlling what is imagined, said and done in regard to problem identification and solutions.

The rationalities and narratives used in reform documents, speeches, and guidance present the novelty and vitality of serious reforms that are advantageous for all if only they adopt them. The speedy reform imperative was framed as “There Is No Alternative” (TINA) with “No Excuses” for poor performance, with the exclusion of “enemies” who think and do otherwise. The UK government designed, funded, and staffed the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England from 2000 to 2018 to control 3Ls knowledge production, where the legacy of codification of best practice remains and is based on tactical decisions about “which organization they should imitate” (Abrahamson, 1991, p. 595). The NCSL was a laboratory for folderol, fad, and fashion development for the profession in England and also impacted globally through the promotion, cascading, and diffusion of corporate 3Ls as generic and globally relevant solutions to the problem of public services education (Gunter, 2012). In Arendtian (1958) terms, a school principal is trained to *labor* and *work* and be relentlessly busy through *activity*, but is prevented from taking authentic educative *action* for students and communities (Gunter, 2018). This is outlined in Fig. 1.

Professional...	Labor	Work	Activity	Action
Ideas	Internal/Derivative	External/Craft	Cascading	Internal/External
Processes	Packaging	Adaptation	Diffusion	Questioning
Outcomes	Delivery	Performance	Data	Originality

**Fig. 1** Labor, work, activity, and action (based on Arendt, 1958)

What Fig. 1 illustrates is how educational professionals as researchers, teachers, and postholders in schools and universities can take up a position (agency) or be positioned (structure) in regard to professional ideas or knowledges, processes or skills, and outcomes or achievements of themselves and/or those they work with (colleagues, students). Consequently, an educational professional *labors* by accepting narrow ideas, the adoption of prepackaged processes, with a focus on securing outcomes, and *works* by tactically using ideas and process to adapt requirements to a context, and to demonstrate how standards have been met. Current trends show that educational professionals are being identified, recruited, trained, accredited, contracted, and managed in order to primarily labor and work. The combination of labor and work generates *activity*, where ideas are communicated and diffused in order to produce the right type and level of data. Alternative trends are in evidence whereby educational professionals exercise agency by taking *action* through intellectual work and practices regarding knowledge and understanding, questioning, and developing novel approaches to research and practice.

## Laboring innovations

Innovation as labor is about survival at a time of unyielding precarity, and so educational professionals recognize that contracts may not be renewed and/or the school could close, and so the focus is on prepackaged problem-solving in order to deliver reforms. Labor uses and makes demands for more folderols and fads and enables fashions to sustain cumulative types of instrumental and behaviorist knowledge production.

There are particular examples of Taylor-Hawthorne labor that are recommended for transfer to education (e.g., Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008):

*Management by Objectives* was launched by Drucker (1954), where he outlines the identification of objectives that are then managed sequentially in order to secure controlled outcomes. This management technique has been updated through the *Balanced Scorecard* (Kaplan & Norton, 1992) that enables data to be organized around finances, customer views, organizational arrangements and future-thinking, in order to ask what the data mean, and how the organization is viewed and fit for purpose (Karathanos & Karathanos, 2005).

*Total Quality Management* was communicated by Deming (1986) as the requirement for quality to be everyone's responsibility based on continuous improvement (Murgatroyd, 1993). An updated version, though clearly distinct from TQM, is Hammer and Champy's (1993) *Business Process Re-engineering*, whereby notions of breaking with the past and downsizing of the organization are recognized as vital to bringing about revolutionary change (Davies, 1997).

*Transformational leadership* has become field orthodoxy for the corporate 3Ls where technologies of objectives and quality needed a focus on the people in leader roles. The identification of "competences" (Jirasinghe & Lyons, 1995) and "capacity building" (Youngs & King, 2002) have given recognition to notions of

trait, styles and contingency that have already been popularized, but it was the shift from transactional to transformational forms of leadership that sutured positivist and behavioral science to form the case for charismatic visioning (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The presentation and adaptation of such management fads and fashions is often through the use of bullet/dot pointed lists of easy-to-remember phrases (Gunter & Willmott, 2001). What seems to matter most is how to make the conditions for the innovation acceptable (Abrahamson, 1991), particularly with educational professionals who have potential access to alternative sites of knowledge production. The focus is about identifying and rewarding who is an “adopter” and who should be neutralized as a “laggard” (p. 586), where the corporate 3Ls is dependent on shared compliance dispositions (e.g., Astle & Ryan, 2008) who turn around “failing” and “coasting” schools (see Peck & Reitzug, 2012), using a combination of prescriptions (e.g., Stoll & Fink, 1996) and bolstered by victory stories (e.g., Clark, 1998).

## Working on Innovations

Innovation as work is about crafting and producing, and for educational professionals this means shaping lessons that must produce a work-ready workforce. Realistically one-size-fits-all reforms may not work in the particular context, and so the focus is on accepting and potentially extending/developing externally crafted packages of “know-how” in order to undertake effective tactical adaptation of the changes. Work uses and produces folderols and fads and enables cumulative fashionable innovation to be accepted.

It seems that: “fashionable management techniques must appear both rational (efficient means to important ends) and progressive (new as well as improved relative to older management techniques)” (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 255). Consequently, for educational professionals as teachers and postholders, the fear of losing out through the rapid restructuring of the system with new school types such as academies in England means that the principal may accept the change on the basis that it is inevitable and so it is better to get involved “now” while advantages can be secured (see McGinity & Gunter, 2017). In addition, new roles open up for the profession such as the CEO of a Multi-Academy Trust where corporate dispositions are revealed and strengthened through practice as corporate 3Ls (Hughes, Courtney, & Gunter, 2019). School principals take on the challenges of making the reforms work (e.g., Kulz, 2017), creating dynamic crafted corporate solutions (e.g., Caldwell and Spinks, 1998); and embrace “new” leadership models as instructional (see Eacott, 2017) and distributed (Lumby, 2016). Running alongside this are researchers who need to be ready to deliver commissioned evaluation projects that focus on producing statistical data that make causal connections between corporate 3Ls and student outcomes (e.g., Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016), and to translate fashionable innovative models into quick reading and training manuals (e.g., Barber, Moffit, & Kihn, 2011). Peck and Reitzug (2012) argue that:

... the appearances and disappearances of MBO and TQM in the educational leadership textbooks may help to illustrate the functioning of the fashion-setting market in school management. The sudden appearance of a school leadership fashion in a textbook may reflect the attempt of the authors, in the role of fashion setters, to satisfy the needs and wants of the reader, in the role of fashion follower, to have access to the latest trends in educational leadership. Once a fashion gains currency in the educational leadership realm, it may in fact be incumbent upon the authors of a textbook to include the fashion as part of a revised edition to demonstrate that the textbook as a whole still has relevance to the field. (Peck & Reitzug, 2012, p. 368)

The failure of educational researchers to meet demand and to rise to this evidence-informed and often normative challenge means that projects are awarded to reliable research (e.g., Earl et al., 2003) and consultancy (e.g., PricewaterhouseCoopers, see PwC, 2008) teams. Primary research funding is cut, and investment is made into certain types of projects that require prescribed methodologies, for example, RCTs (Eacott, 2017).

## Actively Innovating

Labor and work generate activity but not – in Arendtian terms – any authentic action. Innovation as activity is focused on endlessly replenished “make-overs” as modern and novel, accepted from popular gurus and social-media influencers, on the basis that they will enable the educational professional to deliver a higher standard of research and/or education (Eacott, 2017; Gunter & Thomson, 2009). Knowing otherwise is denounced and censured in how knowledge exchanges are framed and conducted. Activity is about cascading in the form of training and feedback, diffusion through everyday language and data production in order to secure delivery to the correct level of performance: “an informational cascade occurs when it is optimal for an individual, having observed the actions of those ahead of him, to follow the behavior of the preceding individual without regard to his own information” (Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, & Welch, 1992, p. 994).

Busy-ness has to be visible and open to acclaim and reward, and it can be: first, classroom-based through “brain-gym,” “multiple intelligences,” “teach like a champion,” “growth mindset,” “assertive discipline,” and “the resilience doughnut”; second, desk-based through the collection, analysis, and communication of vital data to demonstrate individual, group, and organizational “value-added” performance calculations benchmarked against national standards; third, organization-based by building a commitment to the data through vision and mission, enabled through the practicality of monitoring as Management By Walking About (later: *The New Management by Wandering Around* [MBWA]; see Streshly, Gray, & Frase, 2012) in ways that check delivery; fourth, resource-based through the use of data to justify decision-making, and to support external bids to funders to sustain and claim new income streams; fifth, network-based as “one of us” within “professional learning communities,” having the right type of connections in order to make deals for new educational products and services; and sixth, culture-based in order to ensure that everyone knows their place in

the established hierarchy because “there is no I in team,” take their responsibilities seriously by demonstrating “emotional intelligence,” and are incentivized through the title of leader, the notion of “deep” leadership, and the opportunity to have work delegated to them through leadership distribution.

While knowledge claims from Taylorism and Hawthorne tend not to be mentioned by name, the underlying conceptualization of labor and work, and the relationship of the human to that labor and work is enduring, and illustrated by the popularity of business prescriptions for successful companies such as Peters and Waterman’s (2006) *In Search of Excellence*, and Collins’ (2001) *From Good to Great*. For example, what Collins (2001) has done is to package failure as a visceral avoidance imperative in ways that speak to authentic professional concerns in educational services and provide opportunities for personal security and potential advancement. His argument is that even though there are huge barriers, some companies break through and sustain “greatness” because of their Chief Executives, where seven characteristics of these companies are provided. One of these characteristics is entitled: “First Who, Then What,” where the metaphor of a bus is used to communicate the requirement to get the right people on the bus and work out the destination, and get the right people in the right seats. Collins’ (2001) book has been translated into educational services by Gray and Streshly (2008) where the failing school and failing children is a valid and urgent narrative and where Collins’ prescriptions are used to question and create the narratives for the dismantling of employment law in the name of disposing of people who do not fit the vision. Push back on this idea of getting people off the bus has recognized that this actually means “throwing people under the bus,” where the seemingly benign processes do damage not only to the “thrown” but to the “thrower,” and to the organization and wider educational system (see Courtney & Gunter, 2015). What this example illustrates is a form of “authorized inaction,” where educational professionals are required to be active and “make a difference” but not to take authentic action, and so are industrious in designing and deploying templates, collecting and evaluating numbers, and making performance calculations about worth (Gunter, 2018).

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## Activist Natality

The field of corporate 3Ls in education is dominated by labor and work fads and fashions as forms of *fabricated innovation*, and in deploying the Foucauldian (1972) themes in this book we provide some explanations:

**Field of presence:** Fads and fashions are constructed and legitimized in statements (e.g., training manuals, meeting agendas, development plans) that objectify Taylorist external control of professional identity and practices as “manifest, nameable, and describable” and manipulate Hawthorne relational compliance regarding what can be thought and said, and who can speak with authority (Foucault, 1972, p. 41). In effect, fads and fashions require educational professionals to locate in a field of *absence*, where the original site of knowledge production is irrelevant to the recipients of know-how transfer, where the “fad-ness” and “fashion-ability” and the social and organizational positions of those who constitute the

discourses, is sufficient for effervescent adoption. The essential characteristic of a fad is that its fad-ness discredits or obliterates what has gone before.

**Field of concomitance:** Fads and fashions are constructed and legitimized as change imperatives necessary for dealing with the problems in schools as organizations (e.g., efficient and effective work practices; productivity and performance related pay), whereby “analogical confirmation” of the business and the school as unitary organizations combined with “models that can be transferred” enables the adoption of self-incentivization, and other-regarding surveillance (Foucault, 1972, p. 58). In effect, fads and fashions require educational professionals to locate in a field of *dissonance*, where agency has to relentlessly implement what challenges professional values and the purposes of public education because authentic agency has been relocated to the corporate sector.

**Field of memory:** Fads and fashions are constructed and legitimized through both the exclusion of and hostility to what used to be recognized as authentic claims to know (e.g., professional judgment and discretion are disciplined and eradicated by various Taylor-Hawthorne rationalities such as Management by Objectives, that are speeded up by acronyms such as MBO, until the next acronym comes along). In effect, there are “statements that are no longer accepted or discussed, and consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity” (Foucault, 1972, p. 58). In effect, fads and fashions require educational professionals to locate in a field of *forgetting*, where alternative ways of thinking and doing are not possible and are actively censured (Gunter, 2020).

The legacy of Taylorism and the Hawthorne experiments endures within field knowledge production whereby, in Foucauldian terms, the *presence* of the beliefs and experiences of corporate individuals and transmitted through philanthropic foundations (Saltman, 2010) and the absence of professional values (Gunter, 2020); the *concomitance* of the corporation and the school is facilitated by economic cycles (Hartley, 2016) and the *dissonant* realities of reform enactment (Rayner & Gunter, 2020); and the *memory* of what is known and is worth knowing is enabled by the billability of consultant as “all knowing” (Gunter & Mills, 2017); and the proactive *forgetting* by researchers who do not think about how they may be complicit in this process (Gunter, 2020). For example, project funding means that research has been turned into income generation and outputs into citation data (Miller, 2009; Starbuck, 2009b) where the spaces for primary research are narrowed (Bitektine, 2009). Educational professionals in schools are encouraged to demand relevance, and so researchers: “lose sight of the essence of the problems that need to be solved and the questions that need answers” (Dunnette, 1966, p. 348). In addition, this tends to be a feature of globally influential Anglo-American academia (Tienari, 2009) and it is sustained through how new researchers are inducted into the field (Miller, 2009). This analysis is critical but somewhat pessimistic, because it suggests that there is no alternative to Taylor-Hawthorne.

In Arendtian terms, action and activism are different from activity, whereby Arendt (1958) makes the case that as humans we have natality, or the capacity to do new things. Innovation as action, in Arendtian (1958) terms, is based on entering the public realm and spontaneously presenting a standpoint, seeking to understand other standpoints, and relationally exchanging ideas with unique humans. For educational professionals, such *activist natality* means interplaying practical and intellectual knowledges and expertise within plural knowledge production processes, and using knowledges to question and develop original insights that enable



children to know the world and to be aspirational about their capacity to change it. Action exposes and challenges folderols, fads, and fashions and is located in knowledge production that is inclusive and democratic, and focused on social justice. Consequently, educational professionals as teachers and as researchers lead on knowledge production within civil society, where validation is related to debate and not compliance.

Activist natality exposes fabricated innovating through major disruptions to the authority of what can be thought and said. This happens in a range of ways: first, the corporate 3Ls do not actually work, even in their own terms of “best practice” or “getting the job done,” where, for example, Lumby (2016) not only reveals the mythology around distributed leadership but also argues that “it is a displacement activity that facilitates turning aside from the core issue of inequality in learners and staff” (p 165); second, the corporate 3Ls do serious damage not only to those who are meant to be served by public education but also to the private providers who are meant to gain from it (see Carrasco & Gunter, 2019); third, those who are active in producing the 3Ls can experience “Damascene” conversions, where Ravitch (2010) outlines her attraction to markets, then her admission that reforms in the USA are mistaken, and her major shift as a policy actor away from choice and accountability; and fourth, high-quality primary research has not disappeared, in spite of brutal strategies designed to eliminate it from professional concerns in classrooms through to universities, where policy scholars such as Ball are recognized by teachers as making a difference intellectually to professional understanding (Gunter, 2013).

Activist natality provides the opportunities to develop different agendas. Educative action is located in different knowledge claims to those espoused in the corporate 3Ls and is based on partnerships between educational professionals who are occupationally located in different parts of the education system (e.g., part-time postgraduate masters and doctoral programs; collaborative research projects, Wrigley, Thomson, & Lingard, 2012), where the research agenda is independently designed and funded based on transparent indicators of research quality. Consequently, there are alternative vibrant sites of research that support the development of educational 3Ls, and this has a number of features: first, ideas are ontologically and epistemologically plural and originate from a range of sources; second, processes recognize that leadership is not always the function of structural roles, “it does not reside *in* an individual but in the relationship between individuals, and it is oriented toward social visions and change” (Foster, 1989, p. 46, original emphasis); and third, outcomes are focused on social justice access and participation that enables all to perform and realize their aspirations.

Educational professionals as researchers, teachers, and postholders already have access to the educational 3Ls, where the field is replete with evidence about the realities of doing the job and that there are alternatives that work better and are more socially just. For example, while academization has become the fashion bandwagon in England, it is the case that schools do not automatically convert their status (e.g., Rayner & Gunter, 2020); and while educational professionals are required to secure hierarchical instructional control over pedagogy, it is the case that that schools do not



automatically position children as objects of organizational improvement (e.g., Thomson & Gunter, 2006). In addition, while teachers and parents are required to operationalize austerity, it is the case that cuts to staffing and the curriculum, along with school closures have led to public protests (Gunter, 2018); and while school principals have been trained and accredited as transformational leaders, it is the case that social justice values are in evidence in community work, and what Shields (2010) has identified as transformative leadership (see Winkley, 2002). Indeed, there are landmark texts that speak to the field in ways that cannot keep being ignored (e.g., Callahan, 1962), and there is evidence that ignoring these “warnings from history” could mean that public education is turned into a site of antidemocratic trends (e.g., Gunter, 2018).

What has to be addressed is that folderols, fads and fashions demonstrate that seemingly novel but bad ideas can have longevity (Sunstein, 2001), but this is not inevitable (Peng, 1994). Following Arendt (1968), it seems that teaching, researching and leading are taking place in dark times, but she argues that illumination is possible from those who think for and otherwise as educative action (see English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). Perhaps a starting point is to understand not only why professionals are provided with fads and fashions, but to focus on why professionals turn to fads and fashions, and how they might be enabled to turn to a range of intellectual resources, particularly since there are an increasing number of school principals who are admitting to their disappointment that the promises made about the relationship between reforms and educational innovation are not actually borne out in reality (e.g., Leo, Galloway, & Hearne, 2010).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The argument deployed in this chapter is that the corporate 3Ls depend for their survival on a continual quest for “the next big thing,” so that *leaders* are positioned as innovators, *leading* is understood as an exceptional attribute, and *leadership* retains its combination of credibility and mystique. Folderols provide up-to-date and dynamic language, image, and practices that demonstrate the modern. Fads require previous beliefs and practices to be expunged from the field of memory. Fashions cause previous iterations of leadership to become serially unfashionable and thus those who are in leader roles are rendered missing within the field of presence. In the field of concomitance, etymological and practical folderols, fads, and fashions are mobilized and flow as leading edge knowledge production in order to make beliefs and practices variously palatable, usable, and ultimately disposable in educational leadership. The conclusion is that most educational professionals as researchers, teachers, and principals are rendered busy with activity, but in reality they labor and work rather than engage in action. Nevertheless, there are encouraging examples of activist natality where researchers, teachers, and principals refuse corporate makeovers and seek to make a difference based on professional values, social justice, and plural knowledge production.

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# Troubling Intersectionality for Visible Leadership

# 10

Michèle Schmidt

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## Abstract

Foucault's archaeological framework helps establish certain historical conditions of leadership that challenge intersectional leadership possibilities. Historically, a leadership that follows a "one size fits all" epistemology grounded in White male criteria has led to glaring problematics with leadership that marginalizes various minority groups. This chapter highlights a troubling situation that compromises leadership theory's evolution to fit a globalized world in the twenty-first century – a status quo within leadership discourse that highlights gender neutrality and thus disregards the experiences of women in the margins. Intersectionality theory is grounded in a post-structural, feminist critique that challenges the epistemology of leadership theory and addresses areas that merit theoretical expansion. Views framed from a feminist intersectional perspective serve as an intellectual counter to combat the marginalized

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representation of women of color within the canon of leadership. By tracing the intellectual history of intersectionality theory using Foucault's archaeology of knowledge framework, a dialectic discourse between intersectionality and educational leadership epistemologies begin to identify the space where the two bodies of knowledge intersect and the conditions that make this possible.

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**Keywords**

Critical feminism · Educational leadership · Epistemology · Foucault · Archaeology of knowledge · Intersectionality · Single-axis identity · Transformation identity politics

**The Field of Memory**

Leadership is rooted in a single-axes, positivist, "one size fits all" epistemology; merely integrating women into an analysis of leadership theory is insufficient and fails to engage identity beyond an additive, hierarchal strategy without considering their varied identities and social locations; leadership is grounded in hegemonic, dominant perspectives; traditional assumptions of masculinity and the gendered construction of leadership lead to epistemic oppression; power relations dictate what leadership should look like and who should be leaders.

**The Field of Presence**

Intersectional studies of leadership branch out to include post-structural, feminist critiques that challenge the historical hegemonic, positivist epistemologies of leadership; diverse, nondominant, and minority perspectives flourish; different ways of understanding educational contexts and leadership are recognized; focus is on who might be leaders and how circumstances of social class, location, ethnicity, and cultural worldview affects work and identity; recognizes women of color's unique experiences to produce critical innovative leadership approaches; an intersectional lens provides the epistemological complexity necessary to discern how the intersection of privileged and marginalized identities can coexist among leaders.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Rooted in critical feminism and critical race theory, intersectionality is influenced by queer theory, postmodern theory, hermeneutic ontology, standpoint epistemology; intersectionality works with critical theory, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and critical feminism to make visible how marginalized women are being constructed by or within diverse social conditions; intersectional analyses in leadership refer to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power; employed by feminist scholars from different disciplines (philosophy, social sciences,

humanities, economy, psychology, business, organizational studies, law), different theoretical perspectives (phenomenology, structuralist sociology, psychoanalysis, deconstructionism), and different political persuasions (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, disability studies).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Vague and ambiguous definitions claim intersectionality is an analytical approach, a framework, a paradigm, a research program, a description of personal identity, a theory of expression, a counter-hegemonic political program, a methodology; varied labels include interrelations of oppressions, multiple oppressions, multiple social divisions, mutual constitutions, considerable differences, hybridities, simultaneity, numerous oppressions, multiculturalisms, multiplicities, post-colonialism, differential consciousness, inappropriate/d otherness, multi-gendering, multiple other, lattice of difference; scholars believe there is a necessity to correct or refine the intellectual validity of intersectionality; as a project under construction, disagreements are related to (mis)appropriation, identity politics, and intersectionality as a travelling theory; claims of European erasure of race that move away from the original intent of intersectionality are pervasive; debates are concerned with whether intersectionality applies only to some demographics and not others.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Intersectionality has been adapted beyond critical race and feminist scholarship to confront wide-ranging issues, power dynamics, and discursive fields; rather than producing more trustworthy knowledge, intersectionality offers more situated and contextual knowledge and more axes of difference to explore; the intent of social justice and transformational change when applying intersectionality is critical; intersectionality is neither a grand narrative nor a universal body of knowledge.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter traces the intellectual history of intersectionality theory by employing Foucault's (2012) archaeology of knowledge framework. The idea of intersectionality itself is ubiquitous in many disciplines. It requires an in-depth critique to determine its controversies, ruptures, erasures, limitations, and strengths. A dialectic discourse exists between intersectionality and educational leadership epistemologies that identifies the space where the two bodies of knowledge intersect and the conditions that make this possible. But a more specific question might be asked: *How might feminist educational leadership benefit from intersectionality?*

The chapter is structured around a brief description of Foucault's (2012) archaeology of knowledge, and the contextual information which therein grounds the analysis of intersectionality's intellectual history. Subsequently, Foucault's (2012) archaeological method is applied to document the evolution of its intellectual history.



Such an analysis facilitates the possibility of a feminist leadership paradigm using intersectionality as an analytical approach. The remainder of the chapter establishes the changing historical conditions of leadership, outlining the need for a contemporary leadership paradigm that considers marginalized female leaders within the context of race, gender, and class that advances beyond the prevailing White dominance paradigm of leadership. The following question might be asked: *What are the compromising aspects of current leadership discourse when exploring the possible contributions intersectional theory might make to leadership theory?* There is a discussion devoted to leadership evolution, specifically feminist leadership, which addresses the intersection of leadership and intersectionality. A feminist leadership discourse allows latitude for transforming traditional, modernist, positivist leadership paradigms. The chapter addresses questions such as: *How and why did leadership theory evolve to include feminist theory? Why does a post-structural feminist paradigm synchronize so well with intersectionality?*

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## Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge

While not a formal theory, Foucault's (2012) archaeological methodology offers an approach that could allow us to validate a theory or phenomena. This process does not trace the chronology of events in history but instead abandons preconceptions about historical continuity by describing the disruptions, thresholds, differences, and complex discourses that have developed over time. The "history of ideas" concerns the transitions between historical worldviews and the accompanying narrative or discourse (dis)continuities that falter under closer inspection. Foucault (2012) points out that discourse is a means of controlling the social practices and institutions in a society. An archaeological analysis aims to reveal historical conditions that made knowledge development possible. Foucault's (2012) understanding of history is not a traditional approach within a paradigm of historical investigation. Instead, when tracing a phenomenon or theory, he follows a discontinuous approach rather than simple linear continuity. This approach validates discontinuities as typical rather than atypical phenomena. When analyzing ideas, however, Foucault (2012) does not seek meaning in a chronological or linear discursive progression but relies on natural but radical paradigm ruptures that ameliorate and foment the evolution of knowledge.

Foucault (2012) posits a different methodology when looking at the past not based on static, inert memorization of events. He claims that a universalized recollection of past events limits any possibility of examining the idea or event within its unique context and examines the conditions that precede, surround, or follow the idea's development. Doing so would allow for the evolution of an idea (Foucault, 2012). This approach stresses the importance of reviewing the history of an idea in all of its peculiarities related to context, timing, conditions, who is speaking and who they represent. Then the rules of forming an idea, not having anything to do with the chronological or hierarchical processes, acknowledge "forms of succession," "forms of coexistence," and "procedures of intervention" that reify and validate those ideas



(Foucault, 2012). He concerns himself with: *Why, for instance, did an idea become, at a given moment, an object of knowledge?*

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## **An Analysis of Intersectionality Using Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge**

### **1900s: Social Activism as the Foundation of Intersectionality**

Intersectionality entered the twenty-first century as a formal discourse making a significant contribution to social science research and the development of feminism. A lesser-known fact is that the concept has its roots in a long history of Black female activists beginning in the mid-1800s, during the women's movement in the USA when White women marginalized women of color. For centuries Black women were banned from higher education and voting. Consequently, early Black abolitionists and social activists found their voice through activism outside of formal academic institutions with oral history, poetry, music, journalism, and creative nonfiction (Grzanka, 2014). Notable activists such as Maria W. Stewart, Sojourner Truth (Isabella Baumfree in Boston, Massachusetts), Audre Lorde, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett served as central figures in the early history of intersectionality (as cited in Grzanka, 2014).

These early activists criticized the prevailing societal and legal exclusions that defined womanhood based on White European and White American norms, excluding Black women and rendering their experiences invisible (Mays & Ghavami, 2018). Maria W. Stewart used public speaking to highlight the various interlocking systems of racialized gender oppression that affected Black women's position in public spheres. These early forms of intersectionality thinking argued that gender was corrupted by "maleness" and race with "Whiteness." As a result, Black women were rendered invisible (as cited in Mays & Ghavami, 2018). Intersectionality continued to develop throughout the twentieth century by theorists, literary figures, and activists identified as Black womanists, Black feminists, Chicano feminists, Hispanas, Xicanistas, and sister/outside (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1984).

Intersectionality has a lengthy and redoubtable history in philosophy and sociology. Themes that focus on individuals' position in complex multidimensional societies are founded on intersectionality core concepts. Durkheim, Marx, and Weber were founders of traditions related to class schisms and factions, industrialization and divisions of labor. Intersectionality has become pivotal to political movements related to race, racism, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, (neo-)Marxist feminism, (neo-)Marxist anti-racism, migration, and coalition politics (Carastathis, 2016).

### **Twentieth Century: The Legal Perspective of Intersectionality**

Black feminist politics of the early 1900s catalyzed the development of intellectual intersectionality in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)

was recognized as the first scholar to bring intersectionality into the formal academic discourse. She remained faithful to the origins of Black women's oppression by dedicating her metaphor of the traffic intersection to a century of Black feminist scholar-activists. Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) legal contributions to intersectionality recognized Black women's longstanding intellectual contributions to theorizing and combating oppression. In particular, she argued that the legal code only recognized single-axis identity (i.e., race or gender). This code failed to account for how Black women's gendered racism/racialized sexism differed from White women's and Black men's experiences and created workplace discrimination which was allowed to exist within the boundaries of the extant legal system. Crenshaw (1991) argued that ignoring race when discussing gender emphasizes the oppression of people of color and anti-racist perspectives that reinforce women's oppression. As an epistemology, intersectionality was reconfigured in the late 1980s by legal scholars who investigated how the legal system ignored female African Americans' lived experiences. These scholars fought to achieve racial justice within a systemic racist society and represented the legal-scholarship movement of that time period (see Bell, 1987; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Kennedy, 1998; Williams 1992 as cited in Crenshaw, 1991).

Simultaneously, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) wrote: "social theories developed by multiply marginalized women . . . reflect women's efforts to come to terms with lived experiences within intersecting oppressions" (p. 9). Collins (2000) was instrumental in establishing the notion that a "matrix of domination" impacts Black women "in which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained" (p. 228). The Black lesbian Combahee Women's Collective (1986) boycotted oppression and domination by emphasizing how critical it was to acknowledge multiple forms of domination. Written works by Black feminist scholars supported these ideas (see bell hooks' "Ain't I a Woman?" 1981; Hull, Scott, and Smith "All the Women Are White and All the Blacks are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave" 1982 as cited in Schiller, 2000).

Intersectionality was influenced by other theories such as queer theory (Duong, 2012), postmodern theory (Lyotard, 1984), hermeneutic ontology (Heidegger, 1962), standpoint epistemology (Code, 2000), and views of ethics and care (Nodding, 2003). Gloria Anzaldúa and Moraga's (1984) research on borderlands introduced border crossing themes, border space, boundaries, and relationality relevant to contemporary intersectionality.

Queer theory, like intersectionality theory, is an interdisciplinary approach to identity and the human experience and like intersectionality theory, is "world-making" (Duong, 2012, p. 378). That is, it has the power "to wrench frames" (Duong, 2012, p. 371). An in-depth examination of identity is central to the concept of intersectionality, as it is to all the epistemologies that contribute to its development.

Postmodern theory, a key influence on the concept of intersectionality, focuses on skepticism regarding modernity's universal narrative. Having its start in the 1970s and gaining prominence in the 1990s, postmodern theory questions the existence of only one objective reality in favor of a range of realities and epistemologies. Postmodernism holds no "grand narrative" or metanarrative that accurately describe

the world, only multiple, localized, contextual micronarratives. In other words, there is only the particular for the postmodernist not the universal. And there are only stories about the world, no objective world itself (Lyotard, 1984) – tenets that harmonize well with intersectionality.

Hermeneutical ontology foreshadowed intersectional themes. A core tenet of hermeneutical ontology is utilitarian in that things are said to exist and are defined due to their pragmatic operations in the real world (Heidegger, 1962). “Being-in-the-world” and “being-with-others” contradict traditional notions of mind/body dichotomy. This is particularly true concerning phenomena such as race and gender, where an interpretation of identity lies at the core of intersectionality (Botts, 2017).

Standpoint theory, a concept that emerged from Marxist ideology, acknowledges how inequalities between men and women influence knowledge generation. Standpoint epistemology originates with the idea that all social knowledge claims are inherently gendered and perpetuate structures of power and privilege (Code, 2000). Standpoint epistemologist knowledge production is political. According to standpoint theorists, the oppressed have had to learn to adapt to the social order’s workings to function within it, but which also undermines that order (Code, 2000). Intersectionality’s focus on the oppression of the marginalized knower resonates well here.

Themes found in moral and care ethics are significant contributions to intersectionality’s epistemological basis (Noddings, 2003).

## **Twenty-First Century: Many Disciplines/Many Definitions**

As we have seen, intersectionality has been profoundly influenced by several critical theories in the twentieth century. By the twenty-first century, intersectionality had already served many purposes within several disciplines (e.g., transnational feminism, critical race, disability, queer, transgender, and globalization studies). Even though Black women’s oppression in the USA initiated the activism that formed the intersectionality foundation, its reach eventually transcended this group’s plight. Intersectionality since the early 1900s has gradually made an integral contribution to the feminist canon of literature.

While scholars agree that the provenance of intersectionality lies in critical-race theory and feminism, an exact definition of intersectionality still remains equivocal. Cole (2008) stated that intersectionality “is a paradigm for theory and research offering new ways of understanding the complex causality that characterizes social phenomena” (p. 179). Cho et al. (2013) view intersectionality as an analytical sensibility that stresses “what makes an analysis intersectional is not the use of the term intersectionality...nor its drawing on lists of standard citations...what makes an analysis intersectional...is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power” (p. 795).

Scholars differ on what true intersectionality is, although they agree that its applications are abundant. For some, intersectionality constitutes an analytic

approach, a framework, a theory; a paradigm, or a combination of those, while others view intersectionality as a research program, a description of personal identity, a theory of expression, a counter-hegemonic political agenda as well as methodology (see list of scholars in Botts, 2017). As a research program, the concept of intersectionality focuses on how socialized-identity markers like race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, and class interact with and affect the phenomenon being researched (Botts, 2017). As a description of personal identity, intersectionality disrupts the idea of describing personal identity in mono-linear categories (Botts, 2017). As a theory of oppression, intersectionality represents the idea that “axes” of oppression (such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability status) intersect the oppressed’s lives (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). As a counter-hegemonic political agenda, European, androcentric, and White biases are viewed as the cause of systematic exclusion from the realms of legitimate knowledge (Bilge, 2013).

Disciplines that employ intersectionality are equally varied. For example, intersectionality thought has increased in business, management, leadership studies, and organizational reviews (Atewologun, Sealy, & Vinnicombe, 2016). Although rooted in African-American women’s experiences, other feminist women of color both from within and outside the USA have influenced intersectionality (e.g., Cho et al., 2013; Grzanka, 2014). Anzaldúa and Moraga (1984) speak to interlocking systems of oppression from a Chicana lesbian feminist position.

Intersectional perspectives and the complex social phenomena they refer to are dichotomized into different names and labels. These include interrelations of oppressions, multiple oppressions, multiple social divisions, mutual constitutions, considerable differences, hybridities, simultaneity, numerous oppressions, multiculturalisms, multiplicities, post-colonialism, differential consciousness, and inappropriate/d otherness. While intersectional research in leadership exists, other terms are often applied (Hutchinson & Underwood, 2020). Nevertheless, this does not necessarily invalidate the research for intersectional scholarship, since these studies inherently embody the core tenets of intersectionality. For example, Hutchinson and Underwood (2020) advance notions of what they call “multi-gendering” and “multiple others,” or “lattice of difference.” Some researchers use the concept of intersectionality more blatantly than others, reflecting either different disciplinary traditions or the possibility of a lack of awareness of earlier knowledge traditions (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

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## Rewriting the Narrative: A Corrective Project

In sifting through these debates, a central goal of recent scholarship is to “correct” or refine the intellectual validity of intersectionality. Scholars are prone to “revisit,” “rethink,” or identify “blind spots” in previous literature (Nash, 2016). There is an intense culture of amelioration in the twenty-first century with the hopes of gaining more precise knowledge. The more we revisit intersectionality, the more axes of oppression are added. Yet, it may be fair to say that rather than producing more

trustworthy knowledge, intersectionality offers more situated and contextual knowledge and more axes of difference to explore. Rice et al. (2019) stress that the ideal would be for scholars to preserve the intent of social justice and transformational change when selecting appropriate intersectional methodology and theoretical designs.

## Critical Movements

Researchers have broadened and adapted intersectionality beyond critical race and feminist scholarship to confront wide-ranging issues, power dynamics, and discursive fields. As a ubiquitous pervasive theory, intersectionality has generated significant controversy and redoubtable critique. Debates shift continually depending on the discipline in question. These are as diverse as epistemology, discursive landscape, social differences, and political sociology (Botts, 2017). There are many contradictory perspectives – for example, a lack of universal definition; ambiguous methodology; the ubiquitous use of Black women as subjects; appropriation by White feminism to the detriment of Black feminism; and disturbing conceptions of identity politics (see Bilge, 2013). Better known as “critical movements” in intersectional archaeology, these debates offer differing perspectives highlighting disruptions, ruptures, erasures, and overall challenges in the twenty-first century that can ultimately assist scholars in their research for improvement.

As a relatively newly named discourse, intersectionality has neither a grand narrative nor a universal body of knowledge. There does seem to be agreement, however, that intersectionality cannot be considered within the standard canon of research. There are, however, a set of shared ideas that focus on the following: how race, class, gender, and sexuality constitute intersecting systems of power; how specific social inequalities reflect these power relations from one setting to the next; how identities of race and gender are socially constructed within multiple systems of power; and how social problems and their remedies are typically created (May, 2015). Since intersectionality is continually evolving, scholars and activists must engage in debates that influence its evolution. One example of this is the archaeological knowledge analysis approach which makes transparent a project under construction. Yet there is still room for provocative, innovative investigative avenues, even though there is little agreement regarding a definition and the existence of fiercely debated issues surrounding the meaning and scope of intersectionality (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Collins, 2015). Questions such as the following are of particular interest in this scholarly field: *For whom who is intersectionality? What are its purposes? How might it be operationalized? What are its main underlying assumptions?*

## (Mis)Appropriation

While this chapter’s intent is not to provide a comprehensive overview of extant debates and controversies, a few salient provocative ruptures are discussed. When examining one of the more contentious debates in the intersectionality controversies,

the history of White feminism is an essential catalyst for the theory's existence and the basis for discussion and debate. Both Black feminism and intersectionality are dwarfed by a White Euro-centric paradigm of sovereignty, the Global North, and the academy. Consequently, some critics (e.g., Bilge, 2013) believe that an erasure of the origins of Black-American feminism and activism in the twenty-first century has occurred due to the dominance of White Euro-centric researchers who appropriate the theory. These European scholars are accused of rewriting the approach and alienating it from its original intent and context. Scholars argue that intersectionality's appropriation in the European academy tends to obfuscate racism by labelling research as intersectionality (Bilge, 2013). Nash (2016) finds the "remaking [of] the analytic apart from Black women's bodies" troubling since such "an analytic centred on Black women [would] not be palatable or desirable as a field-defining analytic" (p. 17). Alexander-Floyd (2012) stresses intersectional research must honor its "focus on illuminating women of colour as political subjects and the gender, racial, class, and sexual politics that impact their lives" (p. 19). For many scholars, the whole point of intersectionality is to validate marginalized voices and de-emphasize the experiences/interests of privileged groups.

This militant perspective contrasts counter-arguments that a social-justice agenda as the core tenet of intersectionality should *not* limit this research approach by demographic selection (for example, privileged vs. marginalized populations). In further defense of appropriation, some European feminists (cited in Lykke, 2005) insist that intersectionality originated with German social psychologist Moritz Lazarus and sociologists Georg Simmel and Ange-Marie Hancock, 2007, and Stoetzler 2016. Other Europeans attribute the birth of intersectionality to the twentieth-century Russian feminist revolutionary, Alexandra Kollontai (cited in Lykke, 2005). This claim of discovery serves to uphold European scholars' insistence that intersectionality need not focus exclusively on Blackness or women. The nuances surrounding this debate are intricate and transformative. It is also critical to account for the context in which Euro-Western researchers appropriate intersectionality, and why it might look different from that of the intersectionality used by Black feminists. For example, in some disciplines, Euro-Western researchers cite difficulty adopting intersectionality as an analytic tool because of their disciplines' ongoing rootedness in Euro-Western frameworks and methodologies. These dynamics explain, in part, why scholars may have rewritten the genealogy of intersectionality: to downplay its focus on social transformation from the racialized, sexualized bottom-up approach to better align with dominant knowledge systems in their field. In Europe, racism is not recognized and often conflated with multiculturalism. Intersectionality's use in Europe is surrounded by controversy as European scholars are accused of excluding race from the methodological equation. Yet, when we apply Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, we see an example of how ideas become protean in different historical contexts. The German antidiscrimination law was cited as an example of identifying the specific configuration of social situatedness in a given historical context. Because of its Holocaust history, in a genocidal application of race politics, there is a reluctance to work with that category and remains true in many European contexts.

In more recent work (see Cho et al., 2013), Black founding feminists themselves view intersectionality as universally applicable. Broadening the theory to examine the relationship between oppression and privilege allows for acknowledging the visible and invisible positions to ensure that power relations and privileged categories remain unnamed and under-theorized (Anthias, 2013). Far from narrowing intersectionality's scope, such an approach restores the broad applicability of intersectionality as a methodological direction and concedes that intersectionality is political. Nash (2016) points out another crucial and contested point where researchers use intersectionality to manage complexity rather than to understand/transform oppression. Furthermore, Anthias (2013) wonders how many differences (e.g., race, gender, class, disability) should be incorporated into a given study and should they be equally weighted? Are they always equally salient? (p. 129). Appropriations have been critiqued for diluting the idea of intersectionality. For example, the concept of multiculturalism refers to varying cultures contributing their ethnic cultural diversities in superficial cultural celebrations (e.g., food, dress, music). Bilge (2013) refers to such practices as "ornamental intersectionality" – a neoliberal approach that "allows institutions and individuals to accumulate value through good public relations and 'rebranding' without the need to address the underlying structures that produce and sustain injustice" (p. 405).

### Identity Politics

In the twenty-first century, intersectionality has been criticized for being a rebranded albeit sophisticated version of identity politics. A generic explanation of identity politics describes a group of people of similar religions, race, social backgrounds, class, or other identity factors which face oppression organized around similar political agendas. In this section, the shifting meaning of the term intersectionality is discussed and contrasts its new mainstream usage as a variation of identity politics. This critique reflects a concern by scholars that the early conception of intersectionality theory to analyze capitalism and make resistance more effective is being minimized, ignored, and even erased (Litvin, 2018).

In a *Time Magazine* interview in February of 2020 (Steinmetz, 2020), Crenshaw emphasized that intersectionality is *not* identity politics and it was never her intent to conflate the two concepts. She stresses that Black feminists first formulated intersectionality theory to critique identity politics and provide an alternative perspective. The Combahee River Collective relied on the concept of identity politics to make visible the need for emancipatory political affiliations in order to address racism in the women's movement. Their identity politics was intended to establish coalitions to erase oppression (Litvin, 2018). Critics argue that contemporary identity politics have neutralized anti-racial efforts and the Black freedom movement's revolutionary vision has been replaced with a more narrow and limited understanding of identity itself. Instead of creating solidarity, identity, in this case, seems to serve as the basis for an individual's political beliefs which is divisive. "The framework of identity reduces politics to whom you are as an individual and gaining recognition as an individual, rather than your membership in a collectivity and the collective struggle against an oppressive social structure...As a result, identity



politics paradoxically ends up reinforcing the very norms it set out to criticize” (Litvin, 2018).

What remains is a polemic about the politicization of intersectionality and its implications. The rupture this causes in the history and archaeological evolution of the concept has resulted in the emergence of a new range of intersectionality meanings. Some might attest to a reclaiming or renaming of intersectionality as a political practice. Despite that, rethinking identity politics might still offer relevancy to the discussion of intersectionality. Ilomen (2019) cites Lorde’s (1984) work (see also Gloria Anzaldúa and Paula Gunn Allen) who introduces “transformational identity politics” as a complex interactive process that displaces conventional boundaries between apparently disparate social groups. Opportunistic intersectionality promotes “identity politics” by preventing coalition building (Cho et al., 2013). These single-axis approaches to determine identity limit the potential for coalition building and solidarity. Crenshaw (1991) believes that identity is inherently coalitional. Employing post-structuralist claims concerning the contingency of identity, for example, Leslie Hahner (2012) maintains that intersectionality should be conceptualized not as the confrontation between coherent, stable identities, but rather as the “constitutive relationship between discourse and subjectivity” (p. 152). She names this “constitutive intersectionality” and argues that it can account for how identifications shift in response to different situations. Aristeia Fotopoulou (2012) similarly identifies two ways of undertaking intersectional research: one in which deconstructing categories is central and the second in which categories are employed “critically, strategically and selectively” (p. 24).

### **Travelling Theory**

The intersectionality travel across cultures beyond the US borders has expanded the concept and its most fundamental goal of addressing empowerment (Salem, 2016). Exporting intersectionality to non-Western parts of the world (e.g., Africa, Middle East) requires that Western conceptions be deconstructed and then reconstructed to adapt to the context and demographics of analysis (Salem, 2016). Salem (2016) cites the works of scholars such as Davis (1990), Audre Lorde (1984), Lugones (2007), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), and Ramón Grosfoguel (1999) who all serve to caution the importing of US colonial notions of feminism to how intersectionality can and should work outside the USA. Both Nash (2016) and Collins (2015) critique intersectionality’s cooptation in various academic and professional contexts; they have also resisted the idea that intersectionality has a singular, controllable, or “true” intention. Said (1983) also presents a caveat that cautions us to be aware of how theories can lose their originality and critical stance as they travel from one cultural domain to another. However, it’s entirely possible they can also transform in positive ways as they travel. Knapp (2005) claims that complex theories are prone to diluting their complexity and misrepresenting the theory. Alexander-Floyd (2012) argues that the distillation, contortion, and misrepresentation of intersectionality can be traced to the contemporary academy and are often directed uniquely towards European



contexts. Bilge (2013) describes the erasure of Black feminist history through appropriation as a way to “depoliticize intersectionality, to whiten, and eliminate its function as a tool for political change” (p. 405). Depoliticization itself moves away from the foundations of intersectionality. It results in “diversity management” – the phenomenon of merely borrowing the intersectionality language but failing to undertake a real intersectional analysis or challenge inequalities (Paur, 2012). Since dialogue across difference is difficult, Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) recommends traversal rooting practices and shifting where researchers interrogate their histories/ positionalities while gaining fluency in others’ historical/new conditions of oppression and struggle – a critical activity for any research that claims to be intersectional. Despite criticisms of the misappropriation and misrepresentation of intersectionality, scholars suggest that these contortions might ultimately legitimize the theory. This makes it more accessible to a broader demographic of users, including subjects who represent privilege and the heterogenous, White male demographic. Not surprisingly, intersectionality’s travels constitute a contested space (Parker & Samantrai, 2010). A Foucauldian analysis illustrates how intersectionality’s contextual complexities reveal multiple theoretical framing and development due to differing standpoints, contexts, perspectives, and needs.

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## **Studying Leadership Using Intersectionality: A Critical Approach**

### **Leadership Discourse**

An archaeological critique of intersectionality compares discursive formations of ideas in different periods. Historical periods reflect various institutions, structures, politics, socioeconomic conditions, and sociology of thought. All of these variances influence the creation and legitimization of ideas, knowledge, or epistemologies. Nevertheless, each set of historical conditions cannot illuminate the causes or transition of one way of thinking to another at a different period in history.

Foucault’s archaeological framework helps establish certain historical conditions of leadership that challenge intersectional leadership possibilities. Histories of leadership abound in the literature but the discourse discussion adds different conceptual ideas to approach leadership’s vast terrain (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). Foucault sought to disrupt the notion of a universal or standard leadership approach by characterizing the plurality of discourse or, alternatively, establishing ensembles of discourse (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). Historically, a leadership that follows a “one size fits all” epistemology grounded in White male (and White female) criteria has led to glaring problematics within the field of leadership that marginalizes various minority groups (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). This chapter highlights a troubling situation that compromises leadership theory’s evolution to fit a globalized world in the twenty-first century – a status quo within leadership discourse that highlights gender neutrality and objectivity as the most significant factors in knowing why the central discourse celebrates White male knowing.

## **A Discourse of White Male Knowing and Gender-Neutral Paradigms That Exclude**

For the most part, positivist conceptions ground an early leadership epistemology. Much of the leading scholarship reinforces the recognition and legitimacy of some leadership paradigms over others. The most apparent shortcoming of leadership's historical constructions is a profound gender bias against women within leadership discourse. This status quo results from an established hegemonic hold within leadership, which was historically maintained by those who set the norm itself – White men (Acker, 2012). Nixon and Sinclair (2018) suggest that the discipline of leadership itself made the construct of gender invisible. By making some leadership dimensions invisible, these dimensions become undiscussable, beyond critique, challenge, and change, thus discounting and ignoring women as knowers, particularly marginalized women (Nixon & Sinclair, 2018).

Understanding the inner mechanics of a theory involves addressing how a discipline is defined (Dugan, 2017). When there is a lack of definitional clarity, omission, erasure, or delegitimation of one paradigm over another, epistemology's workability and credibility come into question and limit possibilities for transformation (Dugan, 2017). But transformation in leadership requires a paradigm shift from positivist paradigms to post-structuralist conceptions of leadership. This would involve the deconstruction of the type of power that perpetuates epistemic biases against women as leaders.

Ultimately, the epistemological foundation of traditional leadership is flawed due to inherent bias in a knowledge system that excludes nondominant perspectives. Early frameworks underlying leadership theories highlight traditional assumptions of masculinity and the gendered construction of leadership (Nixon & Sinclair, 2018). A leadership canon of dominant archetypes of White male leaders comes with entrenched beliefs related to aggression, dominance, and privilege (Nixon & Sinclair, 2018). Such an epistemological framework situates leadership theory within an archetype with mythic power, but just as significantly, the framework itself resists deconstruction (Nixon & Sinclair, 2018). Given the predisposed epistemological bias within leadership, Nixon and Sinclair (2018) argues that gender neutrality keeps hidden the impact of power on gender.

Foucault's archaeology provides a set of conceptual tools to understand how an unlevel knowledge field's nuances produce and maintain epistemic oppression (and privilege). This analysis explains the epistemic impact exclusion has on marginalized knowers' ability to create, develop, and apply knowledge. Fricker (2007) calls this "hermeneutical injustice" – a form of epistemic neglect, resulting in intellectual inequity (p. 6) and is evident in the discourse of leadership. The subject of gender is often overlooked and minimized or framed within a masculinist paradigm. As a result of epistemic injustices, specifically hermeneutic injustices, women, as leaders, function within a "fragmented, contradictory, and androcentric" discourse (Ford, 2006, p. 78). Given the epistemological gaps within the discipline of leadership and the resulting bias, the collective impact is a discourse predicated on excluding marginalized ways of knowing (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019).

## Intersectionality as a Feminist Critique

This section will seek to initiate a dialogue based on several questions: *What conditions make intersectionality about leadership possible? How might educational leadership and intersectionality theories mutually contribute to benefit each other?* Intersectionality theory is grounded in a post-structural, feminist critique that challenges the epistemology of leadership theory and addresses leadership areas that merit theoretical expansion. Research reveals that the current academic focus within leadership remains skewed toward male interests, even as increasingly diverse perspectives have been integrated into the academic canon. To systemically alter this male-normed pattern within leadership warrants a review of knowledge production that considers various accounts of determining what is valid. One way of changing this historically-normed White male stereotype is to acknowledge the epistemic bias present within leadership theory's epistemology. Understanding this leadership reality for nondominant perspectives invites opportunities to include these heuristics as vehicles for empowering marginalized subjects to alter leadership's epistemology. Views framed from a feminist perspective have served as the intellectual counter to combat the marginalized representation of women and individuals of color within the canon of leadership (Storberg-Walker & Haber-Curran, 2017). A Foucauldian critique is appropriate here since it challenges the basis for leadership assumptions and norms. Furthermore, such an analysis confronts the dominant leadership discourse and suggests alternative understandings of the field and its inherent applications. According to Bailey (2014), "Understanding how the unlevel knowing field produces and maintains epistemic oppression (and privilege) requires a set of nuanced conceptual tools for explaining the impact epistemic exclusion has on marginalized knowers' ability to produce knowledge" (p. 62). The lack of credibility ascribed to marginalized constituents contributes to this intellectual disconnect. Advocating different ways of understanding educational contexts and leadership illuminates the various pressures and opportunities that come to bear on school leaders, the portrayal of leadership and the dominance of certain discourses (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). Foucault's (cited in Niesche & Gowlett, 2019) work helps us understand how leadership in education manifests and the challenges and potentialities for change. Foucault's archaeological analysis of intersectionality begins a conversation about the possibility of adding to leadership knowledge via intersectional research in the twenty-first century.

Extensive studies on women's experiences and leadership challenges in schools already exist (see Rhode, 2017). Much of this research focuses on the intersections of educational leadership in studying female principals' experiences; however, less research examines women's leadership identities as heterogeneous (Davids, 2018). There is already much research around females' relative scarcity in leadership roles (see Rhode, 2017). While there have been numerous and diverse perspectives as advocated through critical theory, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and feminism concerning educational leadership, what remains largely unexplored, however, is how female forms of leadership and identity are being constructed by or within the

ambient social conditions connected with their position. In this regard, Eacott (2011) explains that because the research agenda of educational leadership has employed a narrow and under-theorized view of practice, which has limited itself only to “what leaders do,” the discursive nature of social interactions are usually not taken into account. Researchers often address only a single identity or, at most, just one intersection of identities at a time, depending on the situation (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2020). Traditionally, the study of female experiences in education and other sectors focused on female and male workplace experiences or interactions related to occupation, salary, and promotion (Rhode, 2017). Gender disparities focused on the lack of access to authority positions, management support, executive training, and remuneration (Rhode, 2017).

Appointing women to leadership positions in corporate and public sectors has consistently been a universal and redoubtable challenge (Eagly & Carli, 2012). Even in liberal socioeconomically progressive societies, women remain largely underrepresented in positions of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2012). A growing body of research is emerging however, examining African-American female leaders’ double oppression in the USA and Black and other women of color’s triple oppression in developing countries (Schmidt & Mestry, 2014). There are many concerns about the attitude of resignation towards the status quo that limits women’s access to leadership positions. These include the crisis around the dearth of women in leadership positions, not just in education but also in corporate and government positions. Despite the low numbers, recent research reveals that women are well suited for challenges involving organizational complexity. Interestingly, some theorists now perceive female leadership styles as assets in nonhierarchical organizations that are managed under a team-based paradigm (Oakley, 2000).

Notably, the leadership literature is restricted in its use of intersectionality with poor representation of women of color and the unique experiences and challenges they face. The research, focused almost solely on women in leadership, makes up most of the scholarship rather than concentrating on intersectional or even multiple social groups. Black, Latina, and Asian women remain underrepresented in leadership positions and research (Miller, Kerr, & Reid, 2010) while all women “suffer from underrepresentation at the administrator level . . . Latinas and African American women show the lowest levels of representation” (Miller et al., 2010, p. 217). Intersectionality allows us to determine who might be leaders and how circumstances of social class, location, ethnicity, and cultural worldview might affect work and identity (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Intersectionality demonstrates that barriers are not the same among all women or even among all women of color. There are different stereotypical assumptions about Black, Asian, and White women that need to be distinguished, clarified, acknowledged, and refuted, if possible (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). For example, Asian women are believed to have high technical competence levels but stereotypes feed into their lack of assertiveness which would affect them in a leadership role. Stereotypes depict Black women as less competent (even less intellectual) and aggressively vocal. Rosette et al. (2016) claim that “because Black women tend to be viewed as masculine rather than feminine, they may not be evaluated negatively when acting dominantly,” which

can work in their favor (p. 11). Given that Black women are expected to be strong and assertive, they may, however, not experience the agency restrictions that other women do and consequently Black women may face more sanctions than White women for errors and failures in the job (Rosette et al., 2016). Stereotypes of Indigenous women remain underdeveloped given most organization's limited experience with this ethnic subgroup and its relatively small size (Le, 2020).

Riad (2011) adds, "Leadership is not independent of the power relations within a given cultural context" (p. 831). Such power relations often dictate what leadership should look like, who should be the leaders, and leadership practice. Consequently, an "ideal-leader model" locates White males as the hegemonic demographic based on the status quo. Recognition for women of color's unique experience to produce similar and critical innovative leadership approaches is needed. The extant body of literature is generally characterized by single-axis, reductionist, additive, and unitary examining women's experiences (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2020). However, these results do not yield a complete profile of the women being studied. An intersectional approach is beneficial for this task. For example, it prompts us to ask, *What might we learn by examining leadership's racialized and gendered history? What are the enduring consequences of that history? Specifically, who leads? How do they lead?*

Intersectional analyses can assist researchers better to evaluate diverse leadership consequences for policymaking and policy implementation. Crenshaw's (1991) emphasis on the political element of intersectionality is relevant here. Women of color may experience the strain of the contentious dialectic inherent to antiracist and antisexist politics, both of which may be significant factors in how they lead. This may motivate essential questions to be asked: *In what ways are women of colors' policy priorities unique, and with what consequence? In what ways does their social location at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other social categories inhibit or advance their ability to affect policy outcomes?* Intersectionality offers a theoretical tool to challenge, critique, and deconstruct power imbalances in educational leadership. Intersectionality's capacity to interconnect privilege and oppression allow us to understand how power influences identity affiliations which illustrate intersectionality's value to leadership discourse. By focusing on established epistemic biases and limitations within leadership theory, intersectionality can alter these inveterate epistemological infrastructures by causing epistemic friction or even an entire paradigm shift. Intersectionality contests male-normed traditions and gender neutrality within leadership theory by offering theoretical tools to address these frictions. By disrupting traditional canons of leadership theory, the principles of identity, social location, and structure, collectively examined through an intersectional lens, provide epistemological insight into leadership theory by offering a way to engage women's leadership and its many possible manifestations. The ability to address entrenched norms within the discourse of leadership constructs an opportunity to revisit how women engage their respective leadership identities, utilizing an intersectional lens.

This chapter analysis illustrates the epistemological linkages that bind together the (seemingly) disparate epistemologies of intersectionality and leadership. This systematic exclusion from being present within the production of knowledge and recipients of knowledge impacts all epistemological traditions, including leadership

theory. Merely integrating women into an analysis of leadership theory is insufficient. This single-axis approach fails to engage identity beyond an additive, hierarchical strategy without considering their varied identities and social locations. In this respect, applying an intersectional lens provides the epistemological complexity necessary to discern how the intersection of privileged and marginalized identities can coexist among leaders.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

In summary then, since its inception, the concept of intersectionality has been lauded as one of the most important contributions to feminist scholarship to date. Despite its popularity, there has been considerable confusion concerning what the concept means and how it can or should be applied in feminist inquiry and leadership. This chapter excavated the intersectionality phenomenon within contemporary feminist scholarship and leadership as a means to expand and broaden both intersectionality and leadership theory. Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. The theory is regularly used by feminist scholars from different disciplines (philosophy, social sciences, humanities, economy, and law), theoretical perspectives (phenomenology, structuralist sociology, psychoanalysis, and deconstructionism), and political persuasions (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, queer studies, and disability studies). Not surprisingly, heated theoretical debates, reaching polemical heights, have pervaded the USA and Europe. Most feminist scholars today would agree that intersectionality is essential to feminist theory, judging by the discussions that have emerged around the concept, despite sharing the same confusions around its ambiguity. Some suggest that intersectionality is a theory; others regard it as a concept or a heuristic device but some still see it as a reading strategy for doing feminist analysis. Controversies have emerged about whether intersectionality should be conceptualized as a crossroad (Crenshaw, 1991), as “axes” of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2011) or as an independent dynamic process (Staunæs, 2003). It is not clear whether intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, theorizing identity, or interpreted as a property of social structures and cultural discourses. Disruptions along the way raise questions and controversies about its appropriation by scholars to advance beyond the ubiquitous Black woman, the political implications of identity politics, and the pros and cons of intersectionality as a travelling theory.

The question of how a theory so ambiguous could be regarded as a formidable addition to contemporary feminist approach and to leadership theory leads one to ask whether a more coherent conceptual framework and methodology can harness the complex contexts it was initially intended to address? This chapter’s intent was not to answer this question unequivocally but rather to illustrate the confusion and the complexity that pervades intersectionality and, at the same time, highlight its many uses by a variety of scholars and for a variety of reasons that seem to depart from its

original intent that yield profoundly powerful contextual findings that cannot be ignored.

A Foucauldian archaeological analysis has enabled an etymological examination of its genealogy to the present day. Such an analysis is not limited to a historically linear view and, as such, was able to offer illustrations of the potential for a heuristic or theory to be expanded and broadened to meet the needs of twenty-first-century feminist leadership research. In this discussion, the goal was to understand and embrace an approach that thrives on ambiguity and incompleteness, but that has proven, nevertheless, profoundly illuminating. The chapter sought to investigate the paradox between the recent intersectionality success within feminist theory and its confusion among feminist scholars about what it is and how to use it in the twenty-first century.

In essence, intersectionality addresses the most central theoretical and normative concern within feminist scholarship: acknowledging differences among women. The very fact of differences among women has become the leading subject of feminist theories in recent years. This is because it touches on contemporary feminism and leadership. Intersectionality addresses differences by examining the implications of race, class, and gender on women's identities, experiences, and struggles for empowerment. It has been mainly concerned with the marginalization of poor women and women of color within White, Western feminist theory. A shift in research approaches gradually occurred to examine how race, class, and gender interact and intersect in women's lives to produce and transform power relations (Anthias, 2013; Collins, 2000). Intersectionality seems ideally suited to the task of exploring how categories of race, class, and gender are intertwined and mutually constitutive, giving priority to questions like how race is "gendered" and how gender is "racialized," and how both are linked to the continuities and transformations of social class. While intersectionality is most often associated with US Black feminist theory and the political project of theorizing the relationships between gender, class, and race, it has also been adopted and elaborated on by feminist theorists inspired by postmodern theoretical perspectives. This approach views intersectionality as a project which deconstructs the binary oppositions and universalism inherent in the modernist paradigms of Western philosophy and science (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Intersectionality fits neatly into the postmodern project of conceptualizing multiple and shifting identities. Critical perspectives inspired by poststructuralist theory – postcolonial theory (Mohanty, 2003), diaspora studies (Brah & Phoenix, 2004), and queer theory (Duong, 2012), all seeking an alternative to the study of identity, have seemingly embraced intersectionality. Intersectionality coincides with Foucauldian perspectives on power that focus on dynamic processes and the deconstruction of normalizing and homogenizing categories (Staunæs, 2003). Intersectionality seems to embody a commitment to the situatedness of all knowledge (Haraway, 1988). Thus, it makes a research space for intersectional locations in the production of feminist leadership theory (Lykke, 2005). Despite a false truth that early feminism was inclusive, such a feminist approach remains politically and theoretically imperialistic and ethnocentric. Contemporary feminism, that includes intersectionality, offers a novel and crucial link



between critical feminist theory on the effects of sexism, class, racism, and a critical methodology.

In conclusion, when assessing an archaeological analysis of intersectionality, some important implications for its use become apparent. With the increasing acceleration of intersectionality as a travelling theory across disciplines, demographics, and contexts, the concept runs the risk of being misused, misunderstood, erased, and underutilized in its full depth and potential (e.g., Bilge, 2013; Carbado, 2013). Specifically, what gets missed, are references to the concept's roots in Black feminist activism and scholarship, its contemporary advancements in feminist/gender/sexualities/women's studies, and its focus on understanding and challenging structures/systems of power and their manifestation as oppression and privilege. Understanding intersectionality as a field of study includes understanding how the field came to be (its roots and evolution), what content and themes characterize it, and how it is situated in current power structures and relation to other fields (Collins, 2015; Grzanka, 2014).

Furthermore, for its successful use, it is incumbent upon any scholar to apply the concept of intersectionality in a manner that challenges the idea that intersectionality is only relevant when applied to some demographics over others. An essential impact of intersectional analysis has been to correct the invisibility of experiences beyond the seemingly single-axis boundaries of gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. (e.g., women of color) experiences. Nevertheless, these translations of intersectionality have tended to involve a focus on specific axes of power such as gender/sexism, race/racism, and sexual orientation/heterosexism more so than on other axes, such as ability status/ableism, class/classism, trans identities/cisgenderism, and nationality/xenophobia. To this end, it becomes necessary to scrutinize and adjust intersectionality discourse to avoid implying that intersectionality applies only to some people. Instead, intersectionality can yield a breadth of experiences of social inequalities, including understudied axes of power and experiences of privilege along with oppression. To encourage naming social inequality and power, scholars and practitioners need to engage with several reflective questions, including "What are my assumptions about where intersectionality is located (e.g., in person, in context)? What does the language I use... suggest about my emphasis on individual characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation) versus sociocultural systems (e.g., cisgenderism, heterosexism, racism, and sexism)? What are the implications about an emphasis on identity as static versus shifting in context of interpersonal, structural, historical, and other power dynamics?" (Moradi, 2016 p. 120). Reflecting on these questions can help to identify limitations of current conceptualizations and discourse on intersectionality. By intentionally adopting attention to purposes of social justice, critical social theory, and activism, there is a call for expanding the use of intersectionality toward fuller engagement with its roots in Black feminist thought and contemporary advancements in feminist/women's studies, interdisciplinary richness and potential, and its central aims to challenge and transform structures/systems of power, privilege, and oppression.



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## **Part IV**

# **Theorizing Leadership**



# Postmodernism: Structured Doubt Within Leadership Certainties

# 11

Fenwick W. English

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## Abstract

The field of educational administration/leadership's rise is chronicled in this chapter as a search for a foundation upon which to establish a leadership practice. At first, the field's emergence is aligned with and to concepts and practices from business and management. The rise of postmodernism as a mix of texts in linguistics, philosophy, and history introduced a form of criticism called de-construction. De-construction is a radical but potent tool of postmodern analysis that reveals often hidden hierarchies of domination and power. As a field, educational administration/leadership may not be able to discern any more significant discoveries or constructions regarding leadership in its conventional form as it is conceived and taught in most university programs. Postmodernism can become the driving force to reconceptualize the field and keep programs from becoming lodged in a new form of academic architectonics that fails to unlock greater human potential and equality, and also prevents a new doxa from being established.

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### Keywords

Modernism · Postmodernism · Vienna Circle · Scientific empiricism · Metanarrative · Structuralism · Genealogical method · A regime of truth · Deconstruction · Leadership · Apparatus · Unity of science · Logical positivism · Doxa · A science of management · The consistency condition · Vicious regress · Architectonics

### Field of Memory

The era of modernity is generally said to have been framed by the writings of Rene Decartes (1596–1650) and took full flower through the Enlightenment period. However, it never actually ended and is still regnant in many fields, for one educational research (National Research Council, 2002) and for another educational leadership/administration (Culbertson, 1988; Griffiths, 1959, 1988; Halpin, 1958).

Modernity is propelled by the idea that human reason propagated in several forms of rationality, was the principle means for humans to live and serve as the answer to the problems of life. One downside of this attitude of living was that, “Modernity also produced a set of disciplinary institutions, practices, and discourses which legitimate its modes of domination and control” (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 3). The reason was that “the logic that hides behind Enlightenment rationality is a logic of domination and oppression. The lust to dominate nature entailed the domination of human beings. . .”(Harvey, 1990, p. 11).

Trying to find a temporal space where a line of demarcation between modernism and postmodernism can be discerned is exceptionally difficult. In fact, Ward (2003) has observed that, “We can point to no single date and claim that it marks either a chasm or a point of transition between the two periods” (p. 13). He went on further claim that, “The two can be said to inform each other to such a degree that, in reality, they cannot be separated” (p. 13).

The arts and the field of aesthetics have been an area where both modernism and postmodernism have been publicly exposed and expressed. Harvey (1990) asserts that the reason is that in the dynamics between boom and bust capitalist accumulation and over accumulation a certain time-space compression has been at play where waxing and waning have produced gaps between scientific knowledge and moral judgments. Harvey (1990) observes that:

The confidence of an era can be assessed by the width of the gap between scientific and moral reasoning. In periods of confusion and uncertainty, the turn to aesthetics (of whatever form) becomes pronounced. Since phases of time-space compression are disruptive, we can expect the turn to aesthetics and to the forces of culture as both explanations and *loci* of active struggle to be particularly acute as such moments (p. 327).

One moment of the gap occurred in the time period 1900–1930 (Fowler and Bostrom, 2002) and expressed itself in literature, psychology, philosophy, political theory, and the arts. Ransome (2010) defined modernism as:

A short-hand term for describing the various social, cultural and institutional features associated with the historical period of modern society. Used with reference especially to cultural change, modernity also denotes the widespread acceptance of modern ideas and modern values. Modernity is not just something that can be described but is also constitutive of a set of beliefs and attitudes about what being modern is and what it means to live in a modern society (p. 447).

Fowler and Bostrom's (2002) definition was quite similar:

Modernism is generally seen as an artistic response to a range of philosophical and social changes which undermined the securities on which 19th century literature was founded, including the impact of: writings by Charles Darwin (1809–92), Karl Marx (1818–83), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), urbanization; cultural alienation; world war. . . Modernism is marked by self-consciousness and by a plethora of technical innovations designed to disrupt the 'commonsense' of traditional discourse (p. 348).

According to Fowler and Bostrom (2002) some examples of modernist thought can be found in the work of poets Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and the Irish writer James Joyce. They also indicated that the thoughts on language of Ferdinand de Saussure could be considered a contemporary movement within structuralism.

Bowers (1984) has identified key elements in the ideology of modernism. They are:

1. An outlook that change, instead of being feared, was to be seen as something positive. The roots of this belief went all the way back to the 16th and 17th centuries. The caveat with this embrace of change was that it had to be anchored in rational thought, and when it was, it could then be seen as progressive. Change was a sign of progress.
2. Once rational thought became the mantra linked to change, then the seat of authority could be shifted from external forms of power to the rational individual who could choose to accept those changes if they did not agree. Authority could be divorced from tradition.
3. Another ancillary thought was that as change was rationalized by linking it to reason, a person could then free themselves from the past and its outdated perspectives and attitudes that could not be supported by fact and logic alone. The chief target of reason was religious thinking which professed beliefs that bordered on the embrace of magic. According to Bowers (1984), "Moral absolutes that previously could be grounded in religious teachings gave way to natural laws governing supply and demand in the economic sphere and to utilitarianism in the area of public policy" (p. 12).

One consequence of the dominance of the tenets of modernization thus far stipulated have led to the emergence of what Bowers (1984) describes as producing, "The main apostles of modernizing consciousness are the "liberal technocratic educators who operate within the mainstream of the educational establishment, but their influence over public schools appears to come from the dominant position they hold in the teacher-training institutions" (p. 14).

One result of what Bowers (1984) labels “modernizing consciousness” of people preparing educators

in efficient management techniques, generate a continual stream of theories to improve classroom instruction and administrative control of the school, conduct research to validate their knowledge claims and produce curriculum materials that give the appearance of individualizing the learning of information is increasingly one-dimensional (p. 15)

As Bowers (1984) opines, the agenda of the liberal-technocratic educators has been around for decades. It was responsible for theories of managerialism being superimposed on educational systems, intelligence testing, and the use of a menu of behavioral techniques employed in the classroom. “Another key element of the liberal-technocratic educator’s patterns of thought is the belief that change, based on abstract ideas and theory, is progressive” (p. 16). This is one reason why the proposed changes are called “reform”.

It also should be obvious that while modernism and its tenets have had their day in the arts and literature, it remains very dominant in science, medicine, agriculture, manufacturing, engineering, and education. There is no clear line between modernism and postmodernism. The lack of precision with definitions, the absence of common characteristics and borders, and the lack of coherent body of specific ideologies or narratives often leaves neophytes adrift when trying to understand postmodernism. Postmodernism has no such “essence”. Ward (2003) explained that calling some practice, style, idea, explanation *postmodern* was a way of framing something, and, “You are bringing an idea to it, rather than discovering a quality *in it*. In doing so you are ultimately linking it to a set of ideas about the world and our relationship to the world” (p. 15).

Perhaps the best distinction between modernism and postmodernism was explained by Lyotard (1997) when he said, “I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse [while] making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth” (p.xxiii). The word “meta” means above and without the need to be seriously questioned any longer.

Lyotard (1997) uses the metaphor of a game in modernism because he understands that science is a game with its own rules. While science attacks serious threats to its own status as a privileged discourse, it often fails to question itself on the same grounds. Lyotard (1997) defines *postmodernity* as “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p. xxiv), or translated into modern discourse, disbelief in grand theories of any kind. Three of the most well-known metanarratives are Marxism, fascism, and neoliberalism. Another would be the discourse of positivistic science (Woods, 1999).

The line of demarcation between modernism and postmodernism becomes a bit blurry at times. The notion that these two terms represent a binary presents a temptation to see the distinctions as sharp and absolute. Lyotard (1997) offers a counterfactual by proffering the view that, “A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant” (p. 79). This perspective would posit the



idea that modernism itself is in a kind of permanent doubt about its own beliefs. It is perpetually skeptical. When it becomes compelling skepticism, it enters a postmodern state.

### Field of Presence

The epitome of modernistic thinking, which remains regnant in much of the research undertaken in educational leadership today (see Wang, 2018), traces its lineage back to the famed Vienna Circle (1910–1940) and its thinking which produced logical positivism or sometimes referred to as logical or scientific empiricism (Carnap, 1984). The emphasis of scholars in the Vienna Circle centered on a rational attitude toward investigation and research, and they believed that “every knowledge that is factual, is connected with experiences in such a way that verification or direct or indirect confirmation is possible” (Carnap, 1984, p. 302),

The very wide appeal of the approach of the Vienna Circle in other countries is often grouped under the rubric of *the unity of science* movement. This effort was anchored in the premise that, “There is a logical unity of the language of science [because] the concepts of different branches of science are not of fundamentally different kinds, but belong to one coherent system” (Carnap, 1984, p. 303). However, even as Carnap (1984) was explaining what the *unity of science movement* was about he also admitted that, “There is today no unity of the laws of science (Carnap, 1984, p. 303). Similarly Horgan (1996) observed over a decade later that, “the goal of finding a unified theory of all of nature’s forces seems impossibly distant. In fact, no field of science has yielded any truly deep discoveries for a long time” (1996, pp. 27–8).

It is difficult to capture the locality or position of postmodernism in the *field of presence*. Part of the difficulty is that there is not a coherent body of theory or knowledge that is exclusively identified as *postmodern* with discrete borders or even a group of common advocates. English (2013) called postmodernism, “the anti-theory” (p. 871) and observed:

While postmodernism is antitheory in content, it is not antitheory qua theory. It is only when theory becomes a metanarrative, beyond serious questioning that the postmodernist objects. Postmodernism then is a form of critique, not only of theories but the practices based on them as well. It ought to keep theorists a little more humble and open to dissent when they know their work can be deconstructed and unraveled with postmodern criticism (p. 875).

Ward (2003) avers that “the term postmodernism has been in widespread use for three decades, but the story of its spread through culture is fairly complex” (p. 4). Ward (2003) also indicates that its first use was in academia and confined largely to the arts, “but soon became a descriptive term for all sorts of proposed shifts and changes in contemporary society and culture” (p. 4). One outcome is that each discipline has defined and applied it in somewhat different contexts and situations so that there is not a universally accepted notion of what postmodernism is or means. So postmodernism may refer to a general state of affairs in a particular society; a cluster of ideas which attempt to explain the state of affairs; a kind of artistic style, or all of the aforementioned items (Ward, 2003, p. 6). Harvey (1990) offered his own

version when he proffered, “Postmodernism can be regarded, in short, as a historical-geographical condition of a certain sort” (p. 328). Understanding postmodernism begins by recognizing what it isn’t. It doesn’t have properties. It proceeds through negation, that is, denying or criticizing the basis of some modernistic beliefs and/or practices. Such negations do not result in a law or principle or a narrative becoming one.

Contemporary intellectual battles between modernism and postmodernism recur throughout the present. The crux of the confrontation centers on notions of science and the role of science in modern society. In modernistic terms science involves a quest for universalism, unification and reduction to basic laws or principles, a search for certainty, and ultimate answers. Postmodernists reject this kind of search because in their view, such quests are usually linked to a search for power and domination. Science is too easily yoked to a totalizing discourse. Many postmodernists reject the search for the narratives or theories that are no longer seriously questioned, the so-called *metanarratives*.

Best and Kellner (1991) summarize the postmodern view that, “Modern science, for instance, legitimized itself in terms of an alleged liberation from ignorance and superstition as well as the production of truth, wealth, and progress” (p. 165). Educational administration/leadership remains firmly fixed in the long history of modernism and the undying inheritance from the Vienna Circle scholars. Wang (2018) echoes the same sentiment when he observed:

The findings in this study do not provide compelling evidence suggesting the paradigm shift in the theoretical groundings of educational leadership research. That is, the growing number of concepts and their increasing interconnectedness suggests that incremental knowledge accumulation – the evolution, rather than revolution, of knowledge in the field (p. 356).

Repeated admonitions from a variety of critics of educational administration/leadership for more rigorous research in the paradigm of modernism have failed to deliver it and are unlikely to do so (see also English, 2007; English & Ehrich, 2015; Levine, 2005).

### **Field of Concomitance**

The educational administration/leadership field has a long history of adopting concepts from business and other scientific fields. Wang (2018) notes in his study of concepts in educational administration that the field may see applications from “psychology, behavioral economics, and cognitive neuroscience to study school leaders’ decision-making process” (p. 354). Similarly, postmodern sources also come from many disciplines outside educational leadership and even education. Foucault averred that “the entire field of the human sciences, the space of representation within which they are able to operate, rests upon categorical schemata taken over from other disciplines. The fact that this field can appear, and that something can appear within it, is only possible as a consequence of having borrowed constituent models from the empirical sciences” (Visker, 1995, pp. 37–8).

There is no coherent doctrine that defines postmodernism, nothing even approaching the famous Vienna Circle (1924–1936) which gave rise to logical

positivism also called logical empiricism and which included philosophers, logicians, and mathematicians, such as Rudolf Carnap, Philipp Frank, Kurt Godel, Herbert Feigl, Hans Hahn, Otto Neurath, and Friedrich Waismann. The positivistic agenda espoused by these adherents included a search for a unified science with a universal language of science (Carnap, 1984). It also posited that “there is a distinction to be drawn between objective facts and social values, where facts are considered to be unmediated by any theoretical framework and that only empirical validation or falsification is the stamp of ‘real’ inquiry” (Smith, 1996, p. 16).

Table 1 shows some of the fields, countries, and books that some of the most prominent postmodern thinkers have authored. The fields where these postmodernists seem to find a common intellectual home include philosophy, sociology, and history.

Some of those individuals in the table would also be described as adherents of structuralism and poststructuralism. They would include Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Frederick Jameson, and Felix Guattari (Allison, 1999a). Structuralism is not so much a movement but an interlocking intellectual outlook which was interdisciplinary involving such fields as “anthropology, philosophy, literary theory, psychoanalysis, political theory, even

**Table 1** A Partial List of Notable Postmodern Advocates and their Academic Disciplines

Postmodernist	Birth/Death	Country	Academic Discipline(s)	Most Famous Publication
Jean-Francois Lyotard	1924–1998	France	Philosophy, sociology, literary theory	<i>The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge</i>
Michel Foucault	1926–1984	France	Philosophy, psychology, history, art	<i>The Order of Things</i>
Jacques Derrida	1930–2004	France	Philosophy, literary criticism, history	<i>On Grammatology</i>
Jean Baudrillard	1929–2007	France	Philosophy, sociology, cultural theory	<i>The System of Objects</i>
Gillies DeLeuze	1925–1995	France	Philosophy, art	<i>Difference and Repetition</i>
Frederic Jameson	1934–	United States	Comparative literature, philosophy	<i>Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</i>
Emmanuel Levinas	1906–1995	France	Jewish philosophy, ethics, existentialism	<i>Totality &amp; Infinity</i>
Richard Rorty	1931–2007	United States	History of philosophy, comparative literature	<i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</i>
Pierre-Felix Guattari	1930–1992	France	Philosophy, linguistics, semiotics, psychotherapy	<i>Anti-Oedipus</i>
Slavoj Zizek	1949–	Slovenia	Philosophy	<i>Less Than Nothing</i>

mathematics” (Allison, 1999a, p. 882). Broadly speaking structuralism is centered in the linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1988) who was a scholar of linguistics interested in establishing a science of language. Saussure’s work “viewed language as a system of signs, which was to be studied *synchronically*, that is to say, studied as a complete system at a given point in time. . . Each sign in the system has meaning only by virtue of its difference from the others” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 96).

As a derivative of structuralism Scatamburlo (1998) noted that, “theories which fall under the rubric of poststructuralism reject modernism’s epistemic foundations or master narratives as totalizing, repudiate modern theory’s search for a foundation of knowledge, criticize its apodictic truth claims; and renounce the rational, autonomous Cartesian subject” (p. 169). Postmodern thought still resonates with this perspective into the present day.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Postmodernism represents a significant shift, if not a rupture, in the continued application of modernism’s “. . . meta-languages, meta-theories, and meta-narratives [which] tended to “gloss over important differences, and failed to pay attention to important disjunctions and details” within “multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal (configurations of sensibility) and spatial geographic locations and dislocations. It is this aspect of postmodernist thought that gives it a radical edge. . .” (Harvey, 1990, p. 113).

This juxtaposition anchors postmodernists’ belief that progress occurs through dissent. For example, Lyotard (1997) identifies three conditions for modernist knowledge. They are: (1) searching for and identifying metanarratives to legitimize claims they are foundational (ultimate, first principles); (2) the predictable outcome of legitimation and exclusion, and (3) a quest for homogeneity in legitimizing certain epistemological claims and morality. “Postmodern knowledge, by contrast, is against metanarratives and foundationalism, it eschews grand schemes of legitimation: and it is for heterogeneity, plurality, constant innovation, and pragmatic construction of local rules and prescriptives agreed upon by participants, and it is thus for micro-politics” (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 165).

Collins (1998) echoes similar thoughts when he observes that with postmodern perspectives, “No general explanations are possible; there can be no general theory of ideas, sociological or otherwise. Yet paradoxically, postmodernism is itself a general theory of ideas. The theory has been accumulating in intellectual networks for several generations” (p. 11). Collins (1998) indicates historically, postmodernism was the result from phenomenological movement by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and another branch from of Saussure’s work on the semiotics of language.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Usher and Edwards (1994) point out that education as a field poses a special dilemma for postmodernism and its thinking. The reasons are not hard to discern:

Education is very much the dutiful child of the Enlightenment and, as such, tends to uncritically accept a set of assumptions deriving from Enlightenment thought. Indeed, it is

possible to see education as the vehicle by which the Enlightenment ideals of critical reason, humanistic individual freedom and benevolent progress are substantiated and realized (p. 24).

In fact, the more traditional assumptions undergirding logical positivism, i.e., *scientific empiricism* are still very much alive in the sciences today and in debates regarding scientific verification and standards in educational research specifically (see National Research Council, 2002). The major assumption was the belief in the “exclusive truth-predicting capacity of science in contrast to religion, metaphysics and folk traditions: that science was better able to analyze and consequently predict accurately the course of life events” (Woods, 1999, p. 227). Methods of verification were critical because a corollary assumption was that the “facts” were lying just out there waiting to be discovered. The exemplar of proper investigation was to model inquiry in the social sciences.

Despite its ambitions, social theory consistently failed to provide adequate scientific ‘foundations’ for itself: the attempt to demarcate science from non-science persistently foundered. Time and again science proved to be deeply entrained with the dynamics of social control and domination. The model of natural science as a paradigm for knowledge began to be rejected because people increasingly saw it as part of a larger, corrupting, techno-scientific cultural imperative (Woods, 1999, p. 228)

Belief in the pursuit of a unified science, the ability or effort to separate objective facts from social values, and where the facts were assumed to be pure without any infringement from theory came under fire and eventually proved to be unsustainable. There are no “theory free” observations.

Debates about the pursuit of truth, especially when postmodern approaches compared to scientific investigation were applied was described by Collins (1998) as the “goal displacement” phenomenon (p. 789) which starts with antagonistic sniping across existing intellectual divides (for an example see English, 1996; Willower, 1996).

Each side accuses the other of hindering insight; the process of intellectual history is merciless toward both. Their conflict is one more manifestation of the very general process of conflict which drives intellectual change. Neither conservatism nor radicalism at any one level is a guide to what will emerge as their positions are transformed at later levels of the abstraction-reflexivity sequence. Goal displacement means that, from the point of view of the participants, subsequent intellectual history is always a matter of rude surprises (p. 789).

While it is difficult to map the precise points of contestation between modernism and postmodernism, the literature does suggest some generally accepted demarcations between them (Skinner, 1985), though they may differ in actual practice and traditions in different fields and disciplines (see Davies & Foster, 1994).

The long line of modernistic development in the social sciences, of which education is but one, and educational leadership is a specific manifestation, reveals significant effort to create a stable and all-encompassing knowledge base which would lead to logical methods of inquiry complete with replicable models of

improved practice, and the ultimate prize, a *science of management* (Culbertson, 1988; Donmoyer, 1999). While today most theorists in the educational leadership field have abandoned the quest for a science of management, a few are still struggling to develop the grounds to attain it with revised approaches (see Evers & Lakomski, 1996; Lakomski & Evers, 2017).

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## Introduction

Leaders and leadership are all around us. Simply by virtue of positional occupancy in a bureaucracy individuals may be branded a “leader.” Yet even as humans, experience *leadership*, engage or perform acts referred to as *leading*, the whole thing remains somewhat of a mystery: composed, observed, felt, performed but illusive, hard to define, nearly impossible to standardize. As researchers the rules of observation or logic as the case may be to specific kinds of rituals collectively known as science. The “rock” upon which science exists and forces our mental processes to conform to is itself a kind of game (Oreskes, 2021). It is anchored in assumptions and presuppositions. It has rules which, if violated, may result in being expelled from those who are also playing the game. Censure is one kind of punishment for not playing by the rules (Kuhn, 1961). Banishment is another. But the great engine of science remains *doubt*. Indeed one definition of science is that it is perennial ritualized doubt. However, a trenchant criticism of the lack of doubt in modernistic science contains many postmodern voices. The irony is that while science doubts most everything, it doesn’t doubt itself. Whether this is flaw is debatable. The postmodernist would point out it is a contradiction, viz. there’s no doubt about doubt in the game of science.

To fully understand the nature of postmodernism as it pertains to educational leadership programs and practices, it is necessary to grasp what came before, i.e., modernism. The reason is that as postmodernism either challenges and/or rejects many, if not most of the perspectives and claims of modernism, it refuses to offer substitutes for what it criticizes or rejects.

Postmodernism is the criticism of modernistic thinking and methods, But even as it debunks and negates modernism, such criticism offers no antidotes or place holders (Hicks, 2016). Part of the reason is that to replace modernistic thinking about things, there is no way that postmodernists would not commit the same errors they are critiquing. For example, if postmodernists reject the duality of a center/margin binary via de-construction, they would then not erect another such binary in its place.

The reputed “father” of modernism and scientific empiricism, Rene Descartes, put forth four maxims that ostensibly were his “method” for scientific inquiry. They were:

- 1) “Never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth. . .and to include nothing more in my judgments than what presented itself to my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I had no occasion to doubt it. . .
- 2) The second is ‘to divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible.

- 3) The third is 'to direct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little. . .to knowledge of the most complex.
- 4) And the fourth is to 'make enumerations so complete, and reviews so comprehensive, that I could be sure of leaving nothing out' (Gottlieb, 2016, p. 9).

Within the last 20–30 years educators in the USA, and those that prepare them, have adopted a form of ritualized science that has resulted in the construction of an elaborate and bureaucratized interagency *apparatus* (also called in French the *dispositif*) that controls entry to educational positions in the schools and the universities, if not through licensure then through the earning of advanced degrees or both. Certain practices or benchmarks, sometimes referred to as standards, have been established in a special way, i.e., they are “evidence based” which ostensibly means that some sort of logical and empirical vetting has elevated them to the position of a *master narrative*, or *metanarrative*, which once erected is no longer seriously questioned, viz. it is beyond doubt. Mahatma Gandhi, hardly a postmodernist, captured the spirit of postmodernism when he observed:

... every ideology that pretends that it must not be put in doubt in the interests of society or civilization or something else, becomes the natural basis for dogmatism or fanaticism. In Socratic terms, all *logos* must be submitted by its author or follower to critical examination, with the same sincere will to understand the criticism of others and, if necessary, to proceed to the requested corrections and adjustments of views which the other participants in the dialogue are expected to show (Iyer, 1973, p. 249).

Proponents of engaging in continued inquiry despite claims of practices being supported by “evidence,” and do so by pointing out flaws, false logic, and/or inaccuracies in the reigning game of science at a particular time, have acquired a loose umbrella moniker called postmodernism which covers an increasingly widening front and fount of criticism.

Of all of the challenges posed to contemporary educational leadership programs that stand out as the bastion of tradition, conservatism, and “the” barrier to change is the hoary inheritance of so-called post-positivistic empiricism. It is the equivalent of a mental Maginot Line in the way leadership is conceptualized, taught, researched, debated, funded, and rewarded. The discourse is so strong that alternatives and differences are either marginalized, minimized or ignored. The severity of the challenge to the current notions of the “field” of educational administration have a long trajectory. To understand the contestation the history of the field itself needs to be examined.

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## **Educational Administration: A Continuing Quest for Identity, Legitimacy and Hegemony**

While school administration has a long history in the growth of the public function of schooling, that is, when schools became more than one room in a makeshift structure in a community, it became necessary to have someone pay attention to cleanliness,



safety, supplies, internal coordination, scheduling, discipline, acquisition of books and other instructional materials which were not centered in teaching. These duties later came to serve as a foundation of a new role called *the principal teacher*. As schools became larger and more complex encompassing more students and more classrooms, the need for a full time administrative officer who was not teaching became apparent. Later this role simply was referred to as the *principal*. This need became accelerated with the creation of the graded school in 1848 in Quincy, Massachusetts which had been modeled after the German gymnasium's creation in 1537 (Boykin, 1890–1891). By 1860 “. . . every town and city of any consequence in the country as well as many populous rural communities, had its own unified system of schools organized on a graded basis with a defined course of study, embracing definite time limits, the whole sanctioned and protected by legislative enactment” (Bunker, 1916, p. 54).

At this time there were no schools of education and certainly no departments of educational administration. Further, the development of these institutional forms was a slow process and connected to larger socio-political issues of the times. The progression came in the form of well-known public school administrators (largely city school superintendents) being asked to teach courses on school administration at progressive universities. The emphasis was on problems of practice, or the “how to” of various issues facing organizational management (Culbertson, 1988). It is at this juncture that the beginnings of a “field” as an organized area of information or knowledge began to form.

The peculiarities of establishing, maintaining and advancing an academic area are formidable. The most obvious problem is that there is no final authority to determine legitimacy of a viewpoint or a specific agenda. As stipulated by Bourdieu, “Legitimacy is indivisible: there is no agency to legitimate the legitimacy” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971/2000, p. 18).

A new field such as educational administration in the early twentieth century claimed legitimacy by aligning itself to strong allies to form coalitions; to the dominate knowledge base of the times, the acquisition of some form of political exclusivity and/or to enhanced economic capital (funding). Thus, educational administration formed allies with college presidents and business executives to advocate the need for professional training of school administrators and linked itself to *science* and especially *scientific management*, whose new practitioners were professionally prepared in the new departments of educational administration centered on efficiency and the reduction of costs (see Tyack, 1974).

A *field* is therefore, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu indicated, a very fluid social space where entities (groups, individuals, agencies) compete for legitimacy, survival and domination (Bourdieu, 1984/2009, 1996). Fields are therefore constantly in tension and flux and educational administration as a field remains so today. Whereas in the past professors of educational administration relied on the tenants of *scientific management* to claim exclusivity in preparing school leaders, today it is total quality management (TQM) and its derivatives, scientific research which is put forward as *evidenced based research*, national leadership standards connected to accreditation requirements (the connection to powerful allies) and the acquisition of increased



funding and support from outside agencies (the Wallace Foundation which supported educational standards for preparation programs).

Then as now, “The actual job of helping to create a ‘learned profession’ and of the superintendency fell to another key group in the interlocking directorate of centralizers, the professors of educational administration” (Tyack, 1974, p. 135).

The professors of educational administration fetish with finding and/or creating a knowledge base in the field is at its heart the quest for continuing legitimacy and for domination in an increasingly contentious social space, where the university’s role is being questioned as a “faulty pipeline” (Broad Foundation, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) and the need for accredited licensure based upon university training derided as unnecessary (Hess, 2003).

These attacks on the field of educational administration and the professors and practitioners in it, are stoutly defended by an interlocking group of institutions which include federal agencies which insist on the presence of accreditation standards to qualify for grants along with state departments of education which issue licenses to lead, the test publishers who create the exams upon which the license is based and with such standards yoked to university preparation program programs (see National Policy Board of Educational Administration, 2018) whose courses must become the means to teach them.. Foucault (1980) termed this intersectionality an “apparatus” or a *dispositif* and he explained what he meant by the term:

What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such as the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent (p. 194).

The field of educational administration/educational leadership is a bricolage of agencies and other discourses focused in a situation to define, regulate, and dominate an activity or professional function. Foucault (1980) referred to this as *a regime of truth*. By this he meant the truth to be “understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it” (p. 133).

The many layered construction of what is considered a “professional field” represents an example of creating a monopoly. That is the unsaid of a professional field. The “field” of educational administration is more acceptable to those not in it or denied entrance to it if its legitimacy is tethered to some impersonal and neutral foundation such as “science” or “professional consensus.” However these social constructions inevitably must be anchored by a metanarrative, an essentialist rationale which is above serious questioning. The creation of such a monopoly is why neoliberal economists such as Milton Friedman (1960) and F.A. Hayek (1960/2011)

eschewed all licensing and certification of nearly all groups including teachers and school administrators (Hess, 2003). Their position was as long as such monopolies exist the free market cannot function properly. The logic of the market place becomes the ultimate arbiter of what that is good for everyone.

A postmodern critique begins with a fundamental rejection of this essentialism as part of its outlook. The co-construction of the field of educational administration by many agents, among the most prominent were the early professors of educational administration, and one in particular, Elwood P. Cubberley (1929) of Stanford, who had a profound influence on the nature of administrative work, most importantly the school superintendency.

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## Postmodernism's Most Powerful Analytical Tool: Deconstruction

Howard Felperin (1988) examined postmodernism's most potent method of analytical assault known as *deconstruction*:

The search for the founder or originator of the discourse of deconstruction, flagrantly post-, modernist and avant-garde as it is, would discover, upon examination of the major texts, a number of earlier candidates already nominated as worthy of the honour. The short-list of nominees might well have to stretch back behind the deconstructors of the present to include those relatively recent inquisitors of language who underwrite their work—such acknowledged precursors as Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Freud—or even well behind them to Gorgias and the pre-Socratics, who did their ur-deconstructive philosophizing before writing had fully become its medium and who would themselves have had to have, within the logic of deconstructive or differential textualism, their own, ever more remote, precursors (pp. 104–5).

Deconstruction and a de-constructive analysis of a text involves a deep reading of it. Deconstruction is imbued with the assumptions and methods and vocabulary of *structuralism* and after *post-structuralism*. And these, in turn, rest on the pioneering work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), a “Swiss linguist and founder of the school of structural linguistics” (Allison, 1999b, pp. 815–6). Niesche (2014) explains that, “deconstruction works in identifying the contradictions of logic within a text, exploring those assumptions that are often taken for granted, or go unnoticed in more ‘traditional’ readings’. Deconstruction also aims to disturb the hierarchies of binaries that are often explicitly articulated and also in more subjugated forms” (p. 17).

What contemporary students of educational administration/leadership have to understand is that the critique of the field by postmodern scholarly critics is not empirically grounded, but rather exists on a plane that is centered in the linguistic/philosophical base of an understanding of the logic and rules of language apart from its content. And since everything is expressed in language, showing the ambivalences, contradictions, gaps, and endlessly shifting meanings between words not only denies even the idea of a foundation but negates the quest for some sort of finality of meaning. This is the epitome of the philosophical problem of *infinite* or *vicious regress* in which a “series of items each of which is in some sense dependent

on a prior item of a similar sort” (Tolhurst, 1999, p. 954) or the definition of one word must depend on another word which is undefined, etc. which is a never ending process. One always ends up with an undefined word.

There are two historical examples in the USA of critique and de-construction in educational leadership prior to the new century. A well-known critique was Thorstein Veblen’s scathing (1918) work *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men*. The de-construction example is a notorious work, Raymond Callan’s (1962) *The Cult of Efficiency*. While Veblen was intimately acquainted with that “businesslike standardization and bureaucratic efficiency [which] are evident in the current state of the public schools” to which “the resulting abomination of desolation is sufficiently notorious” he decried “the movement toward a perfunctory routine of mediocrity should logically be expected to go forward at a progressively accelerated rate” (p. 193) in the universities. While Veblen’s analysis and criticism were not only prescient, but are as applicable then as now, his work was not as grounded historically as Callahan’s, nor was it as interdisciplinary and did not explore the sociocultural and literary dimensions as profoundly. Veblen’s intellect, his razor sharp wit, led many readers to assume his book was primarily one of satire and not a serious analysis of the real problems in universities.

Raymond Callahan’s (1962) *Cult of Efficiency* is an example of how de-construction can be a force to engage in a radical reconsideration of precedent, history, and prevailing dogma. Provenzo (1990) commented on *The Cult* by nothing that, “What Callahan did do was take a traditional area of educational history—school administration and more specifically the history of the school superintendency—and debunk the myths surrounding it that had been created by individuals such as Cubberley” (p. 6). Button (1990), a contemporary of Callahan called *The Cult of Efficiency* a book of importance, lasting importance” (p. 67) and indeed the passage of time is testimony to his view. Button called *The Cult* a revisionist book, “before that term was often used:

It was an account of the impact upon school administration and schooling of business management methods; of cost accounting, of the growth of school systems’ central bureaucracy intended to emulate those of private enterprise, of research growing from industrial efficiency studies, and of educational research intended to foster business management and efficiency in the schools.

It dealt critically, for the first time, with the ‘rationalization’ of schooling, and the accompanying centralization of authority in school systems. It described the historical origin of the great eruption of bureaucratization of schools, if not the origin of bureaucratization. The development of aggrandizement of the profession of school administration was justified in the name of ‘efficiency’ (p. 68),

Callahan’s deconstruction was powerful because it involved an analysis of a total system. In the words of Gasche (1988) it represented “a meditation on what we want to call the *general system*” (p. 2). And with *Cult*, Callahan exemplified it as “. . . a well ordered procedure, a step-by-step type of argumentation based on an acute awareness of level-distinctions, a marked thoroughness and regularity” (Gasche, 1988, p. 3).

De-construction probes the ambiguities of concepts within language, the fact that concept and meaning can only be defined by relationships to other concepts within systems of thought and argument. Such conceptual chains within a text may contain contradictions which form fissures and a false sense of unity which can be exposed and seriously questioned. Gasche (1988) has referred to the presence of such *arche-synthesis* as masking a non-unitary presence in linguistic lines of argument.

Callahan, an historian and not a professional administrator, read the literature of the field on two levels. The first read is the one most people would use in traversing a text, sometimes called *superficial*. This was a general and not a detailed read. The second read “is a fine grained, distinctly deconstructive reading, which explores the tensions, the loose threads, the little ‘openings’ in the text which the classical reading tends to close over or put off as a problem for another day” (Caputo, 1997, p. 76).

One method of that second deconstructive read has been used by Michel Foucault in his books and other writings as the *genealogical method*. This approach has been described by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983):

For the genealogist there are no fixed essences, no underlying laws, no metaphysical finalities. Genealogy seeks out discontinuities where others found continuous development. It finds recurrences and play where others found progress and seriousness. It records the past of mankind to unmask the solemn hymns of progress. Genealogy avoids the search for depth. Instead, it seeks the surfaces of events, small details, minor shifts, and subtle contours. It shuns the profundity of the great thinkers our tradition has produced and revered. The interpreter as genealogist sees things from afar. He finds that the questions which were traditionally held to be the deepest and murkiest are truly and literally the most superficial. This certainly doesn't mean that they are either trivial or lacking in importance, only that their meaning is to be discovered in surface practices, not in mysterious depths (pp. 106–7).

For the graduate student or the interested educational historian, these forms of postmodern critique are anchored in linguistics, literary criticism, and philosophy, not the usual off the shelf traditional field centric texts so common in educational leadership department courses anchored to national standards and accreditation matrices. Educational leadership as a field is usually experienced ahistorically, the typical student unaware (or uninterested) in how the course content was created and the many agendas, forces and political compromises which produced that content. They encounter the educational leadership curriculum as a certainty, anchored in law, regulations, traditions, and topical themes which mirror the immediate professional literature of the day.

Postmodern interrogation of the extant sacred texts in law, finance, negotiations, personnel, curriculum, organizational theory, decision making, human development, the principalship or the superintendency reflect the procedures and demands of the status quo. The idea is that graduate students should be able to enter the field with as little disjunction between that world and that of the university as possible.

Perhaps the most obvious outcome of the superficial treatment of topics in many of the educational leadership programs is the low quality of dissertation research. Levine's (2005) review of 28 schools of education criticized the research content as “superficial and lacking in rigor. . .confusing scholarly and practical inquiry, flitting from topic to topic, prizing breadth over depth, and being abstruse” (p. 44). Archbald (2008) also

echoed similar sentiments that “little attention. . .to the powerful structures and values holding in place the traditional research dissertation” has occurred, nor has it “examined the in-depth distinction between research and organizational problem solving” (p. 704).

An AERA task force in educational administration made five recommendations in 2000 to improve research in educational administration. Paraphrased, they were:

1. Present new knowledge to its audience
2. Be relevant to identifying, analyzing, and solving significant educational problems
3. Provide appropriate warrants for its assertions and conclusions.
4. Be relevant to identifying, analyzing, and solving significant educational problems
5. Be communicated effectively to its primary audience (Riehl, Larson, Short & Reitzug, 2000)

The heritage of the proliferation of superficial dissertation topics has been traced to the field’s early and still lasting infatuation with efficiency studies from business, “The result was an emphasis upon the techniques and mechanics of administration” (Callahan, 1967, p. 14). In addition early departments of educational administration were isolated silos which existed apart from the range of academic disciplines which would form the course content for a more advanced and theoretical approach to research and inquiry. To a large extent this attitude still prevails in contemporary times.

Furthermore, the aligning of course work to national standards, research with dissertation forays centered in practice has resulted in little interest or incentive to deeply challenge the existing theoretical base of leadership with faint understanding that advances in leadership practice can only occur when the theoretical base in which leadership is examined is changed. Researchers only see what they expect to see. Things not expected to be seen are not seen, evidence that theory comes before practice.

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## **The Promise of Postmodernism to Restructure Existing Leadership Field Architectonics**

Architectonics refers to any “comprehensive system of thought, a systematic arrangement of knowledge” (Reed, 2014, p. 2). Renfrew (2015) explains that architectonics “also denotes, precisely, *form*—conceived in terms of the ‘deep’ structural relations between value-contexts” (p. 49). Architectonics includes perception, and vision, and a specific world view. However it is one that it is not one which is fixed, but rather “a model of fluid and *dynamic relationships*, grounded only in the inescapable locatedness of the actual human being who stands at the heart of it” (Renfrew, 2015, p. 34). The architectonics of educational administration/leadership, at least in America, is very close to being fixed, or at least moribund, mired in the logic of neoliberalism which is also intellectually compatible with measurable concepts and analysis shaped and defined within behavioral/structuralism, post-positivism, accreditation hegemony and national standards.

Clearly it is going to take more than occasional criticism to create a more flexible and rigorous architectonics and theoretically grounded curriculum in educational administration/leadership than what currently exists in order to confront the legacy of business approaches and neoliberal ideologies which continue to dominate the field and the logic of work within it. Bourdieu (2001) has called this “the doxa” (p. 1). “Doxa are the core beliefs, attitudes, principles, or concepts considered true and proper regarding the nature and relationships of things. The *doxic attitude* encompasses the often unstated but shared beliefs about how practices in schools should be defined, advanced and/or evaluated. This attitude is usually unquestioned and accepted as a given” (English & Bolton, 2016, p. 23).

Postmodernism and its forms of inquiry, its refusal to search for and establish patterns of thought which become enshrined metanarratives, its exposure of power and how forms of power are interwoven in what is falsely presented as neutral, and its radical interrogation of the continuing orthodoxies in method act simultaneously to perpetuate the status quo. Without interrogation, this state of affairs will ensure that there are no new discoveries to be produced and significant breakthroughs are unlikely to occur in the field. One positive outcome of the refusal of postmodern scholars to enshrine new metanarratives means that “If we are to look for solutions to educational problems, then the work of Lyotard and Derrida may actually assist to frame concerns and issues in ways that had not previously been defined or conceptualized” (Niesche, 2014, p. 25).

The realization that there are no essences to be found can be liberating. For some the erection of essences, the establishment of a foundation upon which to build a field, the creation of standards and the construction of a defensible intellectual refuge to define meaning and purpose, also brings an end to imagination and a premature need for closure to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty. To a large extent this has been the course of affairs in educational leadership over the last half century. Consistency prevails over curiosity.

A powerful metaphor is that of the earth’s geology. Texts are words on the surface, words whose meaning is constantly shifting as they are rearranged. Under the earth’s surface lies the lithosphere comprised of massive tectonic plates, huge slabs of solid rock formed billions of years ago in the earth’s history. Upon these plates the surface features of the earth, its mountains and oceans rest. Compared to a linguistic text, the plates would represent the linguistic structure in which words float, subject to the laws of linguistic logic, unique to each language. Deconstruction is the probing of the linguistic structures themselves. That is why deconstruction is a deeper analysis than criticism. It is a very deep criticism. Beneath the linguistic structure as with the tectonic plates lies unfinalizability, a Bakhtinian concept which means that “our conscious self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy” (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 53). In living things life remains perpetually open and without any final reckoning which only comes with death.

Postmodernism does not promise to create a new architectonics for educational administration/leadership. What it does pose is a prickly method to challenge the type of closure which has come to be characterized as “normal” in the field, and to

prevent the door of innovation and creativity from being closed and the field from becoming fossilized. Postmodernism creates the intellectual space to think differently and to be protected from erasure.

Postmodern skepticism and strategic doubt create the intellectual space for alternatives to be born and to hold off the defenders of the exiting doxa from challenging it. Postmodern thinking consists of permitting questions to be posed, “of the systems by which discourse is subjected, for they inculcate rituals, certify qualifications of speakers, constitute groups of doctrinal adherents, and distribute access to [the] discourse” (Shumway, 1992, p. 107).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

As an applied field of practice, educational administration/leadership remains firmly in the thrall of both the mechanics and content of modernism via the science it embraces, perpetuates and honors. That form of science which continues to be regnant in its top-tier journals, textbooks, and comprises the dominant corpus of its annual conferences and conventions of refereed papers, and to which government and foundation grants and other forms of financial largesse are awarded, is thoroughly post positivistic, empirical in a variety of methodological forms and buttressed by a systems of regulation, accreditation, licensure, and other forms of enforcement, all representing what Feyerabend (1993) has called “the consistency condition” (p. 24). This condition is created when the field’s researchers and practitioners require the new hypotheses must be consistent with all of the prevailing theories of the day. Not only the extant theories, but the standards and procedures, irrespective of the theory involved. This practice reinforces and sanctifies the status quo. If the status quo also includes superstition, prejudice, inequalities and outright racism these are also enshrouded within the same structure.

The field was created by a quest for a foundation upon which to build a scientific practice. This is thoroughly modernistic agenda. But modernism is centered on certainties. It represents a search, indeed a quest for a foundation, an essence upon which to ground its theories. But even a staunch modernist such as Karl Popper (1968) recognized the ultimate futility of this venture:

The empirical basis of objective science has thus nothing ‘absolute’ about it. Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or ‘given’ base, and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being (p. 111).

In a postmodern sense, language represents Popper’s metaphorical “swamp”. No matter how deeply the theoretical piles are driven, there’s only more swamp. There’s no finality in language. The only permanent thing possible is temporality ad infinitum.

This state of affairs should provide a renewed platform to not search for new finalities which would be futile, but to a new dynamism which seeks not to dominate

and control, but to understand. Postmodernism, in its relentless de-construction of all metanarratives, offers one way to ensure there are no new such leadership doxic certainties which can escape a relentless structured doubt.

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# Transformative Leadership Theory: Critical, Comprehensive, and Activist

# 12

Carolyn M. Shields

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## Abstract

Although the field of educational leadership has been dominated for over a century by technical and rational perspectives, debates about this positioning are almost as long-standing. By the end of the twentieth century, calls for more critical theories focused on students who had not traditionally been successful in educational institutions as currently constituted became more frequent. The result is a somewhat crowded field of competing and often overlapping theories. Compounding what has become a confusing and inefficient field is the lack of definition of terms, shifting signifiers, competing theories, and frequent atheoretical guidance offered to practitioners.

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The purpose of this chapter is threefold: to provide an etymology of transformative leadership theory (TLT); to distinguish it clearly from transformational leadership; and to present it as a critical, comprehensive, and activist theory that foregrounds diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. The chapter outlines the two underlying assumptions or hypotheses of TLT (absolute regard and deep democracy) and eight interconnected guiding tenets.

The chapter concludes with consideration of the advantages and limitations of TLT and a brief consideration of why more critical theories seem to have had little sustained impact on the field.

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**Keywords**

Transformative leadership · Democracy · Inclusion · Equity · Mindsets · Values · Normative · Critical · Comprehensive · Social Justice

**The Field of Memory**

In some ways, educational leadership is a relatively new concept, related to earlier, scientific management, and concepts of administration and organizational theory. The first known use of the word “leadership” is reported to have been in 1821, when the suffix “-ship” was added to the word leader, although many languages have no single comparative word to reflect the concept. In 1841, leadership was associated by Carlyle with “heroes,” thus setting the stage for the Great Man theory of leadership. Other theories often considered to hold little validity include trait, transactional, and autocratic, individualized theories. In the 1950s, a group of educational administrators (known as the Chicago school), wanting to promote the credibility of the profession, urged a focus on descript and the elimination of the “ought” in administrative studies. Two decades later, the debate about the validity of “objective facts” and subjective perceptions erupted into the Griffiths–Greenfield debates, sometimes known as the “paradigm wars,” focused on methodological and often epistemological differences. The tension persisted, with the 2002 National Research Council deliberation about what constitutes “scientific inquiry,” although in some areas the dominance of scientific management is slowly losing sway. Instructional leadership, and technical “school improvement” emphases dominant at one time, have been replaced by more comprehensive and relational approaches. Tensions still also exist between a “nonaffirmative approach” and more normative theories which attend once again to the “ought.”

**The Field of Presence**

The website of the International Institute for Management and Development (IMD) located in Singapore and Switzerland states: “Throughout history, great leaders have emerged with particular leadership styles in providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. These can be broadly grouped into 5 different categories:” authoritarian, participative, delegative, transactional, and transformational” (IMD.org). These five theories which primarily emphasize organizational effectiveness and

efficiency tend to be the primary leadership theories covered in most textbooks and leadership preparation courses. In contrast, this chapter offers transformative leadership theory (TLT) a comprehensive, normative, and critical theory of leadership grounded in equity, inclusion, and justice. It refutes the concept that leadership needs to be nonaffirmative and nonnormative. Instead TLT posits that leadership theories need to prioritize beliefs, values, and assumptions, recognizing they are antecedents of policies and practices that perpetuate injustice, marginalization, and oppression as well as providing opportunities for change and transformation.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The origins of leadership studies are often traced to early military treatises such as Sun Tzu's *Art of War* (2010) or management treatises like Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1919). Subsequently, key concepts from scholars from various other disciplines influenced the field, including the ideas of Marxist philosopher Gramsci, French sociologists and philosophers Foucault and Bourdieu, Russian philosopher and literary scholar Bakhtin, and many others. More recently, ideas from anthropology, psychology, cultural studies, media studies, ethics, and critical theory have also become influential. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1996), culturally relevant and relational pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2011), curriculum studies (Cranton, 2016; Pinar, 2011), and antiracist strategies (Dei, 1993; May, 1999) can no longer be ignored. The discipline known as educational leadership comprises numerous interconnected roles, responsibilities, topics, and theories – all of which reflect the complexity of leadership and the need to understand the context within which one operates, to clarify one's goals, and to identify one's nonnegotiable principles and practices.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Leadership as command and control is giving way to leadership as collaboration and relationship. Traditional goals of socialization, assimilation, indoctrination of students into existing culture are giving way (at least in common parlance) to a recognition of the value of diversity, multiculturalism, and multiple perspectives. A focus on equality (treating everyone the same) is yielding to equity (treating everyone according to their needs). The need for objective and often quantitative studies of leadership has surrendered to a recognition (thanks to T. Barr Greenfield and others) of the importance of positionality and subjectivity. The wider social context, originally eschewed as a factor to be ignored because leaders cannot do anything about it, is now widely recognized as of central importance. Social justice, although sometimes recognized as a contested, shifting signifier that can be used to support almost any position, has again gained prominence and, in some circles, credibility.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Given changing demographics and increasing public awareness of populations that have suffered marginalization, oppression, and exclusion, a comprehensive and critical theory of leadership which foregrounds equity, inclusion, and justice offers the best way to transform schools for the good of all individuals, groups, and society as a whole.

Of the commonly discussed theories, only the concept of transformative leadership appears to provide an appropriate direction. (Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991, p. 96)

It is only through the adoption of a fundamentally new perspective, an alternative paradigm, that educators can be empowered to implement truly transformative changes. (Nicoll, 2014, p. 49)

Beliefs, values, and mindsets result in implicit bias, are reflected in policy, and determine action. A critical and comprehensive theory of leadership must therefore address beliefs and mindsets.

What separates successful leaders from unsuccessful ones is their mental models or meaning structures, not their knowledge, information, training, or experience per se. (Johnson, 2008, p. 85)

Transformative learning challenges our ways of thinking and helps us to critically examine the fundamental assumptions underlying our worldview or mental models, resulting in life-changing insights. (Anello et al., 2014, p. 3)

A comprehensive and critical theory of leadership addresses various forms of marginalization and oppression, including racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and foregrounds equity when making all decisions, including those related to facility, personnel, budgets, curriculum, policy, and so forth. Transformative leadership is

an exercise of power and authority that begins with questions of justice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility. (Weiner, 2003, p. 89)

Greenfield (1980) recognized that moral decisions are part of the everyday life of educational leaders and therefore that the “*is* and *ought* are intimately joined in human interaction” (p. 32). A comprehensive approach to leadership combines both concepts.

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## Introduction

This chapter will explore the development of transformative leadership theory, distinguish it from transformational leadership, and, drawing on the many scholars who promote transformative leadership, articulate a theory of transformative leadership, describing its underlying assumptions, hypotheses, and tenets.

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## The Roots of Transformative Leadership

When one types “*transformative leadership*” into many search engines, what is most often shown is a series of articles and programs related to *transformational leadership*. Yet, the Oxford Reference Dictionary indicates that the two are not synonymous, although both derive from the old French verb *transformer* and the Latin *transformare*, meaning to change the form of something. Etymological sources

suggest that transformative implies causation, or “having the power to cause transformation,” and is indicative of agency, while transformational is more descriptive, as “pertaining to transformation.”

In leadership theory, the origins of both transformational and transformative leadership are most frequently attributed to James McGregor Burns’ *Leadership* (1978) in which he used the term “transforming” leadership as distinct from transactional leadership to refer to a form of leadership that is complex and powerful. Although he did on occasion use the term transformational, he did not use the term transformative. By recognizing and addressing the needs of followers, transforming leadership “is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 4). Burns concluded that leaders had to first clarify within themselves their own personal goal, second, determine whom they are leading, and third, define their organizational goals. He then stated that leadership “can be defined only in terms of, and to the extent of the realization of, purposeful, substantive change in the conditions of people’s lives” (p. 461).

Later, in his 2003 book, *Transforming Leadership*, Burns distinguished between *change* (a substitution of one thing for another) and *transformation* (a metamorphosis of form or structure) and argued for a form of leadership that would result in metamorphosis, as indicated by the nature and not the degree of change. Transforming leadership is “democratic and participatory” (p. 26) and is firmly grounded in transforming values. Burns posited that “deep and durable change, guided and measured by values, is the ultimate purpose of transforming leadership” (p. 213). He again argued that leadership is a moral undertaking, whose

greatest task—the task even, of a global leadership—must be to respond to the billion of the world’s people in the direst want, people whose pursuits of happiness might begin with a little food or medicine, a pair of shoes, a school within walking distance” (p. 2)

Similarly, William Foster, an early proponent of transformative leadership, argued that for a theory of educational administration to be “adequate,” it would need to be explanatory, social, and critical” (1983, p. 3), and that it should “not only look at the conditions in which we live” but decide how to change them (1986, p. 185).

Hence, according to both Burns and Foster, the success of leadership is to be assessed in terms of substantive and material changes in the lived realities of others. This is, in large part, a major distinguishing aspect between transformative and transformational leadership.

Transformative leadership is clearly focused on making substantive change within and outside of the organization by effecting increased equity in the lived realities, learning environments, and working conditions of others. Transformational leadership in contrast aims at the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization as a whole and posits four main components (each with associated subcomponents): setting directions, redesigning the organization, managing the instructional program, and developing people (Leithwood, 2011). Here one notes a clear focus on topics that relate to overall organizational effectiveness such as organizational problem-solving, climate, and outcomes. However, transformational leadership does not

fulfill Foster's criteria in that there are no inherent values related to changing or improving social conditions; nor does it respond to Burns' call for substantive and material changes in the lived realities of others. In contrast, one could identify a direction that might be exclusionary rather than inclusive; one could design the organization to focus on "traditional western" values, rather than valuing multiple perspectives, and so on.

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## Transformational Versus Transformative Leadership

Several scholars are explicit about the differences between transformational and transformative leadership. Blackmore argued that while seductive, the

Transformational leadership discourse appropriates critical leadership perspectives while depoliticizing their social-justice intent, as the notion of transformational leadership has been framed narrowly within the school-effectiveness-improvement paradigms. (2011, p. 21)

Similarly, Starratt (2011) posited that

The distinction between transformational leadership and transformative leadership is an important one, not only for the field of education, but also for leadership theory in other fields, including public administration, business administration, and leadership in the professions . . . transformative leadership starts out with a focus on the most obviously disadvantaged . . . (pp. 131–132)

Transformative leaders, whether in social services agencies, nonprofits, police departments, or higher education institutions, bring to their positions a focus on those who have traditionally been marginalized, oppressed, or disadvantaged.

Shields explains that "transformative leadership is normative; it broadly defines a desired state toward which we strive. But it is not prescriptive" (2018, p. 20). Each leader must determine how to implement the principles in ways that take into account the priorities and needs of each context in order to provide equitable, inclusive, and socially just working/learning environments for all as well as to promote a more just and equitable society.

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## Early Conceptions of Transformative Leadership

Soon after the 1978 publication of *Leadership*, disjunctures become apparent between Burns' introduction of transforming leadership, subsequent approaches to transformational leadership, and, in response, the rise of transformative leadership. Denhardt and Campbell note that despite Burns challenge that conceptions of leadership should address questions of values and morality, subsequent to his 1978 publication, the "previous focus on morality and values is largely replaced with an emphasis on a more value-neutral perspective" (2007, p. 559). van Oord (2013) comments that Burns "derives his model of leadership from a



number of managerial assumptions,” and argues that for Burns, “the leader is always the top job in an institution...[and] the leader remains a leader just as followers remain followers” (p. 421). Given Burns’ emphasis on understanding and “supporting the needs of followers,” the question of who is a follower becomes central. One can infer that if the followers are typically thought of as fellow white male leaders and the “clients” or students are more diverse, considerable dissonance might ensue. Thus, despite Burns’ desire for the transforming leader to create substantive and material change, the remnants of scientific management and technical solutions presented obstacles to deep and lasting transformation. Nevertheless, the work of Paulo Friere, Jack Mezirow, and William Foster helped to move the field forward.

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## Paulo Freire

Weiner (2003) asserted the importance of considering Paulo Freire’s work when “developing a theory of transformative leadership” in that it “offers a geography of leadership within a terrain of democratic struggle” (p. 91). Among the elements of this expanded terrain, Weiner describes conscientization – the development of a critical consciousness, curiosity, hope, and critique as central to the “radical democratic sphere.” Moreover, Weiner cites others who have argued similarly, including Aronowitz (1998) and Giroux (1983). In her review of several authors who write about the influence of Freire, Jackson states that he has “continually been associated with themes of oppression and liberation” (2007, p. 199), and in particular, emphasizes Freire’s “transformative optimism” and his acknowledgment of education as a political act. Miller, Brown, and Hopson (2011), stated that “Paulo Freire (1923–1997) is widely regarded as a central figure in the reconceptualization of education as a liberatory action” (p. 1082) and argued that Freire’s concepts of conscientization and dialogue are central to new conceptions of educational leadership, as is his emphasis on the whole educational arena, including educational institutions and “*the complex social contexts that surround them*” (italics in original, p. 1094). Moreover, acknowledgments of the influence of Freire on new, critical, and transforming approaches to both pedagogy and leadership are frequent in the literature.

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## Jack Mezirow

Although never associated with leadership studies, per se, Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning has also influenced the development of transformative leadership in that it is grounded in critical theories, and “proposes social justice and change as an aim of adult education” (Fleming, 2018a, p. 121). At the same time, his approach to transformative learning seems to rely more directly on the individual than on social change, as he describes transformative learning as

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of our psychocultural assumptions has come to constrain the way in which we perceive our world, of reconstituting that structure in a way that allows us to be more inclusive and discriminating in our integrating of experience and to act on these new understandings.... (Mezirow, 1985, p. 22 in Fleming, 2018b, p. 3)

Nevertheless, the focus on becoming critically aware, on changing mindsets, and on acting on new understandings is consistent with approaches to transformative leadership.

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## **William Foster**

Foster was one of the early theorists of educational administration who firmly rejected scientific research based on a functionalistic model as inadequate. In response to the ongoing influence of managerial and technical approaches, Foster, an early proponent of transformative educational leadership (although like other early advocates he continued to conflate the terms), complains:

The idea of leadership as a transforming practice, as an empowerment of followers, and as a vehicle for social change has been taken, adapted and co-opted by managerial writers so that now leadership appears as a way of improving organizations, not of transforming our world. What essentially has happened is that the language of leadership has been translated into the needs of bureaucracy. (. . .) Transformational leaders are now those who can lead a company to greater profits. (Foster, 1989, p. 45)

Foster called for a theory of leadership grounded in a radicalized political economy model, because “the reconceptualization of leadership in terms of the political distribution of cultural and social resources can, however, lead to a recognition of its critically transformative possibilities” (1983, p. 16). This emphasis on transforming practice and action permeates subsequent conceptions of transformative leadership.

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## **Transformative Leadership Theory**

The early theorists discussed above influenced the work of many scholars in the last decades of the twentieth century, and with increasing frequency and urgency, into the twenty-first century. Moreover, those who study transformative leadership theory comprise a diverse group of intellectuals that includes, for example, white and Black, male and female, educators, sociologists, nurses, development activists, indigenous scholars from North and South America, Scandinavia, Britain, New Zealand, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Each draws on the key concepts of conscientization and reflection, dialogue, and relationships, but perhaps more importantly, as Gumbonzvanda states, “the notion of transformative leadership derives from an understanding that we have to address the root causes and the underlying factors

that create inequities” (2012, p. 4). She identifies some criteria for determining whether leadership is transformative including whether it demonstrates a commitment to transform underlying social, economic, political, and cultural factors that perpetuate discrimination and oppression, and the need for a “robust, visible, and articulated position to promote the transformation of institutions, policies, norms, behaviors, and attitudes” (p. 5). These are the criteria one also finds in some of the most fully articulated approaches to transformative leadership theory.

Quantz et al. (1991) identify five ideas which they argue “can form the basis of a new dialogue on leadership in schools” (p. 98): schools are arenas of cultural politics, organizations must be based on democratic authority, transformative leaders should come from all levels of an organization, transformative leadership requires a language of critique and possibility, and leaders do not gather followers, but help promote conditions and discourse which cultivate more leaders. They argue that transformative leaders can no longer understand schools in systemic terms “as a whole with a single common interest” (p. 113); moreover, TLT requires civic courage that fights “inevitable resistance” when one strives to restructure power and work for democracy.

These five key ideas were subsequently enhanced in important ways. Dantley (2005) advocated the inclusion of spirituality (as opposed to religious dogma) that “crafts a sense of self and provides the impetus to resist forms and practices of dehumanization and oppression that are sometimes promoted by the dominant culture” (p. 657). Cooper (2009) made explicit the need for cultural work, for transformative leaders to broaden their “cultural knowledge, engaging in critique and resistance, and building coalitions with diverse groups to promote cultural responsiveness, educational equity, and social justice” (p. 696). Bolivian scholars, Anello et al. (2014) articulated a values-based conceptual framework for transformative leadership focused on the need to transform beliefs, mindsets, and assumptions in order to promote personal transformation as well as contribute to the advancement of civilization. Drawing on Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, they argue that

Transformative learning challenges our ways of thinking and helps us to critically examine the fundamental assumptions underlying our worldview or mental models, resulting in life-changing insights. (p. 3)

Thus transformative leadership takes seriously Johnson’s (2008) finding that

what separates successful leaders from unsuccessful ones is their mental models or meaning structures, not their knowledge, information, training, or experience per se. (p. 85)

However, TLT goes well beyond mental models to address policy and practice in comprehensive ways. van Oord (2013) acknowledged TLT’s primary focus on an activist agenda and its commitment to equity and social justice, saying

scholars such as Shields (2010, 2012) have in recent years successfully endeavoured to define and theorize transformative leadership as distinctively separate from the transformational approach. Transformative leadership is characterized by its activist agenda and its overriding commitment to social justice, equality and a democratic society. (pp. 422–423)

In her attempt to define and theorize transformative leadership, Shields attempted to integrate not only the above influences, but the dominant themes and concepts from the many scholars who either used the term transformative leadership or whose work influenced its development, (including but not limited to Bogotch, 2014; Caldwell et al., 2012; Follett, 1940/1973; Giroux, 2004; Keddie, 2006; Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Mertens, 2010; Rusch & Horsford, 2009; Santamaria, 2012; and Tillman et al., 2006).

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## Two Principles of Transformative Leadership

Shields' (2020) conception of transformative leadership begins by reflection on what comprises a theory and acknowledges that in social science, a theory is a group of ideas, concepts, or guiding principles that help to predict, explain, or understand the relationships between or among concepts (sometimes known as variables). Transformative leadership theory begins with two general principles that can be "tested" empirically: absolute regard (Starratt, 1991) and deep democracy (Green, 1999). The principle of absolute regard hypothesizes (to use the language of quantitative research) that when one is fully respected, included, and valued, it is easier to focus on the task at hand, and thus that individual performance will improve. In schools, therefore, if a student does not have to worry about being bullied as he or she leaves the classroom, or that others will discover her transgender identity, or that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) will have arrested their undocumented parent while they are at school, then the student will be more able to focus on the specific learning activity and their academic performance (often as evaluated inappropriately solely by test scores) will improve. Similarly, for adults in a workplace, if the environment is respectful and inclusive, they will not have to worry about a supervisor looking over their shoulder, and they will be better able to perform appropriately.

The second principle, deep democracy, relates to the concept of public good as opposed to individual development. It hypothesizes that when individual achievement is balanced with the importance of public good and emphasizes the need for collective, civic engagement, and social responsibility, then society and democracy (understood as mutual benefit for all) as a whole are strengthened.

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## Eight Interrelated Tenets

These two principles are supported by the following eight specific, interrelated tenets:

- A mandate to effect deep and equitable change
- A need to deconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice and to reconstruct them in more equitable ways
- A need to address the inequitable distribution of power

- An emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good
- A focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice
- An emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness
- The necessity to balance critique with promise
- A call to exhibit moral courage (Shields, 2016, 2018, 2020)

The first tenet suggests the need to critically examine one's own assumptions, the organization within which one works, and its social context, in order to determine whether there are inequities that must be addressed, and whether one has the personal knowledge and commitment to do so. Once one has conducted the preliminary self-reflection and data analysis, one can move to the second tenet: the deconstruction of knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and reconstruction of frameworks in more equitable ways.

This second tenet is particularly important in that it requires a transformative leader to address issues of racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, agism, classism, and so on. In other words, although some conceptions of leadership for social justice focus almost entirely on race or ethnicity, and others primarily address gender inequities or socio-economic status and poverty, the transformative leader must be aware of, and address, the intersections of these and other forms of discrimination, including colonization, deficit thinking, and implicit bias. In this way, TLT is definitely an antiracist leadership theory, but includes much more.

The next two tenets also address the overall organizational environment, including governing and operating procedures and policies that perpetuate power imbalances, and that over-emphasize individual, private good, to the exclusion of public good. As Quantz et al. argued in 1991, TLT "does not imply the diminishing of *power*; but the diminishing of *un-democratic power relationships*" (p. 102). The focus in transformative leadership, therefore, is the need to redistribute power in more equitable ways, to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard and to participate fully in the cultures and structures of the organization or democratic society. This leads directly to an examination of the concept of public good, of community empowerment and transformation. Weiner (2003), for example, asserts the need to

link not only the private and public, but also the empirical and theoretical, the everyday and the future, the imaginative and the real, the past and the forgotten, history and tradition, power and knowledge, and learning and life. (p. 98)

Tenets five and six suggest areas of focus that will help in the organizational transformation, and, for schools, will lead to a re-examination of curriculum and pedagogy as well as of policies and practices. A focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice requires ongoing reflection about every aspect of organizational life, as transformative leaders address ways in which the curriculum may marginalize people from traditionally minoritized groups, ways in which fiscal decisions advantage some groups to the disadvantage of others, or ways in which policies fail to take into consideration the variety of lived experiences or circumstances of all members.

Hence, implementing a one size fits all discipline policy in schools will likely result in disproportionate suspensions of certain groups. Holding parent conferences during the day ignores the financial hardship for nonsalaried parents who work for an hourly wage. Similarly, failure to permit employees to take paid time off work for such activities as voting or a medical appointment again advantages salaried rather than hourly paid employees. Although addressing discriminatory organizational policies and practices is a starting point, a transformative leader will also emphasize interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness and ensure that all members of the organization understand, and take responsibility for, how what happens locally affects the material lived realities of people around the world and vice versa. The global covid-19 pandemic of 2019–2021 provides an excellent example of this. As cases surged in India, for example, requests for oxygen, raw materials for medicines, and relief from patent requirements were heard urgently in the Western hemisphere; at the same time, it was widely recognized that until the pandemic was eliminated globally, travel and health would continue to be affected everywhere.

The final tenets emphasize the global nature of transformative leadership theory. They remind transformative leaders of the need to combine both critique and promise. It is easy to identify areas needing transformation, but much more difficult to act in ways that offer redress. This need for advocacy and activism requires considerable moral courage, for when offering redress and challenging inequity, backlash is almost unavoidable. When one seeks the kind of transformation defined by Burns as “a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, . . . , a radical change . . . as when a frog is transformed into a prince or a carriage maker into an auto factory” (2003, p. 24), there will be those who feel they are losing power or privilege. Nevertheless, deep-seated and systemic change are required if there is to be a more socially-just and inclusive educational system.

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## **TLT: A Comprehensive Theory**

Among the many current leadership theories in widespread use, some rely on technical solutions and approaches, some focus on process, and some address specific inequities such as a lack of cultural relevance and responsiveness, racism, gender inequity, or homophobia. Others still focus on leadership traits or dispositions, including the need to build relationships, to foster trust, to act authentically, or even the need for charisma (which has been disputed for years).

Many theories address what occurs within the organization but ignore a wider structural analysis of inequitable power arrangements, implicit bias, and ongoing systemic discrimination. And many still ignore the critical role beliefs, values, and mindsets play in perpetuating inequity. A heavy focus on organizational needs and outcomes generally fails to acknowledge, as Greenfield argued over half a century ago that “organizations are invented social reality” (p. 4), influenced by the different ways in which people in the organization see and interpret things, and hence that “beliefs are always of greater consequence than facts in shaping behavior” (1974, p. 6).

Transformative leadership theory responds to the need for a critical and comprehensive theory of educational leadership. It acknowledges the need to address the many forms of marginalization, oppression, and prejudice that perpetuate both an unequal playing field and inequitable outcomes for many in organizations. In schools, these inequities affect both teachers and students. Yet, the same inequitable situations are ubiquitous, existing in higher education, community organizations, nonprofits, as well as both governmental and for profit agencies. TLT does not reject measures of efficiency or effectiveness, yet goes well beyond, addressing both what happens within organizations and the external factors that perpetuate deep seated systemic and societal inequities. It calls for transformation both from within and from outside the organization itself.

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## Widespread Influence of TLT

Indeed, the appeal to those who strive for equity, inclusion, and social justice is that TLT is a normative, critical, comprehensive, and activist theory that offers principles for action that can result in transformation. Bruce and McKee (2020) assert,

we predicate our work on the assumption that inherent to leadership development is the drive and desire to lead for equity and justice. That leadership must be as much (or more) about the dismantling of inequitable systems as it is about exerting influence (p. 149)

For that reason, they developed “The Oaks Leadership Scholars—a co-curricular transformative leadership development program in The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NC State University” (McKee & Bruce, 2020, p. 51). Elsewhere the global scholars program of the MasterCard Foundation, which provides support to 15,000 deserving young people over 10 years so they can complete their university education,

Is designed to foster transformative leadership by equipping Scholars with the knowledge, tools, capacity and motivation to make a difference in their countries and regions of origin . . . Transformative leadership is about making or influencing positive change and addressing inequity. The concepts of critique and promise are central. (2014, p. 3)

The global applicability of TLT is also a strength. In 2016 and again in 2018, the global edition of *University World News*, a network of “five dozen education journalists based in more than two dozen countries, with representation in all regions,” ran a series of articles on transformative leadership; the ongoing influence of the topic is reflected on its website, where one of the horizontal menu headings is “transformative leadership.”

Another indication of the impact of transformative leadership is its use as a conceptual framework in doctoral dissertations. *Proquest*, a large repository of dissertation, identifies 3893 doctoral dissertations about transformative leadership, over 70% of them completed since 2010. These cover a wide range of topics

including special education, school lunch programs, homeless, nursing, the automobile industry, gender, Christian education, the pharmaceutical industry, and counseling and comprise numerous contexts including Africa, Mexico, the Caribbean, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the United Kingdom.

Practitioners also attest to the reasons why they have adopted TLT to guide their work. Bieneman states:

As an elementary school principal, I have adopted an agentic perspective and positioned myself as a transformative leader who is willing to live with tension and challenge in order to create schools that are equitable, inclusive, and socially just. (2011, p. 235)

And, adopting this stance, the results of her student body moved from 62% of a largely white student body meeting or exceeding standards to 85% of an increasingly diverse and impoverished student body at that level 5 years later (p. 234).

Transformative Leadership Theory is becoming widespread and well-known as an approach that “demands that leaders not only see the necessity for systemic change but also develop the skills and behaviors necessary to lead that change” (Bruce & McKee, 2020, p. 150).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Despite the previous claim that TLT is becoming widespread and well-known, it risks being lost in the myriad of theories responding to urgings for new leadership theories and approaches, including Burns’ (1978) demand for a “complete revolution of our social systems,” Foster’s (1986) assertion that leadership needed to be “fundamentally addressed to social change and human emancipation” (p. 48), and Quantz, Rogers, and Dantley’s (1991) belief that “traditional leadership theories are inadequate for meeting the present challenge” (p. 96). These calls for new approaches have not been confined to education, but also appear in other disciplines as when business authors Caldwell et al. (2012) asserted “the need for a new approach to leadership in a world that seemingly lacks a moral compass” (p. 176).

In part in response to these pleas, and in recognition that technical approaches to educational reform have not worked, numerous approaches to a more socially just form of leadership have emerged, each focusing on specific aspects of social justice, inclusion, equity, or transformation. Moreover, although the undefined term “social justice” has generally been coopted in support of both conservative and liberal positions, its use as a focus for theories of leadership has continued. Some theories are variously named for specific emphases such as social justice, multiculturalism, cultural relevance and relationships, antiracism, and democracy. Some underscore the concept of context and suggest a focus on urban education, higher education, rural education, and so forth. A few argue the need for equity reformers to “also deconstruct the prevailing beliefs and politics that sustain racial and class privilege [and] engage issues of power by extending beyond the school” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006, p. 15, 31). Still others invite followers to “see themselves” inside theories, and,



therefore, based on identity constructions related to race, religion, sexuality, and gender identity ask readers/spectators to become participants in the theories themselves (Agosto & Roland, 2018).

All of these approaches seem to reside somewhat uncomfortably and often competitively within what Donmoyer (1999) called a “big tent” of leadership theories. Although debates among theorists no longer center on methodological issues, the competition now is more focused on how best to address the substantive challenges that afflict schools and specifically, how best to provide for the differing needs of both dominant and minoritized students. What is disturbing, however, is that, despite the myriad of new theories focused on schooling, little significant and sustainable change has occurred.

Despite general agreement among “social justice-oriented” leadership theories, particularly critically-oriented theories, that equity and justice need to be foregrounded, tensions and competition among them contribute to the lack of meaningful and sustainable change. In some cases, a relatively narrow focus on those who “look like” or share the experience of, proponents of a particular theory, may limit its impact. In other cases, lack of dialogue or understanding among theorists prevents solidarity; and of course, when one builds a career on the development of a theory, it is difficult to move beyond it.

In part, both the worth of critical, social justice-oriented theories and the problem of proliferation reside in what Hodgkinson (1983) called the naturalistic fallacy, in that “values are certainly inextricably intertwined with facts but this does not mean that there is any intrinsic or causal relation between the two categories” (p. 34). Moreover, Hodgkinson identified three types of values: preferences, those based in rationality, and those that are transrational and “imply an act of faith or intent or will as it is manifested in the acceptance of a *principle*” (p. 39). Relying on a rational argument to attempt to resolve a values dispute is likely a futile endeavor.

Because transrational values may be incommensurable, the solution may be to return to the nature of one’s context. Working for the education of girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa or Afghanistan may draw inspiration from a gender-based theory. Trying to overcome the effects of crushing poverty in a homogeneous rural community may require an understanding of class structure. Addressing racism in one of America’s large urban areas, one may focus on antiracism or anti-Blackness. The key is the need for a theory that can lead to, and guide, action. Moreover, in recognition that education and educational leadership are inextricably political, theory must be tempered with a degree of pragmatism that asks and answers the question of “what works” to accomplish a given outcome.

Transformative leadership theory is one approach that attempts to integrate values, principles, and actions with a view to transforming organizations and society and making a substantive improvement in the lived realities of those who have typically been the most oppressed, marginalized, and excluded. For that reason, it should have a prominent place in the lexicon of any educational leader wanting a comprehensive, critical, and action-oriented approach to equity and justice.

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# An Etymology of Feminist Theory in Educational Administration

# 13

Dawn C. Wallin

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## Abstract

This chapter discusses the etymology of feminist theory in the field of educational administration and leadership. The ideas of this text are organized into three categorical schemes found within *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1971), including the field of presence (current scholarship), the field of memory (vestiges of ideas no longer, or less, accepted), and the field of concomitance (ideas that have been transferred from other knowledge bases). In speaking to these ideas, the analysis of the impact of feminist theory in/on the field of educational administration considers the major assumptions and presuppositions embedded in the literature, as well as ruptures and discontinuities of thought that have occurred over time.

## Keywords

Feminist theory · Feminism · Educational administration · Educational leadership

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## Introduction

Similar to all scholarly discourses, the ideas, practices, understandings, and influences of feminist theory on/in educational administration evolve over time. However, even as some of the ideas or emphases have shifted, the scholarship in this field tends to coalesce around common “touchstones” related to feminism and/or educational administration: (a) the nature and conceptualization of feminist theory/ies; (b) the nature of feminist research methodologies and pedagogies; (c) “big ideas” inherent within feminist work in/on educational administration; (d) topical foci considered to be “in scope” of the field of educational administration and the contexts of research; (e) resistance to feminism, and; (f) critiques and concerns within/to feminist positioning.

This chapter is organized into three categorical schemes found within *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1971). The shifts in understanding for each of the above mentioned touchstones are discussed to elaborate upon feminist ideas that may no longer be accepted but have had considerable influence in the scholarship of educational administration and leadership (field of memory); current feminist thinking within/about educational administration and leadership (field of presence); and ideas that have been borrowed or brought into the field of educational administration from other disciplines (field of concomitance).

The ideas of this chapter are framed by feminist theoretical perspectives that have influenced the discourses of educational administration through their publication in eight of the primary journals (and their research associations) focused on educational administration and leadership:

- *Journal of Educational Administration* (first international journal focused on educational leadership, management and administration)
- *Australian Educational Researcher* (Australian Association for Research in Education)
- *British Educational Research Journal* (British Educational Research Association)
- Educational Management, Administration and Leadership (British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society)
- *Canadian Journal of Education* and *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* (Canadian Society for the Study of Education)
- *International Studies in Educational Administration* (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management)
- *Educational Administration Quarterly* (University Council of Educational Administration)

These journals have had a major impact on the global discourses of educational administration and leadership over time, and therefore serve as primary texts for shaping the ways in which feminism has been taken up within the field. Given the sources from which the ideas of this chapter are drawn, it must be acknowledged that the etymology of feminism described in this work is premised on a Western understanding of educational administration (or its critiques), and one that privileges English as the language of scholarship. These two factors embed particular

assumptions and presuppositions within the discourses related to feminist theory and educational administration that are discussed in this text.

After describing the etymology of feminism in educational administration and leadership, the chapter turns to a discussion of two primary ruptures in the feminist scholarship of educational administration. It then moves to a description of the critical assumptions that tend to underpin current feminist studies of administration and leadership. The chapter ends with reflections on the nature and impact of feminism in/on the scholarship of educational administration and leadership over time, and introduces global trends that may influence future feminist work in the field.

### **The Field of Memory**

A field of memory includes those statements, ideas, or practices that are “no longer accepted or discussed, and which consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 46) but may have left traces in the vocabulary or metaphors of that field (in a kind of memory). For the purposes of this chapter, it also includes ideas that may be contentious or less accepted, but that have had considerable influence on the scholarship over time.

In the case of feminist’s influence on educational administration and leadership, writers have constantly critiqued the limitations of second wave reforms for their lack of influence on changing fundamental assumptions about gender and power relations in educational leadership (Glazer, 1991; Keddie, 2005, 2009). Yet, the constructs of meritocracy, androcentrism, liberal visions of equity, individualism, and epistemic marginality remain embedded within much of the scholarship in educational administration and leadership, although critiques of the failing of these constructs are growing. Current feminist critiques from non-Western writers in particular have demonstrated the ways in which White Western (female) academic privilege has been embedded within the leadership literature that disregards, marginalizes, or even demeans the experiences of women outside of these spaces (Ngunjiri, 2010; Phendla, 2008; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008).

Second, feminist writers have consistently raised concerns about treating gender as a unified category (Young, 1995). Cautions against essentializing leadership experiences based on sex or gender have grown over time (Blackmore, 2006; Capper, 1992; O’Malley & Capper, 2015; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008). So has the need to avoid creating dualisms or binaries when discussing gender and leadership (Coleman, 2005; Ngunjiri, 2010). For example, there exists a growing critique of research that delineates essentialized “women’s ways leadership” styles given the critiques that articulate the ways in which this work has reified dualisms based on sex, and essentialized leadership experiences based on gender, White privilege, or other intersectional characteristics (Grogan, 1999).

Perhaps the strongest critique of early feminist thought that influenced the literature base of educational administration and leadership is its failure to adequately address concerns related to class, race, ethnicity, social history, sexuality, gender orientation, language, national origin, religious belief, and/or ability. The field of memory in this regard is replete with work premised on assumptions of a unified “sisterhood” that misunderstood and/or misrepresented leadership experiences due to its failure to

acknowledge the impact of a host of intersectionalities, particularly those related to race and national origin. Even though many feminist writers over the last three decades discussed the need to consider intersectionality, it was not a primary focus in early feminist efforts in educational administration and leadership (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Glazer, 1991; Rusch, 2004; Young, 1995). In addition, it was not until the twenty-first century that authors who openly critiqued the assumptions of White privilege and White supremacy that underpinned earlier feminist work in/and the field of educational administration and leadership were published in these influential journals (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Irby, 2014; Phendla, 2008). Similarly, the recognition of the hegemonic influence of Western knowledge systems (including Western feminist knowledge) and/or the need to decolonize leadership research and theory has only recently appeared in the feminist scholarship of educational administration (Blackmore, 2010; Ngunjiri, 2010; Phendla, 2008; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008). To that end, scholars suggest that the field of memory in much of the feminist work in educational administration and leadership to date has been premised on privileged assumptions based on whiteness, class, and national origin that must be reconceptualized if it is to offer truly powerful explanatory theoretical perspectives on administration and leadership.

### **The Field of Presence**

For the purposes of this chapter, the field of presence consists of those statements, understandings, concepts, practices, and ideas that are considered to be truthful, “involving exact descriptions, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presuppositions” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 46). To that end, it is difficult to discuss the current influence of feminism on educational administration and leadership without reference to the genealogy of thought that has developed over time. By commenting on the touchstones mentioned in the introduction, this section offers a fulsome description of how the state of current thinking within and across the field of thought came to be.

### **Conceptualizations of Feminism**

There exists much diversity in feminist conceptualizations within the scholarship of educational administration and leadership. The two feminist perspectives that have had the most influence on this body of scholarship include critical feminism (Blackmore, 2000, 2006, 2014; Glazer, 1991; Rusch, 2004) and post-structural feminism (Capper, 1992; Grogan, 1996; Wallace, 2010). Jill Blackmore (2000) articulated what is perhaps the central question for researchers who conceptualize their leadership understandings through a critical feminist theoretical perspective by suggesting that it is premised upon “who gets what, how, why, and with what effects for individuals, particular social groups and society?” (p. 18). There is a tendency in this work to conduct structural analyses of policy, organizational dynamics, capital, and/or global trends that lead to systemic understandings of how gender inequities are created, enacted, and/or reified in local, national, and/or global contexts. Much of this work has centered on the economic, political, and social structures that influence



educational administration and leadership. For example, this literature has often considered the gendered impacts of neoliberalism on educational policy and restructuring. These analyses have emphasized how the increasing marketization of education, regulation and accountability measures, and standardization of policy and practice have subsumed and/or reframed gender concerns within a more general diversity discourse and negatively impacted girls' and women's access to, and influence on, education and leadership across the globe.

Those who write from a post-structural perspective focus on the ways in which discourse legitimates (or delegitimizes) subject positionalities. From Grogan's (1996) perspective, "feminist post-structuralism is a combination of the espousal of social change fundamental to feminist critical theory and the focus on language and discourse offered by post-structuralism" (p. 26). These writers tend to focus on how constructs of power, language, subjectivity, and resistance impact upon the ways in which people come to understand what it means to be an administrator or to lead effectively, as well as the ways in which these discourses have been normalized and gendered. Certain subject positions are more or less available to people depending upon how they are caught up in discursive fields of leadership. These studies have asked gendered questions related to "whose knowledge counts" in the field of educational administration and leadership, and how the power relations inherent within these discourses have included or excluded, and constrained or privileged, differently positioned men and women (and/or their intersections with race, class, national origin, etc.).

Over time, a number of conceptualizations have either incorporated elements of critical or post-structural perspectives within their purview, or they have applied alternative frameworks from external disciplines or bodies of knowledge to the study of educational administration and leadership. These include conceptualizations such as postmodern feminism (Grogan, 1999); sex-segregation theory and labor queue theory (Tallerico & Blount, 2004); feminist economic theory (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006); Black South African feminism (Phendla, 2008); and post-colonial feminism (Blackmore, 2006; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008). This combination of epistemological and/or methodological perspectives allows for diversity of perspective to deepen feminist conceptualizations of leadership and leads to more sophisticated analysis in research. The contributions of major thinkers from alternate disciplines are elaborated upon in the section of this chapter on the field of concomitance.

The volume of published feminist work focused on educational administration and leadership was at its height between 2000 and 2009, but has diminished over the last decade in the journals that are represented in this chapter. Current feminist framings tend to invest in issues of intersectionality and/or combine feminist perspectives with other theoretical positionings, particularly but not exclusively focused on issues of race, decolonization, and national origin. This includes, for example, scholarship that incorporates more intentional focus on issues of intersectionality (Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez, 2020); Black or African feminist theory (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Ngunjiri, 2010); critical race/Whiteness studies combined with feminist perspectives (Blackmore, 2010; Irby, 2014); and neo-Gramscian/feminist theoretical frameworks (Jubas, 2015). There continues to be significant attention to

how sex/gender inequities are discursively (re)produced and reified through language, structure, and policy, and how they differentially impact individuals based on their subject positionalities.

## **Feminist Methodologies and/or Pedagogies**

Feminist scholars have remained true to the idea that there exists a need to center research and/or methods on the experiences of sex and/or gender (Cumings Mansfield, Anjalé Welton, & Young, 2010; Young, 1995). Much attention has focused on research methodologies such as life history research (Kyle, 1993), critical feminist interpretive case studies (Dillard, 1995), and feminist standpoint theory (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). In keeping with the genealogical influence representing critical feminist and post-structural feminist thought, as well as developing conceptualizations focused on intersectionality, feminist methodologies that have been acknowledged in the current research base of educational administration and leadership include Latina feminist testimonios (Martinez et al., 2020); feminist biographical narrative inquiry (Sherman, Beaty, Crum, & Peters, 2010); and feminist critical policy analysis (Diko, 2014).

Though not highly prevalent in the literature, feminist scholars advocate for feminist pedagogies to be enacted within the practice of educational administration and leadership. For example, Glazer (1991) advocated for feminist pedagogies of empowerment to be enacted within the contexts of professionalism and educational administration. Blackmore (2010) discussed the need to engage in pedagogies of discomfort that help to unsettle notions of privilege and power in educational leadership, particularly as they relate to issues of intersectionality and the politics of difference. O'Malley and Capper (2015) articulated the need for a feminist public pedagogy that moves beyond the school to foster social justice within and across communities. Interestingly, the recognition of the value of feminist pedagogies to/for educational administrative practice has not yet made its way into the plethora of research on instructional leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008) or leading for learning (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011) that is highly prevalent in the educational administration and leadership scholarship, yet it offers a significant contribution to this line of leadership research.

## **“Big Ideas” of Feminism**

A number of “big ideas” continue to influence feminist scholarship in educational administration and leadership. The first idea focuses on the need to understand the relations of power that exist within schools, governance structures, and leadership contexts (Capper, 1992; Grogan, 1999; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Ng, 1993). In addition, there exists a growing urgency to attend to the historical and global political/economic shifts that continue to shape women's lives or movements, impact gender equity, and/or stymie the efforts of feminists or feminism (Blackmore, 2014;

David, 2011; Jubas, 2015; Kenway, 1997). The feminist aim to conceptualize the scholarship of educational administration and leadership from a broad sociopolitical and socioeconomic perspective was prevalent during the marketization of education that occurred in the 1990s in Australia and the United Kingdom (Blackmore, 2000; Keddie, 2005, 2009; Taylor, 2001). This aim has taken root once again due to growing concerns related to the need for greater economic and social justice across the world, recognition of the gendered effects of global capitalism, and acknowledgment of the differential impacts on health and wellness due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another “big idea” that influences the body of feminist scholarship in educational administration and leadership is the recognition that feminist work is risky, troubling work, and that those who engage in it are often vilified, ostracized, or mocked (Ng, 1993; Wallin, 2008; Young, Mountford, & Skrla, 2006). Nevertheless, calls for feminist activism, or the suggestion that feminism necessitates activist work, remain prevalent within the discourses of educational administration and leadership (Blackmore, 2014; Keddie, 2009; O’Malley & Capper, 2015; Taylor, 2001). Embedded in this discourse, however, also exists the recognition that differently positioned individuals have differential abilities to take on, or to accept the potential consequences of, feminist work or activism. To that end, the very act of engaging in feminist effort carries assumptions of privileges (or marginalities) that may be impacted by (or impact upon) a host of intersectional subject positions.

A third “big idea” that underpins feminist scholarship in educational administration includes the need to deconstruct the patriarchal and masculinized nature of the discourses of educational leadership and management that continue to reify gendered norms and foster inequities (Dillard, 1995; Grogan, 1999). This idea has been particularly salient in the growing literature base premised in anti-colonial or anti-Whiteness stances that have demonstrated the global influence of White Western patriarchy on leadership study and practice (Blackmore, 2010, 2014). As a consequence, calls for counterhegemonic stories that speak back to mainstream ideas of administration and leadership are once again increasing (Phendla, 2008; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008), and are highlighted by feminist perspectives that align with anti-racist and anti-colonial frameworks (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Irby, 2014; Khalifa, Khalil, Marsh, & Halloran, 2019; Ngunjiri, 2010).

## Topical Focus and Contexts of Research

Feminist work in educational administration and leadership has consistently focused on four major topics: (a) women/men in leadership roles (Coleman, 2005; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Martinez et al., 2020; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008); (b) policy, politics, and reform (Blackmore, 2014; David, 2011; Keddie, 2009; Kenway, 1997); (c) leadership preparation (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2010; O’Malley & Capper, 2015; Rusch, 2004; Wallace, 2010); and (d) leadership practices (Diko, 2014; Dillard, 1995; Irby, 2014). Within and across these topical foci, feminist scholars advocate for educational reform with a focus on justice and equity. However, definitions of what constitutes justice or equity within the scholarship of educational administration and

leadership shift significantly over time, and conceptualizations of sex/gender are taken up very differently in these diverse discussions.

Amid the complexity and plethora of feminist effort that has been undertaken to study educational administration and leadership, what is somewhat disappointing is that there has been little change in the nature of topics studied outside of the four topics listed above. This acknowledgment was described by Fitzgerald (2003) as “discourses of privilege” that have developed around constructs such as leadership profiles, patterns, and practices such that “distinctions between and among women have collapsed in the attempt to provide a meta-narrative that describes and defines women’s experiences and practices as educational leaders” (p. 10). This may be interpreted to suggest that although feminist work has offered alternate perspectives in/on educational administration and leadership, it has done so within a rather narrow, normalized menu of options that fall quite typically within the traditional canon of educational administration of leadership, and often has the effect of homogenizing experience – or at least what gets published does so. In addition to topical focus, feminist research focused on educational administration and leadership has seen an increasing shift toward fewer conceptual pieces (Blackmore, 2010, 2014; David, 2011), a growing attention to higher education contexts (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2010; Jubas, 2015; O’Malley & Capper, 2015; Wallace, 2010), and forays into nonformal leadership roles (Diko, 2014). This is suggestive of less feminist theoretical presence in leadership scholarship, which plays into charges of anti-intellectualism that is a common concern in/for leadership programming and scholarship. Although it reflects a growing diversity of contexts within which leadership research is being undertaken, this diversity of context is tempered by the focus on quite traditional topical areas and constructs that questions the extent to which feminist constructs will lead to new ways of thinking, being, or doing in the field of educational administration and leadership.

## **Resistance to Feminism**

A strand of ideas woven throughout feminist work in educational administration and leadership outlines the ways in which resistance to feminism continues to be evidenced. The first means by which resistance is enacted includes the continued and deliberate lack of attention to feminist theory and feminist concerns within the canon of educational administration and leadership (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Young, 2005). In fact, many scholars of this canon have perpetuated this disengagement by listing feminism (often as a “new” paradigm) with a host of other perspectives (critical theory, postmodernism, etc.), and suggest that these perspectives have influenced educational administration but offer little to no further attention or discussion of its influence or value (Donmoyer, 1995, 2020; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Ribbons & Gunter, 2002; Roegman & Woulfin, 2019; Scribner, López, Koschoreck, Mahitivanichcha, & Scheurich, 1999). This lack of intentional effort to discuss the influence of feminism except as an “other” potential perspective before moving on to what “really matters” subtly but

surely undermines feminism's perceived value and importance to the field of educational administration and leadership.

A second idea inherent in the literature base that speaks to resistance to feminism in educational administration and leadership considers how some individuals (or researchers) deliberately disassociate from feminism to avoid negative personal or professional repercussions (Fennel, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000; Young et al., 2006). There also exists a perspective that "the need for feminism is over" in educational administration and leadership, and that gender issues are no longer of concern (Grogan, 1999; Young et al., 2006). Alternately, references continue to be made to the belief that "tables have been turned" and that boys/men are the ones facing discrimination (Keddie, 2009; Kenway, 1997; Young et al., 2006), even though little attention has been focused on the intersectionalities that disproportionately affect these sex/gender claims.

Finally, the continued characterization of feminists as "angry women" or "women out of control" has been noted by a number of writers over time (Ng, 1993; Stockard & Kempner, 1981; Young et al., 2006). In fact, many authors have commented on the continuing sexism in the field of educational administration and leadership that leads to the invalidation and subversion of women's concerns articulated by men and women alike (Diko, 2014; Skrla et al., 2000; Young et al., 2006). In addition, writers have acknowledged the anti-feminist sentiment that exists within the broader society that shapes policy and practice (Blackmore, 2014; Diko, 2014; Keddie, 2005, 2009) and filters into classrooms, schools, and education systems in ways that often go unnoticed but have the effect of reifying systemic inequities.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The field of concomitance refers to those statements, facts, ideas, and theories that have originated in other disciplines and have been transferred to educational leadership or management. The feminist conceptualizations and methodologies that have been most evident in the literature base of educational administration and leadership have drawn from disciplines such as history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, political science, economics, law, post-colonial studies, gender studies, and cultural studies (Blackmore, 2006; Grogan, 1999; Phendla, 2008; Quadar & Oplatka, 2008; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Many of these contributions have shaped how feminist thought influences the study of leadership practice. For example, the work on motherhood introduced by sociologist Patricia Collins (1995) and philosopher Sara Ruddick (1989) helped to frame feminist understandings of, and barriers to, leadership for women in administration. The works of psychologist Carol Gilligan (1993) and philosophers Virginia Held (1993) and Nel Noddings (1992) have shaped how researchers understand women's traditional leadership roles, as well as the influence of the ethic of care on leadership decision making and practice. Additionally, constructs stemming from feminist economic theory and feminist organizational theory such as structural time crisis, ideal worker norms, and labor and occupational queues have influenced scholarship related to access and representation of women in the superintendency (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Other scholars opened up avenues for rethinking how educational administration and leadership could be conceptualized, as well as the methodologies chosen for its study. Philosopher Nancy Fraser influenced the study of feminist considerations of justice within educational administration and leadership, and offered critiques of liberal feminism and identity politics (Fraser, 1997). Scholars such as philosopher Sandra Harding (1991), political scientist Nancy Hartsock (1985), and sociologist Dorothy Smith (1990, 2005) provided scholars of educational administration and leadership theoretical depth in their discussions of feminist epistemologies, and introduced standpoint theory/methodologies that reshaped the study of women's experiences in leadership. Smith's work on institutional ethnography helped researchers problematize women's local experiences within the relations of ruling. This methodology has been incorporated in much of the feminist research in educational administration and leadership even though it has also been critiqued for its potential to reify binaries and objectification (Walby, 2007).

A number of scholars have influenced feminist thought in the field of educational administration and leadership through their work on post-structuralism. Feminist historian Joan Scott's (1986) scholarship emphasized how gender is an important category of analysis in research. Her works considered how power, language, and experience shift over time to shape events and define people's positionalities. Philosopher Judith Butler (1990) is renowned for influencing understandings of third-wave feminism and queer theory. Her work has helped those in the field of educational administration and leadership (re)consider how gender performativity is ascribed, enacted, and reified within leadership efforts. Michel Foucault (1980) and Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) greatly influenced thinking in relation to critical theory, post-structuralism and postmodern thought that in turn was taken up by feminists working in the field of educational administration and leadership. Consideration of the relationships between knowledge and power, discourse, subjectivity, and resistance significantly shaped how scholars of educational administration and leadership think about their work and its consequences for differently positioned subjects who are discursively created and impacted through and by relations of power and knowledge. The work of these post-structural scholars in turn influenced education scholars such as Colleen Capper (1992), Patti Lather (1991), and Bronwyn Davies (1994) whose work introduced post-structural thought into educational leadership scholarship, research methodologies, and pedagogical practice.

Another scholar whose thinking related to critical and post-structural theory is Chris Weedon (1997). Her work in the area of feminist cultural politics and multiculturalism influenced thinkers in the field of educational administration and leadership to consider how constructions of race, class, etc., interacted with gender to produce different experiences for differently positioned people. Sociologist Patricia Collins (1991) is one of the first scholars whose work on Black feminist thought was recognized in the field of educational administration and leadership. Her scholarship critiqued second wave feminism for its failure to recognize how gender and race intersect, and served to illuminate assumptions of White privilege inherent within traditional leadership discourses. Finally, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) development of the construct of intersectionality has reshaped feminist work in educational

administration and leadership by opening the door for scholars to consider how multiple subject positions and systems of oppression can overlap for individuals, creating very different experiences of and with leadership.

A final, more recent influence on feminist thought in educational administration comes from scholars who work in the area of post/anti-colonial studies. These scholars consider the differential gendered effects of colonialism and leadership on colonized peoples, particularly on women and girls (Alexander & Talpade-Mohanty, 1995; Battiste, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2003; Tuhiwa Smith, 1993). The fact that this scholarship is not new, but is only recently being taken up in the scholarship of educational administration and leadership, speaks of how deeply rooted the constructs of whiteness, colonialism, Western privilege, and patriarchy in leadership studies are. The research and study of leadership includes the study of the institutions, systems, and practices that were historically put in place to displace peoples indigenous to their stolen territories, and transform their ways of knowing, being, and doing. To that end, it is perhaps little wonder that anti-colonial calls for the restructuring, if not dismantling, of the very systems upon which the traditional leadership canon and its privileges have been validated and perpetuated have been suppressed. It is also why there exists growing critiques from anti-colonial feminists toward White Western feminist leadership theory that has tended to position White women for leadership as understood through a colonial power lens at the epistemic and practical expense of others.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

As noted in the earlier sections, most feminist scholars who study educational administration and leadership have conceptualized their work from critical or post-structural perspectives. The differentiation between critical and post-structural perspectives was arguably the first significant rupture within the feminist body of scholarship related to educational administration and leadership. This branching out shifted the focus of attention, methodologies, and level and nature of analysis of study in the conceptualization and design of research. It also served to disrupt unified categories of knowledge of sex or gender that had often gone unquestioned by early critical feminist theorists who had been informed by second wave feminism. Coleman (2005) recognized the deterministic dangers of “essentialist feminism” when she described it as:

a view of women as different and celebrating women and their potential (Gilligan, 1982) as collaborative and caring, leading to the logical conclusion that women operate in a different and, implicitly better way than men. However, ‘all women are not all one way’ (Schmuck, 1996, p. 353) and neither are all men. It is now generally recognised that there is a range of different ways of being a woman leader or a man leader and that the differences between women will be just as great as the differences between women and men. (p. 15)

Other writers began to query how critical feminism did not necessarily disrupt additional categories of meaning such as race or class. This critique was leveled by Colleen Capper (1992) in relation to Judith Glazer’s (1991) critical work on the impact of feminism on the research and practice of educational administration:



while tangentially alluding to other oppressions, [Glazer's contentions] ring suspiciously of a White, middle-class view of feminism. . . her version of feminism obscures the layers of oppression within gender (such as race and class), and further, that while briefly describing post-structural views of feminism and their import on partiality, her work tends to privilege gender over race and class rather than claiming many parallel and intersecting aspects of such oppression. (p. 111)

Within this theoretical argumentation, however, post-structuralism was not without its own critiques. Blackmore (2000), for example, suggested that post-structuralism can serve to distract scholars from focusing on systemic inequities that have had major impacts on education:

While post-structuralists have tended to focus on the texts and images of cultural globalisation, it was economic globalisation that has impacted greatest on the nature of educational work. Feminist post-structuralist concerns with the local and framed by discourses about contingency and particularity can divert attention away from a systemic understanding of the politics of difference at a moment of radical economic restructuring. (p. 18)

In the last decade, the focus on intersectionality and the combination of feminist perspectives with those found in economics, sociology, anti-racist, and anti-colonial studies has caused yet another disruption in the trajectory of feminist thought in educational administration and leadership. Analyses have become more complex, assumptions are more fully deconstructed for potential hegemonic bias related to diverse factors, and recognition of how oppressions are layered for differently positioned individuals has grown. As Khalifa et al. (2019) noted:

Indigenous and minoritized womanist and feminist epistemologies (Fitzgerald, 2003; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2011) are invaluable to understanding the interlocking (Collins, 1986) and intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) nature of oppression in colonial models of schooling and education, particularly in relation to the interplay between imperialist, White supremacist, capitalist, and patriarchal structures that work collectively and independently to divide, silence, and stifle Indigenous and minoritized women in their struggle against the patriarchy of colonialism (hooks, 2004; Khalil & DeCuir, 2018).

It is anticipated that these disruptions (and others) will continue to shape how feminism is theorized and enacted within educational administration and leadership. It is also likely that further disruptions in thought and research will occur as researchers struggle with issues of global import: the economic, political, and social sustainability of our human and nonhuman world (Pilgrim & Davis, 2015); the impacts of living in a world of surveillance (Dubrofsky & Magnet, 2015); the health and wellness of global populations (Walls, Butler, & Dixon, 2015); and the growing demands for inclusion of alternate worldviews that have traditionally been epistemically marginalized (Vaditya, 2018).

### **Critical Assumptions**

Though the scholarship of feminism in/and educational administration is diverse, and there may be as many conceptualizations of feminism “out there” as there are



scholars willing to engage in the work, there do exist some (relatively) common assumptions within current feminist thought related to educational leadership that are implied within the literature base. As is noted in the sections on the fields of memory and presence, some of this thinking has shifted over time as perspectives have become more inclusive. Current assumptions tend to include the following:

1. *Sex/gender matters.* Sex/gender remains necessary and valuable constructs upon which to center theory and research in the field of educational administration and leadership.
2. *Sex/gender is fluid.* Sex/gender is not a unitary construct, and scholars must be careful to avoid creating dualisms and/or essentialist assumptions within their efforts that characterize the experiences of “some” as the experiences of “all.”
3. *Feminist thinking includes diverse thinking.* There exists a need to study how sex/gender is taken up in leadership studies from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives in order to consider the multiplicity of ways and forms that sexism and patriarchy remain prevalent in educational administration and leadership theory, research, and practice.
4. *There exists no unified or unitary “sisterhood.”* Sex/gender must be considered in light of intersectionalities that differently position individuals with leadership discourses and practice over time and in multiple contexts (race, class, national origin, ability, language, etc.).
5. *Relations of power matter.* Almost all feminist work in educational administration and leadership studies how relations of power shift, are negotiated, or constrained in leadership contexts, with an emphasis on how these relations of power evidence or impact sex-based or gender-based norms and/or discourses.
6. *Deconstructing discourse is important.* There remains the contention within feminist circles that the normalized discourse of educational administration and leadership remains gendered, and that there exists a need for scholars to deconstruct how this discourse reifies sexism and patriarchy conceptually, within research circles, and in practice.
7. *Privilege (and marginalization) exists everywhere.* Feminist theorists and researchers must continually engage in reflexive practice that critiques their potential to reify and/or perpetuate hegemonic positions (academic feminism, whiteness, global north privilege, Western privilege, etc.) amid a discourse that ostensibly advocates for equity.
8. *The vilification of the “f-word” is ubiquitous.* Resistance or outright rejection of the term “feminism” has occurred over time within the academic circles of educational administration and leadership. Such resistance exists as a perennial tension for those who engage in feminist work, and scholars must “trouble” the canon with caution. There are very real personal and professional risks associated for those involved in feminist work, even though for most feminist scholars, fighting for equity and justice is a way of being more than a way of thinking.

## Conclusions and Reflections

In conclusion, feminist thought has influenced the knowledge base of educational administration and leadership, though its influence has not been as robust as it could/should be. This failure is due, at least in part, to the fact that many researchers who wish to study sex/gender in/and educational administration and leadership have themselves been influenced by a largely androcentric leadership literature base in their leadership programs that has vilified and/or been skeptical of feminist theory even as the research may focus on topics that might lend themselves to feminist analysis (i.e., women/men in leadership, etc.). In fact, many studies of women in leadership, for example, have avoided, minimized, or even openly disavowed the use of feminist frameworks to conceptualize their work. Those who have unapologetically claimed feminism within the canon of educational administration and leadership have done so often at significant cost to themselves personally or professionally. What references to feminism exist in the leadership literature base often references the failure of second wave reforms, implies a fear of radicalization inherent within the more conservative echelon of leadership studies, and focuses on topics of study and research that reify normative, essentializing, White Western understandings of educational administration and leadership. When it is mentioned in leadership meta-analyses, feminism remains firmly on the periphery of the knowledge base, acknowledged yet cast aside, thereby sending a subliminal but not-so-subtle message regarding its perceived significance and value.

In essence, feminist theory in educational administration and leadership discourse has fallen prey to the paternalism that it rails against. It remains on the periphery of the traditional canon, even though it has extended the knowledge base, has served to describe the inequitable landscape and experiences of/with leadership, and has made real gains in pockets of influence for White Western women in particular. It has not significantly changed the normative discourse that is studied in leadership programs even though its potential to shift that discourse is immense. Those who conduct feminist work continue to fight for legitimacy and space in this discursive field, even as they foster change in the interest of equity and justice. However, it is possible that feminist leadership perspectives, informed by complex economic, political, cultural, and sociological constructs, will become increasingly necessary and prevalent in leadership thought/practice as global sustainability crises make it impossible to deny or avoid the inequitable social tensions that differentially affect individuals on the basis of sex, gender, or other intersectional characteristics.

Feminist researchers continue to (re)theorize the conceptualization and study of educational administration and leadership. They work tirelessly to critique current thinking in order to avoid falling into atheoretical and/or anti-intellectual pursuits inherent in utilitarian reductive educational administrative scholarship. Given recent declines in feminist scholarship related to educational administration generally, and declines in feminist conceptual work in particular, there exists a need to reinvigorate the theoretical knowledge base and move beyond traditional leadership topics of study to extend what is acknowledged and legitimated as feminist scholarship within the canon of educational administration. This includes the introduction of the work conducted by scholars whose institutional affiliations are outside of Western institutions in the United

States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, and whose feminist theorizing is informed by cultural and linguistic traditions that have not previously been legitimated in the traditional discourses of educational administration and leadership. Although there exists a growing diversity of scholarship in the literature base from authors of non-Western countries that tangentially references feminism, it is often not the primary conceptualization or methodology for the work. This provides evidence of a genealogical acknowledgment of the assumptions of Western feminism but also the critique (and perhaps rejection) of its utility in diverse contexts.

It is because feminism has been critiqued so often that it has been able to shape-shift to reflect and accommodate new ways of thinking, being, and doing. Feminist theory must be acknowledged for its diverse intellectual and methodological genealogy that allows for comprehensive and complex analyses of leadership theory, research, and practice. Though the critiques of feminism remain, and scholars must perennially guard against the encroachment of privilege and bias in its conceptualization and enactment, gender has become recognized as a legitimate category of analysis, as has its intersections with other categories of analysis. Rather than being irrelevant, feminist theory offers to the scholarship of educational administration and leadership the possibility of renewal, of inclusive perspective, and multiplicity of voice. It asks theorists to consider their own privileges, to acknowledge the ways in which they have been complicit in the perpetuation of inequity, and to reframe their understandings and actions accordingly. This is not accomplished without conflict or discomfort. . .but that is the nature of equity work. Just as it is the nature of leadership.

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## Abstract

This analysis first traces the development of constructivist thinking and then analyzes leadership literature for the roots of constructivist thinking in its evolution. While the word, constructivism, is a fairly recently developed term, constructivist thinking surprisingly actually stretches back into the Dark Ages. Its progression is traced through the ages to the present and then the same model is used to inquire into thinking about leadership. Finally, both are synthesized into a theory and practice of constructivist leadership.

In the treatment of constructivism, the two major forms of constructivist thinking are analyzed, namely, psychological and social constructivism. Psychological constructivism deals with how individuals learn, how they develop knowledge, how they construct their own worlds, while social constructivism

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focuses on how the social world is constructed. Interestingly, as can be predicted, both major forms have generated a moderate and a radical branch. Both will be presented with the controversial conclusion that radical social constructivism questions the objectivity of science and our common sense notions of “reality.” Explorations of both question the validity of notions about the objectivity of science and the general understanding of “reality.”

The next focus is on creating a theory and practice of constructivist leadership, by first examining relevant major theorists in the field such as Barnard, who focused on communication and leadership, followed by Lambert et al. who examined in turn interpersonal relationships followed by Bryk and Schneider whose research discovered trust as quintessential for effective leadership.

Next to be examined is Wilson, Byar, Shapiro, and Schell’s Tripartite Theory of Organizational Change and Succession with its three phases that all organizations careen through in their careers as an example of organizational entropy. Its four styles of leadership behavior are then parsed out. Its theory of organizational dynamics’ application to constructivist leadership is quite apparent. Next to examined is the leader as a change agent facilitator. Keeping in mind the virtually inevitable forces of entropy, several educational reform plans are cited that, if sustained, can thereby empower faculty and administrators and defeat these destructive forces.

A summary, conclusions, and implications end the document.

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### Keywords

Constructivism · Symbolic interactionism · Psychological constructivism · Social constructivism · Theory · Reality · Leadership · Leadership and acceptance of communication · Leadership and relationships · Leadership and trust · Leadership and organizational dynamics and the Tri-Partite Theory of Organizational Change and Succession · Entropy and organizations · Educational reforms as change strategies to control organizational entropy

### The Field of Memory

Conceptions of scientific inquiry. Conceptions of “reality.” The idea of what is true. The idea that all knowledge is constructed. The idea that there are no eternal realities. The idea that the social world is socially constructed. The idea that scientific constructs and concepts, that science itself is constructed. The idea that conceptions of leadership are socially constructed. The idea that a number of key contributions to leadership theory can be utilized in developing a theory and practice of constructivist leadership. The idea that leadership can function as a change agent/facilitator. The idea that organizations mindlessly generate a career that careens through three stages and, therefore, are subject to the forces of entropy. The idea that various styles of leadership generally are characterized by each of the three phases of an organization’s stages and that one is a combination of two styles. The idea that the forces of entropy entrap organizations. The idea that administrators can subvert the forces of



entropy with carefully designed reform educational models that generate heavy involvement of all constituencies.

### **The Field of Presence**

No theory of knowledge nor of leadership satisfies our thirst for greater insight into both. Various theories that are constructed may be useful to expand our insights into both the nature of knowledge and of leadership, hopefully. Somewhat slowly, new theories emerge that provide greater insights into the nature of knowledge. Various leadership theories dominate thinking, practice, and literature only to see new constructs emerge that provide divergent insights into the nature of leadership and the organizations that host and influence their practice. New theories shine different constructs on the nature of leadership such as communication theory, relationships theory, and relational trust. The impact of the force of entropy on organizations and the potential impact of leadership on entropic forces becomes evident when stages of organizational development are studied. Various leadership models appear to emerge when organizations shift into new stages of development, two of which can be considered constructivist in nature. Mechanisms consisting of structure and process appear useful to prevent the forces of entropy from overwhelming organizations.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The social sciences provide a rich field from which to draw constructs. Leadership has long been a focus of the social sciences, while constructivism is a considerably more recent field of study. Literature on leadership harkens back to the Homeric tradition, from whence is drawn the construct of the hero. Thus, the fields of philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science provide sources for literature on leadership. Certainly, Kant provides original thinking to support constructivist theory, such as observing that certain aspects of our knowledge of the physical universe were constructs of our cognitive apparatus. Similarly, Kuhn is a source for generalizing that new constructs emerge to change any scientific fields' most basic beliefs. Besides the major contributions of philosophy, the social science sources for constructivism include education, history, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Such constructs as communication theory, interpersonal relationships, scientific inquiry, and in social psychology, symbolic interactionism provide major underpinnings for both leadership and constructivist inquiry. To that may be added organizational theory to provide further insights into synergizing both fields.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

All fields of knowledge face disruptions as new theories develop. New theories and practices of leadership are merely new theories, rejecting the idea of progress. New theories add divergent dimensions to our armamentaria of knowledge and leadership theories. Social movements comprise the architects of discontinuity and rupture. Social movements can change organizations and thus the succession of leadership models adopted by changing organizations. Changing leadership in itself can be disruptive to organizations. Adopting constructivism as a model is disruptive, but can ensure new growth and change.

### Critical Assumptions

So-called “realities” are constructed and do not exist in nature. The fields of science are also constructed, thus changing over time. The assumption that one can influence his/her organization can be useful. The assumption that one can influence the career of his/her organization for the good may be facilitative. The assumption that knowledge itself and leadership theory and practice can be useful. The assumption that constructivist thinking and practice can alter an organization and its leadership behavior may be important.

The overwhelming consensus as the twentieth century closed has been that knowledge is constructed. (D. C. Phillips, *Constructivism in Education*)

Constructivism has become the reigning paradigm in education today. (S. Hausfather, *Educational Horizons*)

The development of collective meaning is an essential characteristic of a learning organization. (Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*)

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## Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to explore the development of constructivist thinking through the ages and to develop a theory of constructivist leadership. First, a conceptual history of constructivist thought and practice as our analytic model is presented. Mentioned briefly are two major concepts of constructivism and then two major aspects of constructivism, psychological and social. Insights toward a comprehensive theory of constructivist leadership are developed.

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## The Roots of Constructivist Thinking

While use of the word, constructivism, is recent, amazingly, the first tendrils of constructivist thought stretch back to the Dark Ages, to Bishop Nicole D’Oresme in 1377.

In his musical aesthetics, D’Oresme formulated a modern ‘theory of perception’, which was not the perception of objective beauty of God’s creation, but the constructive process of perception, which causes the perception of beauty or ugliness in the senses. Therefore, we can see that every individual perceives another ‘world.’ (Taschow, 2003)

Four hundred years later, Kant contributed to constructivist thought, as philosopher D. C. Phillips (2000, p. 8) observed, Kant

argued that certain aspects of our knowledge of the physical universe (time and space for example) were the product of our own cognitive apparatus – we ‘construct’ the universe to have certain properties, or, rather, our faculty of understanding imposes those temporal and spatial properties on our experience.

This represents a huge change from the prevailing imagery that God's world is perfect and impervious to mere human input.

Next is Descartes' (1637) assertion that he examined all of his beliefs, which he reduced to his famous "I think, therefore, I am" statement. While this does not move him entirely into the constructivist camp, he questions his beliefs unless they could be proven. He perceives that his thinking results in his existence. Rousseau (1762) believed that students learn through their experiences, senses, activities, preceding Dewey by centuries.

Marlowe and Page (1998, p. 17) noted "Pestalozzi (1801–1898)...believed that the student's mind receives impressions through observation and experience and that these impressions produce ideas and an organized mental structure that the student uses to compare, separate, sort and conclude." Both Rousseau and Pestalozzi edge into constructivist thinking.

Piaget (1954) actually worked with children empirically to determine how they thought, writing *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. He asserts that each child constructs his or her own reality, a phenomenal conclusion. "According to Piaget, learners construct their own knowledge schemes in relation to, and filtered through, previous and current experiences" (Marlowe & Page, 1998, p. 18). This revolutionary work moves into constructivist thinking.

For Piaget, a child's construction of reality differs considerably from that of adults. Marlowe and Page (1998, pp. 13–19) cite Dewey, Bruner, Freire, and Vygotsky contributing to constructivist thinking, although not using the word. Dewey thought that projects should be the center of curriculum to increase student motivation and involvement to increase student knowledge and skill. For Bruner (1961), discovery was the keystone to education. Discovery increased intellectual ability, ability to solve problems, motivating interests, and cognitive structures.

George Herbert Mead (1934), Dewey's colleague at the University of Chicago, who developed social psychology, thought that the individual's self is constructed from social interaction. His student, Herbert Blumer (1969), developed the school of Symbolic Interactionism, critical to constructivist theory because it explains social behavior in terms of how people interact with each other using symbols.

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## The Trunk: The Major Forms of Constructivist Thinking

D. C. Phillips (2000, pp. 6–7) was commissioned by the National Society for the Study of Education to edit *Constructivism in Education: Opinions and Second Opinions on Controversial Issues*. Phillips thought at least two different constructs had developed, one consisting of an idea about the bodies of knowledge or disciplines that have developed during human history. The second deals with differences

in understandings about how people learn and thus, how teachers should teach, based on these principles.

Phillips believes that constructivists' ideas about how people learn led to psychological and social constructivism.

## Psychological Constructivism: Moderate and Radical

Psychological constructivism is concerned with understanding the individual psychologically, thus dealing with how people learn and develop knowledge, constructs, beliefs, and attitudes:

Roughly, this . . . type of constructivist view is that learners actively construct their own ("internal," as some would say) sets of meanings or understandings; knowledge is not a mere copy of the external world, nor is knowledge acquired by passive absorption or by simple transference by one person (a teacher) to another (a learner or knower). In sum, knowledge is *made, not acquired*. (Phillips, 2000, p. 7)

Each person builds his/her ideas, perceptions, grasp of new facts, understandings of new information, symbols, and attitudes based on our existing knowledge, our bodies of information. We build these through our experiences.

These perceptions are supported by sociologists Berger and Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), asserting that people tend to construct their realities based on their society and culture. People construct their realities based on gender, age, socioeconomic class, religion, rural, urban or suburban subcultures, experiences. Each person perceives the world quite differently based upon these factors, plus more.

Some might believe that twins develop similar perceptions of most things, but that is not valid. Usually, an older twin is able to tell which is the older twin since his or her behavior provides significant behavior. The older twin is treated differently than the younger. Therefore, each person constructs his/her own world differently – a fundamental constructivist tenet.

If moderate psychological thought develops, surely someone will construct a radical psychological model. Ernst von Glasersfeld (1995, p. 1) startles us by asserting that his understanding of the concept of blue may differ from mine, which, he notes "is profoundly shocking." Both Phillips and von Glasersfeld propose

We cannot be certain any two individuals will construct the same understandings; even if they use the same linguistic formulations to express what they have learned, their deep understandings might be quite different. (Phillips, 2000, p. 7)

This viewpoint is on target since no one is able to share similar experiences and yet perceive these experiences identically. Von Glasersfeld, however, misses perceiving the processes that make us human, social animals. This comprises the power of culture and its underpinning vehicle, language. Language itself is socially constructed. Mead (1934) noted that the human mind, the "self" all humans form, and our society are all socially constructed.

## Social Constructivism: Moderate and Radical

This second form of constructivism is essential to analyzing constructivist leadership since it is within organizations that leadership develops and functions. Sociologists consider organizations as socially constructed, shared realities. Phillips states that it

Embodies a thesis about the disciplines or bodies of knowledge that have been built up during the course of human history. I have described this thesis as, roughly, that these disciplines (or public bodies of knowledge) are human constructs, and that the form of human knowledge has taken in these fields has been determined by such things as politics, ideologies, values, the exertion of power and preservation of status, religious beliefs, and economic self-interest. This thesis denies that the disciplines are objective reflections of an “external world.” (2000, p. 6)

For moderate social constructivism, the social world is socially constructed as demonstrated by Berger and Luckman’s provocative 1966 title, *The Social Construction of Reality*. The *entire social world* is socially constructed, from our merest habits of eating with silverware, to driving on the right (except in the UK), to shaking hands in greeting, to not spitting on the floor.

Examples abound. Soccer has been highly popular all over the world, but until recently, not in the United States. Cricket is enormously popular in the United Kingdom, but mystifying to US audiences. English is read from left to right, whereas Hebrew is read from right to left and Chinese is read up and down. English starts every sentence with a capital letter, but Hebrew capitalizes a few letters when they end a sentence.

Gergen (1994) adds insight with his four social constructivist dimensions (quoted by Samier & Miley, 2020, p. 177)

that counter the dominant realist traditions of organization: communal rationality that is culturally-embedded instead of assuming a culture-free rational agency; socio-cultural processes that produce ‘pictures’ of realities instead of the scientific empirical observational method; language as part of social action, creating meaning through organized forms of interaction that constitute reality instead of the realist view of language as a representation or reflection of reality; and a multi-culturation of meaning that varies from culture to culture that is humanistic and variable instead of the ‘narrative of progress’ that is inherent of a more ‘scientific’ perspective that aims at an often dehumanizing generalization theory or model.

Pinker cites historian David Wootton in describing what an educated Englishman’s beliefs were in 1600:

He believes witches can sum up storms that sink ships at sea. . .

He believes in werewolves, although there happen not to be any in England – he knows they are to be found in Belgium. . .

He believes Circe really did turn Odysseus’s crew into pigs. He believes that mice are spontaneously generated in piles of straw. . .He has seen a unicorn’s horn, but not a unicorn.

He believes a murdered body will bleed in the presence of the murderer. He believes that there is an ointment, which if rubbed on a dagger, which has caused a wound, will heal the wound. . .He believes that a rainbow is a sign from God and that comets portend evil. . .He

believes, of course, that the earth stands still and sun and stars turn around the earth once every 24 hours.

A century and a third later an educated descendent. . . would believe none of these things. (Pinker, 2018, p. 9)

This social construction of reality exemplifies the extremes to which a society can influence its people. Pinker cites sociologist Robert Scott's generalization that in the Middle Ages, "the belief that an external force controlled daily life contributed to a kind of collective paranoia."

Rainstorms, thunder, lightning, wind gusts, solar or lunar eclipses, cold snaps, heat waves, dry spells, and earthquakes alike were considered signs and signals of God's displeasure. As a result the "hobgoblins of fear" inhabited every realm of life. The sea became a satanic realm, and forests were populated by beasts of prey, ogres, witches, demons, and very real thieves and cutthroats. (Pinker, 2018, p. 9)

Visiting Paul Revere's rather small house of 12 kids and 2 adults leads one to conclude that in colonial times, the concept of privacy did not exist. It is a recently developed construct, but with lots of emotional meaning – today.

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## Radical Social Constructivism – A Major Threat to the Assumed Objectivity of Science and Mathematics

Radical social constructivism is a horse of another color. It seems to push our perceptions of reality somewhat strongly. The radical constructivists' "strong program in the sociology of knowledge" believes

That the form that knowledge takes in a discipline can be *fully explained*, or *entirely accounted for* in sociological terms. That is, . . . what is taken to be knowledge in any field has been determined by sociological forces including the influence of ideologies, religion, human interests, group dynamics and so forth. . . this group of thinkers wishes to deny that so-called knowledge is in any sense a reflection or copy of that "external reality" that the community in question is investigating. (Phillips, 2000, pp. 8–9)

Most hard scientists and mathematicians went ballistic about radical social constructivism, leading to the "science wars." However, Phillips notes that science's major concepts did not drop out of heaven like manna. They were developed by humans.

It should be clear that the concepts we use, whether in every day or in the scholarly disciplines, did not descend – fully formed – out of the blue. There was a time when the concepts of "energy" or "mass" or "molecule" or "psychosis" or "working class" did not exist; and the halting and interactive process can be traced by which these concepts and the very things or categories themselves were developed. (Phillips, 2000, p. 88)

Kuhn (1962) notes that science's concepts are hardly eternal, that radical new ideas at times are very slowly adopted, many scientists holding onto their familiar,

older paradigms. Some wag noted that new shifts in major paradigms become adopted when the old generation dies off.

Zais (1976, pp. 85–86) states, “Scientific theory should not be regarded as an objective map that describes and explains reality but rather as” quoting James Conant (1952) “a policy – an economical and fruitful guide to action by scientific investigators.” Zais continues

Scientific, empirical-rational methods had shown that a scientific theory was not, as had been thought, a value-free, objective description of reality, but a construct invented to advance human endeavors. . . Theory regarded as a map, as mentioned earlier, purports to tell us what the world is really like. It implies *discovered* knowledge, which literally represents an uncovering of the nature of reality. By contrast, modern scientific theory – that is, theory regarded as a policy for action – claims only to tell us what are the best *representations* of the world in terms of present experience. Knowledge from this point of view is regarded as *constructed*, that is, fabricated on the basis of human experience for particular ends-in-view. . . theory may vary accordingly as purposes for which it is constructed may vary. . .

Zais cites esteemed physicist Bridgman (1950, pp. 86–87):

As we have noted in a previous paragraph, all of the evidence available seems to indicate that the revolution in modern physics has rendered the “map” concept of scientific theory both an illusion and a presumption. Scientific theory not only *does not* describe the nature of reality, but it *cannot*. The reason, some physicists contend, is that theory is a product of human thought processes, and modern physics suggests that human thought processes may not correspond sufficiently to the structure of nature to permit us to think about it at all.

Thus, the nature of reality and the concept of existence become meaningless, not because of the nature of the world, because of the construction of the human mind, meaning that man finds it impossible to transcend his own human reference point. Bridgman (1950, p. 87) notes, “We cannot even express this in the way we would like. . . it literally is true that the only way of reacting to this is to shut up.” Bredo (2000, p. 149) supports this “As an article on quantum mechanics on *Scientific American* suggested, ‘The doctrine that the world is made up of objects whose existence is independent of human consciousness turns out to be in conflict with quantum mechanics and the facts established by experiment’” (D’Espagnot, 1979, p. 158).

Concerning the question of whether knowledge is made or found, Bredo (2000, p. 150) asserts “The issue actually goes much deeper. The deeper issue is whether the objects that are known are given independently of the knower, or are in some way made or constructed by the knower’s activities. Put in another way, the contentious issue is not whether knowledge is made or found, but whether ‘reality’ is made or found.” This can lead the unsuspecting seeker to emerge with mutually polarized positions. Fortunately, Bredo tries to resolve this by turning to Mead (1934).

Viewed in this non-dogmatic way a scientific conclusion represents the conclusion of the latest inquiry, not *the* conclusion of inquiry. This approach allows science itself to evolve, reconstructing present conclusions when new facts call for it. When science is placed within

the world, rather than outside of it, the rigid division between the nature and human is also eliminated, leaving in its place various sciences with differing aims and objects, all of which involve some form of participation in the phenomena being studied. (p. 150)

Bredo (2000, p. 152) concludes that perhaps “the world is many ways,” that employing Mead focuses on our interaction with both the natural and social worlds. We interact with both, so that scientific conclusions are not eternal truth, merely those of the latest inquiry.

Rosalind Driver, a major pioneer in science education, helps:

Any account of teaching and learning science needs to consider the nature of the knowledge to be taught. . . The objects of science are not the phenomena of nature but constructs that are advanced by the scientific community to interpret nature. . . the point is that, even in relatively simple domains of science the concepts used to describe and model the domain are not revealed in an obvious way by the “book of nature.” Rather they have been invented and imposed on phenomena in attempts to interpret and explain them, often as a result of considerable intellectual struggles. (1986, p. 11)

Blumer (1969) coined the term *symbolic interactionism* in analyzing human social behavior, thus trashing the notion that things have an inherent meaning:

Symbolic interactionism does not regard meaning as emanating from the intrinsic makeup of the thing that has meaning, nor does it see meaning as arising through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person. Instead, it sees meaning as arising *from the interaction* between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person in regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing toward the person. . . the meaning of things is formed in the context of social interaction, and is derived by that person from that interaction. . . the use of meanings by the person in his action involves an *interpretative process*. (pp. 4–5)

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## The Branches and Leaves of Constructivism

### Leadership and Constructivism

This section focuses on developing a theory and practice of constructivist leadership. Amazingly, the number of books on constructivist leadership consists of three by Lambert et al. and three by Shapiro, which will be discussed later. Only two works on constructivism and organizations have been published, both by Shapiro (2009, 2013).

Following the model used in getting a handle on constructivism, this section first explores insights developed by the father of administration, Chester Barnard.

Patently, constructivism involves the construction of meaning by individuals immersed within social groupings in which they interact.

### Chester Barnard

Chester Barnard, the chief economic officer of Bell Labs, contributed key insights into constructivist leadership before the term was invented. Barnard (1938) thought that to be effective, to have power and authority, leaders’ communications had to be



*accepted* by subordinates, contradicting the prevalent idea that authority and power came from superiors. Barnard states the exact reverse, *authority must be accepted by one's subordinates* for it to exist. They accept it because they believe the communication comes from a source vested with the *right* to make decisions or communications, a stunning insight. Thus, if an administrator loses support of subordinates, he/she actually has no authority nor power. This happens, but rarely.

Barnard delineated four conditions for accepting a communication:

1. The person(s) must understand the communication adequately.
2. The communication cannot be inconsistent with the person's perceptions of the purpose of the organization.
3. The communication cannot be contrary to the individual's perceptions of his or her purposes.
4. The person must be able to carry out the directive mentally and physically.

If American soldiers in the Iraq war were ordered to torture Iraqis and felt that it was inconsistent with their sense of morality, they may have refused. FBI agents refused, although some CIA agents did not.

In the *Functions of the Executive* (1938), Barnard delineated three interlocking, essential functions of any executive, the first being to facilitate a common purpose. The second is to facilitate designing a system of communications as direct as possible in order to accomplish a common purpose. The third is to facilitate establishing a system of cooperation to achieve a common purpose. All three are essential to the effective functioning of any organization, hence Barnard's unusual title.

Barnard changed the way we perceive organizations from treating organizations as their structure to perceiving them as a series of small, informal social systems which provide keys to achieve the organization's purpose, and which can serve to protect individuals. Without systems of communication and cooperation, it is impossible to achieve a common purpose, to develop loyalty to that purpose and to each other, which are, patently, constructivist in nature. Barnard's recognition of the small group/social system as the basis for organizations to function provides a fundamental insight to constructivism since it establishes the essential role of social systems to understand how organizations function.

Barnard implicitly recognizes the essential role of trust and respect for individuals and is quite adamant that administrators operate in a climate of morality, all central to constructivist principles.

### **Lambert et al.: Relationships**

Five decades later, Lambert et al. (1995) proposed a theory of constructivist leadership as follows:

Constructivist Leadership that entails

The reciprocal processes that enable. . .  
 Participants in an educational community to construct meanings. . .  
 That lead toward a common purpose of schooling. (p. 51)

“Since leadership is viewed as enabling reciprocal processes among people, leadership becomes manifest within the relationships in a community. . .” (p. 32). Lambert et al. perceive leadership as making things happen, facilitating developing a purpose.

Lambert cites Poplin and Weeres’ (1993) study, finding the most important factor in schools is *relationships*.

The researchers, who were teachers, conducted the study in a series of dialogues, writing this remarkable statement:

For it is in the coming to know that we came to want to act. It is in the listening that we changed. It is in the hearing our own students speak, as if for the first time, that we came to believe. This is what we heard. . . *Relationships dominated all participant discussions* about issues of schooling. No group inside the schools felt adequately respected, connected, or affirmed. (p. 19)

“No group in the schools felt respected, connected, or affirmed,” a commentary on American education after decades of forced reform resulting in many school personnel becoming alienated.

Lambert and Poplin and Weeres comprise exemplifications of Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism, with researchers deriving insights from interactions among respondents and concluding that relationships form the core of schools, and of all organizations.

### **Trust: Bryk and Schneider**

Bryk and Schneider (2002), two sociologists studying elementary schools in Chicago, note that they stumbled onto a missing ingredient in school reform: relational trust which rested on four bedrock supports:

1. Respect
2. Competence
3. Integrity
4. Personal regard for others

“Again and again,” notes Gewertz (2002, October) “they found that teachers and principals who had one another’s trust, and the trust of parents, had exhibited strong and consistent signs of all four” of these bedrock supports (p. 3).

The researchers examined 100 schools that had made the most and least gains, finding that the schools with high levels of relational trust “had a 1 in 2 chance of being in the ‘improving’ category, compared with lower-trust schools, which had a 1 in 7 chance” (Gewertz, 2002, October, p. 3). Without relational trust, administrators have a 14% chance of improving a school.

All the huge focus on school reform, all the emphasis on teaching to the test, all the enormous energy on test-prep is wasted, is inconsequential, unless trust is built. And trust is undermined by the ceaseless emphasis on forced testing, rather than on relationships – with the staff and with the students.

Gewertz quotes Bryk and Schneider,

In this regard, relational trust constitutes a moral resource for school improvement. . . People in a school community are involved in one another's lives, and sometimes we forget about the importance of the way they interrelate with one another and how that makes a difference in the way learning takes place.

This is about not forgetting the people. I think that's what we've brought back to the table. (p. 4)

The themes of trust, of relationships, of morality, glitter like diamonds in thinking about constructivist leadership. That these behaviors underlying relational trust relate to leadership goes without saying.

Central school administrations undercut trust by insisting that they have full authority to appoint teachers instead of involving administration and staff. Gewertz points to the negative impact that poverty and size exert on schools, but notes that even poverty is overcome by relational trust. As for school size, Shapiro (2009) provides strategies to overcome the negative impact of large schools.

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### **The Tri-Partite Theory of Organizational Change and Succession: Wilson, Byar, Shapiro, and Schell**

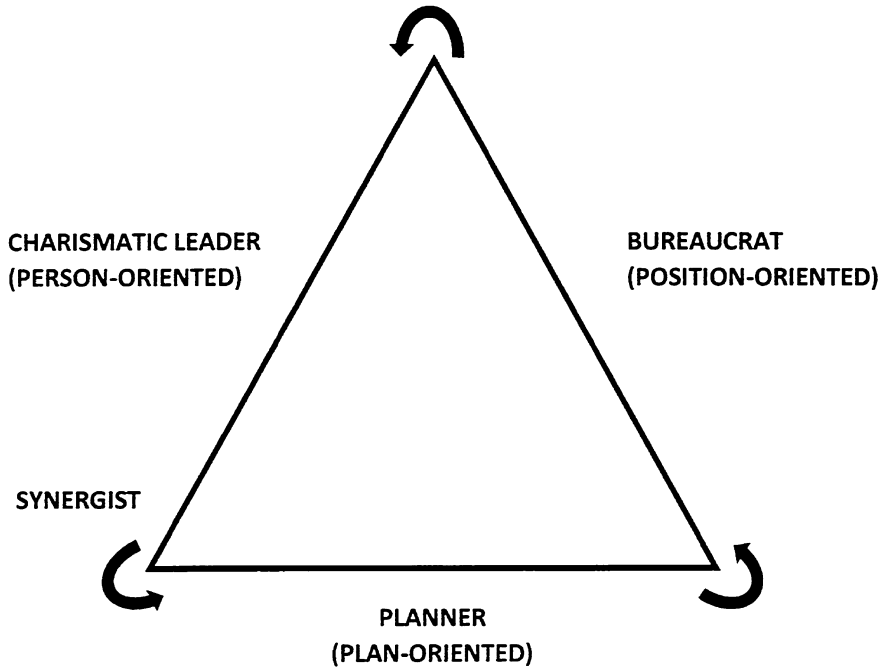
Wilson, Byar, Shapiro, and Schell (1969) thought it vital to examine organizational dynamics, so they analyzed the phases or stages that organizations career through in their careers.

They concluded that a trajectory of three phases developed. The first, a charismatic or a person-oriented phase, was followed by a planning phase and the third by a bureaucratic or position-oriented phase. Obviously, this is a theory of entropy. In thinking about this, the authors discovered that once in a while a leader who combined both charisma and the ability to plan might be found. The team called this administrator a synergist, borrowing the term from medicine in which two drugs acting together produce far greater results than each operating alone.

The change in leadership and phases in an organization's career occur because of organizational dynamics. In the third phase of its career, a bureaucracy, people both within and outside of the organization see it as stationary, resisting change, increasingly unable to meet its employees' and those it serves' needs. If it is a unit within a larger organization, or if it is the entire organization itself, this becomes increasingly apparent to the board, or to the administrator leading the organization (Fig. 1).

The solution is to find a charismatic leader or a synergist to wrench the unit out of its doldrums and refocus on developing and achieving its purposes. The charismatic leader energizes the organization, refocuses on its purpose, and gives it new vigor, new energy.

But after a small handful of years, the charismatic moves on, so people are anxious to keep up their momentum. They find a planner to develop plans to achieve



**Fig. 1** Phases of Organizational Change: Tri-Partite Theory

their goals. This is also a dynamic phase of the organization's career. After a while, things become more and more routinized, vigor seems to decrease, the planner leaves, and someone usually within the organization is selected to run it. This bureaucratic phase of the organization's career is usually the longest lasting, unfortunately, until once again, the organization needs rescuing from its nonfunctional, bureaucratic phase. This describes the process of organizational entropy.

Organizations experience charismatic and planning phases, which are constructivist phases in their career. The organization is most constructivist when it has a charismatic leader, a planner, or a synergist. The discussion by Barnard and Lambert points to the necessity of planning. The Wilson et al.'s study brings more precision and an ability to predict that organizations will experience going through a planning phase in their careers. This supports Barnard's insistence on the necessity of planning to achieve a common goal.

One of the foci of Shapiro (2000) is the leader as a change agent, and another examines organizational dynamics, with a third focusing on power in organizations.

Shapiro (2009) digs into the dynamics of organizations, such as images, organizational cycles, and pulls, and focuses on establishing oneself and the nature of power in organizations. It also provides case studies on a process of turning a school into a constructivist model.

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## The Leader as a Change Agent/Facilitator

This role of the charismatic or planner or synergist fits admirably into extensive literature on the leader as a change agent. As Wilson et al. (1969) note, these leaders are essentially change agents. They enter into an organization to make changes. Somewhat recently, some administrators see themselves as fulfilling either charismatic and/or planning roles.

This formulation has become an organizational cult phenomenon with courses and literature focusing on leaders as change agents, some quite academic, others more in a “how to” vein. Lunenburg (2010), for example, provides a serious focus. Change agents can be internal or external.

Many consultants, regionally, nationally, and internationally, often fulfill the role of change agent, to meet organizational needs. Such change agents have included W. Edwards Deming, Stanton Leggett, and a host of other people of more or less fame. Deming focused on understanding the system and in pursuing quality, which is largely responsible for the majority of cars driving our streets being Japanese and Korean. Those two nations took his approaches seriously, while the Big Three American carmakers, probably in a bureaucratic phase of their organizations’ careers, were less accepting, at least for quite some time.

---

## Developing Reforms and Systems to Generate Change in the Organization

A considerable literature has developed pertaining to reducing a large school’s size by decentralizing it into a small schools or a house schools plan. This involves developing a plan, which can generate a good deal of energy and focus and which can create many positive outcomes. Advantages are numerous. For example, if Barnard’s (1938) three indispensable elements of an organization are used, that is, a clear purpose, shared cooperation, and a system of clear communication, manifestly, a smaller school can more readily establish a shared purpose since people in a smaller system can develop a greater sense of participating and belonging. Similarly, since people feel closer to each other, get to know each other, cooperation can occur more readily. In a smaller organization, communication is more often a face-to-face basis so the organization becomes a small folk society with direct communication occurring much more frequently.

Many other advantages can be discussed, among them increased relational trust, greater academic achievement (Bickel & Howley, 2002; Fowler & Walberg, 1991), decreased toxic climates, closer social relationships, plus other educational factors.

Similarly, developing a Professional Learning Center (PLC) can operate as a plan which can generate a good deal of energy and faculty involvement in professional study. Stohl, Bolam, McMahan, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) co-authored a review of the literature that is instructive. PLC’s can be a major enterprise for teams of

faculty and/or administrators to improve their educational understandings and professional practice. Often, a planning period once a week or every other week can be instituted to facilitate the purposes of the effort.

Magnet schools, originally developed in the 1960s and 1970s to desegregate schools, can comprise a reform effort which can develop improved quality in schools. Usually small in size, and public in nature, they focus on developing a specialized program to attract both student and parents (hence the “magnet” term). Such schools often attract parents who become strongly supportive. Magnets can develop all sorts of programs, only limited by the imagination of the founders and limitations of the school system. Examples include special programs for special education, programs for the gifted, outdoor education models, foreign language immersion models.

A host of different education models have developed, but this chapter will focus on two, among them the Montessori schools and Waldorf schools. Montessori schools are essentially organizations that develop self-directed, activities-oriented, collaborative models, often for primary students (Whitecarver & Cossentino, 2008). Teachers develop age-appropriate activities to guide the students. The model was developed by Montessori over 150 years ago and it still widely practiced.

The Waldorf schools also provide a model that attracts the loyalty of parents and students. Developed over 90 years ago by Rudolph Steiner, it attempts to develop pupils’ intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated and holistic approach (Petraash, 2002).

Manifestly, other models exist. The charter school movement and the voucher movement certainly can be cited. Some charters are public, others are private. However, a full discussion of their quality far exceeds the purposes of this chapter, other than noting that a full third of charters have collapsed.

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## Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This study attempted to pull together elements toward a comprehensive theory of constructivist leadership, first focusing on the development of the constructivist construct. It dug into the roots, trunk, and branches of constructivism from the fourteenth century to today, including the two major forms of constructivism, psychological, and social. Elements of constructivist leadership were synthesized, starting with Barnard’s perception that subordinates must accept communication from a leader for his/her authority to exist, to Lambert’s insistence that relationships are essential to effective leadership. Both insist that morality is essential for any organization.

Bryk and Schneider found that relational trust was quintessential for effective leadership. The Tri-Partite Theory of Organizational Change and Succession noted that organizations are entropic, careening through three phases in their careers: charismatic, planning, and bureaucratic, with leaders corresponding to those phases. And a rare leader, a synergist, combines charisma and planning, with the first two and the synergist being constructivist leaders.

Constructivist leaders were considered as change agents.

The problem with maintaining a constructivist organization lies in the entropic nature of organizational dynamics; thus, developing planning strategies is essential.

Living in and creating constructivist organizations can be exciting, dynamic, challenging. They are safe and open to learning. They can provide the most satisfying experiences of a professional lifetime.

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# Variegated Perspectives Within Distributed Leadership: A Mix(Up) of Ontologies and Positions in Construct Development 15

Howard Youngs

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## Abstract

Distributed leadership is a commonplace feature of educational leadership, management, and administration (ELMA) nomenclature. This was not the case before the late 1990s, though aspects of a distributed approach to leadership thinking is evident prior to this in the context of groups. The chapter starts with a review of leadership, the subject of distribution. Leadership, however, is not a clearly defined phenomenon and often relies on a preceding adjective in the hope of bringing clarity. The adjective, *distributed*, emphasizes and assumes that leadership is already spread in either a latent or active state across entities or is spread by an entity to others. Sitting beneath the surface of these assumptions are ontological questions related to leadership. Two ontologies, entitative and process, are used to illustrate how distributed leadership is both a contribution to leadership conceptualization and practice in education, and an addition to the mishmash of adjectivalism and ontological variation in what counts as leadership knowledge.

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In addition, multiple positions across ELMA regarding distributed leadership and knowledge development prevent distributed leadership from having a shared meaning. Despite these ongoing issues, promise of further development may lay in some of the practice and process directions emerging in ELMA and the leadership field.

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**Keywords**

Distributed leadership · Distributed perspective · Shared leadership · Post-heroic leadership · Entitative ontology · Process ontology · Leadership practice

**The Field of Memory**

A predominant focus on leader-centric models has lessened due to the rise of post-heroic models, such as distributed leadership. The term delegation has been replaced by a functional form of distributed leadership.

**The Field of Presence**

Distributed leadership is usually positioned as a means of spreading leadership to achieve organizational improvement and/or a distributed perspective is used as a unit of analysis for understanding practice labeled as leadership. Distributed leadership is common across ELMA nomenclature and has a lesser profile in the leadership field.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Shared leadership, which has its origins in group research, has continued in the leadership field as a group-level construct. Distributed leadership is usually attributed as having the same roots, though is positioned more as an organizational property.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Distributed leadership in ELMA has become more distant from leadership studies literature over time. The distributed perspective is distinct from distributing more leadership. The past decade has seen the emergence of variegated perspectives and contributed to contestation and debate across ELMA.

**Critical Assumptions**

Entitative ontology informs most distributed leadership literature, whereas a greater focus on practices and the application of process ontology may reveal new understanding of practice labeled as leadership, provided critical studies are undertaken.

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**Introduction**

The overall purpose of this chapter is to trace the conceptual development and thought of distributed leadership in ELMA and why distributed leadership has become a mix (up) of ontologies and positions. The term variegated is emphasized, due to distributed

leadership not only having different perspectives, but the differences are discrete, and using the analogy from biology exhibit quite different colors. Before any analysis of the origins of distributed leadership takes place, the first section focuses on the substance of meaning in the terms: *distributed*, *leadership*, and *distributed leadership*. Substance of meaning brings forth the ontological questions, first what leadership is, and secondly depending on what leadership is, how does the distributed aspect add meaning to leadership? The ontological assumptions and knowledge positioning in this first section are then used to inform the three sections that follow. These three sections draw specific attention to the origins and emergence of distributed leadership, followed by the variegated perspectives of distributed leadership across ELMA, and conclude with possible paths of future knowledge development.

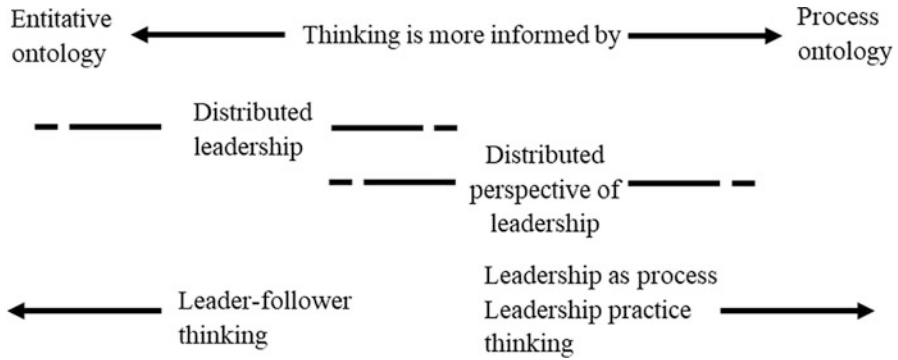
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## Leadership and Distributed Thinking

Leadership is associated primarily with influence, expertise, and/or traits emanating from an entity, usually a person in an organizational role that has responsibility and authority attached to it. Associated theories, such as transformational leadership, are described as heroic, leader centric, or focused. If leadership is assumed to be both good and needed across an organization, then leadership (responsibility) is distributed to other entities, either through creating more leadership roles and/or distributed by an entity who has the authority to distribute leadership to others. This used to be called delegation, a term that has to an extent been replaced with one form of distributed leadership in ELMA.

In addition to these formal organization functions of distribution is the view that leadership can also emanate from any person in an organization. Leadership here is not restricted to specific roles, and using an entitative ontology, leaders and followers are interchangeable. In contrast to leader-centric theories, distributed leadership is usually positioned as a post-heroic theoretical concept, alongside other post-heroic variances such as shared leadership, collective leadership, collaborative leadership, and democratic leadership. Post-heroic leadership theories can still rely on an entitative ontology. One variation is a relational view of leadership, where the unit of analysis shifts from individuals (entities) to the relational space between individuals (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). This variation may be evident when distributed leadership is used more as a distributed (or distributive) perspective of (leadership) practice, rather than as a means to distribute leadership work and responsibility. Fitzsimons, Turnbull James, and Denyer (2011) provide an overview of relational-entity and relational-processual positions as part of their discussion of alternative approaches for studying distributed and shared leadership.

In contrast to an entitative ontology in distributed leadership knowledge, practice theory (see Nicolini, 2012) is a lesser used Process ontology (see Rescher, 1996) and practice theory (see Nicolini, 2012), provide additional means of understanding distributed leadership beyond entitative ontology. Here, the focus shifts from entities to process, from practitioners to practice, and from causal associations of leader with followers and context to emergent, fluid, sociomaterial, and spatiotemporal locations



**Fig. 1** Thinking about distributed leadership

as a means of understanding practice. There is a decoupling of leadership from entities (Youngs & Evans, 2021). Leadership as a practice recurs and evolves over time and in the moment (Raelin, 2016). One way of defining leadership in line with process ontology is that leadership may “be the moment-by-moment production of direction, or collective agency in changing and setting courses of action” (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016, p. 42). For example, in ELMA, Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) employ “a practice-informed approach” (p. 343), drawing on Theodore Schatzki’s site ontology perspective, examining how “the pre-existing cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political set-ups or arrangements which prefigure the conditions for leading practice also must be transformed” (p. 344). Here the focus is the interrelation of practices, rather than how actors connect in a practice (Kemmis et al., 2014; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). The latter is the focus of Spillane’s (2006) distributed perspective of leadership, discussed later in this chapter, and at the time of writing in 2021, Spillane (2006) was the most cited source for distributed leadership according to Google Scholar, followed by Gronn (2002). A distributed perspective of leadership became evident in the early 2000s theorizing of Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001), and Gronn (2000, 2002). The range of blended thinking, used in the analysis of distributed leadership in the sections that follow, is illustrated below, while acknowledging there are other possible ontological positions that may be used (Fig. 1).

## The Origins and Emergence of Distributed Leadership

### Etymological Origins of “Distributed” and “Leadership”

The first occurrence of *leadership* in a dictionary was in the 1821 version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Case, French, & Simpson, 2011). The verb *lead* and the noun *leader* appeared much earlier. Grace’s (2003) etymological research locates the origin of the root word *lead* to around AD 800 and *leader* around AD 1300. This does not limit applying contemporary understandings of leader and leadership to events and people from around AD 800 onward. Civilizations prior and classical

leadership studies provide evidence of leaders, and concepts, principles, and patterns of leadership (Bass, 2008; Wilson, 2016). Indigenous ontologies also predate Western contemporary leadership theory and thought, such as those evident in a Māori perspective of leadership, can also acknowledge a source of authority in leadership can come through ancestral efficacy (Henry & Wolfgramm, 2018), where leadership dispersion is spread across time as ancestors inform the present. In addition, Australian Aboriginal knowledge shows leadership dispersion and collectivity is not confined to contemporary organizations, but has been in existence for centuries (Sveiby, 2011).

*Lead* is “from the Anglo-Saxon Old English word *loedan*, the causal form of *lithan* – to travel” (Grace, 2003, p. 3 of 16). This can conjure a metaphor of an individual leading the way, traveling along a path, if the singular noun *leader* is used. The etymology of *lead*, *leader*, and *leadership* must be understood in the context of the times. Wilson’s (2016) analysis of sixteenth-century European truth about leadership illustrates how its meaning shifted over several centuries of critical junctures across European societies. This contributes to her thesis that leadership “is fundamentally a social, political invention . . . not something fixed in ‘human nature’” (p. 10). The implication here for distributed leadership is the need to clarify what *leadership* means in the context and times it is being used, otherwise leadership may become an empty signifier, an issue that can emerge when leadership does not mean anything specific (Kelly, 2014) or lacks sufficient meaning so that it is reliant on a preceding adjective to bring some clarity that is perhaps lacking in defining leadership. Leadership meaning may then be located more in the adjective preceding the term leadership, so a particular meaning is advanced through adjectivalism, in this case that leadership is distributed.

Carlyle’s 1840 lecture set in motion the equating of *leader* with *Great Men* and heroic acts, where the imagery generated through this has made it “now nigh on impossible” (Case et al., 2011, p. 246) to not see leaders as heroic male entities and leadership as the characteristic of these leaders (Case et al., 2011). As an antithesis to this, shifts toward post-heroic leadership constructs and critical leadership studies (CLS, see Collinson, 2011) have progressed the leadership field “toward more relational, distributed, and gender-aware understandings” (Case et al., 2011, p. 246), though there is still a tendency of leader-follower dualistic thinking within some of these shifts. Because of the interest and romanticism (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985) with leadership, no matter which view is taken, leadership has been elevated to a “must have” (Wilson, 2016, p. 6) if challenges are to be overcome. The argument for more “must have” leadership meant it was just a matter of time before the nomenclature *distributed leadership* became popular (Youngs, 2009), as well as *leadership* becoming more commonplace than *management* across ELMA (Gunter, 2016).

The origin of *distribute* is somewhat more contested compared to *leadership*. Butts (2017) suggests some scholars propose the Aramaic  $\sqrt{prms}$  (meaning, to distribute) has a Semitic etymology, whereas others suggest it is “a loadword from Greek  $\pi\rho\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$ , the aorist infinitive of  $\pi\rho\nu\omicron\eta\acute{\omicron}$  ‘to perceive, foresee; to provide, take care of’” (p. 245). An English etymology indicates *distribūt* is a stem of the Latin *distribuere*, where *tribuere* (cf. tribute) can mean assign, grant, allot, and to

divide among (Hoad, 1996). In the case of distributed leadership, the past tense *-ed* literally means leadership has already been divided and assigned among others. If an association is made with *delegate*, derived from *dēlēgāre* (f.), it brings together *dē*, down and *lēgāre* to send on a commission away from (Hoad, 1996). In an example from the 1960s, “one can, therefore, say that in order to assure for the Chief the freedom necessary in view of the exercise of his principal function, which is to plan, it is expedient to distribute in favour of different levels of the hierarchy delegation of authority” (Migeon, 1965, p. 51). This perhaps has some alignment to one form of distributed leadership where leadership (authority to act) is delegated down through an organizational structure and co-missioned to and/or with others.

Whether *distribūt* or *dēlēgāre* is intended in the use of *distributed leadership*, both illustrate a functional distribution of leadership from an individual entity or a group entity to others. These literal origins assume leadership has some substance which can be passed on from one to another, or one can divide the leadership they supposedly have and grant it to others. It is a matter of consideration as to whether or not this functional distribution happens in practice or is able to happen at all. It all depends on what is meant by *leadership* when the term distributed leadership is used.

## Contemporary Origins of Distributed Leadership

A number of leadership and ELMA publications explore the origins of distributed leadership. For example, see Bolden (2011), Gronn (2000, 2011), Fitzsimons et al. (2011), and Youngs (2009, 2020). The origins and knowledge production of distributed leadership located in education contexts are informed by a broader intellectual history of ELMA. For an authoritative analysis of ELMA intellectual history and knowledge production, see Gunter (2016) and, in particular, Gunter, Hall, and Bragg (2013) for specific analysis of distributed leadership knowledge production. In addition, a distributed perspective of leadership is evident in Ogawa’s and Bossert’s (1995) conceptual argument that leadership is an organizational quality, flowing “through the roles that comprise organizations” (p. 225).

“Distributed leadership” became a commonplace term in ELMA from the start of the millennium and first appeared during the 1990s in a small number of ELMA publications. In the leadership field, the nomenclature “distributed leadership” first appeared in the 1980s. The origins of distributed leadership are often traced back to group research, from which has also stemmed shared leadership. The latter’s theoretical origins are often evident in team-based literature (Fitzsimons et al., 2011). The underlying principles and thought related to leadership dispersion, either through an entity dispersing leadership or acknowledging leadership is a latent or active property already dispersed beyond formal organization leadership or management roles, emerged a lot earlier. Chronologizing examples of underlying principles and thought (shown hereafter) illustrate the gradual emergence of distributed leadership as distinct from and in addition to focused leadership.

### Origins Outside of ELMA

Simmel's (1902a) discussion of group size determining sociological forms of groups is perhaps one of the earliest published articles where the organization of (larger) groups "demands a definite quota of its units as a guiding body" (p. 24), suggesting a dispersion of leadership beyond a single person. "A group of a certain extent and beyond a certain stage in its increase of numbers must develop for its maintenance certain forms and organization which it did not previously need" (p. 2). In part two of his discussion (1902b), he provides an example of an aggregation of leaders. "Even in recent time the Czechish secret society Omladina was constituted according to the principle of quintettes. The leadership of the society belonged to numerous 'hands,' which consisted in each case of a 'thumb,' i.e., the chief leader, and four 'fingers'" (Simmel, 1902b, p. 190).

Leadership as a diffused property is evident in the 1920s writings of Follett (Graham, 1995), where she argued that leadership may emerge from anywhere and not be restricted to those in managerial positions. A socially critical and agentic argument is evident in her reasoning, where she states managers should give employees opportunity "to grow capacity or power for themselves" (Graham, 1995, p. 111). A similar emancipatory argument is evident in Crutchfield (1932), who perhaps is one of the first to bring the terms *distributed* and *leadership* together.

The urge toward leadership is stronger and more commonly distributed than is generally supposed. We lack leadership because we lack faith in the so-called common man. We use the same leaders over and over until they reach the point of diminishing returns. We assume that because a person won success in some form, he is destined to be successful in others. Leadership in a democracy cannot be inherited neither can it be purchased . . . The leader's greatest service to his community comes when he finds in his community the men and women whom he may encourage to assume leadership. (pp. 362, 363)

One of the earliest published references bringing the terms *shared* and *leadership* together is located in a study of preschool children. Parten's (1933) observations of children's social participation during a free play hour in a nursery school resulted in leadership being viewed as both a property of a group as well as an individual. "Leadership is a function of the personnel of the group and of its activities, as well as of each individual child" (p. 430), where "shared leadership replaces a large amount of the independent play" (p. 438). Leadership as a group property as well as an individual property is also evident in Benne and Sheats' (1948) research of group roles. "Groups may operate with various degrees of diffusion of 'leadership' functions among group members or of concentration of such functions in one member or a few members. Ideally, of course, the concept of leadership emphasized here is that of a multilaterally shared responsibility" (Benne & Sheats, 1948, p. 41).

The examples presented thus far start to identify an additional conceptualization of leadership thinking beyond an individual leader, which is also reflected in Bales' (1954) acknowledgment of the importance of social leadership in addition to that of a group leader.

Gibb (1958) contributed to leadership thought, progressing leadership from being a fixed-only property to an emergent property. Leadership, “as a property of interaction” (Gibb, 1958, p. 104), “emerges in a group as part of a more diffuse differentiation of roles by which group members more expeditiously achieve group goals and satisfy their individual group-invested needs . . . in any group there may be, at any time, a *number* of leaders” (pp. 102,103).

Gronn (2000, 2020, 2011), in his commentaries of distributed leadership history, highlights Gibb’s forms of leadership distribution, accumulative and systemic. Accumulative is a numerical interpretation of distribution where the totality of leadership acts is the sum of each individual leadership act. Systemic is holistic in nature, where leadership could pass from one group member to another, depending on the situation. (Youngs, 2020, p. 3 of 24)

Gibb’s publications about leadership in groups are sometimes presented as the “cornerstone” of contemporary distributed leadership origins and have contributed to the acknowledgment of ambiguity between leaders and followers. The unfixing of leadership from the exclusive few, so leader and follower roles become interchangeable, and leadership is viewed as a process, rather than an attribute, is evident in Tannenbaum’s and Massarik’s (1957) framing of leadership.

. . . leadership as a *process* or *function* rather than as an exclusive attribute of a *prescribed role*. The subordinate often influences the superior; the customer, the salesman; and the group member, the chairman. In any given relationship, the roles of the influencer and the behavior often shift from one person to the other. Conceptually, the influence process or function is present even though the specific individuals taking the roles of influencer and behavior may vary. Thus, the leader role is one which is rarely taken continuously by one individual, even under specific conditions with the same persons. Instead, it is one that is taken at one time or another by each individual. (p. 3)

This line of thought, according to Bowers and Seashore (1966), does not undermine the authority of those in formal leadership roles, further sowing the thought that a wider dispersion of leadership is not at the expense of formal leaders’ authority.

. . . leadership may be either “supervisory” or “mutual”; that is, a group’s needs for support may be provided by a formally designated leader, by members for each other, or both; goals may be emphasized by the formal leader, by members to each other, or by both; and similarly for work facilitation and interaction facilitation. This does not imply that formally designated leaders are unnecessary or superfluous, for there are both common-sense and theoretical reasons for believing that a formally acknowledged leader through his supervisory leadership behaviour sets the pattern of the mutual leadership which subordinates supply each other. (Bowers & Seashore, 1966, p. 249)

The leadership thinking presented above is a stream that shapes contemporary distributed leadership. The profile of distributed leadership did start to emerge in the 1980s, albeit well in the shadow of transformational leadership that started to come to the fore in the late 1970s and 1980s. Bolden (2011), in his Scopus database analysis of distributed leadership publications, shows distributed leadership rarely figured during the 1980s and 1990s, and if works were published during these



decades, distributed leadership lagged behind the profile of shared leadership from the 1990s to the early 2000s.

One of the first references to distributed leadership post the 1970s was made by Beck and Peters (1981), where their key point was that distributed leadership as a studied phenomenon was not new. “Distributed leadership refers to the idea that there are several different leadership functions which must be performed by several different people. This is a phenomenon which has been studied for many years, primarily by social psychologists” (p. 43), a reference back to the work of Gibb and others. Brown and Hosking (1986) were another to make links back to Gibb in relation to the coexistence of distributed influence and focused leadership. “Whether focused or distributed, leadership characterizes social organization, and is recognized in participants shared sense of a social order” (Brown & Hosking, 1986, p. 76).

Possibly, the first distributed leadership model was Barry’s (1991), which he argues was uniquely suited to self-managing teams. The model brought together envisioning leadership, organizing leadership, and social leadership. “At its heart is the notion that leadership, is a collection, of roles and behaviors that can be split apart, shared, rotated, and used sequentially or concomitantly. This in turn means that at any one time multiple leaders can exist in a team, with each leader assuming a complementary leadership role. It is this characteristic that truly differentiates this approach from the person-centered approaches described earlier” (p. 34). House and Aditya (1997) divided distributed leadership into three forms: delegated leadership, co-leadership, and peer leadership; the first broad classification of distributed leadership forms in the leadership field.

Early signs of distributed leadership being positioned as “a” (or “the”) preferred mode of leadership in and for organizations are evident in Senge (1993). “Knowledge-creating companies will require distributed leadership” (p. 5). “In the traditional, resource-based organization, leadership and top management are synonymous. In the knowledge-creating company, leadership is a distributed phenomenon. The organization is full of leaders operating at different levels and around different issues” (pp. 14, 15).

The commentary related to distributed leadership over time increasingly branched away from the group focused origins that have stayed with shared leadership and team leadership. Distributed leadership was being situated as an organizational property.

### **The Pre-millennium Emergence of Distributed Leadership in ELMA**

The seeds contributing to the establishment of distributed leadership in ELMA as “the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century” (Bush, 2011, p. 88) are:

- The political and post-welfarist education reforms of the 1980s.
- With a subsequent increase in emphasis on self-managing organizations, site-based management, improvement, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- That contributed to issues of head teacher/principal/senior leader overload.

- As well as emphasizing principals as transformational and strong leaders, albeit as teacher leadership research was growing.
- While there was a loosening of leader and follower from fixed to transferable states across an organization in the leadership field.
- In addition to emerging post-heroic alternatives to leader-centric and heroic leadership thought in the leadership field.
- Emerging arguments for process-based ontologies in organizational theory (for example, see Chia, 1997).
- Emerging arguments to understand leadership as practice.
- ELMA voices ranging from post-welfare enthusiasts and subtle apologists through to critical commentators (see Thrupp and Willmott (2003) for their treatise of ELMA literature at the time). For more on positioning across ELMA see Gunter (2016) and in relation to distributed leadership, see Gunter et al. (2013).

The diverse factors listed above have contributed to distributed leadership being understood from a range of perspectives, informed by differing ontologies of leadership (Youngs, 2020). Distributed leadership emerged in times, “not since the late nineteenth century, when the present organizational contours of mass public education emerged, has the political rhetoric of school reform been so broad and comprehensive” (Elmore, 1990, p. 3). Distributed leadership not only is situated in an education context, but a political one too. Critical commentators and research will tend to include one or more of the following as part of their critique: neoliberalism, new public management (NPM), neo-Taylorism, managerialism, social (in)justice issues, power, democratic principles, micropolitics, colonization, and oppression of indigenous/cultural identity and agency.

Change leadership literature in the 1970s and 1980s emphasized strong leadership (which is usually equated with a clear visionary leader at the head of an organization), yet education research studies in those decades appeared to contradict this, showing leadership tasks were apparent across numerous roles (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Associations instead were made with Kerr’s and Jermier’s (1978) substitutes for leadership (Heller & Firestone, 1995).

Contributing to the strong leadership, leader-centric and heroic perspective were ELMA literature supporting post-welfarist reforms with little or no engagement with critical perspectives of self-management, thus reifying the role of principal/head teacher without much challenge from elsewhere across ELMA at the time (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). For example, Beare, Caldwell, and Millikan (1989) argued:

The principal is, in the final analysis, the custodian of a culture. It is appropriate then, that transformational leadership should be the concept addressed in the next chapter (p. 98) . . . Outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools . . . outstanding leaders have a vision for their schools – a mental picture of a preferred future – which is shared with all in the school. (p. 99)

In addition, “a vision for the decade ahead [the 1990s] calls for strong leadership . . . where . . . we refer . . . to leaders having a commitment to and a capacity to articulate a vision for self-management” (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992, p. 202). On the

one hand, Caldwell and Spinks (1992), were advocating here for extraordinary leaders, while on the other hand claiming they were not promoting “a superperson as leader” (p. 203), and were stressing the need “for widely dispersed leadership” (p. 203).

Two push-back factors came into play. Firstly, the subsequent overloading and unsustainability of responsibilities and tasks associated with principals/head teachers, and secondly the growing acknowledgment that leader-centric models were not reflective of leadership practices across an organization. Distributed leadership became an alternative model to those that focus solely on head teacher’s work, but is not a post-millennium idea, where Thomson (2009) (1983, cited in Thomson, 2009) argued that delegation is the most practical understanding of distributed leadership. Avoiding head teacher overload, a product of education reforms over decades led to a greater distribution of work through schools (Gunter, 2001). This distribution of work:

the neo-Taylorist approach to getting new tasks done efficiently and effectively has been given a new-wave gloss in which delegation is the means through which individuals in teams can learn and develop . . . Sharing or distributing leadership has another understanding, and has less to do with managerial efficiency and more to do with educational leadership working within and developing democracy. (Gunter, 2001, p. 131)

Gunter (2001) was one of the early voices bringing critical engagement to the emergence of distributed leadership as delegation dressed up in new clothes, as well as suggesting that any distribution of leadership should have democratic intent.

The possible first signs of a process ontology (as an alternative to the entitative norm evident in leadership and ELMA studies) came in Smyth’s (1989) edited book, *Critical perspectives on educational leadership*, now positioned as seminal in critical perspectives within ELMA, thus standing in stark contrast to the advocates and subtle apologists of the reforms as discussed by Thrupp and Willmott (2003). An example of promoting a process ontology is evident in Watkins’ (1989) chapter.

. . .rather than examining organizations and their designated leaders in simplistic functionalist terms of merely operating in order to solve particular problems (p. 26) . . . leadership should be seen as a process dialectical relationship . . . such a processual perspective implies that there is not one preordained or designated leader within the organization, but that at any time any one member of the organization can come to the forefront to provide guidance in resolving the tensions and contradictions that beset organizations. As a consequence, a dialectic view of the leadership process focuses on the human agency of all members of the organization as that agency interacts with the constraining or enabling structure of the institution. (pp. 28, 29).

Throughout the 1990s, principles aligned to distributed leadership became apparent. For example, Razik’s and Swanson’s (1995) textbook for developing educational leaders promoted a “new paradigm,” with “leadership as a relationship involving multiple followers and multiple leaders who engage in shared or collaborative leadership. The roles of leaders and followers are not etched in stone but can shift” (p. 63).

In addition, studies started to elaborate on leadership practices from less of a leader-centric perspective, instead reflecting a broader distributed perspective. For example, Thurston's, Clift's and Schacht's (1993) case studies of four schools showed that leadership responsibility was evident across all staff and did not reside only with the principal. Polite's (1993) case study of a middle school's major change process presents possibly the first distributed leadership typology in ELMA. Leadership aggregation consisted of leaders of influence, leaders of curriculum, leaders of groups, leaders of direction, and leaders of resistance, where individuals were associated with more than one of these forms over time (Polite, 1993). During the 1990s, there were "limited amounts of prior evidence about distributed leadership" (Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, & Steinbach, 1997, p. 3) so for Leithwood's et al.'s (1997) mixed methods study, the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership (aligned to principal leadership) and teacher leadership were brought together. Both, however, are usually associated with entitative thinking regarding leadership, so even though a broader lens was being used, ontological assumptions about leadership were still largely entitative.

### **Foundational Keystones and a Diverging View**

During the early 2000s, the profile of distributed leadership quickly increased and came out of the shadows of the leader-centric dominated leadership field and ELMA. Post-heroic models of leadership become prominent and given the policy reforms of the previous two decades across education; it was of little surprise how distributed leadership became so popular. The merging of these factors meant distributed leadership became inevitable as a preferred model of leadership in education (Youngs, 2009). "In education" is a significant point here. "Distributed leadership" has a high profile across ELMA, but less so in the broader leadership field.

The two most cited distributed leadership sources (as of July 2021), Spillane's (2006) and Gronn's (2002) independent theorizing of leadership, where the unit of analysis is a distributed perspective, are often portrayed as the foundation of distributed leadership across ELMA. In addition to these sources, distributed leadership literature also draws on Spillane et al. (2001) and Gronn (2000). Neither Spillane nor Gronn advocate for a greater distribution of leadership in their original conceptual frameworks, hence a distributed perspective of leadership is an appropriate way of describing these. Both acknowledge the aggregation of leadership, with Spillane defining this as "leader-plus." In addition, Spillane focuses on practice, through collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution, whereas Gronn focuses on three forms of concertive action: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations, and institutionalized or regulated practices. These foci shift the unit of analysis more to practices, rather than the leader. One point of difference between Spillane's and Gronn's frameworks is that Spillane draws on terminology associated with entitative views of leadership, so leaders, followers, and their situation are the core components of his framework, with the use of leaders and followers deemed by Gronn (2003) as unhelpful. Spillane (2015) explains:

A distributed perspective, then, conceptualizes practice in a very particular way: practice is not just about the actions of individual leaders, though they are clearly relevant; it is fundamentally about *interactions* among leaders and among leaders and followers. And, leaders not only influence followers but followers also influence leaders in these interactions. (p. 281)

Where Spillane's and Gronn's frameworks overlap is in drawing attention away from a leader-centric position of understanding leadership to a practice-informed perspective. Over the following 10 years, the high profile of distributed leadership is confirmed in meta-reviews of ELMA research (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018; Tian & Huber, 2021; Wang, 2018). Gronn (2011) started to raise concerns as to whether too much emphasis was being given to the dispersion of leadership at the expense of acknowledging individual sources of leadership. His review of distributed research studies suggested that hybrid configurations of focused and dispersed leadership were a more accurate account of what was reported in distributed leadership research studies and went as far to call himself a skeptic of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2016).

Following the initial frameworks of Spillane and Gronn, the first major ELMA review of distributed leadership research was published (see Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). Around the mid-2000s there was an acceleration of distributed leadership publications across ELMA. These consisted of research studies (some published more than once) and reviews. The most cited review at the time of writing this chapter (July, 2021) is Bolden's (2011), who,

concluded that descriptive and normative perspectives which dominate the literature should be supplemented by more critical accounts which recognize the rhetorical and discursive significance of DL in (re)constructing leader–follower identities, mobilizing collective engagement and challenging or reinforcing traditional forms of organization. (p. 251)

During the period 2004–2011 multiple typologies of distributed leadership emerged. For a comparative review of these typologies and recurring themes emerging from other literature reviews see Youngs (2020).

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## **The Variegated Perspectives of Distributed Leadership Across ELMA**

Two directions, at times overlapping, are initially apparent in ELMA, distributed leadership, and a distributed (or distributive) perspective of leadership. An entitative view of distributed leadership focuses on the multiple sources of leadership across an organization's staff and a normative view within that advocates that a wider distribution of (more) leadership to more staff may lead to organizational improvement, though this should not lead to assuming distributed leadership "is some sort of panacea" (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016, p. 141). A distributed perspective does not advocate or imply a wider distribution is required. Instead it provides a unit of analysis where leadership practice is not limited to those in organizational leadership

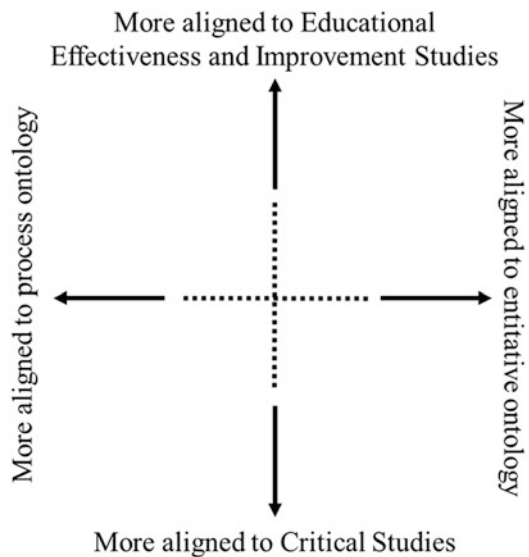
roles. Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) argue there are two positions, one where distributed leadership is a unit of analysis and another which is “a more practical or applied view” (p. 141).

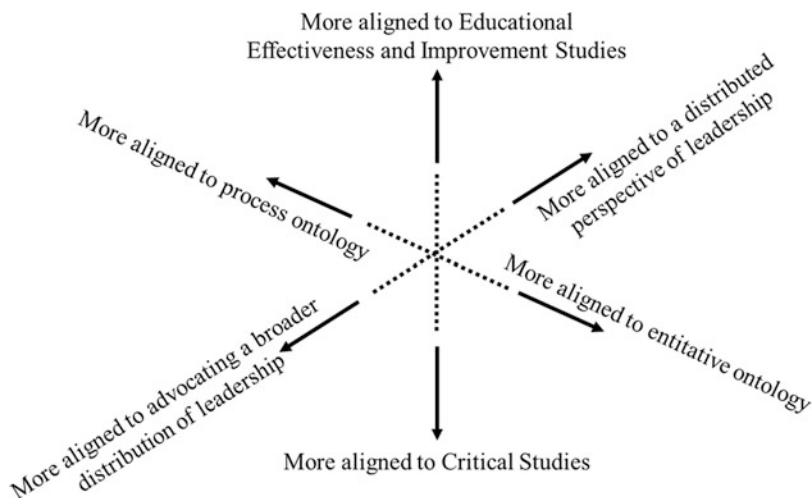
In addition to these two directions (no matter what terminology is used) is where the application of each direction is positioned by ELMA commentators and researchers. Two factors can be considered here. Firstly, is the use of either direction more aligned to educational effectiveness and improvement studies or more to critical studies? For more on ELMA positioning refer to Gunter (2016), and for CLS see Collinson (2011). Secondly, ontological consideration is needed in relation to how leadership is defined. Is the leadership definition (whether explicit or implicit in the source of literature) aligned more to entitative thinking of leadership or more to process thinking of leadership, or does it attempt to blend two ontologies?

This is summarized in the following two diagrams. Figure 2 presents a framework for locating any educational leadership study. Figure 3 adds the dual directions of distributed leadership across ELMA.

The axes of Figs. 2 and 3 include dotted lines. If the ends of the dotted lines were all linked across the three dimensions in Fig. 3, then a sphere would be apparent. It is in this sphere where perhaps many distributed leadership commentaries and research may be located. For some they are in the sphere because it is not made clear by authors where the commentary or research study is located. For others, it may be because an eclectic positioning is sought, so positioning is closer to the nexus of the three axes. Given that entitative ontology informs most leadership theorizing, research, and application, most distributed leadership literature tends toward this way of thinking and advocates a considered dispersion of leadership as a possible lever for improvement (for the latter see Harris and DeFlaminis (2016)). Despite the

**Fig. 2** Locating ELMA leadership commentary and research studies





**Fig. 3** Locating ELMA distributed leadership commentary and research studies

promise distributed leadership appears to provide as “an alternative to the unjust power differences and inequalities that condition effective participation in leadership . . . it has yet to convincingly address these issues” (Woods & Roberts, 2018, p. 5), thus highlighting a need for studies to lean more toward critical studies.

In addition to multiple locations within these three axes are two other considerations, whether or not distributed leadership commentary and research is situated in group or organization settings, and whether a relational ontology of leadership (see Crevani & Endrissat, 2016; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012) is more apparent than either an entitative or process ontology. The multiple possible locations of distributed leadership contribute to the acknowledgment across ELMA that distributed leadership is challenging to define as a concept and has led to debates regarding how research findings should be interpreted, what is missing from stated and implied assumptions made by authors, and how crucial distributed leadership or a distributed perspective is for ELMA.

## Possible Paths of Future Knowledge Development

Across ELMA, there is agreement that “distributed leadership is predicated on the assumption that it will bring about beneficial effects that would not occur with singular leadership” (Bush, 2011, p. 90). Distributed leadership continues to be positioned as a post-heroic concept. However, distributed leadership is not the only model in use across ELMA. For example, transformational leadership has continued to be promoted as the best practice model for running schools as a business (Gunter, 2016), as well as being evident across ELMA research studies along with instructional leadership (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018; Wang,



2018). In addition, any model of leadership is influenced by country and local state education policy, so many variations of models will continue to emerge. Any quest for a uniform understanding and application of distributed leadership is therefore an impossibility, particularly given the multiple locations of distributed leadership commentary and research studies discussed earlier. In addition to this are our own implicit leadership and implicit followership theories, thus rendering further variation as these will differ from person to person. Youngs and Evans (2021) explore in more depth how our implicit theories can help identify untested assumptions regarding our ontology-in-use regarding distributed leadership. Cognizant of these issues, three paths of possible development are provided.

### **Practice Theory and Process Ontology**

In a review of ELMA research studies from 2007–2016, Tian and Huber (2019) reveal a shift from leader-centric to practice-centric studies. At the forefront of a practice theory–informed understanding of leadership in ELMA is the practice architectures developed by Kemmis et al. (2014) (see also Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015) and applied in research studies. Further studies positioned as a distributed perspective of leadership may continue to draw on Spillane’s framework, though ELMA researchers now have another option, to apply the practice architectures developed by Kemmis et al. (2014). In addition, the leadership field has a small but growing number of commentaries and applications of leadership-as-practice (L-A-P). A starting place for applying the variations of L-A-P discussed by a range of leadership authors, including Philip Woods from ELMA, is Raelin’s (2016) edited book, *Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application*. Here there is a deliberate focus on practices rather than practitioners. Aligned to some of this L-A-P commentary is an intentional shift from entitative ontology to either relational or process ontology. For an example of the latter see Crevani (2018). ELMA and “leadership research and development activities must rise to the *ontological* challenge of *processes* rather than *things*” (Wood, 2005, p. 1101). Following a path where practice theory and process ontology merge to inform distributed perspectives of leadership in ELMA may further an understanding of practice (labeled as leadership) as it unfolds in education organizations. Links can also be made to the organization theory field where there has been a focus on process organizational studies (for example, see the *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* series of books, published by Oxford and overseen by series editors, Ann Langley and Hardimos Tsoukas).

### **Returning to Where It Started: Group Research**

The historical roots of distributed leadership construct development lay in group studies, mainly carried out in the 1950s. Shared leadership and team leadership research and development continue to focus on group contexts, whereas distributed leadership, particularly in ELMA, has become positioned more as an organizational construct. ELMA research that focuses on instructional/educational leadership



research is almost unanimous in that leadership (whether leader centric or post-heroic) has an indirect association with student learning. Educational organizations rely on groups structured around faculties, departments, and specialized permanent teams or fixed term project teams to hopefully enhance and support the conditions conducive to supporting teachers and relational environments that support student learning. With a greater focus in the leadership practices flowing and emerging within and across groups, it means turning attention back to shared leadership, group development, group interactions, and team learning (for example, see Decuyper, Dochy, & Van den Bosshe, 2010). Focusing on group settings is not restricted to those groups structured according to division of labor and responsibility; alliances associated with friendship and social movements also exist in groups that are not restricted to organization structure. This makes any study of practices labeled as leadership complex, but not unattainable. Some of the groundwork for studying practices has been laid in ELMA (e.g., Gronn, Spillane, Kemmis, Wilkinson et al.) and leadership studies (e.g., Raelin, Crevani).

### **Making Connections with Other Post-Heroic Variants**

The nomenclature “distributed leadership” is commonplace across ELMA, but not across the leadership field. Sometimes there may be a reticence in ELMA to go outside of its field regarding leadership, however this places ELMA at risk from field knowledge group think, and the same literature within ELMA being referenced again and again. It is important ELMA maintains a guardianship watch over the educational aspect of educational leadership, management, and administration, and be more connected to leadership knowledge development streams beyond education. Some of these streams are:

- Leadership-as-practice (discussed earlier)
- Process ontology (discussed earlier, see also Wood & Dibben, 2015)
- Shared leadership (as discussed earlier, see Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021)
- Collective leadership (see Fairhurst, Jackson, Foldy, & Ospina, 2020)
- Emergent leadership (see Alvehus, 2019)
- Indigenous leadership worldviews aligned to post-heroic leadership (see Spiller, Maunganui Wolgramm, Henry, & Pouwhare, 2020)

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### **Conclusions and Reflections**

Variegated perspectives will remain with future knowledge development concerning distributed leadership. An understanding of distributed leadership can exist but only on the assumption that “understanding” is not singular, but plural and at times paradoxical. It then becomes the responsibility of any person or group who provide commentary and/or research regarding distributed leadership to make clear the location of their work (as some do) so the ELMA community see what makes distributed leadership a

variegated concept. Variegation is also expected because the leadership field is a contested space, as well as leadership being used (or captured) as a popular (and simplified) means to bring about change and address problems.

This chapter started with two questions regarding what leadership is, and depending what leadership is, how does the distributed aspect add meaning to leadership? It perhaps is all too straightforward to provide answers to “what is distributed leadership?”, such as “it is the distribution of leadership,” or “leadership is a distributed property of effective organizations,” or “distributed leadership is a preferred alternative to leader-centric models.” In a way these responses may all ring true to some degree, but the problem, and the reason why this chapter has been written in the way it has, is to say “hang on a minute, what do we actually mean by leadership?.” If we are not clear with an ontology that informs meaning, then what is actually being distributed? It may not be leadership after all.

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# Mindful Leadership: A Way of Being Under Construction

# 16

Caryn M. Wells

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## Abstract

Mindful leadership is a new build from a foundation of mindfulness, dating back 2,500 years. As such, this chapter provides a narrative of the building blocks that have been conceptualized by neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and scholars, and articulated, as research and empirical evidence to be transferred to a new home – that of mindful leadership. At the time of this writing, a single agreed-upon definition of mindful leadership does not exist, although depictions include the qualities, traits, and characteristics that mindful leaders employ. An unwritten, agreed upon element of what it means to be a mindful leader by the authors who conceptualize the same, described essential qualities of awareness, being fully present, and ultimately that mindfulness is a *way of being, not doing*. Perhaps the issues of *being*, instead of *doing*, seems contradictory to the way that people visualize leaders, who are often described by action verbs such as develop, plan, organize, or design. Mindful leaders influence others in the organization by how they listen, respond, avoid criticizing and judging, and offer compassion and empathy, characteristics and qualities that speak to the affective, humanistic, and altruistic side of leading. Mindful leadership invites a journey *inward* that may

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ultimately cultivate a sense of community or sangha. Mindful leaders slow down the busyness of the usual overwhelm and mind wandering by allowing stillness for reflection and growth. If this one chapter fulfills the intended hope and expectations, it will allow for a contemplative view of mindful leadership that invites others on the journey uniting the science with the art of mindfulness, while offering a read that integrates the theoretical and conceptual elements, with one that is experiential.

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**Keywords**

Mindfulness · Mindful leadership · Compassion · Way of being · Meditation

*Mindfulness helps leaders to stop and listen to hear, learn not to judge, learn patience, develop spaciousness around problems and issues, become truly aware of what is happening in the moment, accept what is happening instead of denying or avoiding it, develop compassionate understanding, generate self-compassion for their own shortcomings or missteps, and importantly learn to let go of things that are in the past or those that cannot be changed.* Wells (2016, p. 121)

**The Field of Memory**

Mindful leadership is a relatively new construct in the field of leadership; it is a derivative and extrapolation of mindfulness practice, which has its roots in Buddhist thought. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the once molecular scientist who is credited with articulating the vision of mindfulness practice in the Western world, and the one who developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), offered this explanation of the roots of mindfulness,

The systematic cultivation of mindfulness has been called the heart of Buddhist meditation. It has flourished over the past 2,500 years in both monastic and secular settings in many Asian countries. In recent years the practice of this kind of meditation has become widespread in the world. Although at this time mindful meditation is most commonly taught and practiced within the context of Buddhism, its essence is universal. (2009, p. 12).

Understanding what mindfulness is and is not is important in comprehending how it may serve leaders in an organization. Mindfulness practice is a form of meditation, where people focus on the present moment, noticing the breath as it enters and leaves the body, practicing watching the thoughts and emotions that enter and leave the body for the insights or questions they bring. Mindfulness is not about clearing the mind of all thoughts; it is about noticing what the mind is bringing for attention. As people practice mindfulness, they learn how incessant the mind is with a constant barrage of thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness teaches to watch for storylines of thoughts, and to simply bring the awareness back to the present moment. Mindfulness practice reinforces the importance of no criticism or judgment. Practitioners learn to rest with awareness of the present moment, allowing the stillness of that moment to be as constant as one's breath. Leaders are ones who are continually



evaluating and analyzing at work; mindfulness teaches the importance of sensing, noticing, feeling, and observing as new or different metrics. Mindfulness practice can also occur in walking, eating, body scans, sitting, or lying down.

Mindfulness is referenced in the context of psychological study, neurobiology, and psychotherapy and used in a variety of clinical settings. Although psychological or medical references to mindfulness are included in substantial publications and printed materials, mindful leadership takes a departure to the traits and states of mindfulness and transports them to describe what leadership qualities that may find a home in a workplace environment. The largest departure from the field of leadership is to depict mindful leaders as being fully present, listening, showing compassion, and descriptions of what is generally referred to as the soft skills of leadership, or what Goleman (2013) refers to as, “the hard case for soft skills” (p. 235). Goleman elucidates qualities such as listening, showing empathy, where relationship strengths such as influence and persuasion, team, and collaboration matter (p. 235). He further summarized by discussing the emotional aperture where leaders read the emotional climate of a group, impossible to do without being fully present and aware (p. 239).

Mindfulness, with its adherence to present moment awareness, fosters a variety of examples that relate to qualities or characteristics that may serve leaders. Siegel and Germer (2012) related that mindfulness assists people in stepping out of the thoughts that are automatic as people wrestle with resisting what is, in helping to learn to be with discomfort, in nonreactivity as an automatic response, in gaining insight, in watching what might be the mind’s continual defenses, in learning how the mind causes its own suffering, its ability to embrace and give space to opposites that the mind creates about the self, and in developing compassion for self and others (pp. 30–33).

### **The Field of Presence**

The definitions that exist for mindful leadership reference the qualities and characteristics of a leader who is fully present and listening with empathy to build a culture of engagement and commitment. As such, the descriptions of mindful leadership practices are built on a foundation of the qualities and characteristics of mindfulness practice that Kabat-Zinn (2018) defined as his operational definition of mindfulness, “. . . the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (p. xxxiv). Because mindfulness has been positively linked with work engagement and job performance, negatively correlated with mindfulness and turnover intention (Dane & Brummel, 2013), and was correlated with better functioning within the workplace (Glomb et al., 2011), the attention to the leader’s role in influencing these conditions has been a natural and compelling path in its conception and construction.

Additionally, medical benefits, research outlining cases of stress, burnout, job turnovers, attrition rates, anxiety, depression, or other emotional issues that can derail business workers or leaders, have impacted the development of mindfulness practices being considered or utilized in the workplace. Mindfulness practice assists in furthering the expressed understanding of what it means to be employed in a variety of industries, where complexity and change are constants. Kabat-Zinn wrote



(2009), “The stress in our lives is now so great and so insidious that more and more people are making the deliberate decision to understand it better and bring it under personal control” (p. 2). Mindfulness assists in personal control to cope with and learn to process the stress of daily life, including personal and workplace stress.

Another strong rationale to include mindfulness in the affective construction of workplace is fostered by the strength of empirical and scientific research attesting to the efficacy of mindfulness in helping people deal with chronic pain, depression, and anxiety (Baer, 2003). Mindfulness practice has been shown to benefit both psychologically and physiologically (Hyland et al., 2015). Leaders respond to the stressors of the workplace, and they bring their personal stress with them to it as well; their leadership influences the people and practices of the workplace with actions including their *way of being*.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Mindful leadership has had its foundation of construction in several fields, still providing research and empirical evidence about its effectiveness. For example, Brown and Ryan (2003) presented a theoretical and empirical review of the role of mindfulness in psychological well-being, demonstrating that “dispositional and state mindfulness predict self-regulated behavior and positive emotional states” (p. 822), qualities that are important to leaders.

Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007) explained the conceptual alignment, with other concepts, and included traits of attention and awareness that are important to leadership,

The concept of mindfulness is most firmly rooted in Buddhist psychology, but it shares conceptual kinship with ideas advanced by a variety of philosophical and psychological traditions, including ancient Greek philosophy; phenomenology, existentialism, and naturalism in later Western European thought; and transcendentalism and humanism in America. That this mode of being has been commonly described suggests its centrality to the human experience, and indeed, mindfulness is rooted in the fundamental activities of consciousness: attention and awareness. (p. 212)

The interest in mindfulness and the importance of what it means to being intentional about present-moment awareness continues to grow exponentially (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Major corporations, the US army, hospitals, and schools have programs for training in mindfulness (Gelles, 2015; Jha et al., 2015; Tan, 2012).

The disciplines listed above have provided layer after layer of the construction of mindful leadership, building upon each brick and mortar of publication, study, original thought, and the integration of thought, leading back centuries. It is the integration of the disparate fields that has opened a window for its application to the human experience in an offering that may benefit both the individual and the organization, hence, the mindful leader and subsequent mindful leadership.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Fields of knowledge are subject to evolving visions as people and circumstances change the landscape. As such, the study of mindfulness practice in the Western

world has included various peer-reviewed publications that align mindful leadership with the ancient practice of meditation. The rupture of contemplative thought for viewing leadership is one that is discontinuous with prevalent leadership roles that place a heavy emphasis on *doing* as opposed to a way of *being*, and on management or technical priorities as opposed to those that are inclusive of affective, humanistic leading. The language of leading as a *way of being* is not a passive term; the language is actually a powerful example of another way of interacting. The adoption of mindful leadership is disruptive in the sense of content and process. Instead of the use of the conjunction “*but*,” it is the use of the word “*and*” that illustrates a view of *how* the leadership is conceptualized. An example is *leading and listening*, or *leading and also hearing*. The word “*and*” offers a powerful example of qualities of mindful leadership, joining two concepts that are not often paired together.

### Critical Assumptions

Mindful leadership is articulated differently by the various authors who have conceptualized its essence. The belief that mindfulness is part of mindful leadership is foundational, yet differentiated by its many qualities. Some definitions are more related to business, educational, or medical concepts, and others are more aligned with mindfulness practices. The critical assumptions of mindful leadership are therefore varied, without a common or centrally agreed upon single definition. Although increasing in its publications, the assumption that mindful leadership is universally accepted or understood is not true; conceptually, it remains under construction.

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## Introduction

This chapter is written to convey the conceptual and theoretical background of mindfulness, acknowledging that it is practiced experientially. Imagine reading about riding a bike, its history, bike construction, and perhaps the feel of riding, or a description of where riding takes place. As detailed as this might be, it still does not allow for the understanding of what it feels like to ride. The same is true with a description of contemplative practice of mindfulness. In choosing to offer an insight to this ancient practice, the following is offered as an invitation for a voluntary mindful moment:

*Let's take a few moments to settle in, and be fully present, letting go of outside or inside distractions, and just taking this time to make friends with quiet, resting in awareness of the present moment. Perhaps you could whisper to yourself, "Here, here" as acknowledgment that you are truly here in this moment. See if you can approach this practice with an open and curious mind, and see how that feels to you. As you notice your mind interrupting the quiet, just note what your mind is bringing to your attention, and return to present moment, all without judgment or criticism, perhaps watching your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Note the rhythm of your own breathing, breathing in and breathing out. Feel your feet on the ground and just be aware of being grounded to the earth. Sit in this awareness and be*

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*ready to return to your reading of the chapter, perhaps noting what you noticed, sensed, felt, or observed from taking this mindful pause.*

The intention of this chapter is to document the development of mindfulness practice with a focus on the dynamics that have led to the conceptualization of mindful leadership. It is further intended to be constructed in such a way as to engender a mindful approach to its narrative, hoping to embrace the concepts of a contemplative telling of the story behind its growth. To be fair to its meaning, it is important to not convey a strictly conceptual view of what is decidedly experiential in practice. Mindfulness practice has been articulated as a *way of being*. One metaphor, used to describe and articulate its essence, is to align the concepts with air.

Air is ubiquitous, and it surrounds people who might be unaware of its presence unless they are outside on a windy day, or they are having trouble with breathing. Leadership is like air in this sense; leadership is everywhere, in both formal and informal roles. People might witness leadership without thinking about it, until there is an aspect that either so moves or so troubles them that they begin to think about its impact on them personally, or the impact on the organization or work unit. It is when people are fully present with leadership that they begin to understand its impact. Consider for example that when adults are asked to describe examples of “good leadership” they have experienced; many will mention their parents as opposed to historical figures or others from their work environment. As people describe leadership in this capacity, they share the *way of being* that they witnessed from their own parents. The examples shared are not about a bottom line of organizational triumph, but instead, stories of the ways in which their parents exemplified quality leadership, what they stood for, believed in, and enacted through those values; hence, it was their way of being.

Because mindful leadership has a variety of explanations and definitions, and is often referenced by the qualities of leaders projecting a means of being “mindful” at work, it can also be understood by a visualization of construction. Mindful leadership has, as its foundation, the ancient practice of meditation. Consider the growth over time and the application to personal or organizational life; this growth engenders the building of many levels with new construction appearing as new visions emerge. In some iterations of construction, the building is radically different, and in others, it is an addition or wing. The construction of mindful leadership also exemplifies disparate views of the *what* and the *how* of leadership if it is to be considered mindful.

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## **The Origins of Mindful Leadership**

Descriptions of mindful leadership have increased since the first publication in 1989 when Ellen Langer wrote of the leadership of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia and military opposition to Kutuzov, in her book, *Mindfulness*. Langer described the chess

game of advancing during winter in Russia and Napoleon's ultimate withdrawal. Ellen portrayed the choices of Kutuzov in standing firm to this attack with an analysis and categorization of mindfulness. She offered,

In the character of Kutuzov we can find portrayed the key qualities of a mindful state of being: (1). Creation of new categories; (2). Openness to new information; and (3). Awareness of more than one perspective. (p. 62)

Langer distinguished the strategies employed by Napoleon as mindless and those of Kutuzov as mindful. Langer reviewed the qualities of being mindful with its benefits to the workplace. She articulated, "For employer and employee alike, mindfulness may increase flexibility, productivity, innovation, leadership ability, and productivity" (p. 133). While not using the term mindful leadership, Langer described examples from the business world where mindfulness allowed for transparency that was equated with a type of clarity in understanding and being aware.

Publications of mindfulness have increased exponentially (Brown & Ryan, 2003) with peer-reviewed papers about mindful leadership surfacing in 2009. In articulating mindful leadership, various authors have chosen to describe the traits of the leaders seen as being more mindful than others. Some authors have focused on the stress as antecedents for mindfulness while others reported on the barrage of constant connectivity and media to interrupt productivity and the capacity to perform the tasks at hand in the workplace. Mindfulness articles span several distinctive categories of psychology, medicine, neurobiology, and business-related fields. Being more mindful, than not, generally refers to being fully present and aware; both are attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice as described by Kabat-Zinn (2009). Other reviewers have described the organizations as being more mindful than mindless or operating by default. To that end, mindful leadership is like the air; it is everywhere, and although aspects of it may be invisible, it is ultimately experienced by everybody, whether in subtle or dramatic ways.

## Mindful Leadership in Business

Boyatzis and McKee (2005) described the importance of resonating and renewing to build after the numerous challenges and sacrifices that leaders face, and instead offering mindfulness, hope, and compassion as foundational to that renewal. While they do not use the term *mindful leader*, they aligned the practice of mindfulness to that of leadership, as in their suggestions of being awake, aware, and attentive at work (p. 116). Boyatzis and McKee viewed mindfulness as a practice to help with the shutting down or defensiveness that is often present in a leader's role. They shared, "Being open to learning, especially learning from failures, takes courage. And living mindfully requires resilience" (p. 117).

Boyatzis and McKee depicted mindfulness as a means of knowing what is happening and being able to respond to it, directly in opposition of leaders who

either close out or shut down what is happening. Finally, they suggested finding time to reflect, and find mental space for the issues that arise, all supported by mindfulness.

Carroll (2007) revealed a definition of mindfulness that was designed to inspire leaders to bring out the best that they had to offer while doing the same for those they were leading. In this sense, he outlined ten principles that he specified as part of what he deemed, “leading from the inside out” (p. 17). He continued, “Mindful leadership teaches that this instinct to inspire the best in others is completely natural- utterly human- and is at the very heart of being a leader” (p. 18). In addition to explaining the *what* of leadership, Carroll moved to describing the *how*,

Typically when we think of leading, we think of guiding and instructing others, pointing the way, setting direction. And surely, these activities are what leaders do. Yet, for the mindful leader, leading from the inside out requires a primary act- a fundamental human gesture that must take place first and foremost, before any leader can guide or direct or point the way. According to the tradition of the mindful leader, a leader must first open- step beyond the boundaries of what is familiar and routine and directly touch the very people and environment he or she intends to inspire. Leading requires that we first open to the world around us. (pp. 19–20)

Carroll advocated for practicing mindfulness, to be at peace with stillness, and allow for insights. His understanding of the stress of leaders can be found in his advice, “Treat adverse circumstances as your teacher” (p. 209). Finally, he explained the differences in traditional and mindful leadership, “In the tradition of the mindful leader, rather than leading with will, power, and ambition, we lead and inspire one another with openness, intelligence, and vulnerability” (p. 52).

Sethi (2009) articulated the real challenge of moving qualities of meditation to the office and actual world experiences. As such, he advocated for the integration of mindfulness practices for the teaching of leadership. His view is based on a decade of teaching leadership in the corporate world with his assessment that senior executives do not have the answers to the complexities they are witnessing, which are often seen or understood at the middle and lower levels. Sethi viewed mindfulness-based leadership as a solution because of its tendency to open up minds for new information. He offered that mindfulness “is a whole new way of leading, working, and living, and it requires us all to unlearn old ways” (p. 11). Sethi described focus, awareness, and living in the moment, as the three mindfulness qualities that are aligned with mindful leadership.

Gonzalez (2012) described the prevalence of stress and 24/7 connectivity as reasons to pursue the study of mindfulness; its reported health benefits provided another layer of support for the practice of mindfulness. Gonzalez related three areas that are improved with meditation: concentration and achieving focus, clarity in noticing what is arising, and equanimity in accepting what is happening without overreacting.

Marturano (2014) shared, “A mindful leader embodies leadership presence by cultivating focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion in the service of others” (p. 11). Focus was about being fully present as opposed to being distracted; clarity is about

being able to see both the events around oneself and those that are internal to self with more accuracy; creativity allows the brain to slow down so that better ideas may emerge; and compassion is about recognizing suffering with the decision to want to do something about it (pp. 35–40). Marturano defined a mindful leader by traits, “non-judgmental, open-minded, open-hearted, self-aware, patient, humble, trusting, collaborative, and compassionate” (p. 176).

Vich (2015) articulated the core variables of mindful leadership, offering the differences among it and other leadership models, suggesting the challenges of the emergence of mindful leadership theory. As such, he referenced the stress inherent in organizations and concepts such as awareness, being mindful as opposed to mindless, and the coping mechanisms of mindfulness practice. Vich discussed the many challenges of contemporary organizations, including the preponderance of mind wandering, mindlessness, overall stress, and the impact on resilience. He offered guidance in this explanation,

Mindful leadership, which can be explained as a mutual relationship between the leaders and followers influenced by the leader’s mindfulness seems to be a possible next step of mindfulness research on the workplace. First of all, the researchers should examine variables which have been already examined on an individual level, particularly job satisfaction, job engagement, burnout and turnover intentions. Secondly researchers need to take into account clear differentiation from other already existing leadership approaches. (p. 42)

Ehrlich (2017) traced the result of technology where leaders may be working harder while paying less attention. For example, he related that Microsoft managers were interrupted an average of 10–30 times per hour, with considerable time to be able to return to the work that was interrupted. He listed the numerous examples of organizations teaching their employees mindfulness to assist in being mindful at work. He quoted Fortune 500 companies that are conducting mindfulness research and documenting the following: (1) focus, decision-making, memory, creativity, and learning; (2) communication, collaboration, and productivity; (3) emotional intelligence, well-being, and internal and client relationships; (4) job satisfaction and engagement; and (5) reduced stress, absenteeism, and turnover (p. 234). His conceptualization of mindful leadership is that it helps with inspiring, connecting, and being present. Ehrlich offered a view of mindful leaders as appearing to have more hope, resiliency, and optimism, with their employees demonstrating higher job satisfaction and job performance, higher engagement, and well-being (p. 240).

Lesser (2019) shared the seven practices of a mindful leader that colleagues at Google, where he was coaching engineers on leadership and team building, were working on. The seven practices included,

**Investigate:** *Love the work-* acknowledge and cultivate inspiration; *Do the work-* a regular meditation and mindfulness practice; *Don’t be an expert-* Step into wonder and vulnerability; *Connect to your pain-* pain comes with being human.

**Connect:** *Connect to the pain of others-* Embody a connection to all humanity; *Depend on others-* Let go of a false sense of independence.

**Integrate:** *Keep making it simpler-* Let go of a scarcity mindset. (pp. 25–26)

## Mindful Leadership: Library Science

Beverage et al. (2014) offered a conception of mindful leadership as it related to the librarianship by stating,

Mindful leadership is the connection between the brain and leadership and focuses on being in the moment and paying attention. Studying the act of paying attention and focus as a neuroscientific phenomenon bridges emerging knowledge about human intelligence, and is a framework that supports leadership that is mindful (i.e., thoughtful and attentive of the nature and nurture of intelligence in influencing others toward achievement of goals). (p. 23–24)

Beverage et al. described the numerous challenges evident to the field of librarians with regard to digital and electronic resources, and their recommendations as to how a library leader may include mindfulness at work, including qualities such as practicing and reflecting, cultivating awareness, listening, and keeping the mission and vision alive for staff (p. 30).

## Mindful Leadership: Medicine

Rishel (2015) reviewed the importance of resilience and mindful leadership in oncology nursing. She advocated for the training of mindfulness practices, “If oncology nurses at all organizational levels are to be authentic leaders in their practice, they must be offered skills that will help them to achieve this goal” (p. 199). She further called upon oncology nurses to be leaders for the patients and families they serve, as she explained,

Developing mindfulness will enable oncology nurses to be fully present with patients and families, more aware of themselves and their impact on others, and increasingly sensitive to the reactions of patients, families, and colleagues in stressful situations. Mindful oncology nurse leaders will be more effective in motivating patients, families, and others to achieve shared goals. (p. 199)

Levey and Levey (2019) conceptualized mindful leadership for its ability to offer organizational and personal resilience in a world that is often described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). They asked a compelling question about the inception of mindfulness in organizations,

Could it be that the global surge of interest in mindfulness and resiliency reflects a wise and evolutionary impulse perfectly adapted and responsive to meeting the challenges and realizing the opportunities of the VUCA world in which we live and serve as dedicated health caring providers and practitioners? (p. 739)

Levey and Levey offered a conception of the uncertainties that a VUCA world presents and the responses that leaders did not feel capable to lead these efforts (p. 742). Hence, leading businesses with usual business norms are correlated with how “distressed, exhausted frustrated, overwhelmed, vulnerable, unhappy, and

unsustainable their default life-work styles are” (p. 742). Levey and Levey further articulated the example from the United Kingdom in which mindful leadership, resilience, and life balance were promoted. Named simply as *Here*, this example of a mindful approach changed the ways that physicians and healthcare providers presented as a *way of being* with their patients, resulting in changes in the way that practitioners cared for themselves and others (p. 744).

Horton and Epstein (2020), physicians themselves, described the role of mindfulness in attending to the challenges that physicians face, offering views of how mindfulness can increase the well-being of patients. They wrote about the complexities of the medical organization, one that they described as being “rooted in system dysfunction” in a chapter named *Mindful Leadership* (p. 51). Consider this description of the duality of benefits that mindfulness provides,

Mindfulness is a practice and a habit, a higher-order emotional and cognitive skill, deceptive in its apparent simplicity. It is also an antidote to organizational cultures that encourage harsh self-appraisal, quick and efficient cognitive closure, and a learning structure that exposes us to constant, reflexive judgment. Mindfulness embodies qualities valued by the most visionary and effective leaders- attentiveness, focus, and curiosity in the face of difficult circumstances; seeing problems in new ways; and being present and available. (p. 52).

Horton and Epstein called for nonjudgment, moment-to-moment awareness, and open listening with an intention to listen instead of responding and offered a full explanation,

Leading mindfully asks us to be aware of the difference between really listening and just going through the motions, momentarily putting our own agendas aside and directing our attention towards being present, without anticipating or exerting influence on the direction of the conversation. (p. 54)

Horton and Epstein called upon physicians and healthcare executives to develop a habit of mindfulness practice, develop the skills of listening with tolerance, even when they do not know what to say, cultivate emotional self-awareness to better manage words and actions, truly feel and recognize one’s own pain for growth and insight, and witness the suffering of others as a marker of the shared human experience (p. 57).

## **Mindful Leadership: Education**

Brown and Olson (2015) wrote a book for educational leaders in which they outlined qualities and characteristics of mindful leaders; their impetus is rooted in the continual urgency and stress of the school leaders and the benefits and alignment of mindfulness to address the same. Their advocacy for mindfulness centers on its myriad health benefits and the relationship of mindfulness traits to effective school leadership. While they do not use the term mindful leadership, per se, these authors related the traits of a mindful school leader. Brown and Olson related traits of being



well focused, with mindful listening, speaking from the heart, and being fully present. They summarized, “Finally, and perhaps most critical in terms of our views of leadership, we believe employing mindfulness practices helps educational leaders develop the most important attribute of all: the capacity to connect with themselves and others” (pp. 31–32).

Wells (2016) defined a mindful leader by traits and qualities that they demonstrate, offering that mindful leaders are engaged and interested in the people of the organization, with a high degree of attention and empathy (p. 8). She represented how mindfulness could address both the personal and professional lives of educational leaders, addressing the stress levels while also serving to increase the effectiveness of leadership skills. She further outlined the qualities of attention as being: caring, concern for, acceptance, and without judgment or criticism. Her outline of attention included noticing, listening, being with, observing, and mindful awareness (p. 9). She summarized the nuances of her definition,

Mindful leadership, as defined in this book, is the integration of constructs of mindfulness practice, with emotional, social, and resonant leadership, informed by the research from neuroscience. Mindful leadership embraces the interconnectedness and interdependence of mindful practice. Thus, the *practice* of mindful practice benefits the person in the moment, and it has as impact that is possible in the practice of leadership. With practice, the cultivation of the qualities inherent in the constructs such as acceptance, awareness and being fully present; listening, trust, patience, nonreactivity, non-judgment, compassion and self-compassion can be developed. It is a cycle of growth, all possible from being in the moment on purpose, practicing awareness and attention without judgment or criticism. (p. 118)

Wells developed this definition by referencing Kabat-Zinn (2009) for providing the anchors of attitudinal foundation of mindfulness that included nonjudging, patience, trust, and acceptance. She further defined mindful leaders by the traits they exhibit; descriptors are listed below in bold print, with the continuum of opposites of that quality,

**Acceptance**, instead of being unaware or seeing the reality of the situation, or blaming others. **Awareness**, instead of being preoccupied or distracted, or refusing to accept reality. **Being fully present**, instead of regretting the past, or worrying about tomorrow. **Compassion**, instead of not caring or listening to someone in need, or judging or criticizing. **Letting Go**, instead of not caring enough to be interested, or holding on. **Listening**, instead of disregarding, or interrupting to tell your story. **Patience**, instead of not observing or being aware of a situation, or reacting with an angry outburst. **Trust**, instead of having a disbelief of disregard, or acting with duplicity. (p. 129)

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The options for increasing mindful leadership are everywhere, like the air that is not seen, but always present. Some of the options represent a world of overwork and overwhelm. Consider, for example, the challenges of constant or permanent

connectivity with the Internet. People's work lives are a major source of stress where the workday hours are blurred, interrupted by the sound of new text messages arriving. As mentioned in this writing, VUCA, or volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, in this world impacts major organizations, and personal lives, all in flux for change.

Mindful leadership depends on what is referred to as soft skills, areas such as self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and self-management and regulation, qualities that are continuing to rise in literature about effective leadership (Marques, 2013). Goleman (2013) related the hard case for soft skills in which he cited the importance of empathy, self-awareness, listening, and resilience (pp. 235–236).

Mindfulness is equated with numerous health benefits. Goleman and Davidson (2017) reported the “emergence of neuroscience's evidence that our experiences shape our brains, a platform suggesting our theory that as meditation trains the mind, it reshapes the brain” (p. 17). They further added,

Many reports boil down to the ways a short daily dose of meditation alters our biology and emotional life for the better. This news, gone viral, has drawn millions worldwide to find a slot in their daily routine for meditation. (p. 17)

Consider the eloquence of a view of a more esthetic perspective of leadership as articulated by English and Ehrich (2020) in which they revealed,

It is argued, here, that the identity of a leader is best understood as an aesthetic construct, something which is characteristic of many aesthetic words such as beauty or even the word art itself. Moreover, as with many aesthetic words, leadership remains elusive to precise translation. It is not so much described, but felt. (p. 2).

English and Ehrich provided numerous examples of this esthetic view of leadership that correlate with that of a mindful leader, while not using the words *mindfully* or *mindful leader*. These authors referenced the issue and importance of identity, “. . . identity is always dynamic, fluid, emotional and rooted in exchange. Leadership and identity have yet to be deciphered from empirical, scientific studies” (English & Ehrich, p. 3).

English and Ehrich provided a conception of the esthetics and the arts as it relates to the preparation of school leaders,

The dominant approach to formal school leadership preparation in many universities tends to be narrow and based primarily on technical skill development. The language of business and management is pervasive in such training and thus limited. Over the last ten years or more there has been a growing recognition of the place of the arts in leadership and management development. (pp. 17–18)

While these authors have not advocated for mindfulness, per se the alignment of conceptions of understanding the reality of the work of the educational leaders, their lives at work, provide for an intersection of mindful leadership with this art form of leadership. It is the use of this art form that translates beautifully as a way of being to create a presence

that is dynamic, fluid, and responsive to what is often referred to as the “slings and arrows of life” that are present in the day-to-day operations of an educational leader.

What are the next additions to the construction of mindful leadership? Vich (2015) offered a possibility, “Mindful leadership, which can be explained as a mutual relationship between the leader and follower influenced by leader’s mindfulness, seems to be a possible next step of mindfulness research on the workplace” (p. 42).

Is it possible the mindful leadership can help with the constant state of preoccupation and distraction that people feel, the sense of overwhelm, busyness, inability to even hear what is being said in the present moment, the anxiety, and over-involvement that pervades the workplace as well as personal lives? The research on the workplace points to some interesting examples of its potential. The narrative from Good et al. (2016) provided some roadmaps for continuing this journey of discovery as they described their framework,

The framework identifies how mindfulness influences attention, with downstream effects on functional domains of cognition, behavior, and physiology. Ultimately these domains impact key workplace outcomes, including performance, relationships, and well-being. Considerations of the evidence on mindfulness at work stimulates important questions and challenges key assumptions within management science, generating an agenda for future research. (p. 115)

Perhaps, mindful leadership and mindful leaders will play a major role in this construction of a new vision of leading, one that is about growth through practice by listening to the whispers of quiet, stillness, and reflection. Wells (2016) provided a description of mindful leadership where leaders would emphasize “listening instead of talking, being instead of doing, hearing instead of telling, being in the moment instead of distracted thinking, stillness instead of busyness, and compassionate understanding instead of judging” (p. 119). In this description, the art of mindful leadership would include being fully present, empathic, and resilient, qualities that serve the leader and the people in the organization.

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# Leader Centric Versus Leader Relational

# 17

## Negotiating the Divide

Fenwick W. English

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### Abstract

This chapter explores the presence of two distinctive sociological perspectives regarding educational leadership which are often portrayed as a binary or a dualism. On one side is the historical and dominant view known as “leader centric.” The other side has been called “leader relational” or constructivist (Eacott S, Evers CW, *New directions in educational leadership theory*. Routledge, New York, 2016; Offermann LR, *Relational leadership: creating effective leadership with diverse staff*. In: Uhl-Bien M, Ospina SM (eds) *Advancing relational leadership research: a dialogue among perspectives*. Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, pp 361–380, 2012). Intellectual practitioners and some academic leaders sometimes speak of these differences as sharply at odds with one another, even intractable.

For example, Emirbayer (1997) saw the intellectual divide as

rational-actor and norm-based models, diverse holisms and structuralisms, and statistical ‘variable’ analyses—all of them beholden to the idea that it is entities that come first and

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relations among them only subsequently—hold sway throughout much of the discipline. But increasingly, researchers are searching for viable analytic alternatives, approaches that reverse these basic assumptions and depict social reality instead in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms. (p. 281)

Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012) observed that “learning and sharing across perspectives is still rare in the leadership field as a whole” (p. 8). This chapter highlights the conceptual and ontological differences in the traditional mainstream views and theories in leadership compared to what is called *critical leadership studies (CLS)* and it also acknowledges that “premature paradigmatic closure in the field has privileged the entity perspective as ‘the legitimate’ type of leadership scholarship” (Ospina SM, Uhl-Bien M, Introduction – mapping the terrain: convergence and divergence around relational leadership. In: Uhl-Bien M, Ospina SM (eds) *Advancing relational leadership research: a dialogue among perspectives*. Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, pp xix–xivii, 2012, p. 9).

Finally, the research of Michael Mann (2003) and his sociological work on social power within the critical leadership studies field is advanced as a theoretical bridge which connects the two rival perspectives and argues that they occupy a common ontology and two points on a single continuum instead of being considered as incommensurate theories.

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### Keywords

Leader centric · Leader relational · The unschooled mind · Myth of individual achievement · Entitism · Theory movement · Myth of individual achievement · Critical leadership studies · Theory of social power · Rank societies · Social stratification · Civilization · The social cage · Coercive power

### The Field of Memory

The leadership field has historically been anchored in the centrism of a focus on the singular individual leader. When looking at a military campaign, a political conflict, a labor dispute, or a religious movement, it is the leader or leaders who stand out. These are the people that other people follow. It has been quite natural then for observers, biographers, journalists, researchers, and scholars to attribute success or failure to the habits, traits, beliefs, behaviors, attributes or intelligence, physical strength, personal character, and charisma of a single person, *the leader* to explain events and history.

Portraits of leaders from the arts and humanities, which for centuries had nourished the imaginations and aspirations of future leaders in many fields, eventually gave way to the more mundane tasks involved in running the schools. One of the earliest academic leaders to spell out the actual work tasks of *administration* was Elwood P. Cubberley who first wrote *Public School Administration* in 1916 with revisions in 1922 and 1929.

Cubberley (1929) indicated that there were four essential areas of concentration which comprised the nature of the school superintendent’s work. They were: (1) *the superintendent as an organizer*; (2) *the superintendent as an administrator*; (3) *the*

*superintendent as supervisor*; and (4) *the superintendent as a community leader*. From each of these came specific tasks such as:

- To exercise general control over school organization
- The school plant
- Courses of study
- Classification of students, textbooks, and supplies
- Curriculum reorganization
- Defining the work of teachers and principals
- Selection and pay of staff

The main task of administration, according to Cubberley (1929), was “in some way, reach down through all the complicated machinery of school organization and administration and vitalize the work of teachers. His (sic) larger grasp of the problems should in some way find expression in the daily work of teachers and pupils if his highest mission as a superintendent is to be fulfilled” (p. 219).

As far as the individual was concerned, Cubberley (1929) gave this advice which one would not find in any textbook in leadership preparation in contemporary times.

The man (sic) who would be a superintendent of schools—the educational leader of a city—must be clean, both in person and mind; he must be temperate, both in speech and act; he must be honest and square, and able to look men straight in the eye; and he must be possessed of a high sense of personal honor. He needs a good time-sense to enable him to save time and to transact business with dispatch, and a good sense of proportion to enable him to see things in their proper place and relationship. He must have the manners and courtesy of a gentleman, without being flabby or weak. He must not be affected by a desire to stand in the community limelight, or to talk unnecessarily about his own accomplishments. He must avoid oracularism [acting like an oracle], the solemnity and dignity of an owl, and the not uncommon tendency to lay down the law. A good sense of humor will be found a means of saving grace here, and will many times keep him from taking himself too serious. (p. 228)

Cubberley (1929) also spoke to the qualities of leadership required of the superintendent when he warned, “He (sic) must learn to lead by reason of his larger knowledge and his contagious enthusiasm, rather than to drive by reason of his superior power” (p. 228).

This type of early textbook for school leaders is still around in modern form. It is not based on any theoretical model or even systematic research. There are still a few contemporary examples in education as for example Russ Thompson’s (2016) *Fall Down, Stand Up* based on his 14 years as a high school principal in Los Angeles. Former military leaders also provide practice-based experience as wisdom with L. David MarQuet’s, a former attack submarine captain (2012) *Turn the Ship Around* whose subtitle is “A true story of turning followers into leaders” (book cover quote). The reader is promised “The payoff: a workplace where everyone is around you is taking responsibility for their actions, where people are healthier and happier, where everyone is a leader” (inside cover).



The business field is replete with these examples of advice without the benefit of research, theory, or objective peer review. John Wareham (1991) wrote *The Anatomy of a Great Executive* based on his years as a consultant. His book promises to explain “The seven fallacies that account for 80 percent of misjudgments about people,” as well as “The four crucial blind spots that lead to ruinous mishires and mis-promotions” (book cover) among other things.

Another example from the business world is Alex Malley’s (2015) *The Naked CEO* which promises the reader “. . .the power to shape your future. With the intriguing stories and outstanding advice, this book puts the knowledge and insights of a successful CEO right in your pocket” (book cover). Finally, there is Brene Brown’s (2018) *Dare to Lead*, a popular *New York Times* best seller. Brown is billed as a research professor but there is precious little research cited in her book. It is filled with catchy-phrases such as “the rumble tool: the square squad” (p. 22) and “You can’t get to courage without rumbling with vulnerability. Embrace the suck” (p. 10).

Finally, there are books of factoids about leaders. One recent one is Charles Phillips (2015) *50 Leaders Who Changed History*. This book identifies a formulaic key to each person such as Simon Bolivar, Eva Peron, Mother Teresa, Fidel Castro, and Steve Jobs called “Leadership Analysis” presented in a color-coded call box. In each box are short descriptors for *Leader Type, Key Qualities, Likeminded Leaders, and Fact*. There are 16 types of leaders including such descriptors as revolutionary, paternalistic, reformer, innovator, unifier, talent-promoter, and those (p. 9) which are sorted by whether or not they were included in *arts and culture; military; politics and society; or religion*.

The line between *the field of memory* and *the field of presence* becomes a bit blurry at times. In the popular mind, what Gardner (1995) called “the unschooled mind,” a person who has the sophistication in worldly affairs and complex relationships of the mind of a 5-year-old child, needs simple and straightforward explanations. The “unschooled mind” is not a less intelligent mind, only one lacking in understanding that would normally occur with increased formal schooling. The enduring popularity of *Bible stories* and *fairy tales* is due to their simplicity and lack of subtlety. The mass appeal of comic book heroes and heroines in films testify to their robustness and continuation in adult life.

There probably will not come a time when simple stories about leaders and their accomplishments will cease to fascinate humans. In this sense, leadership stories are transcendent and they serve to reinforce virtues and values humans need to survive and prosper. What has occurred, however, is that in scholarly circles, such simplified visions have often revealed an inability to provide deeper meanings and more sophisticated understandings of leaders and leadership. They are sometimes referred to as “management light” or “kitsch” (Samier, 2005.)

### **The Field of Presence**

Wilkinson and Kemmis (2016) summarize the dominant mindset regarding leadership studies today when they remarked, “. . .in current Anglophone nations, leadership practice (and the scholarship which underpins it) is dominated by managerialist

notions of leading as a technicist activity whose primary imperative is to render educational sites and the systems which support them, more efficient and accountable” (p. 37).

The *field of presence* remains dominated by “leader centric” versions, because “. . . premature paradigmatic closure in the field has privileged the entity perspective as ‘the legitimate type of leadership scholarship’” (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 9). In this approach, individual leaders are cut and diced by the methods used to analyze them. There are portraits of leaders framed in various lenses of empiricism in largely behavioral models, which tend to be quantitative in nature.

Even when research investigates leader beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and their choices or preferences, quantitative and qualitative renderings remain leader centric. This same trend continues even when the whole human being as leader is revealed in some depth as in such exemplary ethnographies such as Wolcott’s (1973) *The Man in the Principal’s Office*, Larry Cuban’s (1976) or Sara Lawrence Lightfoot’s (1983) *The Good High School*.

With the theoretical break brought by educational administration’s dissident professors in the mid-twentieth century who started what later became known as “the theory movement” based on an ideology of science expounded by the Vienna Circle (see Griffiths, 1959; Halpin, 1966), the field’s intellectual leaders worked hard to reframe not only the knowledge base and more robust (qua quantitative) research, but the way one imagined educational administration/leadership should be conceptualized. No longer were former practitioners regaling students with their “war stories” adequate. The dissidents wanted nothing less than to reimagine and remake educational administration into a respectable social science with all of the trappings of such a science (Culbertson, 1988, 1995; Hills, 1968). Remnants of the theory movement still remain firmly in the mainstream, but the idea of the discipline becoming a science has been labeled by some as the futile search for the Holy Grail. Despite the disappointments for the creation of an educational management science, Lakomski and Evers (2017) have refounded such a belief by insisting that the area of cognitive neuroscience has the potential to enable the field to establish a true scientific footing (Evers & Lakomski, 2016).

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Educational administration/leadership has a long history of borrowing concepts, techniques, philosophical assumptions, as well as work routines from a broad array of related or even unrelated fields or areas of study. The field has long been infatuated with business or industrial management ideas, agendas, and outright fads (see Lee Iacocca, 2007, *Where Have all the Leaders Gone?*).

The major discipline which arguably has had the most profound intellectual influence on educational leadership/administration has been sociology. Eacott (2015) has provided some explanation for this phenomenon when he observed, “Disciplines with greater internal heterodoxy (e.g. sociology) are more open than those with stronger identity defining research traditions” (p. 142). He then went on to comment, “The desire to be scientific—in the traditional sense—and of value to practice is a limitation of educational administration” (p. 142).

Two sociological perspectives on leadership, *the leader centric* with its long and historical manifestations into portraits, poems, songs, and near universal cultural mythologies (Campbell, 2008), as well as biographies and other heroic testimonials, satisfy a yearning for human certitude against the unknown (nescience as framed by Thomas Carlyle, 1935) and the need for heroes as models to engage in political and cultural struggles of all sorts, juxtaposed against a sociology of networks instead of individuals as *leader relationally* are often presented as a binary choice (see Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). The heroic and singular leader holds a formidable presence in the popular mind and retains a dominant trope in academic textbooks in educational leadership with such titles as Theoharis and Brooks (2012) *What Every Principal Needs to Know To Create Equitable and Excellent Schools*; Glasman and Glasman's (2007) *The Expert School Leader: Accelerating Accountability*; Sergiovanni and Green's (2015) *The Principalship: A Reflective Practice Perspective*; Ubben, Hughes, and Norris' (2001) *The Principal: Creative Leadership for Effective Schools* among many others.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The leader relational view represents a rupture in how leadership is defined and enacted. It shifts authority away from a static leader-follower relationship to a much more fluid and ill-defined one when leaders and followers exchange roles, though this possibility is diminished in bureaucratic organizations with rigidly defined hierarchical roles enforced with an authoritative and often legally restricted chain of command.

Joyce Fletcher (2012) summarizes the impact of gender on implementing a model of relational leadership to the different cultural socializing practices for men and women that are ruptured in moving away from leader-centric models to relational ones. Men are socialized to deny certain relational skills because they may be perceived as weak or emotionally needy. Women, on the other hand, are rewarded for using them. They employ them “naturally” and often without attribution or recognition. One result is that the total social structure honors an achievement ethic that appears to be based on independence and self-reliance, when the collaborative glue that is necessary to attain such achievements goes unnoticed and devalued. Fletcher (2012) then comments that the “myth of individual achievement” floats on the unrecognized interdependence of everyone.

The basic rupture within leadership studies occurs along the fault lines of what has been called *CLS* or critical leadership studies. Collinson (2012) indicates that the term *critical leadership studies* “comprises a variety of approaches informed by an eclectic set of premises, frameworks and ideas. . . critical studies do not constitute a unified set of ideas, perspectives or a single community of practice” (p. 181). Collinson (2012) opines the plurality of newer theories may be drawn from such perspectives as “structuralism, labor process theory and critical realism, to feminism, post-structural, deconstructionism, literary criticism, postcolonial theory, cultural studies, environmentalism, and psychoanalysis” (p. 181).

### Critical Assumptions

Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012) observe that “Entity (leader centric) and constructivist perspectives on leadership are separated by a profound divide in philosophical understanding—in the deep meanings—regarding what constitutes the nature of leadership and the research enterprise around it” (p. 1). These two perspectives rest on different assumptions. The ontology of leader centrism is that it is *discovered* because an “emphasis on leaders as sovereign individuals trains the lens on personal attributes and agency, while silencing or marginalizing the critical role that varying contextual conditions (local, national and international) play in change and change processes” (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2016, p. 37).

The traditional leader-centric binary rests on the historic and long-standing “leader-follower” dyad that privileges the leader with some kind of “presence” that followers lack. The disparity is built into the binary with the result of the perpetuation of those “heroic approaches to leadership that are not only unrealistic but also damaging to those such as school principals who are grappling with checklists and performative standards of practice based on those models as the essence of their day-to-day work” (Niesche, 2014, p. 85). At this moment in time, there are mostly theoretical texts that deal with the *leader relational* view in ways which would match in volume or clarity the leader-centric mental monolithic that remains dominate in the field. Niesche (2014) also makes a persuasive case that the concepts such as distributed leadership, democratic leadership, collaborative, dispersed, parallel, situational, or shared models, or even transformational leadership do not shed the foundational leader/follower binary.

The assumptions undergirding the *leader relational* view are that leadership is a social construct which emanates from a relational process in which clear boundaries between leaders and followers do not exist. Rather, they are fluid and contextually defined because individuals and collectives are mutually embedded in each other. Leadership is therefore constructed and can take on a life of its own, i.e., become reified. In the *leader relational* model, the ontological nature of reality is that it is created by humans interacting with one another. It is not observed “out there” but constructed inter-relationally and it is the interaction within those relationships which is the unit of analysis and not the singular “leader.”

Michael Mann’s (2003) theory of social power is the proposed theoretical bridge which may have the elasticity and capacity to dissolve the apparent binary between *leader centric* and *leader relational* views of leadership. Undergirding Mann’s analysis of social power is his assumption that “societies are constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power” (p. 1). Similarly he argues that “societies are not unitary” (p. 1) and what flows from this claim is he asserts that there are no totalities, no unitary entities, and no social system itself. He posits that there is no social structure that constrains humans. From this perspective, he disputes “sociological orthodoxies such as systems theory, Marxism, structuralism, structural functionalism, normative functionalism, multidimensional theory, evolutionism, diffusionism, and action theory” because they all assume that

something called *society* (italics the chapter author's) represents an "unproblematic, unitary totality" (p. 2).

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## Introduction

Leadership's root word is the noun *leader*. It is singular. About 1300, *ledere* was derived from the Middle English *leden* meaning *to guide* (Barnhart, 1995, p. 425). The practice of describing a leader has hoary precedents in the ancient literary works of the past. Perhaps one of the most famous was Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* most likely written in the second century, A.D. (Lamberton, 2001). The Plutarchian portraits of Greek and Roman leaders have been firmly implanted in the Western mind. They were given personalities and near immortality because of William Shakespeare and his genius for portraying the inner human being struggling with near universal moral issues.

When it came to Plutarch, Shakespeare not only "...lifted the narratives of his four Roman plays, plus a bit of *A Midsummer's Night Dream*... [but] most important he assumed Plutarch's ethical approach to character" (Whittemore, 1988, p. 12). Bloom (1998) noted that "Shakespeare's works have been termed the secular Scripture, or more simply the fixed center of the Western canon" (p. 3). The colloquies of Hamlet, Othello, Falstaff, King Lear, and MacBeth lay convincing portraits of singular leaders struggling with events of their days, paradoxes, and deep moral dilemmas. From Shakespeare, we learn that leaders are lonely, their lives are complex, and their problems rarely one dimensional.

It could be argued that Shakespeare's Elizabethan theatrical portrayals of leaders have continued to exert a dominance in thinking about leaders and leadership that have not been substantially altered over many centuries. For example, in Howard Gardner's (1995) *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* published almost two thousand years following Plutarch, Gardner attributed to those we call leaders to their proclivity to "achieve effectiveness chiefly through the stories they relate" (p. 9).

Despite shifting the fulcrum of separating a leader from a follower to the communication of stories, Gardner's definition of a leader remains firmly in the individualistic mode linking back to Plutarch. Here is Gardner's definition (1995) "persons who, by word and/or personal example, markedly influence the behaviors, thoughts and/or feelings of a significant number of their fellow human beings (here termed *followers* [italics original] or *audience members* [italics original]). The leaders' voices affected their worlds, and ultimately, our world" (pp. 8-9).

## The Evolutionary Social Power Theory of Michael Mann

Michael Mann is a British-born sociologist. A graduate of Oxford, he subsequently served as an academic at Cambridge, the University of Essex, and the London School of Economics before becoming a professor at UCLA (University of

California at Los Angeles) in 1987. He was elected Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 2015. His primary scholarship has been an investigation of the sources of social power and his initial book *The Sources of Social Power* first published in 1987 had been reprinted ten times through 2003.

A close reading of *The Sources of Social Power* would reveal that Mann's work would be grouped within the definition of *critical studies of leadership (CSL)*. His foundational premise is that "Societies are constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power" (p. 1). His definition of power is "the ability to pursue and attain goals through mastery of one's environment" (p. 6). There are two additional aspects of social power he cites. The first emanates from Max Weber (1968) who indicates that power is the concept that one person can exercise their will despite pushback from others. A second aspect of power comes from Parsons (1960) "whereby persons in cooperation can enhance their joint power over third parties or over nature" (1960, 199–225 as cited in Mann, 2003, p. 6). These two forms of power, *distributive* and *collective*, are joined by *exploitative* and *functional* power though all "operate simultaneously and are intertwined" (Mann, 2003, p. 6).



As this intertwining takes form and shape in an organization, there is a natural drift towards *distributive power* emanating from the need for supervision and coordination. When this happens, those at the top exercise or have hegemony over the totality of the organization, "and it prevents those at the bottom from sharing in this control. It enables those at the top to set in motion machinery for implementing collective goals" (Mann, 2003, p. 7). The newly acquired control is buttressed by the institutionalization of laws and social rules as a kind of standard operating procedures for the collectivity or organization. The result is social stratification which in turn also becomes institutionalized. Mann (2003) defines social stratification as "...the overall creation and distribution of power in society. It is the central structure of societies because in its dual collective and distributive aspects it is the means whereby human beings achieve their goals in society" (p. 10).

Mann (2003) asserts that in the evolution of the human species, there are distinctive stages, each with a peculiar form of social power. As societies become more complex with greater differentiation among roles and functions together with hierarchies of power and privilege, their form of leadership is impacted. With Mann's theory of social power as the major narrative, it can be seen how leadership models begin relationally, but end with more and more well-defined leader centralism. Leadership roles evolve as each society reacts to environmental and political pressures and constraints.

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## The Stages of Social/Political Development

Mann (2003) has identified seven stages (see Fig. 1) of socio/political development which have led to the creation of a permanent leader-centric organization where after certain external challenges to a human collectivity, there is movement towards more centralized permanent, coercive power. Beginning with a near egalitarian society, social groups may move towards the identification of ranks

Level of Social Stratification	Characteristics	Leadership Type	Description
1. Egalitarian societies	There are some differences in the social hierarchy based on gender and age, but they are not institutionalized	Relational	No one is allowed to have involuntary authoritarian control over others
2. Rank societies	Certain members have more prestige than others. But this is conferred only by the entire collectivity. Legitimate power can only be individualized by permission from the total group. Even if heredity is honored the collectivity can withdraw a leader's authority.	Relational	Leaders occupy provisional roles and in those roles they do not possess coercive power over individuals who may be resistant or hesitant to it
2.1 Relative rank societies	While persons and lineage groups may be ranked, there is no specific or absolute highest point on the scale. Rank maybe contested at times.	Relational leadership remains dominant	Leaders can be identified and they may stand out, but there is no ultimate positioning as there is no identifiable ceiling
2.2 Absolute rank societies	There is the development of an uncontested, highest rank and all other ranks are allayed to it. A ceremonial center appears devoted to religion.	Leader centric & with trappings of leader relational	The emergence of a permanent leader and positioning of that leader in relation to a ceiling which is established and known.
	<b>THE ESCAPE ROUTE BEGINS TO CLOSE</b>		<b>THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL CAGING</b>
3. The State	A specific ensemble of institutions and attendant personnel embodied in a political center which develops and extends to a specific geographical area and rule making that is reinforced by physical violence. War making requires the apparatus of the state.	Leader centric & trappings of leader relational- <b>discernable social caging occurring</b>	Leader decisions do not have the force of law, but only collective authority derived from smaller social groups (clans, tribes) support. The leader's authority is solidified in wartime.
4. Stratification	Movement towards the creation of a permanent and institutionalized power over the life chances of its inhabitants. Its control over the life chances of others may be backed by physical force.	Leader centric & trappings of leader relational/ <b>accelerating social caging underway</b>	While leaders exercise power it is not unitary. While stratification is going on, the leader cannot create a state which is independent of him/her self and have it survive beyond 1-2 generations.
5. Civilization	The presence of three social institutions: a ceremonial center, writing and the city. When these are combined there is a notable advance in the power over nature.	Leader centric with near total social caging- <b>social cage development is permanent</b>	Leaders access permanent coercive and centralized authority within fixed settlements of territorialized power that are more or less coercive and centralized.

**Fig. 1** Stages and characteristics of Michael Mann’s social stratification and type of corresponding leadership adaption towards social caging. (FILE: Figure 1 Social stratification and leadership, adapted from Mann 2003, pp. 1–33)

which at first are quite fluid but become rigid and fixed. Once a human collectivity moves from an absolute rank society, “. . .from this centralized institution onward to the state is only a step” (p. 37).

The next progression involves *stratification* eventually sliding into something called *civilization*. The last stage of *civilization* is described as “the containment of human beings behind clear, fixed, confined behind social and territorial boundaries” (Mann, 2003, p. 38). The term civilization contains a lot of nugatory emotional and cultural baggage. In fact, Mann (2003) confesses, “We can never exactly define what we mean by *civilization*. The word has too much resonance, and the prehistoric and historic record is too varied” (p. 73). The evolution of Mann’s stages is the result of a



specific kind of social compacting. Mann refers to it as the progression of the stages caused by pressures and choices which lead to *the social cage*.

The considered opinion of some examining in an expansive passage of time was that the development of “civilization” as sketched out in Mann’s historical progression was viewed by him and others as abnormal, a relatively rare event because many humans simply refused to move beyond relative social ranking. Piggott (1965) estimated that within a 5000-year period in Western Asia, there were “probably under ten” examples of civilizations emerging.

The reason that there were only ten civilizations was “the inseparability of functionality and exploitation. . .The decisive features of these ecologies and of human reactions to them was *the closing of the escape route*” (p. 75). The closing of the way back from civilization in Mann’s evolutionary model occurred because, “fixed settlement traps people into living with each other, cooperating, and devising more complex forms of social organization. The metaphor of a cage is appropriate” (p. 42). Such a closing made it nearly impossible to avoid civilization and along with it “social stratification, and the state” (p. 75). The alchemy of these three evolutionary movements was the creation of permanent, coercive social power.

Mann (2003) also indicates that the progression he sketches out, from egalitarian to civilization, does not always follow the exact order in which he presents them indicating that sometimes they may devolve or become cyclical (p. 67). Most human groups at the relative rank level refused to advance any further. They were unwilling to bestow the kind of coercive power that could be employed against them. “In noncivilized societies escape from the social cage was possible. Authority was freely conferred, but recoverable; power, permanent and coercive, was unattainable” (Mann, 2003, p. 39).

One of the factors that pushes human groups to move towards denser more compact societies is the propensity to engage in warfare. “First, war is ubiquitous to organized social life, even if not universal. . .In a quantitative study only four out of fifty primitive peoples did not routinely engage in warfare” (Mann, 2003, p. 48). As social rankings advanced, the intensity of warfare greatly increased as social groups employed more lethal means of killing.

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## What Mann’s Model Demonstrates

What Mann’s evolutionary model shows is that in the development of coercive social power, leadership was almost purely relational before the absolute rank stage when it became progressively centralized. As a result of social caging, the later stages of social power become lodged in a solitary ruler of a permanent rank, most normally a monarch, whether it be a pharaoh, a king or queen, or an emperor. From this perspective, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) correctly observe that, “Leadership is thus not given (as contingent upon a managerial position), but rather it is a process outcome. It is not what shapes the outcome of situations; it is shaped by and can better be seen as an emergent outcome of situations” (p. 212).



Mann's evolutionary model dissolves the apparent binary between leader centrism and leader relational perspectives regarding leadership. The model also incorporates the observation that a "leader" is a social construct produced through relationships and those relationships are interdependent. The relationships also constitute a field made up of individuals and collectives. Individuals are derivative of relational processes. There are no hard and fast lines between leaders and non-leaders, especially in the early stages of the evolutionary process, and that leadership is coproduced in the space between individuals.

The dominance of leader-centric theories is only maintained by ignoring the evolutionary development of leadership itself. All leadership begins as relational and can remain relational unless the external situation or environment (social caging being one) requires a change. By envisioning leader relational and leader centrism as two points on a single continuum, the apparent incommensurability between these two visions of leadership is erased.

Also in discussions about the essential differences between leader-centric and leader-relational perspectives, the utilization of Mann's evolutionary model of social power, a different perspective, is proffered to explain some of them. For example, the relational model as a social construction fits the first two stages of Mann's model. Leadership is a social construct among members of the same social group. However, when ranking leads to stratification and civilization, entitism aptly describes the demarcation lines between leaders and followers.

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## Some Contemporary Issues

Understanding that leader centrism and leader relational views are points on a common evolutionary continuum does not prohibit dilemmas in selection of which approach is more relevant or better for specific situations. Ways to dilute the creation and implementation of a coercive leader-centric role by moving towards leadership which can be called democratic (see Woods, 2005) distributive (see Youngs & Evans, 2021), parallel, situational, shared, or other hybridized forms that disperse unilateral coercive authority across more roles in modern bureaucracy are nearly ubiquitous (see Gronn, 2012). These models spread out duties and with it the delegated authority to undertake them. Most do not also erase entitism, i.e., there is still an identifiable and separate *leader*. Even in some of the CLS (critical leadership studies) texts, there still remains evidence of entitism (Dolan, 2020).

Perhaps one of the issues which emerges is in the case of hierarchical organization roles in modern bureaucracies. In this context, roles exist prior to being filled by a "leader." Whether or not a person could actually get anyone to follow them outside the bureaucracy is irrelevant. The bureaucracy has identified some roles as superior and others subordinate. There is no "emergence" of a leader. A leadership role exists without anyone being in it. When a person occupies such a role, they are by definition a "leader." Those who are subordinate to superior roles are by definition "followers." The line between the two (leader-follower) can be drawn and specified.

There is no mystery or doubt about the existence of such a line of demarcation in a bureaucracy.

However in real life, even in well-defined bureaucracies, there may be a different set of relationships than those specified in organizational charts. The “real” leaders may not be the ones who occupy the officially sanctioned leadership positions. Some followers may have more influence on the opinions of other followers than the officially appointed bureaucratic leaders. And it may be true that even with duly appointed persons to occupy leadership positions, the organization may have no leadership. It takes more than an incumbent in a leadership role to actually possess and practice leadership.

What Mann’s evolutionary model of the development of coercive social power shows is that in the beginning of human social relationships, there is either very little, if any, such centralization of authority and a deliberate consensus among those impacted to avoid creating such a centralized structure. Relational leadership approaches either show an avoidance of acquiring coercive power or a decision not to create it. Relational approaches are about decentering single persons of supreme power. Relational leadership practices do not view power as something to be acquired and applied in static situations, but instead as a much more fluid concept which is that “it generates particular types of knowledge and certain types of behaviours” (Niesche & Gowlett, 2016, p. 69).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Michael Mann’s concept of *the social cage* as the external causative agency for the development of types of leadership is firmly rooted in a relational sociology that posits that leaders are created by the circumstances and relationships in which they live. Leaders do not create those conditions. The conditions create the leadership. From this perspective, *power* is not something that leaders own or can bank. Rather, power is the product of the relationships between persons being squeezed in the *social cage*. An accelerant to such *caging* is the making of war.

It is understandable that as humans born into a social structure that is already at the evolutionary apex would fail to see or understand how a social structure has undergone formative changes over extended time periods. If all one sees is a summative all powerful king or president with near permanent and unchallenged coercive authority, how to envision an ontological reality as anything but this final stage of *the social cage* is unimaginable. Relationships in this stage, and especially in bureaucratic organizations, are centered in entitism. Leadership is visible, definable, hierarchical, and individualistic. What appears as “real” is the presence of an individual leader and so academic study of leadership concentrates on the skills, habits, attitude, perceptions, traits, beliefs, and actions of the lone leader figure. These studies have been the most prevalent kind in the leadership field since Elwood Cubberley (1929) described them in one of the first textbooks in the discipline. They remain the dominant trope into present times.

What Michael Mann's evolutionary theory of social power contributes to the study and understanding of leadership is to demonstrate that it is a dynamic unfolding properly understood as one of continuous adaptation to emergent social forces and conditions. Leadership is one outcome of those forces.

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# Marx, Weber, and the Twin Leadership Dilemmas

# 18

## Alienation and Bureaucratization

John M. Heffron

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### Abstract

Ongoing debates over the relationship between leadership and administration, especially in the field of education, raise a new question of alienation and bureaucratization first introduced at the dawn of capitalism by the pioneer sociologists Karl Marx and Max Weber. The traditional notion of alienation as the separation of the worker from the object of his or her labor and from the production process itself finds new meaning in the proletarianization of the modern educational leader, a worker with little or no control over the work process due not to subjugation from above, but in Weberian terms, to bureaucratization from below. What this chapter explores are the lessons to be learned from Marx and Weber for the restructuring of educational leadership in such a way as to advance the freedom, both positive and negative, as well as the sense of responsibility for one and all necessary to democratize, to domesticate capitalism.

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### Keywords

Bureaucracy · Alienation · Charisma · Disenchantment · Leadership and administration · Rationalization · Property ownership · Value pluralism · Proletarianization · Predicates

### The Field of Memory

By the end of the nineteenth century productive forces in Europe and the USA had become in the eyes of Karl Marx and Max Weber forces of destruction and social alienation, Weber's "iron cage" of bureaucratization the cause and effect of Marx's self-alienation. While for Marx the powerful critique of capitalism and his call for "the dictatorship of the proletariat" (Marx, 1852) would fall into the hands of Lenin and devolve into Stalinism, communism losing its roots in democracy; in Weber's case his "iron cage" would seem preferable today to the anarchistic individualism of neoliberalism.

### The Field of Presence

In our own time, the thought and philosophy of Karl Mark is making something of a rebound in so-called Neo-Marxism, to distinguish it from Vulgar Marxism, its reduction to "historical materialism." Weber's search for an "ideal-type of bureaucracy" (Elwell, 1999, p. 1) and with it for a new rational order, one rooted not in overconsumption but in a kind of religious asceticism, remains as, if not more, relevant today than in his own time, when the modern public and with it "the revolt of the masses" was just coming into its own (Gasset, 1930).

### The Field of Concomitance

Weber's disenchantment of the world – its movement away from an overarching deism to a so-called "value pluralism" in which conflicting claims have no final arbiter – began, on the one hand, to offer a solution to abject bureaucracy. However, the mathematization of all knowledge and experience, and with it the elevation of valorization over labor control, makes it concomitant with Marx's notion of alienation. According to one organizational scientist, "even when the enabling functions of bureaucracy is salient to employees, bureaucracy will be experienced simultaneously as alienating" (Adler, 2012, p. 257).

### Discontinuities and Ruptures

While the alienation of the worker from the objects of his or her labor was a reality of the modern capitalist system, it was ultimately viewed by Marx as an expedient means to the destruction of the state and the rule of the people, they, the people, owning the means of production, not the state, as in the case, for example, of the Soviet Union. For Weber, alienation stemmed from the same causes but was not temporary, it was permanent, enshrined in bureaucracy and rationalization, the rise of instrumental reason.

### Critical Assumptions

Viewing educational leadership as a form of labor – a higher one, yet one no less subject to the dialectical forces of alienation and bureaucratization – the paper alleges that in the absence of self-control and other-awareness, the educational leader as worker has little or no control over the work process. In such a case, writes David Held, “individuals are divided against each other by competition and possession; and men and women are in danger of losing their capacity to be universal and free in all the spheres of life” (Held, 1980, p. 237). Today the kind and degree of educational leadership is determined by the kind and degree of capitalism, a productive mechanism that has changed dramatically since the time of Karl Marx and Max Weber, in some cases for the better, that is, for a greater alignment with democratic ideals (spelled out here), and in some cases for the worse. It has a complex reality, one calling for greater understanding and articulation by educational leaders first and foremost. For the labor process, as understood by Marx and Weber, is both ontological and sociological, determining “both the basic structure of human existence and society’s basic patterns” (p. 240). At the heart of the universalization of the proletariat lies the proletarianization of all labor, the key not so much to overcoming as to turning to human benefit Marx’s utopia of a classless society, eliminating the twin forces of alienation and bureaucratization. For Michel Foucault there were no a priori truths. Everything was considered in “remanence,” the magnetization of any given thought or event by its environment, its true nature. So, that which is socially and historically constructed is that which is left behind, the material with which we have to work, our tools for the creation of value and meaning.

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### Introduction

The old canard “the more things change, the more they remain the same” describes the transformation yet relative stasis in the forms and patterns of educational leadership since Tyack and Hansot first identified them a generation ago in *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America 1820–1980*. *Managers of Virtue* (1982) was an extended critique of the “Educational Trust,” a corporate model of US school governance “predicated,” they wrote, “on the expertise of the school executive and on reform elites who would select and support them” (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 141) Today no less than in 1980, the challenges not only to public school leadership but to the American common school idea remain remarkably the same. Principals now as then complain of the financial burdens of “retrenchment,” onerous new forms of “accountability,” their declining public status, the bureaucratization of school management, and the intrusion of “politics” into their work. In a recent national study of public-school principals (N: 1206), to the survey question “What are the major challenges that you face as a school principal?” US respondents cited in order of exasperation “being asked to do more for less money”; “lack of community support”; “pressures from above for NCLB compliance and scores” and

“changing the instructional culture to data-driven decision-making”; “time to complete administrative requirements and provide instructional leadership concurrently”; and over and over again simply “overwhelmed” (Wise, 2014).

Notwithstanding current allegations that the 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation and subsequent ISLLC standards have created a “second wave of scientific management in educational administration,” it remains as true today as it did at the close of the twentieth century that most Colleges of Education serve up administrators-in-training “a potpourri of theory, concepts, and ideas – unrelated to one another and rarely useful in either understanding schools or managing them” (Brooks & Miles, 2008, p. 109; Mulkeen & Cooper, 1989, p. 12). In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration recommended “continued and increased involvement with the private sector,” business, industry, and educational leaders “participating jointly in management training programs” (pp. 33 & 35). As another one of its key recommendations, the commission proposed the establishment of a National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA), a representative board of national organizations the function of which would be to “conduct periodic national reviews of preparation for educational administrators and professors” (p. 28) and in the process contribute toward the development of a standardized and centralized knowledge base, including certification standards, for the professional education and training of school leaders.

Not immaterially, in an early statement from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), Marx identified the alienation of the worker in precisely these terms, “not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him” (Marx, as cited in Elster, 1994, p. 102). For Weber, who was not a strict Marxist, the machinery of bureaucracy and with it “rationalization” was nevertheless a major cause of alienation in just this sense of the term. And Weber’s solution (?) – the infusion of politics, partisan ones, into bureaucracy, something precluded by communism, which was essentially apolitical in nature. This and re-enchantment, the re-introduction of religiosity, lay at the heart of de-bureaucratization (or maybe re-bureaucratization), not as the ascendancy of this religion or that, but in the Deweyan sense as the power to “unify interests and energies” and to “direct action and generate the heat of emotion and the light of intelligence” (Dewey, 1934, pp. 50–52). It was America’s bard of heroic self-assertion, Walt Whitman, who in 1876 made this stipulation: “Not that half only, Individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is Adhesiveness or Love, that fuses, ties, and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing them all.” And this was the quid pro quo: “Both are to be vitalized by Religion, breathing into the proud, material issues, the breath of life. For I say at the core of Democracy, finally, is the Religious element” (Whitman, 2010, p. 24). To the parenthetical notion of re-bureaucratization, what this chapter explores are the lessons to be learned from Marx and Weber for the restructuring of educational leadership in such a way as to advance the freedom, both positive and negative, as well as the sense of responsibility for one and all necessary to democratize, to domesticate capitalism. Toward this end the chapter offers a



number of predicates for a theory of democracy, necessary yet insufficient conditions – with a view toward identifying the insufficiencies.

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## Marx on Alienation

As Michel Foucault put it at the centennial of the first English edition of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, “Marx is not just the author of the *Communist Manifesto* or *Das Kapital*, [he has] established an endless possibility of discourse” (as cited in Peters, 2001, p. 37). As we approach the bicentennial of his work, it may be important to take just such a post-structuralist view, an aesthetic one, of such key concepts as alienation or what Marx also called estrangement. Jacques Derrida, the progenitor of deconstruction and a great admirer of Marx, echoes Foucault: “It will always be a fault not to read and reread and discuss Marx and to go beyond scholarly ‘reading’ or ‘discussion’. It will be more and more a fault, a failing of theoretical, philosophical, political responsibility” (Derrida, 1994, p. 13). Drawing in part on *Capital*, but primarily on his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, the goal here is not only to bring Marx into the present, but to identify the significance of his work for educational leadership and ultimately for its de-alienation. The focus here is on the commodification of the average educational leader under the conditions of modern capitalism, but also on the ways he or she may serve as *an instrument* of commodification, commercializing the workers under them in a form of duplicitous alienation. For under modern industry, workers are separated both from the objects of their production and the production process itself.

Again, bringing the past into the present, no one may have said it better than the great art critic and political philosopher, Marx’s contemporary, John Ruskin.

We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labor; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labor that is divided; but the men: — Divided into mere segments of men — broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail (Ruskin, 1851–53, p. 94).

The shift from craftsmanship – a form of labor rooted in the master and apprentice relationship, one in which the apprentice learns what it takes to make a *whole* pin or a *whole* nail from start to finish, thereby becoming a master himself or herself – the shift from craftsmanship to specialized labor was felt not only in industry but in education and schooling as well, a culture of professionalism leading to the dominance of this narrow expertise or that, the functional equivalent of parts manufacturing. The result is a “mutual alienation” that, as Arnold Toynbee once observed, “is bad for both parties [experts and nonexperts] and bad for society.” Daisaku Ikeda, in a dialogue with Toynbee, concurs: “Today, as learning reaches higher levels, it tends to become so departmentalized that the uninitiated find it incomprehensible. To solve the difficulty, it is now essential for learning to follow the reverse course; that

is, it must become generalized instead of specialized and inclusive instead of divided” (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1976, p. 77). Departmentalization has given rise to a sense of personal inadequacy leading to new dependencies on expert guidance and judgment. Symbols of professional authority, including the number of technical aids in an office, conspicuous displays of professional certification and attainment, the number of articles and books on a vita, the income and lifestyle of a successful practitioner, and symbols designed to reinforce the lay public’s consciousness of its inferiority and dependence, are ubiquitous. What appears as another form of alienation to the common worker, to the school teacher, for example, feels like empowerment to the former, to the educational leader, a professional class no less departmentalized and divided against itself, however.

Operating as neo-capitalists, educational leaders and administrators are no less subject to estrangement than their working-class counterparts. What they hold in common is a market system that dictates the kind and degree of their work. The former are *not* free agents. “Capitalism subjects every individual capitalist,” writes Marx, “to the immanent laws of capitalist production as external coercive laws” (as cited in Small, 2005, p. 28). What are those laws? For if the appropriation of one’s labor by its products is what amounts to alienation, one’s labor becoming “an object, an *external* existence a power on its own confronting him,” how, according to Marx, does that system operate? As a superstructure resting on an economic foundation, what are its defining features? Marx spends three long volumes of his authoritative work, *Capital*, on this subject. In summary, the laws of production to which every capitalist is subject, include the following:

1. Capitalist command over labor power and labor itself
2. The separation of the worker from his means of production, “the starting-point of capitalist production” (Marx, 1975, p. 570)
3. Mechanization – “The life-long specialty of handling one and the same tool, now becomes the life-long specialty of serving one and the same machine” (p. 422)
4. The mass production and circulation of commodities and with them money and profit, money “the universally recognized embodiment of all wealth” (p. 143)
5. A process of continuous reproduction, one that “converts every capital into capitalized surplus-value,” which describes the rate of return, i.e., the amount raised through sale of the product minus the cost of its production (Eastman, 1932, p. 148). But it is more than that. “This incessant reproduction,” writes Marx in *Capital*, Volume 2, “this perpetuation of the proletarian labourer, is an indispensable condition of capitalist production” (p. 149).

The extent to which the social relations of educational leadership reflect these laws of capitalist production calls into question another Marxist preoccupation: property ownership, public and private alike. Describing private property as both “the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labor” and “the *means* by which labor alienates itself,” Marx would become the world’s greatest proponent of propertylessness, public and private alike. It was the key to classlessness. Educational leaders, it may be argued, are simultaneously property owners and

propertyless workers. In the latter form, as a propertyless worker, he/she becomes, in Marx's terms, "an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates" (Marx, 1844, pp. 9 & 2). Propertied – with ultimate power and authority – he or she runs the danger of not only alienating themselves but all of those working under them.

A purely administrative consciousness enforces what Blase, Anderson, and Dungan (1995) call power-over approaches to leadership, which "emphasize control and manipulation of others' behavior, thoughts, and values. In contrast, power-with approaches to leadership focus," they say, "on the development of collegiality, reciprocity, equality, and mutuality with others" (Blase et al., p. 2; Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Kreisberg, 1992). Participatory decision-making, shared leadership, and the concept of the leader as "servant" run counter to concepts of management and public administration that draw on analogies to military-style command and control or to scientific management. What follows is a set of indicators for what leadership looks like once it has departed from administration (and vice versa), becoming, as Max Weber would say, bureaucratic, another form of estrangement.

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## Weber on Bureaucratization

Enamored by the Protestant Reformation – Martin Luther in his egalitarianism calling for "the priesthood of all believers" – Weber went so far as to identify a Protestant Work Ethic, one identifying hard work, regardless of the kind and degree, with religious salvation (Ciano, 2020). But he was also a product of the eighteenth-century scientific revolution, of Cartesian Dualism, the rationalism of "I think, therefore I am," *Cogito ergo sum*. The rise of thought over emotion became an important part of what Weber would describe as rationalization, the capitulation of reason to mathematical logic. Bureaucratization and rationalization went hand-in-hand in the emergent capitalist world, one in which work was desacralized; and life in general disenchanting, leading to the "iron cage" of a bureaucratized way of life, one in which the "technical and economic conditions of machine production determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism with irresistible force" (Weber, as cited in Spicer, 2015, p. 33). While the bureaucratic form of organization – "social rules becoming reified objectifications commanding directions" (Held, 1980, p. 66) – may have, on the one hand, invited new and higher forms of efficiency, it was nevertheless in this very sense that it was "formally," said Weber, "the most rational known means of exercising authority *over* human beings" (Spicer, p. 33). Religiously speaking, it was the historic descent of Lutheranism into Calvinism, from the human-friendly God of the New Testament to the ascetic God of the Old – "a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding," any hope of salvation interdicted by predestination and, worse, by innate depravity – that for Weber gave rise to the "extreme inhumanity" of the modern world (Weber, 1958, pp. 103–104). The individual loss of self-control over one's destiny, an ancient Judeo-Christian credo, found its secular incarnation in bureaucracy, the individual bureaucrat himself or herself simply a cog in the machine.

Which brings us back to the historic divide between educational administration understood as the management of predetermined outcomes and educational leadership understood as a metaphysic of the relations of self and society, self and other, transcending (if it does not transcend) the boundaries of any one nation state. If and how and when the twain shall ever meet remains an open question but one worth exploring, English and Papa (2015) for one, taking up the cudgels three years ago. While citing approvingly sentiments like those of former US Army General Colin Powell that “leadership is the act of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible,” they also caution against setting up a “false dichotomy” between leadership and management (p. 22; Brown, Noble, & Papa, 2009). The two exist or should exist instead in something like a dialectical relationship – thesis (leadership) and antithesis (administration) combining to produce a higher synthesis. “While management,” they argue, “is essential to operationalize leadership, leadership is essential to changing forms of management” (p. 22). Historically this amounts to something of a revelation, however. As Tyack and Hansot (1982) and others have pointed out, in the foundational years, 1890–1930, “no other lay group had as much an impact on public education as did businessmen,” their language, techniques, and ideology infusing a new “science” of educational administration (p. 110). What they write of this new class of administrative progressives sounds oddly familiar today. It is worth quoting in full:

In seeking to depoliticize education, in moving the regulation upward and inward in urban and state bureaucracies, in basing legitimation for new authority on scientific expertise, the new managers in education were following patterns of action and thought pioneered in the corporate sector of business and in the politically influential professional and trade organizations (p. 108).

Instrumental in the supply of these new school managers – the superintendent as a business executive – was Elwood P. Cubberley, founder of the Department of Education at Stanford and one of the fathers of the social efficiency movement in education. To increase “social efficiency,” schools need to “give up,” in his words, “the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal, and that our society is devoid of classes . . . and to begin a specialization of effort along many new lines in an attempt to adapt the school to the needs of these many classes in the city life” (Cubberley, as cited in Tyack & Hansot, p. 128). What many years later revisionist historians like Joel Spring would identify as “sorting machines” and others more recently as “today’s accountability movement” – a combination of business and management principles, measurement standards with grade-level scales, data-driven decision-making, and detailed record keeping – remain after all these years the rule rather than the exception in the educational world (Spring 1988; Bogotch, 2015, p. 6).

But there is the other side of the story, the spontaneous emergence with the “educational trust” of so-called humanists and social meliorists (Kliebard, 1986), the leading exponents of which, contra-Cubberley, were Lester Frank Ward, John Dewey, and George C. Counts. At a meeting in 1935 of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association (NEA), Dewey exhorted educational administrators to lead cooperatively, inviting teachers, parents, and the local

community to take, in his words, “an active and cooperative share in developing the plan of education” (Dewey, as cited in Simpson & Stack, 2010, p. 131). He warned superintendents of the dangers of mistaking the practical, mechanical nature of their tasks with their intellectual and moral responsibilities as educators. And he left them with a question: “Is it the social function of the school to perpetuate existing conditions or to take part in their transformation?” If the focus of the school was to be the growth and development of the student and hence of the larger society, the choice, Dewey argued, was obvious. “He will realize that public education is essentially education of the public: directly, through teachers and students in the school; indirectly, through communicating to others his own ideals and standards, inspiring others with the enthusiasm of himself and his staff for the function of intelligence and character in the transformation of society” (p. 133).

By these lights, good school administration, however crucial, was simply “a special phase,” in his words, of a more “inclusive and fundamental problem: What movement of social forces, economic, political, religious, cultural shall the schools take to be the controlling aims and methods, and with which forces shall the school align itself?” (Dewey, as cited in Boydston, 2008, p. 412). To Count’s question in 1932, “Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?,” Dewey’s answer was a resounding yes (Counts, 1932). What the schools needed was a new type of school officer-principal-superintendent, one, wrote Dewey, “who is thoroughly acquainted with civic and political problems, and whose view goes beyond that of conventional subject matter and methods of teaching” to embrace a more all-inclusive notion of “the good” but also to stand up fearlessly against the enemies of democracy, no matter what the personal cost (Dewey, as cited in Boydston, 2008, p. 71).

With these vital differences in mind, historical as well as contemporary, between educational leaders and administrators, what follows is a brief look at how they manifest themselves in day-to-day actions. When it comes to exercising one’s responsibilities, including the need to meet certain state and federal demands for academic achievement, Philip Woods identifies two contrasting approaches. “The first is met with management and is focused on getting people to commit themselves to working in ways consistent with organizational requirements and powerful interests in the wider socioeconomic system.” The second approach is more concerned with what Woods calls “the human need for a re-enchantment of labour, imbuing work with a sense of meaning, worth and validity rooted in enduring truths and values concerning human living” (Woods, as cited in English and Papa, p. 24). And there is still another interesting comparison, a related one. Take the Native American spirit of potlatch, where leadership is measured and defined by the degree of “conspicuous distribution” – he or she who gives away the most the fastest coming out ironically on the top of the heap (LaDuke, 1997, p. 28). Contrast this with conspicuous consumption and the goal of accumulation, the heart of the capitalist ethic. To *homo economicus*, to greed and animosity, educational leaders oppose self-abnegating love, care, and cooperation. They are not in the business of administration, whether top down or bottom up, but in the throes of leadership, a perpetual state of becoming in which one is a learning organization bound only by the self-imposed limits of his or her own curiosity and imagination. As Barnard

reminds us, “It is a matter of art rather than science, and is aesthetic rather than logical. For this reason, it is recognized rather than described and is known by its effects rather than by analysis” (Barnard, 1938, 1968, p. 235).

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## **Alienation and Bureaucracy in Concomitance**

Weber’s disenchantment of the world – its movement away from an overarching yet disestablished deism to a so-called “value pluralism” in which conflicting claims have no final arbiter – began, on the one hand, to offer a solution to abject bureaucracy. However, the mathematization of all knowledge and experience, and with it the elevation of valorization over labor control, makes it concomitant with Marx’s notion of alienation. According to one organizational scientist, “even when the enabling functions of bureaucracy is salient to employees, bureaucracy will be experienced simultaneously as alienating” (Adler, 2012, p. 257). Both Marx and Weber, as political economists, as sociologists, and as philosophers, were ultimately about raising human consciousness, raising awareness of the kind and degree of ownership, private and public, and its implications for creating the social democratic societies they had in mind, and not just property ownership. All forms of ownership whether in part or in whole were in question, none with perhaps greater consequence for democracy than the ownership, or lack thereof, of one’s work. While part ownership in the work process is something that can be “bequeathed” by its managers, full ownership is not; it is something that needs to be *won* equally and by all, including administrators, who too, as Marx and Weber point out, are subject to alienation.

Educational leaders have a special responsibility here. The bureaucracies they inhabit, whether at the school level, the district level, and the state or the federal level, all have at least five elements in common, any one of which has the potential to promote great alienation, both individual and organizational.

- Hierarchy of authority
- Impersonality
- Written rules of conduct
- Promotion based on achievement
- Specialized division of labor
- Efficiency (Elwell, 1999, p. 1)

Organizational leaders up and down these hierarchies need to personalize, to humanize their relations not only with each other but with all the people working under them; they need to move from colonizing rules and regulations to consensual agreements among and between all individuals, in the case of schools, including students and their parents and members of the local community; they need to give every worker full control of the work process, full ownership of both the means and ends of production, the success or failure of their work, not its efficiency or lack thereof, the criteria for granting or denying promotion; but this also means abdicating the power of promotion and transferring it into the control, a results-oriented one,

of all workers, leaders, and nonleaders alike. In their organizational oversight, educational leaders need to become architects in the vein of Joel Sanders, who has said, “I love beautiful things, but I’m not interested in form for its own sake. What counts is human experience and human interaction, and how form facilitates that” (as cited in Tingley, 2020, 52).

To the concomitance here of Marx’s economic materialism and Weber’s super-structuralism:

Weber’s views about the inescapable rationalization and bureaucratization of the world have some obvious similarities to Marx’s notion of alienation. Both men agree that modern methods of organization have tremendously increased the effectiveness and efficiency of production and organization and have allowed an unprecedented domination of man over the world of nature. They also agree that the new world of rationalized efficiency has turned into a monster that threatens to dehumanize its creators (Coser, 1977, p. 232)

Marx’s solution to this state of affairs – communism, not as the state-owned means of production, but as an “association” in which, according to the *Communist Manifesto*, “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx, as cited in Rubel, 1983, p. 104) – was not that far removed from Weber’s solution – the infusion of politics and de-rationalization, of “charisma,” a prerequisite for “communal organization,” into bureaucracy. Charismatic leadership – one that lacks a “definite sphere of authority and of competence” (Weber, as cited in Parsons, 1947, p. 360), is “foreign to all rules,” is case specific and nonroutine, operating in the here and now – such a form of leadership was Weber’s answer to disenchantment, putting moral and social considerations ahead of narrowly economic ones, especially around profitability (pp. 360 & 361). The big question how to normalize this?, how to put charismatic leadership “on a stable everyday basis” (p. 364), oxymoronically, to routinize nonroutine forms of leadership? enter politics and value pluralism. The politicization of bureaucracy, “allowing for the expression and protection of a broader range of conflicting values” (Spicer, 2015, p. 25), would help shelter charismatic leadership from its cooptation by traditional, rationalistic administration. At the same time, the possibility of its conversion from an exception to the rule to the rule itself would entail, ironically, a “process of traditionalism” (Weber, as cited in Parsons, 1947, p. 364) and ultimately of “legalization” (365), accountability, which was no less important (indeed the sine qua non of such leadership), hiding behind all the red tape of any bureaucracy. For Marx this was part and parcel of the need of every individual that he “strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming” (Marx, as cited in Elster, 1994, p. 83).

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## Predicates for a Theory of Democracy

Democracy, the home of politics and value pluralism, is itself in a state of becoming. The lack of common agreement over the true nature of democracy, not simply as a form of government but as a way of life, is in this light a positive one, providing opportunities for its greater growth and development. To take it a step further,



“democracy,” as Dewey once wrote, “is neither a form of government nor a social expediency, but a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience to nature” (Dewey, as cited in Rorty, 1998, pp. 18–19). All the more reason try to identify some of its conditionalities. These so-called predicates, necessary yet insufficient conditions, can point the way forward, reminding educational leaders, whether charismatic or not, of the work to be done and their many related responsibilities. Some of the insufficiencies, when converted to necessities, become themselves insufficient, insufficient without a certain necessity in the case, for example, of number 4 below, the rule of law.

1. Rule of law: This includes legally constituted social, cultural, and economic rights (e.g., the right to work and to a living wage).

*Insufficient without:* an understanding of the responsibilities that go with these rights; trial by a jury of peers and the presumption of innocence; the right to appeal

2. The right to vote in regular local, state, and national elections, including rights of referendum and recall.

*Insufficient without:* corruption-free voter registration; civic education and engagement; an informed public; viable choices; confidentiality; safety measures

3. A plurality of competing forces responsible for defining the common good and for fixing the identity of the community. “If the people are to rule, it is necessary to determine who belongs to the people” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 43).

*Insufficient without:* freedom of speech and assembly; safeguards to protect individual rights and the whole concept of the dignity of the individual; minority rights and action safety nets against a tyrannical majority; public acknowledgment of the necessity of diversity; an ethic of self-determination

4. A robust civic life and empowered nongovernmental organizations to support and guide informal, decentralized decision-making.

*Insufficient without:* rule of law; coordinated versus autonomous decentralization; broad educational efforts aimed at demystifying the work and job requirements of any bureaucracy; an equally robust political life of local, state, and federally elected officials; the awareness that at one level, in a democracy, all people are public officials

5. Critical reading, writing, and oral literacy, including informational and scientific literacy; in general, the democratization of knowledge, pure and applied.

*Insufficient without:* equal access to free and open educational channels; a shared understanding of what entails critical reading; an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge; raising fundamental epistemological questions around how we know what we know, its social and historical construction

6. The moral aims and forces of social sympathy, cooperation, and association.

*Insufficient without:* the existence of public spaces where people can formally and informally interact; putting an end to residential and other forms of class, racial, and ethnic segregation; rules of civil discourse and engagement; a society organized around the imperatives of dialogue and leadership; an alternative economic system



7. Vertical opportunities for individual advancement within a horizontal, socialized organizational culture, as an effective source of noncorporate power and control (Goodwyn, 1978).

*Insufficient without:* a better understanding of what such opportunities imply, their markers, and what they may invoke at the horizontal level; the democratization of opportunity and a common interest in individual growth and development; a countervailing animus against power and control written into the Constitution

The articulation of these and other predicates for a true democracy, one that can help obviate the two main concerns of Marx and Weber, alienation and bureaucracy, needs to become first and foremost the work of educational leaders, especially those devoted to societal change, society being the sea in which schools, including all teachers and students, swim.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

While societal change may be the ultimate goal, for Marx and Weber the individual and their self-realization was the common denominator, the medium through which societies had to act. However, by the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, with the submergence of the individual in a mass, faceless society, we have the so-called “release of powers” – mercantilist ones – and with it a new phase of predatory individualism (Dewey, 1927, p. 99). Wants or needs are effectively demands driven in turn by the demands of association, not individualism. In education, the bureaucratization of the individual and with it their alienation finds its expression in the division of labor it upholds, specialization being the bane of free and open discourse. To reach the higher synthesis promised by placing educational leadership and administration in a dialectical relationship – this synthesis becoming the thesis for a new antithesis and with it a new and still higher synthesis; this process leading in turn to the teleology sought by Weber in charismatic leadership – to achieve this effect will entail dramatic changes in the kind and degree of leadership preparation, in the knowledge base required of future leaders.

For the work of the modern school principal or superintendent has never been more complex or more nuanced, requiring the broadest and most inclusive affective no less that cognitive knowledge, skills, and abilities, in addition to that “je ne sais quoi” for which there is no specific book or teaching. Jesse H. Newlon, a former superintendent of schools in Denver, Colorado, and a professor of education and director of the Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia, may have said it best in 1933 when he spoke of “the social basis of school administration,” arguing for a strict diet of history and philosophy, the physical and biological sciences, anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, and geography, including a familiarity with “the great classics in these fields” (Newlon, 1934, p. 265). That these classics should include the works of Marx and Weber goes without saying. Tyack and Hansot (1982, p. 203) cite Newlon approvingly as a powerful corrective to the administrative progressivism plaguing the education of the US school executive then and now.

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# Grassroots Leadership Models

# 19

## A Conceptual History of Thought and Practice

Frank Davidson and Thomas R. Hughes

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### Abstract

This chapter provides a conceptual history of the practice and study of grassroots leadership. It includes an analysis of the contrasts between grassroots leaders and leaders in roles of authority. The vital role that productive nonviolent conflict has in creating social and institutional change is discussed, as is the fact that school leadership programs would benefit from an enhanced focus on an understanding of conflict. Attention is given to the importance of trust in grassroots leadership, and the notion that trust in institutions can be increased through engagement with grassroots movements and organizations. Consideration is given to the nature of power and the effects of its distribution among dominant and subdominant groups. The chapter includes an analysis of extant theories of leadership that have enjoyed the attention of researchers and practitioners in recent decades and that share qualities with grassroots leadership. Consideration is given to those elements of grassroots leadership that can be

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transferred to educational leadership. The chapter concludes with reflections on the path of current trends in grassroots leadership and where new directions or discontinuities might emerge.

### Keywords

Grassroots leadership · Inclusive leadership · Collective action · Community organizing · Equity · Social activism · Social justice · Trust · Alternative leadership approaches · Leadership development · Conflict · Confrontation

### The Field of Memory

As a result of the influences from, if not even the past dependence on fields as diverse as anthropology, ethnic studies, history, law, sociology, and political science, educational leadership preparation has only recently extended its focus to include community agency and the school's place in society as part of its role in educating students. The awakening to this added responsibility has thrust the topics of social justice and community advocacy into the field of leadership development and its supporting literature. As systemic injustice and inequity have become more difficult to deny or ignore, such issues are receiving considerable attention in leadership preparation programs.

### The Field of Presence

Although a generation of aspiring educational leaders was introduced to the concept of viewing organizations through a political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017), school leaders are only now beginning to embrace the strategies of collective action and community organizing. Those who do are in a better position to develop and engage grassroots leaders in building support for initiatives, confronting existing systemic inequities, and bringing meaningful reform to schools. The study of power relationships in the fields of organizational studies and social psychology teaches that there is an alternative to the legal and coercive power traditionally associated with formal organizations such as school districts. Addressing the contrast between the power typically exercised through formal organizations with nonorganizational leadership, English wrote that the nonorganizational leader

bases his or her authority on moral conviction and a cause, such as Gandhi's leadership in the movement in South Africa and India to secure independence from Great Britain, or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership in the American Civil Rights Movement. In those cases, the focus of leadership is communal, centered on a cause and fueled by an idea that binds the participants together (2008, p. 15).

### The Field of Concomitance

Recognizing the benefits if not outright need to incorporate research into practice, educational leadership has increasingly been influenced by organizational theory, sociology, and behavioral psychology. Mainstream political parties once dismissed Saul Alinsky's strategies of collective action and community organizing. They are now much more representative of views of the political left and reform-minded educational

leaders and academics. Conflict avoidance is the least effective strategy educational leaders can pursue to create systemic improvements; conflict avoidance results not only in short-term flight from conflict, but it also produces a flight from change.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures which form the Different Viewpoints of this Area or Field**

Grassroots leaders long ago perceived the value of amplifying their message through print and visual media, the arts, and political theatre. The recent emergence of social media has led to advances in the extent to which grassroots movements can both gain influence and shape their public image (Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; Dessewffy & Nagy, 2016; Tye, Leong, Tan, Tan, & Khoo, 2018).

Critical theories, including critical feminist theory and critical race theory, provide a lens for examining grassroots leadership that represents a significant departure from the past. These approaches involve an analysis of the role of those who may pose a subdominant population *within* the broader subdominant community. They can lead to a greater appreciation of leaders who participated in grassroots leadership through strategies such as networking, developing consciousness, or organizing, rather than through more traditional leadership roles such as holding office or serving as a spokesperson (Bernal, 1998).

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

The following describes the significant assumptions that guide the content of this chapter.

First, conflict is often viewed negatively by educational leaders; instead, it should be viewed as a potential springboard for substantive change and improvement, particularly for students who have experienced injustice and bias. As has been asserted elsewhere, “diverging viewpoints handled effectively can expand perspectives and actually serve to spur innovation” (Hughes & Davidson, 2020a, p. 3).

Second, trust is essential for leaders, whether or not they are in a formal role of authority. Whereas educational leaders seek to build trust *after* they have been appointed to a position, grassroots leaders must first earn trust before they are capable of wielding influence (English & Ehrich, 2012). The critical lesson for educational leaders should be that meaningful change is dependent upon earned relational trust. Willie, Willard, and Ridini point out that “When confidence and trust occur simultaneously, there is mutual respect between dominant and subdominant people of power” (2008, p. 102). Shirley cites research findings that grassroots leadership through community organizing produces higher levels of trust between schools and community members (Shirley, 2009, p. 177).

Third, leadership and influence can come from many people and groups, not just from those in positions of authority (Foster, 1986; Harris, 2011; Hartley, 2007; Schultz & Galbraith, 1993). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins concluded that “School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed” (2008, p. 27). Hartley provides two explanations for the trend to distributed leadership: “the failure of the ‘charismatic hero’ associated with transformational leadership; and second, the greater complexity of the tasks which now beset school leaders” (2007, p. 206).

## Introduction

This chapter will analyze the study of grassroots leadership in practice, beginning with labor and civil rights movements of the early twentieth century. It will address what it means to be a grassroots leader, how grassroots leaders are distinguished from leaders in roles of authority, and how assumptions regarding grassroots leadership have evolved. The importance of a cause (typically an injustice) that captures the passions of followers will be integrated with theories of leadership that may reflect elements of grassroots leadership (authentic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, distributive leadership, etc.), and aspects of grassroots leadership that can be transferred to educational leadership. It will conclude with reflections on how current trends in grassroots leadership may lead and where new directions or discontinuities might emerge.

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## What It Means to be a Grassroots Leader

Willie et al. (2008) assert that, in order to understand grassroots leadership, one must understand the notion of power, along with the capacity of dominant and subdominant groups to wield power. Power is seen as “the capacity to coerce or persuade people to act in specific ways” (2008, p. 7). Both dominant and subdominant groups are needed for a well-ordered society, and each serves a role that complements the other. Social benefits accrue when these groups recognize their dependency and effectively negotiate these relationships. Willie and colleagues describe the give-and-take of this power-wielding relationship as follows:

Dominant people of power try to advance the goals and objectives of a community or collective by serving others in a generous way, giving more of their time, talent, and treasure than they are required to give. Subdominant people of power attempt to advance the goals and objectives of a community or collective by sacrificing on behalf of others in a magnanimous way that involves taking less than they are entitled to receive. (2008, p. 98)

A second element that helps to define grassroots leadership is that of collective action through community organizing. Shirley (2009) points to Saul Alinsky’s work in immigrant neighborhoods in the 1930s and the work of the Industrial Areas Foundation (*Industrial Areas Foundation*, n.d.) as examples of ways in which community organizing could produce effective grassroots-inspired change. Notes Shirley,

The emphasis by community organizers is not on an individual’s *human* capital, nor even on his or her *social* capital, but more on the development of *political* capital to change power relationships in a community, city, or state to empower the marginalized and disenfranchised. (Shirley, 2009, p. 174)

Community organizing involves grassroots leaders engaging with other community members and individuals in authority who can help bring improvements to communities. Shirley relates that “grassroots organizers generally prefer activating community

actors to develop ‘civic capacity’ to solve local problems” (2009, p. 180). Grassroots movements are organized around a cause or an injustice, which serve to clarify the values and principles of those who are inspired to participate. Without a shared purpose or issue, there would be no movement and no one to lead. Miller writes that

the major things that distinguish community organizing from other approaches to social change are its focus on power, the large-scale and continued involvement of people from the base, a continuing focus on leadership development, and the strategic role played by the professional organizer. (Miller, 2009, p. 44)

Varying examples of what constitutes a grassroots leader can be considered. There is the example of Medgar Evers, who in 1946 on his 21st birthday led a group of World War II veterans to face down violence in an attempt to exercise their right to vote (Dittmer, 1994). There is the example of Rosa Parks and other Black women of Montgomery, Alabama, who refused to yield their seats to white passengers, as well as pastors including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy who led the Montgomery bus boycott following the arrest of Rosa Parks (Willie, 2008). There is the example of countless volunteer community activists throughout the world who marshal and organize individuals and groups to engage with representatives of agencies or entities that hold some degree of power over peoples’ lives. There is the example of a faculty member who emerges through a formal organization to advocate for a cause of interest to other faculty members (Kezar, Bertram Gallant, & Lester, 2011). There is the “Tea Party” movement, fueled by racial resentment, that emerged following the election of President Obama in 2008 (Arceneaux & Nicholson, 2012). There are the youthful gun control activists who demanded and achieved a degree of legislative action following the killing of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018 (Brezenski, 2018). There is the example of the Black Lives Matter movement, that in 2020, has forced the USA to face the reality that “Too many citizens prefer to cling to brutal and unjust systems than to give up political power, the perceived benefits of white supremacy and an exploitive economic system” (Alexander, 2020, p. 1).

In their exhaustive case study of grassroots leadership, Willie et al. (2008) conclude that while the characteristics of grassroots leaders can continuously change, there are some common characteristics that emerge. Emotional intelligence and a strong sense of empathy are qualities common to most grassroots leaders. Effective grassroots leaders prefer to resolve conflict through education and negotiation rather than coercion. Society benefits when grassroots leaders pursue both strategies intended to enhance individuals’ lives and improve the community. When leaders are successful in building diverse alliances and coalitions, this increases the likelihood of successful collective action. Leaders’ use of data to frame and contextualize issues serves to mobilize community support for an issue. Successful grassroots leaders, “with the aid of the media, used personal experiences to provide a context for the public at large to understand harmful social problems” (Willie et al., 2008, p. 191).

English and Ehrich (2012) developed an original model of grassroots leadership describing approaches to change achieved through reform or refinement involving



either conflict or consensus. This model casts grassroots leadership in a manner that represents a discontinuity from the past and challenges traditional approaches toward educational leadership in graduate preparation programs. Their model involves a quadrant involving two methods to change (conflict and consent) along one axis, and two categories of change (reform and refinement) along the other axis. They view grassroots leaders as possessing four qualities: lack of a formal organizational or community role, concern related to the need for improvement or change, lack of institutional power, and focus on a cause. They advocate a perspective on leadership that “gains its inspiration from grassroots leadership that upholds the traditions and values of democracy and social justice” (2012, p. 100) and that exposes students of leadership to elements of grassroots leadership, including those which involve conflict or confrontation.

In their study of grassroots leaders, Creyton and Ehrich (2009) noted the extent to which leaders from a broad array of social sectors were motivated by the values and beliefs that guided their leadership activities. Grassroots leaders, generally speaking, are in their leadership roles because of a passion for a cause or an issue, often driven by a desire to correct an injustice or inequity. Similar motivations have been found to drive the work of recognized leaders in formal educational roles (Davidson & Hughes, 2019).

Bernal’s oral history of Latinas who were involved in grassroots leadership of school boycotts in 1968 known as the East Los Angeles School Blowouts identified five dimensions of grassroots leadership: networking, organizing, developing consciousness, holding elected or appointed office, or serving as a spokesperson (Bernal, 1998). These boycotts came to involve over ten thousand students and ultimately gained the support of Senator Robert Kennedy. Bernal asserts that traditional paradigms of leadership, which tend to favor those who serve in formal appointed or elective office or as spokespersons, fail to capture the leadership contributions of those who lead through the important grassroots functions of networking, organizing, and developing consciousness. Though the women in Bernal’s study also served as spokespersons and held office, they viewed these leadership dimensions as less influential than their efforts to organize through planning and attending events, developing consciousness by helping others gain awareness of injustices, or networking with others to build a base of support. She concludes that

there is something faulty in previous leadership paradigms that have not allowed us to acknowledge Chicanas as leaders in the 1968 Blowouts, the Chicano Movement, and in other grassroots movements. A cooperative leadership paradigm allows us to address the erroneous absence of Chicanas as participants and leaders in history and contemporary life. (Bernal, 1998, p. 136)

Kezar approaches the question of defining grassroots leadership by defining the “bottom-up” efforts of leaders on postsecondary campuses to navigate campus culture and power dynamics (2011; Kezar et al., 2011). Tactics used in these settings include strategies such as creating intellectual opportunities for debating issues of interest, offering professional development to raise consciousness and a sense of

vision, capitalizing on coursework and curricula to bring attention to issues, mentoring students, participating in search committees in an effort to hire issue-conscious colleagues, securing funding to support targeted issues, using data to tell a story, taking advantage of existing networks, and developing partnerships with stakeholders external to the institution. Citing Meyerson (2008), Kezar situates the tactics of college faculty and staff as tempered grassroots leadership operating below the radar until opportunity knocks (Kezar et al., 2011, p. 147).

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## How Grassroots Leaders are Distinguished From Leaders in Roles of Authority

A fundamental distinction between leaders in roles of authority and grassroots leaders has to do with differing views of conflict. Where school leaders often feel unprepared to address conflict and may be inclined to avoid it to protect the status quo (English & Ehrich, 2012; Hughes & Davidson, 2020a), avoiding conflict is not an option for the grassroots leader if change is to be achieved. While Swain has argued that the last few decades have brought a more consensus-oriented perspective to community organizing (Swain, 2001), recent worldwide protest movements, in solidarity with Americans protesting police brutality, have seemed to support the conclusion that significant societal change can only come through protest and outrage. English and Ehrich conclude that, depending on the particular context, nonviolent conflict has a legitimate role in bringing about change, yet is likely the change strategy that receives the least attention in leadership preparation programs (2012).

A second fundamental difference between those in formal leadership roles and grassroots leaders relates to trust. Grassroots leaders wield little influence unless they have a broad base of trust. In contrast, those in formal leadership roles may exercise authority even in the absence of trust. English and Ehrich argue that “grassroots leaders must build trust before any action is possible, whereas in formal organizations leaders may assume a position and then look to build trust” (2012, p. 89). Collective action within grassroots movements tends to build trust as like-minded individuals solidify their connectedness in pursuit of principles or a cause. Just as school leaders who are more likely to share decision-making authority are also more likely to enjoy high levels of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2014, 2017), there is research evidence related to community-based organizations supporting the notion that there is a positive correlation between community organizing and higher levels of trust between schools and community members (Shirley, 2009). Note English and Ehrich, “Trust is the essential glue to creating a cohesive community action organization from scratch and to sustain it over time” (2012, p. 89).

A third difference between grassroots and institutional leaders lies in their respective reliance on the distribution of leadership. Since grassroots leaders generally gain influence through their dedication to a movement or cause, they often tend

to view theirs as one voice among many and lay claim to no special place of privilege or authority. Institutionally appointed leaders, in contrast, are conferred a position of influence and power simply by virtue of being authority figures and are inclined to overvalue their expertise. Notes Shirley, “Educators often overstate technical considerations in educational change that advantage their own status and knowledge and minimize political and cultural factors that parents and community members seek to bring to their relationships with schools” (2009, p. 182). To picture the distinction between grassroots and institutional leaders, consider the example of Rosa Parks. Mrs. Parks was one of many Black women who refused to relinquish their seats on the Montgomery bus system to white people. The community’s overwhelming response to her subsequent arrest provides insights into Mrs. Parks’ leadership qualities. Charles Willie wrote that

the communitywide response by Blacks to the arrest of Mrs. Parks was probably due to several happenings in the past: the increasing number of black women verbally and physically abused by white bus drivers, the love and respect that all had for Mrs. Parks, and her extraordinary voluntary service to the NAACP as secretary and overseer of its youth organization. (2008, p. 24)

Smeed et al. (2009) provided an analysis that is helpful for thinking about political influence as viewed through the lens of grassroots leadership, by drawing a contrast between pluralists, elitists, and corporatists. Pluralists see power as being widely distributed, with groups competing around decisions and outcomes. Elitists divide society into those who rule and those who are ruled. Corporatists “champion tripartite decision-making” (Smeed et al., 2009, p. 29) between government, business interests, and worker interests. Although recent years have brought recognition to the importance of shared authority to education leadership, school leaders can learn a great deal from grassroots leaders’ focus on the democratization of decision-making and distribution of leadership.

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## **How Assumptions Regarding Grassroots Leadership have Evolved**

Earlier in this chapter, several examples of grassroots leaders were cited. The examples included activists of the US civil rights era such as Medgar Evers, who was murdered in 1963 for his advocacy for civil rights for blacks, and Rosa Parks, whose refusal to relinquish her seat led to the successful Montgomery bus boycott, as well as contemporary activists including advocates for gun control and those involved in the Black Lives Matter movement. Scholars of grassroots leadership have documented both confrontational and more conciliatory approaches that served to educate and advocate while producing results ranging from the incremental to the unprecedented.

Sixty years ago, Augusto Boal created a process of participatory theatre in which the audience members could engage during a performance and propose a different storyline, which would then be carried out by the actors (Boal, 2006;

Schaedler, 2010). Authors have described how participatory theatre can serve to constitute an “artful disruption of power dynamics [that] transforms citizens into change agents” (Burns, Mukisa, Sanyu, & Muwanguzi, 2017, p. 352). The use of forum theatre effectively provides a relatively safe setting through which participants can tell previously untold stories of injustices. Similarly, *Jana Sanskriti*, a cultural and political theatre movement (Mills, 2009), has been described as a grassroots effort in India which involves “oppositional practices that present participants in rural Bengal with a significant space for self-organization” (Mohan, 2004, p. 179) to bring attention to women’s issues. “Building trust in community outreach calls for a response to immediate felt needs — coupled with a long-range vision of transformation that includes everyone” (Burns et al., 2017, p. 359). Mohan speaks of the importance of bringing together symbolic interactionism and historical sociology to spur grassroots change (2004). The benefits of theatrical media relate to

the value that learning, imagination, and human interaction hold for people whose days are filled with mundane and individual struggles to survive a challenging environment and for those who have historically been beneficiaries of a power that violates human life in myriad ways. (Mohan, 2004, p. 210)

Asserting that their book on grassroots leadership “opens a new chapter” (Willie et al., 2008, p. 18) on the subject, Willie et al. argue that “the most effective leaders of grassroots movements are people who have experienced life in communities of both dominant and subdominant people” (2008, p. 18). This notion that good grassroots leaders are individuals who are capable of working at the margins of both dominant and subdominant groups, empathizing with the needs and concerns of each, is certainly not embraced as a universal truth within contemporary grassroots movements. Instead, there increasingly appears to be a belief that social injustices are meaningfully confronted only when individuals in power have been forced to a reckoning as the result of mass outrage, conflict, or protest.

Willie and colleagues (2008) conclude that while grassroots leaders tend to focus on horizontal linkages and relationships among local stakeholders, those linkages that involve aligning vertically with potential allies outside the local community may be essential to achieve success. “Making alliances and building coalitions” (Willie et al., 2008, p. 16) both horizontally and vertically are necessary to produce societal change. Efforts in this area are most fruitful when initiated early in a change initiative. Willie and colleagues note that “dialogue is most efficacious when it is introduced during the planning stage of social change rather than after a decisive conclusion has been made” (Willie et al., 2008, p. 103).

Twenty years ago, Swain (2001) described an ongoing shift away from confrontational approaches and toward more consensus-oriented tactics beginning in the 1980s, a change which he attributed in part to rising representation of Blacks in the middle class, diminished segregation in housing, the lifting of school desegregation orders, increasing prosperity, and increasing acceptance of diversity. Weary of

hoping for change through consensus, and driven by rising concerns in the present day about economic inequality, social injustice, the murder of Black men at the hands of police officers, and systemic racism, contemporary grassroots leaders appear to be embracing the notion that social change will only come about through tactics that include productive conflict.

As an alternative to productive conflict, some grassroots movements have sometimes cast protest votes that represent a commitment to principle, but nonetheless amount to a futile and counterproductive choice. The history of third-party presidential candidates in the U.S. represents such a choice. When their efforts at collaboration with like-minded groups have proven to be unfruitful, grassroots leaders sometimes abandon efforts at engagement or coalition-building. Rather than accept a role that would constitute a junior partnership in a broader governing coalition, some grassroots movements pursue purity over compromise. The outcome can then be entirely contrary to the group's interests. In 2000 and 2016, the candidacies of Green Party candidates Ralph Nader and Jill Stein, respectively, plausibly delivered electoral victories to George W. Bush and Donald Trump. No one could reasonably argue that these two presidents' views aligned with the Green Party platform. Other actions that grassroots movements may pursue that are akin to a third-party vote, though perhaps not as damaging, include abandonment of the cause, withdrawal from negotiation, and silent protest.

Changes that are currently afoot in the USA give weight to the argument that where conciliatory approaches have proven to be ineffective over time, grassroots movements must resort to confrontation and productive conflict to achieve desired ends. Less than two weeks after a black man named George Floyd died in the custody of a Minneapolis police officer who kneeled on his neck for nearly nine minutes, grassroots expressions of outrage and broad-based demands for law enforcement reforms led to calls to "defund the police" (Rushin & Michalski, 2019) as well as the destruction and removal of Confederate monuments across the USA (Fisher, 2020). On June 27, 2020, Princeton University's trustees, stating that his "racist thinking and policies make him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college" (President Eisgruber's Message to Community on Removal of Woodrow Wilson Name from Public Policy School and Wilson College, 2020), voted to remove Woodrow Wilson's name from the school's facilities. This action by the trustees appeared to support the effectiveness of the tactics of conflict and confrontation, as notably, the trustees had declined to do so just four years earlier after activists had occupied the President's office in protest. By June 28, 2020, the Mississippi legislature voted to replace the state flag, the last in the nation to feature the Confederate battle emblem (Shammas, 2020). Financial considerations and pressures from donors and investors likely played a substantial role in these decisions. It is presumed that social changes still unfolding may lend greater support to this argument about the effectiveness of tactics involving conflict. Given America's history related to racial injustice, it is also conceivable that a substantial backlash of opposition to the above changes may yet come.

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## The Importance of a Cause to Create a Movement

As has been pointed out throughout this chapter, a cause is central to producing grassroots movements and grassroots leadership. The cause can focus on a long-simmering injustice, and, increasingly, movements can be sparked by widely circulated video documenting a horrifying act of violence carried out by vigilantes or law enforcement authorities. Absent a shared cause or issue, grassroots leadership would not exist.

Grassroots movements “grow out of need” (Willie et al., 2008, p. 171). Political and social movements that produced progress in basic civil rights in the United States happened because the pernicious effects of segregation and discrimination which profoundly affected the livelihoods of entire communities could no longer be tolerated. The struggle to address these wrongs by providing fair access to education, housing, voting, and equal protection under the law persists to this day. In his “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King Jr. captured the pain of countless injustices to help readers to grasp this particular cause:

When you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity . . . never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’ then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait (King, 1963).

It is a tragedy and an example of collective moral failure that Dr. King’s words sound as relevant today as they did three-quarters of a century ago. Castagno wrote, “Each of us, individually and collectively, needs to be held accountable for the role we play in maintaining and reinforcing injustice” (2014, p. 12).

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## Elements of Grassroots Leadership that can be Transferred to Educational Leadership

One of the reasons why there is merit in examining grassroots leadership is that such an examination can shed light on those attributes and qualities of grassroots leaders that enable them to gain influence, despite their lack of role authority. This could help produce educational leadership that is more “effectual and trustworthy” (English & Ehrich, 2012, p. 86) than leadership that is tied to position or rank. English and Ehrich (2012) point out that, absent leadership skills or qualities, grassroots leaders would have no followers because they possess no formal role with the accompanying power that produces ready followership. They note that “much can be gained by being aware of the tactics and strategies used by grassroots leaders who depend on influence as opposed to power” (2012, pp. 86–87).

While extant theories of leadership provide quite useful guidance for leaders and those involved in leadership preparation programs, there is merit in giving particular attention to those theoretical dimensions that overlap with theories of grassroots leadership. Some examples of these areas of overlap are cited here. Transformational

leadership models point to the importance of building capacity in others, a strategy which is ultimately dependent on the relational trust that is so essential for grassroots leaders. Greenleaf's (2002) views of servant leaders as those who are attentive to the needs of others, and who, through being alert to such requirements, become followers themselves, evoke the grassroots leader's dependence on influence and trust over power and authority. Grassroots leadership's focus on civic responsibility and community engagement is also reflected in models of authentic leadership, defined by Begley as

a genuine kind of leadership –a hopeful, open-ended, visionary and creative response to social circumstances, as opposed to the more traditional dualistic portrayal of management and leadership practices characteristic of now obsolete and superseded research literature on effective principal practices. (2003, p. 1)

Distributive leadership's focus on collective wisdom and shared authority reflects the grassroots leader's focus on the democratization of decision-making and distribution of leadership.

The lessons from grassroots leadership cited earlier in this chapter regarding conflict, trust, and shared power and influence are all relevant to school leadership.

- As has been noted previously, productive nonviolent conflict has a legitimate role in creating social and institutional change, and school leaders would benefit from an improved focus on conflict in leadership preparation programs (English & Ehrich, 2012; Hughes & Davidson, 2020a, b).
- Trust “binds organizational participants to one another” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 18) and, as reported by Shirley, school-community trust can be an outcome of effective grassroots leadership (2009, p. 177).
- Shared power reflects an implicit recognition that true power lies in a common vision, collective wisdom, and a joint cause. Influence gained through authentic actions intended to correct an injustice produces genuine moral authority that far surpasses the authority associated with position.

The moral leadership that is reflected in grassroots leadership points to the need for a substantial shift in leadership preparation programs toward issues of equity and social justice. This chapter has provided examples of leaders driven by a commitment to address an injustice. Leadership coursework must be carefully scrutinized to ensure that essential conversations on historical and contemporary injustices are not crowded out by overly technocratic content (Crow, Day, & Møller, 2017). Leadership preparation programs have a role to play in developing leaders that are ready and willing to challenge existing injustices. Shirley writes that,

The consequences of neglectful policies and values injurious to children spill over into schools and communities on a daily basis and suggest that educators have a civic responsibility, as part of their vocation, to remedy the most egregious forms of social injustice that afflict the most vulnerable members of their schools and communities. (Shirley, 2009, p. 182)



School leaders are being tested today as never before, as they cope with the effects of the global pandemic that has required school closures and an abrupt transition to universal online schooling. Given all of the challenges they face, including and beyond a global pandemic, their ability to address these challenges will require a significant expansion of their already-extensive engagement with their communities. As Shirley notes, they will need novel approaches

to network not only with one another but also to reach out to community members to confront common problems, to share expertise, and to slowly but surely transform schools from islands of bureaucracy to centers of civic engagement. The interdependent relationship between democracy and education may remain fractious and demanding, but it also remains indispensable. (Shirley, 2009, p. 183)

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

The future of grassroots leadership worldwide will undoubtedly depend on leaders' abilities to garner the attention of western media, while successfully overcoming the potential for such media to exploit and appropriate such figures. Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan rose in prominence and influence following the attempt to murder her because of her message about girls' access to schooling and because of media interest in her narrative, but despite the unquestionable value of this message, her rise in influence was not free from criticism (Ryder, 2015). Likewise, Greta Thunberg, who went from skipping school and holding a sign reading "School Strike for Climate" in 2018 to be Time magazine's "Person of the Year" in 2019 (Alter, Haynes, & Worland, 2019), gained a worldwide audience with her message about the need to address climate change, but she too faced caustic criticism. While operating on a much smaller scale, even local grassroots leaders depend upon the media to amplify their message.

Predicting the future of grassroots leadership during a time of significant social upheaval and change is a perilous exercise. If present examples of successful grassroots leadership are representative of what is to come, then it is reasonable to anticipate that grassroots movements will employ more confrontational and uncompromising tactics. We will need school leaders who are equipped to effectively understand and engage with those with conflicting views.

As noted earlier in this chapter, in 2016, Princeton University's trustees rejected a proposal to remove the name of an avowed racist from school facilities; four years later, they supported the proposal. In 2001, two-thirds of Mississippi's voters chose to continue use of a state flag bearing an image of the Confederate battle emblem, an emblem first officially embraced by post-Reconstruction white supremacists nearly 30 years after the end of the Civil War. In the summer of 2020, the state of Mississippi elected to eliminate the image from the flag. In both of these examples, it is likely that the potential loss of significant financial investments may have provided the inspiration, which may lead to more sophisticated and creative ways to pressure businesses and mobilize supporters. While both examples may ultimately



be more symbolic than substantive, the fact that these long-sought changes took place at all will likely provide inspiration for future grassroots movements.

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# The Role of Prototypicality in Educational Leadership

# 20

Tuncer Fidan and Pinar Ayyıldız

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## Abstract

Educational leadership studies often portray schools as homogeneous professional communities that automatically and willingly endorse the leadership of school principals. For this reason, leadership preparation programs usually include a static set of administrative, technical, and financial skills necessary to operate schools and prompt followers (in-school stakeholders) to engage in actions toward pre-determined goals. However, schools are not usually homogeneous communities, but rather they involve informal social groups who potentially have different expectations about the traits and behaviors of school principals. This also suggests that there can be different evaluations about the leadership of the same school principal. In other words, competencies acquired in leadership preparation programs can transform school principals into leaders only in the eyes of social groups whose expectations are met through those competencies. At this point, it should be noted that formal authority does not always bring about leadership and that school principals must get the endorsement of followers to attain leadership status. To be

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more precise, leadership in schools is co-constructed by school principals and followers rather than being granted by formal authority. Accordingly, relational competencies are needed to create an (if not the) appropriate context through relationship building for the construction of leadership. The preparation of educational leaders is solely not the work of ensuring school principals are equipped with the skills they need for their formal roles. They should first gain the relational skills that can help with the approval of their leadership by social groups in schools possibly carrying rather different leadership expectations.

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**Keywords**

Prototypicality · Leadership categorization theory · Group identification · Leadership prototypes · Leadership effectiveness · Leadership preparation · Relational skills

**The Field of Memory**

The study of leadership used to be through the study of traits of leaders. In the past leadership studies were centered on leaders not followers. The assumption that “leaders are born, not made” epitomizes the main focus of leadership studies in the past.

**The Field of Presence**

Taking a glance at the relevant literature, the role of followers - in-school stakeholders in this case - in the construction of educational leadership has been elaborated to some extent. Or at least they are depicted as individuals to be persuaded by school principals, as designated (or partial) leaders, to reach predetermined goals rather than fully passive recipients of leaders’ or organizations’ actions. It can be argued that the more the traits and behaviors of school principals meet the expectations of followers, the more probable they become successful in their persuasion attempts.

**The Field of Concomitance**

The notion of prototype lies at the core of categorization theory in psychology. Categorization theory defines conceptual categories in terms of a certain artifact or the most central member of a category instead of unique features of overall members. The more an entity is deemed as a prototype of a category, the more common features it shares with other members of that category and the less with the members of opposite categories (Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976). In addition to this, prototypes represent the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that best define social groups, which place them at the core of group identification, and self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory is a theory in social psychology that describes how and when individuals define themselves as individuals and as part of group entities and studies the influence of this variability in self-perception (“I” to “we”) for understandings of behavior and mind (Turner & Reynolds, 2011).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Even though, the effects of followers in the approval and evaluation of the leadership of designated leaders have been supported by empirical studies in the related literature (e.g., Platow, Haslam, Foddy, & Grace, 2003; Rast, Hogg, & van Knippenberg, 2018), educational leadership studies still mostly hold the assumption that school principals, as designated leaders, automatically become leaders when they are appointed to schools. Furthermore, leadership preparation programs are predominantly developed for the acquisition of skills necessary for formal roles rather than competencies that are required for the co-construction of leadership by school principals and followers.

### **Critical Assumptions**

It is highly probable that there exist informal social groups in schools with different expectations about traits and behaviors of school principals. For this reason, the leadership of school principals should not be expected to be unanimously and unwaveringly endorsed by followers (in-school stakeholders). Moreover, different informal social groups tend to make different evaluations about the same school principal for the same reason. Accordingly, leadership preparation programs aiming the acquisition of contextless one-size-fits-all type competencies necessary for enacting formal roles and operating schools should not always be expected to turn school principals into leaders. In addition to such competencies, leadership preparation programs should include relational competencies that can enable school principals to construct leadership together with followers through relationship building.

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## **Introduction**

Allegedly, leadership is the most captivating subject for the educational administration community. The focus of educational leadership research, like general leadership studies, was mostly on the traits that a leader “must have.” The origins of this focus can be traced back to a well-known old maxim: “the leaders are born, not made.” That was partially true though. Innate traits, such as intelligence, can give some individuals advantage over others. What is more, culture adds many traits to individuals through social interactions. Howbeit, neither is leading a context-free activity nor are leaders universal biological and cultural products who can freely navigate through contexts independent of unique and ever-changing aspects of these contexts (Conger, 2004).

Schools are the main contexts of the educational leadership. The hierarchical structure of schools gives school principals formal authority over teachers and school activities. On the other hand, the technical side of teaching and learning is highly linked to the rapport between teachers and learners and creates autonomous spheres within classrooms (Orton & Weick, 1990). The formal authority turns school principals into designated leaders (or partial leaders). The existence of teachers working within their autonomous spheres requires complete leaders who can both run daily

activities of schools in an organized manner and encourage teachers to participate in school works. These works mainly include administrative and instructional tasks, such as school improvement projects, curriculum development, textbook selection, professional development programs, assessments of student learning, supplementary programs for students, extracurricular school activities, Parent-Teacher Association, and the like (Harris, 2005). School principals must acquire necessary skills to become complete leaders (English, 2007). These skills are usually determined by ministries/departments of education or professional administrative associations. Even they are sometimes dictated as standards, which has led to the homogenization of university curricula about educational leadership and the involvement of for-profit organizations in leadership preparation. Furthermore, leadership programs offered by these organizations generally involve a static set of administrative, technical, and financial skills (assumed to be) necessary to operate schools and prompt school stakeholders to realize the predetermined goals (English, 2003). They mostly overlook an important aspect of leadership: educational leadership is about not only the leader but also the interactions with followers in schools (English, 2007).

In school settings, the term follower mainly represents in-school stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students. They are not merely passive recipients of school principals' actions, but rather they act in a self-determining fashion. They can choose to enthusiastically support their principals or stay silent by neither participating nor objecting to (their) decisions. Followers significantly differ in terms of approving and evaluating the leadership of school principals (Brown, 2018). Followers often have different expectations of what kind of traits leaders should have and how they should behave. The more the traits and behaviors of school principals align with the expectations of followers, the easier they can get their endorsement and the less their mistakes are noticed. This suggests that even followers in culturally uniform schools are not always supposed to react to their principals' actions in the same manner, which requires school principals to construct their leadership together with different follower groups with different expectations (Coyle & Foti, 2015).

It can be observed that the focus of leadership development is shifting from prescribed leadership skills to the co-construction of leadership by school principals and followers. This entails the examination of what kind of expectations followers have in their minds about traits and behaviors of school principals and which factors are influential in shaping these expectations. Undoubtedly, diversifying expectations of followers give rise to varying leadership ratings for the same principals, which also leads to consequences about the preparation processes of educational leaders. The following sections elaborate on the theoretical background of the effects of followers in leadership construction and the current situation in schools.

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## **The Role of Prototypicality in Leadership**

The role of followers in leader–follower interactions can be portrayed by using the notion of prototype. The notion of prototype lies at the core of categorization theory in psychology. It refers to the most central member of a conceptual category, such as

leader and follower (Rosch et al., 1976). Categorization theory defines conceptual categories in terms of a certain artifact or the most central member of a category instead of general features. The more an entity is deemed as a prototype of a category, the more common features it shares with other members of that category and the less with the members of opposite categories. People tend to find prototypes attractive, which renders them potentially effective in a wide range of issues ranging from friend choice to leadership (Rosch et al., 1976).

A developmental parallel to categorization theory in psychology has occurred in leadership studies. In this direction, implicit leadership theories were developed to depict the influence of followers in the leadership process. Implicit leadership theories involve a set of theories aiming to explain the effects of mental representations held by followers that ensure discerning leaders from non-leaders (Lord & Hall, 2003). These theories posit that individuals construct mental representations of their environments through which they interpret the world and control their own behaviors. According to these theories, members of a group have implicit expectations and assumptions about personal traits and behaviors that a leader must possess. These expectations and assumptions are dubbed as leader prototypes, and they play a key role in followers' approval and evaluation of a leader (Medvedeff & Lord, 2007). Leader prototypes lie at the core of leader categorization theory, one of the implicit leadership theories. According to leader categorization theory, prototypes can help individuals make distinctions between leader and non-leader categories and create expectations about the traits and behaviors of leaders. Perceiving individuals as leaders is basically making categorizations by examining their appropriateness to existing mental categories (leader/non-leader or leader/follower). In its simplest form, the theory implicates identification of an individual's appropriateness to the leadership category based on the prototypes held by followers (Foti, Fraser, & Lord, 1982).

According to leadership categorization theory, leadership perception of followers can be shaped by two processes. The first one is determining the fit between traits and behaviors of a potential leader and followers' leader prototypes, that is, the recognition of a leader by followers. Good fit usually gives rise to high leadership ratings whereas poor fit to lower ratings. The second process is the inference of the leadership from the events and effects incurred from the actions of a potential leader. The more traits and behaviors of potential leaders are associated with the good performance, the more probable they can be deemed as prototypical. In sum, in both cases followers play the dominant role in building leadership perceptions. Potential leaders can have a chance to attain a (or "the") leadership status if their traits and behaviors are perceived as appropriate for leadership by the followers (Lord & Hall, 2003).

Leadership categorization theory postulates that the position of a potential leader in the authority hierarchy and informal groups in an organization can shape leadership perceptions of followers. To illustrate, thanks to their hierarchical status and authority, school principals can be accepted as leaders easier than teachers can do (Lord & Hall, 2003). On the other hand, the existence of informal groups in a school complexifies the process of the endorsement of a school principal as a leader. Members of a social group usually regard one of them as more effective, trustworthy, and charismatic than members of other groups, and their unfair behaviors draw



relatively less reactions. Particularly in schools, where informal groups are highly effective, school principals being perceived as “one of us” rather than “one of them” can facilitate their endorsement as leaders. This situation, on the other hand, might render some individuals disadvantageous due to their inborn traits. Those who can reach school principalship positions must engage in struggles in which their small mistakes are harshly criticized, and achievements and success are underestimated (Platow et al., 2003).

Like leadership endorsement, group identification and culture are influential in evaluating the effectiveness of school principals. In a group with a specific culture, leaders exhibiting traits and behaviors consistent with leadership prototypes of this group’s members are usually evaluated more positively when group identification is strong (Turner & Reynolds, 2011). Group identification leads to shared perceptions about what characteristics and behaviors should be found in a leadership prototype that will enable that group to achieve its goals (van Knippenberg, 2000). Moreover, it provides the internalization of group interests by the members. In this way, members see group interests as their own and use similar criteria in their leader evaluations. In light of these discussions, it is possible to state that prototypical leaders are individuals with appropriate and desirable characteristics and behaviors. They have also gained the members’ confidence regarding the belief that they can protect the group’s interests in the best way. While this situation requires non-prototypical leaders to gain the trust of followers through group-oriented actions such as self-sacrifice and benevolence, it offers prototypical leaders the chance to be perceived as effective without engaging in such actions (van Knippenberg, 2011). In a school accommodating diverse groups with different leadership prototypes, the consistence of the school principal’s traits and behaviors with leadership prototypes of groups may vary, which may lead to different evaluations about the leadership of the same person (Rast et al., 2018).

In summation, as pinpointed by leader categorization theory, followers’ leadership prototypes mainly include expectations about leaders’ inborn traits, such as gender and race, and perceived behaviors. This fact primarily necessitates the elaboration of leader prototypes and their effects on evaluating leadership effectiveness. Then, why leadership prototypes mostly invalidate leadership preparation programs based on standardized skills and entail an approach based on leader–follower interactions need to be analyzed.

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## **Leader Prototypes and Leader Effectiveness in Educational Organizations**

Taking a closer look at the educational leadership literature, it can be seen that schools are mostly dealt with as if they were homogeneous professional communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018; Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010). In these studies, the majority of administrators and teachers are regarded as they share the same cultural background (Swartz, 2003; Walker & Dimmock, 2002) and ready to receive contextless homogeneous leadership practices and prescriptions (Mertkan, Arsan,

Inal Cavlan, & Onurkan Aliusta, 2017). In this respect, educational leadership is generally portrayed as if leaders (mostly school principals) and their followers (teachers, parents, and students) were members of a single formal group and informal social groups in schools had low or no effect on the endorsement of the leadership of school principals (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

However, schools do not consist of only formal groups such as administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Physical and demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation, transform contemporary schools into heterogeneous communities and an interaction area of many informal groups with distinctive cultures (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). This fact implies that social groups in schools have their unique cultures and identities; therefore, they can hold different leadership prototypes. Social identities of culturally different groups and their collective experiences related to these identities may lead them to make their own “good leader” descriptions different from that of the dominant social group in a society. Without doubt, it is inevitable that the dominant culture in the society can affect the leadership perceptions of social groups in the school; however, as the marginalization levels increase, it can be expected that the leadership prototypes of culturally different groups will also differ (Chin, 2013). Here marginalization refers to culturally different groups’ exclusion from access to and participation in the dominant culture in terms of opportunities, resources, and rights (Collins, 1989).

Another enduring setback in the field of educational leadership, aside from the previously divulged one, is arguably the researchers’ and field members’ tendency to predicate that school principals - as legally authorized persons - are automatically leaders in the eyes of followers (in-school stakeholders) despite the probability that many school principals are not seen as leaders by followers (Alvesson, 2020; Fidan, Ayyıldız, & Kurt, 2021). This indeed is a rather fallacious thinking and an act since leadership is to be taken to a great degree as a matter of follower decisions and selections. Leadership is co-constructed by school principals and followers through a series of interactions of which frequency and duration are largely determined by followers’ leader prototypes (Bogotch, Bauer, & Su-Keene, 2019). On that note, questioning whether the school principal or any “candidate” to be a leader actually becomes and remains as “the” leader for the followers is vital. This situation shadows forth a couple of core elements of educational leadership, which can be enlisted as: (1) legitimacy of power does not always bring about leadership, (2) leadership is indeed a subject and at times even a struggle for being acquiesced by the followers, and (3) the struggle comes forward in varying extents based upon the prototypes that followers have in their minds. This also suggests that school principals are “doomed” to be subjected to continuous tests by followers to check if and/or what extent they fit with their expectations. This conveys that leadership is an “awarded title” at the end of a process of appraisal carried out by different follower groups and they may not approve the leadership of a principal equally (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

The spotted delusions (homogeneity of school communities and automatically approved leadership of school principals) in the field of educational administration,

which are identified in the above paragraphs, signalize two critical strands of educational leadership: the first one is the existence of informal follower groups in a school and the other is the similarities and differences between their expectations from leaders. In this regard, it is vital to lay out the two types of schools. (1) The first type includes schools with multiple leadership prototypes. In these schools, strong group identifications and different leadership prototypes exist despite the effects of the dominant culture on the in-school social dynamics. (2) The second type includes schools with a dominant leadership prototype. In these schools, leader prototypes are shaped with the effects of the dominant culture still with the existence of in-school social groups and informal in- and out-group relationships.

### **Schools with Multiple Leadership Prototypes**

It is indeed understood that there are schools in numerous parts of the world in which informal social groups with strong group identification may hold their own leader prototypes despite the effects of the dominant culture of the society. Leader prototypes are closely related with group identification as group members tend to approve leaders who represent the group's values, interests, and beliefs. Therefore, the stronger the group identification becomes, the more probable the members support leaders who embody the group identification rather than that of the organization (schools in this case) (Turner & Reynolds, 2011; van Knippenberg, 2011).

In-group leader prototypes alter under the influence of sociocultural environment at macro and micro levels. Macro-level environment includes statewide or nationwide cultural and social changes that influence the relationships between in-school groups. Micro-level environment involves changes resulting from contingent elements (e.g., the quality of relationships between groups, actions of school principals, and the features of tasks) of the institutions. With the intent of concretizing the state of affairs of the first group of schools, where social groups have different leader prototypes in defiance of the effects of the mainstream culture, it can be accentuated that these schools are the ones where group membership and group identification are more influential and important than school membership and school identification for followers (Turner & Reynolds, 2011). In these schools, individuals whose traits and behaviors are relatively more consistent with the leader prototypes of the group members are more likely to be seen as leaders. This would mean there might be the development of a multitude of prototypes by groups in schools with heterogeneous populations and thusly individuals can become leaders as long as they prove themselves as close to as the prototypes of these groups reflecting the values and norms of the groups and to the extent that they epitomize the group members' social identities. Groups choose their leaders among the members that can best preserve, serve for, and represent their collective identities and who can be their "one of us" (Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013).

Due to this fact, it is highly likely that informal leaders emerge from each group with strong group identification along with the designated leader, namely, the school principal. In such situations, group members have different in-group and

out-group leadership categorizations, which give rise to different leadership prototypes for informal leaders and school principals (Neubert & Taggar, 2004). When groups are marginalized by the school administration or relationships between groups become tense, the in-group leadership prototypes get more prominent than out-group prototypes. This suggests more intergroup discriminations and lower leadership ratings for school principals. In this case, there is a negative correlation between the endorsement of in-group informal leaders and out-group designated leaders. While in-group leaders' approval ratings ascend, those of out-group leaders descend (Waldzus, Mummendey, & Wenzel, 2005). School principals are still endorsed by the members of the different groups to some extent even in tense situations. Withal, the co-construction of leadership in schools through leader–follower interactions turns into a complicated process in the event that members of a group regard the endorsement of the leadership of a school principal besides their natural leader as a deviation from group norms (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003).

To illustrate, Amit and Bar-Lev (2013) state that multiple leadership prototypes and thus multiple informal leaders can be seen in multicultural organizations in which culturally different groups operate in the same settings. Furthermore, it was found in a study by Dugan, Komives, and Segar (2009) with college and university students in the USA that racial discriminations in the past are effective in the construction of leader prototypes in educational organizations. They confirmed that Black students have leadership prototypes emphasizing collective identity more than those of other students. Leadership prototypes of Black students stress the values of consciousness of self, citizenship, and change more than those of other students (Dugan et al., 2009). A weak group has developed cooperative leadership practices as a means of struggling against discriminations. This can also be attributed to the other Black members of schools, i.e., teachers relating it to their leader prototypes for the school principal (Dugan et al., 2009). In minority schools, individuals being seen as leaders provided they do not share the language, ethnicity, or religious background of the members is almost out of question. This is relevant to the fact that the school itself constitutes “a subgroup of the society” and organizational membership indeed is impactful in shaping followers' leadership prototypes and determining the leader in a collective fashion. All of these result from in-group prototypicality, which is related to the sum of qualities that social groups would like to find in the(ir) leader and hence cannot be realized by individuals merely via following a predetermined and prescribed rules pertaining to traits or behaviors so as to be able to come to the fore (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011).

It should be noted with caution that prototypes are not rigid stereotypes and are inclined to change through interactions between social groups. Meaningful interactions between a social group and school context (school principal and other groups) have the potential to yield positive results even though there are tense relationships among groups. Particularly, this process is facilitated when there is a consensus on the statuses of leadership prototypes of the school principal and informal leaders (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is because holding different leadership prototypes does not always mean to have a discriminatory stance against others. It can only produce

discriminatory actions when these actions are justified by individual values, beliefs, and ideologies. Additionally, complexity alleviates the power of in-group leadership prototypes. Should the composition of a group become heterogeneous and group identity involves relatively more features, group members become more tolerant of the school principal (Waldzus et al., 2003). At this point Eagly and Chin (2010) remark that leaders have become more dependent on followers for effective performance as the complexity of their tasks has escalated. This development has given rise to increased leader–follower interactions and followers’ undertaking some of the traits and behaviors of leaders. In the same manner, demographic changes and complexifying group compositions have led changes in expectations about leader traits and behaviors (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

### **Schools with a Dominant Leadership Prototype**

In the majority of schools, school administrators and in-school stakeholders are mostly the members of the mainstream culture in a society. Undoubtedly, their leadership prototypes are constructed and refined over time under the influence of the dominant culture of the society in which, and more importantly for which, schools operate. In most cases, school principals, as designated leaders, are the end results of that culture and as a matter of fact entities that represent that very culture at the same time being agents aiding in sustaining the codes of this culture. That culture does steer the approbation mechanism of the followers, and this is true for many cases especially in the schools in which the majority of members identify themselves more with the school than their groups (Maxcy, 1998). This may grow into a deeper issue especially at lower levels where teachers and school principals are expected, by parents and other members of the society, to set examples with their traits and behaviors for youngsters. In these instances, status beliefs are worth mentioning. Status beliefs refer to “widely shared cultural beliefs that people who belong to one social group are more esteemed and competent than those who belong to another social group” (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000, p. 580).

Ridgeway (2001) divulges status beliefs with reference to groups’ social status in the society that is connected to factors like gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, educational and socioeconomic background, and profession. In status beliefs, cultural assumptions about the position of a social group in reference to the others are legitimized through judgments on the differences among the competence levels of the members of these groups. This in time causes status beliefs to evolve into stereotypical thinking that argues some groups are more pressing and competent than the others. It is also crucial to note that group identities and group status are socially constructed convictions and thereupon are subject to change in time and they can also differ from one society to another. For instance, the intersection of physical traits, such as race, sexual orientation and gender, can give rise to a favorable situation for White heterosexual males. This can give them an advantageous position in the attainment of leadership status (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Ridgeway, 2003). Furthermore, it is clear that the maneuver of stereotyping does not

always come into view in the form of stereotyping of weak or minority groups by dominant groups. Self-stereotyping, e.g., of females, persons of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and handicapped people may also be compelling, which results in attributing leadership (qualities) to individuals representing the dominant culture. This implies that these groups tend to evaluate White heterosexual male leaders more positively than the leaders belonging to their own groups (Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, & Huynh, 2014; Morton, 2017; Toh & Leonardelli, 2012).

In this regard, individuals generally do not have prototypes suitable for non-traditional leaders, such as women and minority group members. Such leaders are included in different categories, and evaluations about them are conducted in accordance with these categories. Followers have difficulty in approving the leadership of school principals who have non-prototypical traits and behaviors. The behaviors of these people are less approved by their followers and consequently they are evaluated as ineffective or less effective leaders than the prototypical ones (Helgstrand & Stuhlmacher, 1999). For example, in countries like Turkey where the majority of the citizens are Muslims it is almost inconceivable that a gay school principal is acknowledged by followers given that Islam prohibits homosexuality and teaching professionals are regarded as role models for the whole society (Köse & Demir, 2014). In a similar vein, educational workplaces have most often been defined as environments where the vast majority of workers (teachers as followers) are women yet where not a proportionate share of school principalship positions has been attained by these women and in which females are underrepresented in promoted posts, across all education phases. On the other hand, this usually does not lead to any crucial differences in the endorsement of school principals in terms of gender (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996).

As concerns how prototypes are shaped in the minds of followers in schools, one of the vitally essential statements to be made is that whatever is in the eye of the beholder, viz., the follower when it comes to evaluating the leadership of school principals with their traits and behaviors, this procedure becomes wholly an outcome, a product of the culture regardless of the fact that it is (also) the subculture of the group that the follower belongs to or the prevailing one that surrounds the school in and outside. With a view to mitigating the case with the schools particularly from the followers' perspective, indulging in the agenda of group members, that is to say followers, can be a good starting point; however, "we cannot know the extent to which each prototypical attribute individually contributes to the outcomes, or which prototypical attributes are most relevant for recognizing someone as a leader" (Tavares, Sobral, Goldszmidt, & Araújo, 2018, p. 2).

Nonetheless, it is obvious that a fair number of parameters do affect leadership development in educational contexts just like in others. A striking point to be made here is also about the matching between leader traits and behaviors and follower expectations that come after evaluations of followers against their prototypes and that complement their evaluations. Specifically, despite the fact that school principals, with their congenital traits, fall in line with the leader prototypes of the followers, they may still need to do whatever is expected from them to be called a leader (Koopman et al., 1999) and followers generally would like to see intelligent,

trustworthy, inspirational, autonomous, procedural, face saver, non-autocratic and modest individuals as their leaders (Brodbeck et al., 2000; Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015) almost all of which can easily turn into widely accepted qualities for an educational leader as well. It is undeniable that characteristics from birth can be highly enticing among the other effective factors checked against prototypes. Therefore, school principals can become rather disadvantaged by virtue of their hereditary qualities like ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation and they may find themselves struggling toward compensating for their smallest mistake or justifying whatever they do (Platow et al., 2003) as they stand outside the margins of the well-defined circle of “effective leadership” of the hegemonic or dominant groups.

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## Leader Prototypes and Leadership Preparation

The preparation of educational leaders, i.e., transforming school principals into complete leaders, has traditionally been reckoned as a matter of meeting predetermined standard competencies necessary for operating a school. The fact that schools predominantly function in educational systems reduces the school principalship into a layer within bureaucratic hierarchies and requires them to encumber legal duties regarding the operation of schools. This generally puts meeting legal standards at the nexus of preparation programs. Every country has its own traditions about the preparation of educational leaders. For instance, in some countries, like the USA, the preparation of educational leaders has historically been a formal training offered as university programs (English, 2012). On the other hand, some countries like Turkey have no tradition of formal leadership training. Instead, short-termed in-service training programs of which content is determined by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey are offered to school principals (Aslan & Karip, 2014). In a global scale, standardized skills necessary to operate schools and lead teachers had been among topics of hot debates in leadership preparation issues since the 1990s, but the turning point was the first Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1996. ISLLC was revised in 2008. It mainly consists of what a school principal must do so as to be an educational leader (ISLLC, 2008). Although this incident took place in the USA, it has had global effects. For instance, MOE 2013 professional standards for the school principals, similar to ISLLC, were issued by the Ministry of Education of China (Liu, Xu, Grant, Strong, & Fang, 2017). In Turkey, the necessity of widely accepted documented competencies and standards has widely garnered support among academics and the Ministry executives (Aslan & Karip, 2014).

The ISLLC form of standardization policy, which aimed at reshaping the school principalship and directing leadership practices to certain areas, such as student outcomes, has gained momentum worldwide. School principals are expected to have certain patterns of behavioral skills in order to attain certain student outcomes. Indicators based on behavioral observation and student outcomes are used as a main criterion for determining whether a school principal is a leader or not



(Murphy, 2015). These policies are so powerful that they impact university programs worldwide. Contextless one-size-fits-all type leadership skills have become the benchmark for educational leadership preparation programs and scientific studies (English, 2006). To illustrate, the below quote hints the inferred impact of standardization policies:

“More than ever in today’s climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to serve the often-conflicting needs and interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 1).

In a similar fashion, Hallinger (2010) pins down the requirements of effective leadership as the work of and working toward improving the existing conditions to create unity in values and endeavors within and across school. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to deny the noteworthiness of these general statements about leadership effectiveness. However, neither are schools machine-like organizations running like clockwork, nor in-school stakeholders uniform individuals. The acquisition of standardized competencies that the formal role entails does not transform principals into leaders (Fletcher, 2012). Such leadership assumptions are grounded on the idea that there is a general leadership prototype for school principals, which is independent from the context of each school. This leads to two major weaknesses. The first one is that they ignore the role and place of constructing the leadership before enacting it. The second one is that they largely overlook the possibility of the existence of various informal groups with different leadership prototypes (English, 2006; Lumby & English, 2009).

At this point, Smith (1998) claims that mental representations like prototypes should be regarded as dynamic context-sensitive states instead of static entities. This point of view implies that leadership is a dynamic contextual process constructed by the interaction of a variety of factors, such as culture, the community that a school operates in, tasks, histories of informal groups in a school, and personal traits and behaviors of leaders and followers. This point of view also suggests a shift from static models of prototype-based leadership to dynamic models of leadership perceptions that can change over time and across contexts while retaining some properties of prototypes (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001). In this context, school principals must work with a wide variety of informal groups in schools to construct leadership (Lumby & English, 2009). This is because there can be slight differences between the leader prototypes of social groups even in schools where all followers share the same culture. To cite an example, even though there usually exists a consensus on inborn traits and basic behaviors of leaders between sexes, females and males may attach different levels of momentousness to certain traits and behaviors. Females’ leader prototypes emphasize interpersonal sensitivity more than



those of males whereas males' ideal leader categories tend to be more forgiving to antiprototypical traits, such as authoritarianism than those of females (Brown, 2018).

The possibility of the existence of prototypical differences requires the leadership preparation to go beyond the acquisition of predetermined standardized competencies that the principalship role entails and include relational competencies. This is because leadership development is actually about the development and use of relational competencies to cultivate the commitment of social groups in schools. Relational competencies involve the establishment of efficient and sustainable work relationships with a variety of individuals and groups in and outside the school across different leadership tasks. Relational competencies address the actions that are fundamental for establishing mutually beneficial, egalitarian, and enduring relationships between interdependent social groups and the school principal (Fletcher, 2012). As the prototypes are stored in memory as dynamic and flexible structures that are reconstructed according to contextual differences rather than static and rigid structures, establishing high-quality relationships can potentially transform leadership prototypes by dramatically altering the context (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). For instance, national and group cultures shape the basic traits and behaviors expected from a leader through values and norms. School principals participate in this process by bringing their goals, norms, and emotions into the context. Followers are not passive recipients; their values and goals are influential in shaping the expectations from school principals. Moreover the features of task to be undertaken dictate goals and give rise to new emotional states in school principals and followers like tension, excitement, or unhappiness. When these contextual factors interact with the behaviors of school principals and followers, a new context arises with a new web of relationships that creates specific expectations about traits and behaviors a leader must have, such as intelligence, extroversion, and pretentiousness (Bolton & English, 2010; Lord et al., 2001).

In this context, it is possible to claim that rather than current traits or behaviors of school principals or standardized competencies necessary for their formal roles, the process of leadership aiming to reshape leadership perceptions of school principals and followers through relationship building becomes more prominent. A school principal and social groups in a school can enable the reconstruction of leadership prototypes through building a common understanding regarding the relationships existing in the school. In line with this very insight into the matter, Uhl-Bien (2006) regards leadership as a process of social construction. According to her, leadership is a process of social impact fostering evolving social order and change. In fact, all the social realities in an organization are mutually dependent and endure through relational circumstances (Uhl-Bien, 2006). As Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) manifest, individuals, together with social groups in a school, can exist thanks to their being in relationships with the others. This translates to the idea that the school principal, as a designated leader, and the school context are interrelated social constructions. They generate leadership through a set of ongoing cultural and social processes. The key term to share herein is communication. Leadership prototypes of social groups are created and changed via communication. That is, a school principal is not a "leader" presented to the followers as a fact because leadership is an outcome of the communication taking place among interdependent groups with different

prototypes (Uhl-Bien, 2006). The communication in question is actually not an expression of something preconceived. Instead, communication is an open process aiming to spotlight what is meaningful. This can be interpreted in the following way: It is not necessary for school principals to convey the aims of standardization and accountability policies or directives of superior organizations, such as ministries, departments, or district administrations, to schools for them to become leaders. Therefore, there needs to be communication, which is egalitarian, reciprocal, and open ended, through which situational meanings and finally leadership prototypes of different social groups are reshaped (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

The co-construction of leadership by school principals and followers - or the reconstruction of their leadership prototypes - entails analyzing relationships in a school and acquiring necessary skills to construct high-quality relationships, and thus to reach outcomes specific to each school. This puts forward the notion that school principals should carefully analyze intergroup relationships in a school before engaging in relationship building. By doing this, they can produce strategies to enable different social groups in the same school to establish high-quality relationships and work cooperatively. At this point, Hogg, Van Knippenberg, and Rast (2012) purported that intergroup cooperation is an arena where different group identities - and therefore leader prototypes - mostly conflict with each other. Attempts to create an inclusive collective identity that require the imposition of a superordinate prefabricated leadership prototype, like what school principals generally try to do, mostly fail to become a solution to this problem (Hunt, Boal, & Sorenson, 1990). Before determining the leadership practices they will use, school principals should effectively analyze the tense and harmonious relations between the social groups in a school. In case of high intergroup tensions, the cooperation of each group by making sui generis contributions in line with the common goal with equal status can reduce intergroup tensions to a controllable level (Hogg et al., 2012). Therefore, school principals should give equal eminence to the identity of each group and highlight the fact that groups are interdependent. For the groups that have harmonious relationships, building an intergroup collective identity, that is “we,” can produce positive results (Rast et al., 2018).

Correlatively, Fletcher (2012) expresses the construction of leadership through relationship building yields better outcomes as opposed to the imposition of a superordinate prefabricated leadership prototype. There are three components of the construction of leadership through relationship: *skills*, *processes*, and *outcomes*. In order to be able to establish good working relationships, school principals need to possess several relational *skills*, which refer abilities necessary to initiate and sustain relationships like empathy, sensitivity, self-awareness, self-regulation, modesty, resilience, and commitment (Fletcher, 2010). Similarly, Uhl-Bien (2003) states that relational *skills* include interpersonal skills necessary for establishing long-term interpersonal relationships (e.g., trust, respect, equivalence, and mutual interest); communication skills needed for relationship building (e.g., emotional expressivity, social expressivity, and social control); relational self-management skills (e.g., self-correcting behaviors, ability to accept negative feedback, and ability to accept responsibility for failed actions); and relational feedback giving skills (e.g., school principals not refraining from sharing rather sensitive issues that have the potential of dispute when

communicating with social groups in the school). These *skills* can help school principals to gain the trust of social groups and preserve their previously established relations. Underpinning particularly negative issues and failures and sharing them with social groups in a way that they can be knowledgeable about these and moreover inviting them to contribute to the relevant solution processes help eliminate communication barriers on the way to high-quality relationships while reinforcing mutual trust between and among groups. As a result, the preparation of leaders is not only a work of ensuring school principals are equipped with the skills they need for their roles. These individuals should first gain the relational *skills* that can help with the approval of their leadership by social groups in schools who may have rather different leader prototypes (Uhl-Bien, 2003). Since leader prototypes of followers are refined over time as a result of experiences with school principals, they tend to change as the use of relational *skills* intensifies (Lord et al., 2001).

Also, these *skills* can assist school principals in engaging in suitable social interactions that pave the way for the attainment of their goals. Social interactions are critical since they constitute *processes* with which leadership are enacted (Fletcher, 2010). Those interactions being egalitarian, mutual, and cooperative are indicators of effective leadership, because followers are at least as influential as the leader during leadership *processes*. These interactions carry the great potential of stimulating effective *outcomes*, such as collective success and organizational learning. Co-creation of an understanding toward the definition of a right act by the leader and social groups and its dissemination to all parties within the school through positive learning relationships may cause blurring boundaries between the leader and followers. Leadership is created from the relations between interdependent individuals and social groups, namely, co-creation of leadership by the leader and followers can lead to the convergence of the image of “designated leaders” such as school principals and the leader prototypes of social groups (Fletcher, 1999). It should also be noted that three components (*skills*, *processes*, and *outcomes*) highlight general contours of the reconstruction of leadership prototypes that can change according to contextual changes rather than denoting a contextless general leadership prescription (Lord et al., 2001; Lumby & English, 2009).

Accordingly, it is deemed pivotal to design leadership preparation programs that aid leaders in building and maintaining high-quality work relationships with social groups with different leader prototypes. In particular, communication concentrating on mutual interest and interdependence facilitates establishing relatively better-quality relationships in this regard (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). To this end, alongside contextless skills necessary for formal roles of school principals, they need to carry context-sensitive relational skills to cater to social groups in schools (Ehrich & English, 2013).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Approaching schools as homogeneous communities isolated from the cultural diversity of societies as well as those of the groups that they are embedded in effectuates an inaccurate portrayal of the school contexts in which educational leadership is

constructed. Concordantly, educational leadership studies mostly regard school principals as leaders already endorsed by school communities when they assume their formal roles. Furthermore, leadership preparation programs are predominantly based on standardized competencies that school principals need to undertake in their formal roles. These competencies mainly include knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to operate schools and persuade followers (in-school stakeholders in this case) to comply with the requirements of standardization and accountability policies and directives of superior organizations.

Nevertheless, schools are open to the effects of the cultural diversity of societies they operate in. The primary consequence of this fact is that formal authorities of school principals are not always adequate to turn them into leaders since the expectations of followers from school principals diversify as the number of informal social groups in schools increase. The existence of informal groups with different leadership prototypes in a school gives rise to different effectiveness ratings for the leadership of the same school principal. Leadership preparation programs based on standardized competencies necessary for formal roles do not guarantee transforming school principals into leaders.

Conversely, the probability of the existence of different informal groups with different leadership prototypes propels school principals and followers to work together to co-construct leadership. This can only be succeeded through restructuring followers' leadership prototypes. The alteration of the school context via establishing long-termed relationships based on trust in schools can change the expectations of followers and reshape their leadership prototypes.

The dynamic nature of prototypes provides school principals and followers with opportunities to co-construct leadership even in relatively tense school contexts. This has some consequences for the leadership preparation, because merely relying on contextless one-size-fits-all type competencies that aim to prepare school principals for their formal roles does not always turn them into leaders nor enable their schools to be successful. It is time for leadership preparation programs to be imbued with these new realities.

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# A Genealogical Analysis of Charisma in Leadership

# 21

Steven J. Courtney

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## Abstract

In this chapter, charisma is traced conceptually in a genealogical exploration. From its origins in antiquity, charisma is followed through contrasting iterations by Weber and a range of organization-studies and psychology scholars through to its arrival in the field of educational leadership as an integral element of transformational leadership. There, dominant, it disappeared, swallowed whole by the model it underpinned. Further discredited by its associations with “hero” leadership and rendered irrelevant in increasingly bureaucratized schools, it has only recently started to return to relevance as a conceptual lens. Startling

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reconceptualizations in the field of organization studies reposition charisma as sublimated homoerotic desire in a compulsorily heteronormative organizational context. This signals, perhaps, not so much a new direction for the field of educational leadership, but rather the potential of charisma to bear radical new interpretations for the foreseeable future.

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**Keywords**

Charisma · Charismatic leadership · Educational leadership · Behaviors · Desire · Emotions · Transformational leadership

**The Field of Memory**

Charisma is held in the field of memory in the following ways; first, as a quasi-supernatural and exceedingly rare quality, in the manner conceptualized by Weber (1947/2012). Second, charisma is remembered as a vital part of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978/2010), which dominated the fields of practice and research in education from the 1990s to the 2000s (Gunter, 2012). Third, and related, the field recalls that charisma operationalized the discredited heroic leadership, which started as an integral part of the original conceptualization of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978/2010), but came to be interpreted negatively as a development of it, as the logical conclusion of its moral and intellectual elevation of the leader (Allix, 2000).

**The Field of Presence**

The contemporary dominance of distributed and system leadership has marginalized the explicit and normative elements of the role of charisma in educational leadership, owing to widespread acceptance of its conceptual insufficiency as a mechanism to achieve sustained educational change. It is consequently coming through a period during which it had largely lost the field's attention as an object of study.

**The Field of Concomitance**

From psychology and organization studies comes the idea that charisma is mundane and, reducible to a contested number of measurable psychological traits and behaviors, learnable (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). This framing contributed to the particular configuration of transformational leadership as a conceptual and normatively practical model. The relative absence of charisma from the contemporary field has opened the doors to radical new conceptualizations, most notably from organization studies, where charisma in leadership has been argued to consist of sublimated homoerotic desire (Harding, Lee, Ford, & Learmonth, 2011).

**Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

Charisma has undergone a series of massive shifts in meaning, from quasi-supernatural and seldom found (Weber, 1947/2012), through mundane and

learnable (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) and subsumed into transformational leadership (Burns, 1978/2010), finally to homoerotic desire (Harding et al., 2011), although this latter has not reached the field of educational, only organizational leadership. Such shifts have multiple reasons, including mutual paradigmatic incomprehension. This is evidenced in the following excerpt, in which Weber's sociological insights are filtered through a psychological lens: "Weber (1947/2012) argued that CLs [Charismatic Leaders] have a special gift, which appears from his writings to be a *specific and unique personality syndrome*" (House & Howell, 1992: 86, emphasis added).

### **Critical Assumptions or Presuppositions**

It is assumed that the field knows what charisma is and its significance in leadership. However, it has not been defined in a way that has endured, which demonstrates the deficiency in this assumption and the malleability of the concept. Nobody can say for certain what charisma is, although each attempt makes at least some claim to authoritativeness.

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## **Introduction**

The aims of this chapter are to trace the development of charisma in educational leadership and leading from its origins in ancient Greece through to new conceptualizations in the adjunct field of organization studies, which has driven most of the insights into charisma over the last 50 years. First, a sketch of the ontological problem with charismatic leadership is presented. Second, key developments in the evolution of the concept of charisma are outlined, with reference to the epistemological influence of the protagonist field. This genealogy takes into account the most important sociological as well as psychological contributions to charisma's conceptual development. In this chapter, however, it is argued that sociological insights concerning charisma, whether they be early ones from Weber or later ones (e.g., Harding et al., 2011), have largely passed the field of education by. When charisma became tainted with the sins of heroic leadership, education as a field did not have the intellectual or genealogical resources to draw upon to reconfigure charisma, but rather preferred to marginalize it as an object of research and as a conceptual lens. The chapter shows how charisma is now reentering the field of education, primarily through practitioners' own accounts and empirical reports of leadership practice.

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## **The Problem with Charisma**

It borders on being a trope of academic writing to observe that definitions of a phenomenon are contested. This does not prevent its special applicability to charisma, a concept which has shifted substantively as it has been taken up in one field after another. Indeed, examples of charisma were noted or inferred from historical, even classical accounts before there were academic fields of study (English, 2019).

Charisma is therefore unusually suited to the genealogical treatment which is the methodological focus and contribution of this collection.

In many ways, the ongoing search for ontological certainty regarding charisma resembles the similar, parallel one regarding leadership more generally, whose existence is simultaneously necessary and deniable. Leadership is necessary to explain, often post hoc, the mechanism by which social events were observed to have taken place and by which power was observed, or felt, to have operated between social actors. It is deniable because the leadership mechanism itself, like definitions of charisma, is slippery, mutable, and likely plural. In order to make sense, it is therefore often accompanied by an adjective (e.g., distributed leadership), or by a noun functioning as an adjective (e.g., system leadership). This requirement for semantic supplementation begs valid questions concerning first, the need to call anything leadership *tout court* at all, since the semantic meat is in the adjective, and second, the consequent conceptual vacuity of that word leadership itself (Eacott, 2015).

Charisma, too, is necessary and deniable. It is necessary to account for the unquestionable thrill that one might feel in a charged room whose occupants' rapt focus is on one person. It is deniable in the sense that each new iteration rarely builds upon, but rather is often antithetical to former ones.

Charismatic leadership is consequently an eel in a greased tin, doubly slippery; an enigma as a subset of a mystery, onto which may be projected contemporaneously significant societal concerns and beliefs with relatively little chance of refutation.

This genealogy is anchored in the field of education: it locates the concept of charisma historically and discursively in order to illuminate usages, possibilities, and limitations in that field particularly: this distinguishes it from other, recent explorations (e.g., English, 2019).

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## The Roots of Charisma

The Oxford Etymological Dictionary states that the word "charisma" comes from the Greek *khárisma*, meaning "gift of God's grace." It derives from *kharizesthai*, to show favor, which was formed from *kháris*, or favor (Onions, Friedrichsen, & Burchfield, 1966, p. 164).

Charisma's object and purposes have therefore been definitionally unspecified from the outset, an ambiguity which, for Burns (1978/2010), has "enabled it to be captured by scholars in different disciplines and applied to a variety of situations" (p. 243). Nonetheless, it was first attributed to political leaders in ancient Greece. English (2019), for instance, writes that the historical biographer Plutarch described Pericles' (495–429 B.C.) "'thundering and lightening' when he harangued the people, and of his wielding a dreadful thunderbolt in his tongue" (Plutarch/Clough, 1960 in English, 2019). This example illuminates immediately the methodological challenges in identifying charisma; here, it is inferred from Pericles' oratory skill – an undoubted gift, but one which is at odds with other, later constructions of charisma, as this chapter will demonstrate. Weber (1947/2012) points out other early charismatic leaders, including beserkers and shamans, as well as later individuals such as the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, and the leader of the Bavarian communist movement, Kurt Eisner. It is

notable that right from charisma's earliest elucidations, it is not constructed as necessarily positive; Weber (1947/2012) notes the possibility that Smith "was a very sophisticated type of deliberate swindler" (p. 359) but urges the sociologist to refrain from judgment. Throughout this chapter, it is shown how each major branch of thought concerning charisma has dealt with its "darker side" (Calás, 1993: 313).

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## The Trunk: The Major Conceptualizations of Charisma in Leadership

### Weberian Charisma

Weber developed his conceptualization of charisma throughout his career (see, e.g., Eisenstadt, 1968; Weber, 1922, 1947/2012). In Weber's 1947 book, "The Theory of Social and Economic Organization" (republished in 2012, and largely reprised in the 1968 collection of his works by Eisenstadt), he described charisma as

a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. (pp. 358–359)

The basis for charismatic legitimacy is "the duty of those who have been called to a charismatic mission [i.e., followers] to recognize its quality and to act accordingly" (p. 359). This calling is motivated by what Eisenstadt (1968) calls the charismatic property; this produces a recognition which "is thought to be the connection of a person to the central feature of the universe or the force within the universe" (English, 2019).

For Weber, therefore, charismatic authority is always extraordinary and sometimes spiritual, and so cannot be sustained in organizations that tend toward the bureaucratic, such as schools. This is partly because unlike in schools, there is no differentiation of follower in a charisma-led group, "no such thing as 'appointment' or 'dismissal', no career, no promotion. There is only a 'call' at the insistence of the leader on the basis of the charismatic qualification of those he summons. There is no hierarchy. . ." (1947/2012, p. 360), and neither are there rules; the charismatic leader governs by revelation. This means that charisma must be "routinized" or transmogrified into one of the other two forms of authority identified by Weber (1947/2012), that is, "traditionalized or rationalized" (p. 364). In schools, for reasons set out below, routinization has meant rationalization, or bureaucratization.

### Charisma, Psychologized

The turn to psychology-informed constructions of leadership in the 1980s was irreconcilable with the Weberian view of charisma that its proponents constructed, which, according to Calás (1993), purposively omitted charismatic routinization in order to

foreground charisma's "*wildest* aspects" and thereby to create a "suspicion of charisma" (p. 306). This, for Calás (1993), provided the conceptual grounds necessary "for maintaining conventional notions of management – based on bureaucratic authority – as the only legitimate form of organizational leadership, despite claims to the contrary" (p. 306). It also provided a methodological rationale for "psychologizing 'charismatic leadership'" (p. 313), that is to say, privileging a conceptualization that highlights an individual's behaviors and traits, with interactions between a leader and follower(s) being interpersonal rather than relational. In other words, and following Crevani (2015), such leadership draws on an "entity perspective" (p. 193). This is where individuals interact in a manner constructed as leading and following but are fundamentally unchanged by that interaction. They are "treated as stable entities that have different roles and the impact the leader has on the follower is a function of the quality of the relation between the two" (p. 194). That is not to say that behaviors cannot be modified: indeed, any improvement in the outcomes of that leaderful encounter depends on such amendments. However, it is a matter of a stable entity changing behaviors rather than a reflexive and mutable entity co-constructing new identities – and hence practices – dialogically and interdependently with the social world. This latter process is redolent with unpredictability and messiness, whereas as Calás (1993) notes, reducing charisma to measurable, psychological attributes is motivated by a desire to control it.

Such an epistemological foundation means that sentences such as the following are typical of this body of literature: "without a systematic conceptual framework, researchers often have found it difficult to define and operationalize charisma and to identify the variables that influence its development (Willner, 1984)" (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, p. 637). In this framing, it is assumed that it is reasonable and achievable to identify metrics for measuring charisma; it is mundane rather than extraordinary; it may and even should be learned.

This normativity derives in part from the influence of a further major contributor to the development of the field of leadership: organization studies. This field is dominated by a functionalism that works to make capitalism work (better) and so instrumentalized charisma to this end. Psychologists were often also, or later became organizational-leadership scholars – Bruce Avolio is typical in this respect; his PhD (Avolio, 1982) was in psychology and explored age stereotypes in interview evaluation contexts. Conger (1999) made this relationship explicit:

As I look back over the evolution of the fields of charismatic and transformational leadership in organizational settings, it appears that a significant portion of the interest has been shaped by a small group of scholars . . . [who] have most likely been influenced by larger forces – the primary one being the globally competitive business environment. (Conger, 1999: 147)

These changes in field location are important because they help to explain the shift in conceptualizations of charisma from supernatural to mundane and commodifiable. As Conger and Kanungo put it, "If a deeper understanding of charismatic leadership within organizations is to be obtained, it is important to strip the aura of mysticism from charisma and to deal with it strictly as a behavioural

process” (1987: 639). Arguably, Conger and Kanungo do not mean “deeper” here, but rather “measurable”; psychology requires that attributes and phenomena be rendered as observable and measurable variables that may be associated with individuals. Further, whatever is measurable is susceptible to being purposively increased through interventions. In other words, it becomes learnable. So, charisma’s field shift from sociology to psychology simultaneously individualized and demystified it, making it acquirable and providing the intellectual warrant for a burgeoning leadership industry, where suppliers promise to enhance customers’ charisma on a consultancy or other transactional basis.

Early contributions from this field therefore sought to arrive first at a series of testable hypotheses concerning charisma (House, 1976), then at a list of psychologically amenable charismatic behaviors and qualities. Conger and Kanungo (1987), for instance, suggested that the charismatic leader is, *inter alia*, “essentially opposed to status quo and strives to change it,” “expert in using unconventional means to transcend the existing order,” and “transforms people to share the radical changes advocated” (p. 641). Bass (1990a) was one of several further scholars who attempted to refine or amend this list, either empirically or through literature review (see, e.g., House & Howell, 1992). Bass characterized charismatic leaders as being, *inter alia*, more enthusiastic, more tolerant of ambiguity, more self-actualized, less accepting of authority, and less defensive than leaders without charisma. Further qualities include high self-possession and self-esteem, as well as being generous, honest, open, and concerned for others. They are sensitive to followers’ needs, articulate, risk-taking, confident, determined, morally righteous, and idealistic. However, such attempts were simply trait and behaviorist theorizing repackaged for a new age, an approach which had been discounted owing to “the fact that no single pattern of behavior will be effective in all situations” (Stogdill, 1975) and empirical findings that

leadership is not a matter of . . . the mere possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his (sic) capacity for carrying coöperative tasks through to completion. (Stogdill, 1948: 66)

By 1989, Conger had come to agree with Stogdill, writing that “charisma is a relational phenomenon . . . Such dynamics are not easily duplicated à la cookbook style” (Conger, 1989: 160). Instead, Conger proposed four *Stages in Charismatic Leadership*, comprising scoping the present and envisioning an alternative; articulating this and motivating followership; building trust through example and self-sacrifice; and operationalizing the vision. Nonetheless, and although she was referring to Bass’ (1990a) literature review, Calás’ (1993) characterization applies equally across most of the field when she wrote that

Charisma becomes a few psychological attributes that could be attached to certain people. This reduction ends up by naming as “charisma” only a particular set of “leader” and “follower” attributes derived mostly from questionnaire-based self-report studies and from laboratory experiments using students as subjects. Even when acknowledging the

interpersonal nature of charisma, the reviewed studies focus mostly on personal attributes of “the leader” or “the follower” rather than on their *assumed emerging relationships* (emphasis in original). (Calás, 1993: 312–313)

Calás (1993) notes that a further consequence of the psychologization of charisma is the attribution of its demonstrably negative features or manifestations to pathologies evinced by “*particular individuals and their followers*” (p. 313, emphasis in original). This releases charisma from conceptual culpability; its mediation by personality traits implies that charisma is not wrong; the wrong people are sometimes doing it (see, e.g., House & Howell, 1992). There is also evidence that negative manifestations of charismatic leadership were simply ignored:

While charisma’s advocates saw it as a remarkable form of leadership, they were also aware that charisma had revealed a frightening dark side throughout history. Nonetheless, most of us focused our attention on the positive face of charisma. (Conger, 1999: 149)

The specters of Hitler and Stalin haunted charisma’s study in its move to the fields of psychology and organization studies, contributing to charisma’s conceptual neutering and only partial examination. In summary, charisma had crossed over to become a mainstream concern, but in a form that was a pale and wan imitation of the fuller Weberian conceptualization. Importantly, all this debate was taking place within organization studies and so impacted little and only indirectly on the field of educational-leadership studies.

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## Charisma in Early Educational Leading

That is not to say that charisma was indiscernible in the field of educational-leadership *practice*, particularly post hoc. Grace (1995) described the late nineteenth-century “headmaster tradition” in England as follows:

At its most influential, the mystique of headship was constituted by personal charisma, moral, and frequently religious, authority, impressive scholarship, the capacity to “master” all other members of the school, indefatigable energy and a sense of mission or vocation in the role. The headmaster tradition as a cultural and ideological construct was a resource which could empower even those headteachers who failed to realize all of its characteristics. (Grace, 1995: 10)

This evokes MacIntyre’s (2013) notion of the identity-forming function of the leader “character,” pre-figuring and enabling possibilities for agency that exceed the initial dispositions of the role-holder (see also Courtney & McGinity, 2020a). Here, charisma is integral to how the idealized role of headmaster is perceived, conjuring it in the eyes of followers through their expectation of encountering it. Significantly, Grace does not define charisma, leaving the reader to infer its nature. However, as a central feature of an ideal type, it may be deduced to be more extraordinary than mundane.



## Charisma as Integral to, Yet Concealed Within Transformational Leadership

Charisma entered the field of educational-leadership research and scholarship significantly as an integral, yet implicit element of the model known as transformational leadership. Indeed, Conger (1999) “felt that charismatic leadership was the most exemplary form that transformational leaders could assume (p. 149). Transformational leadership, elucidated powerfully in Burns’ (1978/2010) book, “Leadership,” was taken up and mediated not only through psychology departments but also through business schools, with its advocates, or entrepreneurs, often having a background in both fields (see Bass, 1990b; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Conger, 1999), just as had been the case with charisma scholars. Burns himself was disillusioned with charisma, claiming that “it is impossible to restore the word to analytic duty” (1978/2010: 244). He preferred the term heroic leadership, which was not adopted in subsequent formulations of transformational leadership (but see “we don’t need another hero” section below). Instead, charisma was re-articulated as idealized influence, one of ultimately four constituent characteristics, along with individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (see, e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1990). Psychologized and anonymized, charisma nonetheless forms “the bedrock of transformational leadership” (English, 2019: 23), as can be seen from Bass and Avolio’s (1990) elucidation:

**Idealised Influence:** This is strong among leaders who have a vision and sense of mission; who gain respect, trust, and confidence; and who acquire strong individual identification from followers. [These] leaders ... are able to obtain the required extra effort from followers to achieve optimal levels of development and performance.

**Individually Considerate:** Leaders ... diagnose followers’ needs and attend to them individually. They also delegate, coach, advise, and provide feedback for ... personal development ... They raise the needs and confidence levels of followers to take on greater levels of responsibility ... [including] for their personal development. ...

**Intellectually Stimulating:** Leaders ... foster creativity, and ... use intuition as well as more formal logic to solve problems. ... Followers become more effective problem solvers with or without the leader’s facilitation. They become more innovative. ...

**Inspirational:** Leaders give pep talks, increase optimism and enthusiasm, and communicate their visions of attainable futures with fluency and confidence ... which stimulates the energy to accomplish higher levels of performance and development. (Bass & Avolio, 1990: 22)

Missing from the extract above is many scholars’ focus on morality as a key ingredient of transformational leadership. Burns’ (1978/2010) claimed that “Transforming leaders ‘raise’ their followers up through levels of morality” (p. 426). Many others since have followed his lead (see, e.g., Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). However, the following clause of Burns’ quote is instructive, and hints at the complexity of bald assertions concerning the elevated moral status of transformational leaders. Burns goes on to write, “though insufficient attention to means can corrupt the ends” (p. 426). Here is an acknowledgment of transformational leadership’s dark side, arguably imported from charismatic leadership. In a similar way to what had been attempted with

charismatic leadership (Conger & Kamungo, 1998), scholars sought to differentiate between what they called “authentic” transformational leadership, which represented only the aspects aligned with morals constructed as positive or socially oriented. This was established in opposition to inauthentic, or “pseudo-transformational leadership” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999: 211), whose moral grounding is weak and/or self-centered.

Transformational leadership was imported into the field of education, where it was taken up enthusiastically and promulgated by key figures in the school improvement and school effectiveness tradition, such as Leithwood (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, 2005) and Hallinger (e.g., Hallinger, 1992). The model’s spread owed much to its seeming universality. As Conger (1999) notes,

the contributions of contingency theorists (e.g. Friedler, 1967; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) to our understanding of leadership would little impact upon this body of research. Transformational leadership was applicable to most situations. (Conger, 1999: 149)

Transformational leadership consequently was strongly associated with the school improvement field during a period when nation states were increasingly focused on improving their education systems. For instance, in the UK, the New Labour government (1997–2010) seized upon transformational leadership as a key mechanism to achieve wider education reform. Headteachers would be trained through a central state-approved organization, the National College for School Leadership, in the techniques and dispositions of transformational leadership. New Labour sought thereby to transform headteachers into believers who would proselytize, “to rework headship through increasing status for the local delivery of reform” (Gunter, 2012: 114–115). Transformational leadership consequently became discursively mandatory,

constructed and promoted as the means of suturing together a vast array of interventions in the curriculum, staffing, lesson planning and assessment, and to evidence success or be accountable for failure. (Gunter, 2012: 5)

This example is located in England, but transformational leadership was promoted globally for distinctive reasons that might have spoken to, or invoked local contexts, yet produced the effect of universality predicted by Conger (1999). Example locations in the global south where transformational leadership has been enthusiastically promulgated include South Africa (Singh & Lokotsch, 2005), China (Liu, 2018), Indonesia (Damanik & Aldridge, 2017), and Malaysia (Selamat, Nordin, & Adnan, 2013).

Charismatic leadership has therefore been injected into the heart of education systems internationally, influencing national policies and professionals’ practices and identities. However, it has done so from within the larger, more palatable model of transformational leadership, which has arguably distracted from a direct focus on the role of charisma in educational leadership. Where critique has taken place, it has often differed from attempts in the organization-studies literature to compartmentalize the “good” and “bad” forms of the model. Allix (2000), for instance, problematizes fundamentally the idea that “leaders have some sort of monopoly on moral truth, knowledge and wisdom, which they exploit to draw followers up to their

own perceived ethical standards” (p. 15). The issue is not the location of the moral destination (i.e., good/bad; socially/personally oriented) but the very claim to any sort of moral superiority. Allix also directly addresses the charismatic element of transformational leadership, arguing that its location (often) in hierarchical superordinates, its appeal to followers’ emotions and “habituated followership” (p. 17) and its lack of safeguards mean that it

collapses into a *transactional process of emotionally charged ideological exchange*, with all of the possible physical repercussions that this entails; and which implies a pattern of social relations structured not for education, but for *domination*. (Allix, 2000: 18, emphasis in original)

As a result of the dominance of transformational leadership globally, charisma in educational leadership became ubiquitous, yet unnamed. On those occasions when charisma did reveal itself explicitly in policy and practice, it failed, as will be described in the following section.

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## The Branches and Leaves of Charismatic Leadership

### De-charismatization: We Don’t Need Another Hero

As outlined above, the embedding of transformational leadership as a normative model in research and practice idealized new, charismatic identities and inhibited alternatives. As Conger (1999) notes:

To be transformational was to be a leader. To be purely transactional was to be the calculating manager. The heroic leader had returned – reminiscent of the days of “great man” theories – with a humanistic twist given the transformational leader’s strong orientation towards the development of others. (Conger, 1999: 149)

The discursive privileging of heroic leadership in research resonated with policy makers internationally but particularly in the west (Goodson & Anstead, 1998) who were focused on leaders and leadership as a mechanism to achieve policy goals (Gunter, 2012). The aim was to produce transformational leaders, but clearly normal distribution applied to the results, whereby the most “successful” would be more obviously heroic. A new cadre of hero headteachers, or principals, was consequently created. These exemplified the charismatic ideal and, importantly, were extremely successful in their local context. Their practice was reduced to traits and promoted in the school-effectiveness field as normatively achievable (McEwan, 2003). Ball (2011) characterized them as “the hero innovator – Sir this and Dame that, the lone transformers of deficient schools, who bring their vision *and charisma* to bear to raise standards and rescue poorly served students” (p. 50, emphasis added).

In the United States, these were known as turnaround principals, whose creation was prompted by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. A few elucidations of this model

were expansive and power-relation focused; Papa and English (2011), for instance, focus on the requirement for socially just activist leadership to achieve turnaround. However, most more closely resemble the leader constructed in Meyers and Hambrick Hitt's (2017) review of the literature. Their list of traits includes items that would fit in a list from earlier, psychological constructs of charismatic leadership, including "belief that positive change can and must happen"; "strong moral mission"; determination or courage"; "competitiveness"; and "willingness to disrupt complacency" (p. 52).

In England, the equivalent was "superheads" (i.e., headteachers), who were a part of the evolution of the New Labour strategy to enhance school leaders' pay and prestige in return for greater accountability against standards-aligned targets. In 2000, the *Financial Times* reported that the then education secretary, David Blunkett, announced "that a pilot scheme would see 10 so-called superheads 'with a proven track record' paid up to £100,000 each to oversee between three and five struggling schools" (Kelly, 2000) under the "Fresh Start" scheme. Perryman (2002) describes the arrival of a superhead in the school where she was conducting research:

A new Superhead was appointed in a blaze of publicity, with items on the local television news and regular press updates on his progress, largely focused around his salary of £70,000 per year. . . . With little more than six weeks preparation time, after which the largely disgruntled student body came back to chaos and a staff of teachers they did not know, the school was bound to fail. . . . (Perryman, 2002: 47)

The superhead left after 6 months, "one of three Superheads nationwide who resigned that month, the title lost its credibility, and subsequent advertisements for their replacement did not include the term" (p. 48). Another superhead was ill prepared for the gang battles that characterized life in his new school: "Rumours that Friedag had lost his grip began circulating earlier this year . . . One of these said Friedag had been found hiding under his desk during the gang clashes" (Bright, 2003: 3). Charisma in this context was clearly seldom transferable.

Narratives internationally shifted from headship or principalship requiring a single, heroic leader to being "a job too big for one" (Grubb & Flessa, 2006), thereby providing the rationale for the development of distributed leadership, which has become the new normative model in its various forms, for example, teacher leadership (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008) and system leadership (Courtney & McGinity, 2020b). Barthe (2003) exemplifies this paradigm shift in his challenge to principals to "become not 'heroes' but 'hero makers'" (p. 63). Charisma, it seemed, had first animated and then terminated transformational leadership.

## **De-charmatization: The Bureaucratization of Schools**

A further feature working to diminish the role of charisma in educational leadership is the bureaucratization of schools.

This has come about owing to the spread of New Public Management (NPM) from the 1980s, characterized by transparent budgeting, with outputs rather than

inputs costed and measured by quantitative performance indicators; the construction of organizations as contract-based, whose members are incentivizable; and the introduction of market principles concerning provider entry and exit (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). NPM was operationalized through managerialism, which ideologizes the manager's "right to manage" according to these principles and so constructs schools as bureaucracies. From a Weberian perspective at least, it therefore follows that charismatic leadership is unlikely to be most relevant or useful form, since a rules-based order is antithetical to charismatic authority:

Formally concrete judgments are newly created from case to case and are originally regarded as divine judgments and revelations . . . these are imposed on the authority of revolution by oracles, or of the leader's own will, and are recognized by the members of the religious, military, or party group, because they come from such a source. Recognition is a duty. (Weber, 1947/2012, p. 361)

The product of these de-charismatizing factors is a relative silence concerning charisma in key educational-leadership research texts from the turn of the millennium in the global north and an even greater silence concerning its normativity. The last article to be published in the highly ranked journal, *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership* with the phrase "charismatic leadership" in its title saw it as a deficiency (Morris, 2000). Bush's (2003) influential book, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management* devotes only ten lines to charismatic leadership, within a slightly longer section called "personal power" (p. 99).

## Re-charismatization: In Politics

Schools and society cannot be disentangled (Apple, 2013). Charismatic political leaders proliferate with, *inter alia*, Donald Trump until 2021 in the USA, Justin Trudeau in Canada, and Imran Khan in Pakistan. At the time of writing, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is the charismatic Boris Johnson, who adheres consciously or otherwise to a Weberian construction of charisma. His disdain for the rule of law, evidenced in his attempted illegal proroguing of parliament (Bowcott, 2019), can be argued to exemplify the Weberian charismatic leader's analogous rejection of any law-based system in favor of personal dictat: "There is no system of formal rules, of abstract legal principles, and hence no process of judicial decision oriented to them" (Weber, 1947/2012: 361). Seemingly bizarre episodes whereby Johnson persuades benefactors to pay for holidays (BBC, 2021a) or home decorations (BBC, 2021b) make sense in the context of the Weberian observation that "What is despised . . . is traditional or rational everyday economizing, the attainment of a regular income by continuous economic activity devoted to this end. Support by gifts, sometimes on a grand scale involving foundations, even by bribery and grand-scale honoraria, or by begging, constitute the strictly voluntary type of support" (Weber, 1947/2012: 362) which, for Weber, is indicative of charismatic authority.

Whatever the reasons for this notable rise in charismatic political leadership internationally, discourses and discursive conditions spread, such that its re-appearance in education was inevitable, as the next section demonstrates.

### Re-charismatization: In Education Practice

Texts written by (recently) practicing educational leaders are more reflective of the charisma-inflected zeitgeist than the charisma-denying field of research. For example, a former headteacher made famous by his participation in a reality-television show, *Educating Greater Manchester* (Channel 4, 2021), later coauthored a book titled, *The Leadership Factor: The Seven Characteristics of Exceptional Leaders* (Povey & McInerney, 2019). The third of these seven is charisma, which Povey summarizes as follows:

In the end, the crucial skill of charisma is knowing your message and having the **presence**, **warmth** and **power** to get it across to the room. Begin with the basics: **smile**, **use superlatives**, and **emphasise the key words**. But most of all, be ready to present authentically and in a way that recognises where the listeners are, as well as getting across your key message concisely. (Povey & McInerney, 2019: 88, emphasis in original)

This extract reveals how, in order to reclaim charisma from the discredited hero discourse, Povey and McInerney have drawn upon and hugely simplified some of the ideas from the psychology and organization studies era. The most important of these is that charisma is learnable. Its appearance here signifies its role in what Gunter (2012) called the “leadership industry” (p. 5), where educational leadership is reduced to behaviors that can be learned. This exemplifies a wider tendency in the educational-leadership field to privilege psychological over sociological insights.

### Re-charismatization: In Education Research

There are indications in research reports of empirical studies that a sort of Weberian charismatic authority is evident in the field. Weber (1947/2012, p. 361) notes, “Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules.” For instance, in their article, Courtney and Gunter (2015) identify the arbitrariness with which superficially rational rules are applied by headteachers, as well as the vagueness of their composition, seemingly so as to prevent teachers from ever being certain that they were acting within the rules and so render themselves sanctionable. One headteacher, “Paul,” has staff fulfill common performance-management objectives, one of which “is about contribution to the vision” (p. 409). Paul, of course, is the sole arbiter of whether the teacher has achieved this, and he is also the embodiment of the vision. The target therefore requires staff’s obeisance to him. Courtney and Gunter do not theorize this episode,

or others, using charismatic leadership as a lens, perhaps owing to its having fallen out of use as an intellectual resource for the field. More recently, however, new conceptualizations of educational leadership have drawn explicitly on charismatic leadership. For instance, Courtney and McGinity (2021) present their case-study interview data as scripted drama, rendering the CEO of the multi-academy trust (CMO) explicitly as Jesus-like in order to foreground the charismatic mechanism underpinning his leadership.

## Re-charismatization: Beyond Education

In the field of organization studies, charisma is undergoing a new shift. Harding et al. (2011) use Queer Theory to argue that:

The leader's charisma arises from an irresistible sexual attractiveness that evokes a homoerotic desire whose libidinal energies can be diverted towards the achievement of organizational goals. Managers' understanding of leadership presumes that followers will be so overcome by an erotic desire to be possessed by the leader that they will forget their own objectives and fall in with the leader's "vision". They will, in theory, see only what the leader wants them to see and they will thus, in theory, become controllable. (Harding et al., 2011: 941)

As of June 2021, this chapter had received 155 citations in Google Scholar, almost all of which are from scholars in the organization studies field. It is not useful to speculate what impact, if any, this reconceptualization will have on thinking about charisma in educational leadership, but it raises important questions concerning the vitality of the theories currently in use there. Charisma has not yet been defined definitively and so continues to generate new and creative thinking.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Charisma in leadership is a shape-shifter; its articulation changes radically from one generation to the next, yet each articulation is susceptible to a spurious certainty. Thinking beyond the obvious contrasts between the Weberian and psychological interpretations, other distinctions are evident. For Bourdieu (1990), charisma is merely symbolic capital, mis-recognized and mis-attributed by those who follow its bearers for reasons they cannot quite pinpoint, but which are actually simply the multiple ways in which the "leader" dominates the game in play. But this interpretation misses the almost visceral, and definitely emotional, appeal of the charismatic leader. English's (2019) definition captures this: he writes that it is "a powerful but temporary emotional bond between individuals who normally share a common condition or hardship. Charisma . . . tap[s] into the deepest yearnings, values, prejudices and fears of a social group and bring[s] them together to forge a common change agenda [which] may involve positive or negative means and ends" (p. 27).



But this interpretation misses the way in which charisma influences differentially; not everybody in the social group succumbs in the same way. Harding et al.'s (2011) conceptualization provides a partial answer to this; if charisma is about desire, then it is subject to the same vagaries concerning its object as in other areas of life. We do not all desire the same person, or in the same way. Charisma is consequently particularly suited to a genealogical exploration; its conceptual twists and turns reflect the anxieties and wishes of the age; it can bear almost any interpretation, none of which can be refuted, only rejected.

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# Parallel Leadership: A Leadership Approach for Organizational Alignment

# 22

Joan M. Conway and Dorothy Andrews

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## Abstract

Parallel leadership, a conceptualized model of educational leadership for contemporary, collaborative educational organizations, is underpinned by the concepts of mutualism, shared beliefs and values, and allowance for individual expression. Importantly, it is in recognition of the relational nature between the principal (leadership team) and the teacher leaders (formal and informal). It is founded on a belief that leadership in educational organizations is first and foremost to focus on the interrelationships of multiple and complex mixes of people in school communities on a daily basis. Integral to the research and development of this leadership approach has been the focus of leadership for whole school improvement responding to the continual rapid changes in societal behavior and expectations and the discontinuous nature of that change. Regardless of ever-changing educational landscapes, the core of this approach has been sustained because of the enabling processes that respect the contributions and aspirations of the people

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in their setting. This chapter traces the evolutionary development of parallel leadership and its sustainability over time in a range of different schools and educational systems.

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**Keywords**

Leadership · Parallel leadership · Teacher leadership · Collaborative cultures · Capacity building · Professional learning community · System-school alignment · Visionary action

**The Field of Memory**

Traditionally, the principal has been viewed as “the” leader of an educational organization (specifically school) and all leadership responsibility is attributed to the one individual voice. It has been not uncommon to hear the generally accepted mantra highlighting the success of the organization as solely the outcome of the leader. Furthermore, the perceived success or otherwise of such leadership has often been reported as a result of the personal traits of the individual. In such situations, a lack of change, or ability to change in response to contemporary conditions, has been viewed as a paralysis of the organization where nothing happens until the individual leader “says or acts” accordingly. Too often, the social and intellectual capitals of an organization are lost in the transition awaiting the appointment of a new leader. Moreover, the wider collect of individuals, that is, principally the teachers, are left rudderless until the next *coxswain* is in place.

**The Field of Presence**

Heightened levels of teacher professionalism, changes in professional practice in education, and the movement toward more collaborative cultures have changed the nature of the teaching profession. Educational organizations are now more commonly focused on “success” brought about by an overall capacity for leadership development across the multiple perspectives of the contemporary, complex organization that is specifically *school*. An overarching concept underpinning parallel leadership is that leadership is the capacity of an educational organization wherein the principal (and in some cases, the leadership team) is the metastrategic leader in partnership with teacher leaders as leaders of pedagogical praxis. Teacher leaders of either formal or informal positions are those of the profession who influentially demonstrate the qualities of leading self and leading others.

**The Field of Concomitance**

This chapter has acknowledged the work of many researchers who drew on concepts of management theory (Handy, 1996; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Lakomski, 1999, 2005; Senge, 1997). That body of work is replete with terms such as distributed leadership, co-leadership, partnership, community of leaders, and social systems of thinking. Furthermore, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) worked with the concept of leadership as an organization-wide quality. Senge’s social systems of thinking with

adaptation to the concepts of organizational learning have influenced the transformation of schools and educational systems to be more flexible, adaptive, and productive, requiring different approaches to leadership in meeting the needs of contemporary learners.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

This chapter acknowledges the ever-increasing complexity of educational organizations charged with expectations and the responsibilities of providing equity of opportunities for all learners. Increasingly, organizational leadership is perceived as not the sole province of the principal, nor the leadership team alone. Teachers have the capacity for leading pedagogical transformation through innovative knowledge creation and critical evaluation in meeting the needs of the contemporary learner. Moreover, schools and systems are recognized as interrelated agents in sharing the co-construction of leadership and management of education.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presumptions**

This chapter is based on a view of leadership that is built on collaborative action shared by formal and informal positions within an organization. Meaningful work and effective organizational cultures as meaningful workplaces are socially constructed realities. Integral to this reality is the imperative that processes for collaborative action must be strategically, deliberately, and focally designed and enacted. The success of a shared meaningfulness is based on the collective intelligence of the professional community. Ultimately, the reality of individual professionalism and collective responsibility forms the basis for sustainable capacity building. The parallel leadership model builds on movement away from the focus on the principal as “the” leader of an educational organization toward providing a more inclusive conception of leadership acknowledging the potential of some teachers as leaders in partnership. The teacher is no longer isolated to their classroom, and the teaching profession is no longer considered as just a vocation.

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## **Introduction**

Parallel leadership was first presented by Crowther, Hann, and McMaster (2001), Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002), and Andrews and Crowther (2002). The initial impetus for capturing the essence of this leadership approach arose from a study that focused on leadership for successful school reform (Cuttance, 2000) and the emerging understanding of the importance of teacher leadership in whole school improvement processes. Based on role theory, it was important for the Leadership Research International research team at the University of Southern Queensland (LRI\_USQ) to understand the functions of teacher leaders and the principal in enhancing school outcomes for successful school improvement. It was this relationship that was conceptualized as parallel. This chapter focuses on the initial conceptual development and the resultant longitudinal research and further development of parallel leadership.

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## Exploring the Concept: Initial Explanation

The initial focus was *leadership for successful school reform* and focused on literature that reconceptualized educational leadership. This meant moving away from the sole focus on principalship toward providing a more inclusive conception of leadership. Many researchers (Handy, 1996; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Lakomski, 1999, 2005; Senge, 1997) used terms like distributed leadership, co-leadership, partnership, community of leaders, and social systems of thinking. However, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) were informing the concept of leadership as an organization-wide quality and Limerick, Cunnington, and Crowther (1998) were presenting role-based leadership. This research resonated with the USQ Leadership Research Institute's senior researcher Crowther, who reported this research in a 1997 article *Teachers as Leaders – an exploratory framework* (Crowther & Olsen, 1997).

Further informing research came from literature associated with professional learning communities and educational leadership (Hord, 1997; King & Newmann, 2000, 2001; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). This literature opened the conversation for the LRI\_USQ research team in relation to *sustaining school improvement* through concepts of authentic pedagogy, professional learning, and capacity building and noted distributed leadership as an important contributing factor. Australian research (Cuttance, 2001) on school effectiveness supported the findings of the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools as reported by Newmann and Wehlage (1995) but added four areas of importance for innovation that led to enhanced and sustained school outcomes. These areas were a focus on pedagogy, a whole school approach (holistic), an active professional learning community, and a form of role-based distributed leadership that “engaged teachers exercising pedagogical leadership and principals exercising strategic leadership” (Andrews & Crowther, 2002, p. 153), previously emphasized by Andrews and Lewis (2000). In addition, the work of Silins and Mulford (2002) and Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) acknowledged the emergence of leadership roles and functions of classroom leaders in substantive reform.

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## Research on Leadership for Sustainable Improvement

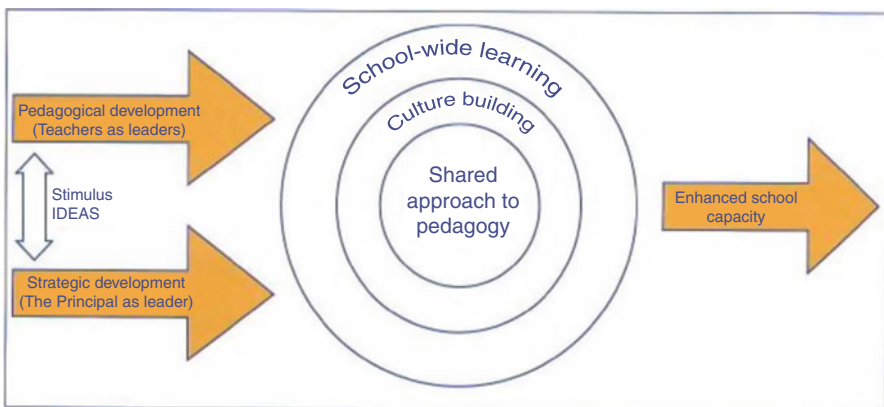
The early stages of the LRI\_USQ research reported by Crowther, Andrews, Dawson, and Lewis (2001) focused on the conceptualization of a teacher leadership framework and an emerging understanding of the relationship between teacher leaders and the principal. This concept evolved as the trusting and mutualistic relationship that Crowther, Andrews, et al. (2001) termed parallel leadership and was subsequently published by Crowther et al. (2002) and Andrews and Crowther (2002). As was noted, parallel leadership:

- (a) Is evidenced differently in different contexts;
- (b) Reflects different personal qualities of the educators;

- (c) Evidences mutual trust, respect, and shared goals; and
- (d) Allows for individual expression.

Crowther, Hann, and McMaster's (2001) initial conceptualization is presented in Fig. 1. The initial conceptualization of parallel leadership was spurred by the need to change the narrative of school improvement to one that acknowledges the importance of people working together and developing capacity for creating, implementing, and critiquing their work in context. That is, the principal leader's role is focused on strategic leadership, and teacher leaders' roles are focused on pedagogical leadership. Teacher leadership focused on pedagogical leadership was defined as "behaviour that facilitates principled pedagogical action towards whole school success. It derives from the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. It contributes to enhanced quality of community life in the long term" (Crowther, 2002, p. 169).

The definition of parallel leadership was defined as: "a process of teacher leaders and their principals engaging in collective action to build capacity. It embodies mutualism, shared purpose and respect for individual expression and contribution" (Crowther, 2002, p. 169). As reported by Andrews and Crowther (2002, p. 155), the development of parallelism facilitates an environment that enables innovation emerging as the result of a trusting relationship within the professional community resulting in a culture where members of the community take collective responsibility for school outcomes. Figure 1 represents the interrelationship between leadership action and the enactment of processes that result in enhanced school outcomes. These three interacting processes are: school wide professional learning, school wide culture building, and a school wide approach to pedagogy. Furthermore, a doctoral study by Lewis (2004) illuminated these related processes of knowledge creation that reflected the distinctiveness of each school context.



**Fig. 1** Parallel leadership and enhanced school outcomes. (Source: Crowther, Hann et al., 2001, p. 141) Printed with permission from the Australian Government

Research reported in *Developing Teacher Leaders, 2nd Edition* (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009) was the result of a longitudinal study engaging schools in Australia. This research, supported by the Australian Research Council, explored the implications of parallel leadership for classroom practice. The participants’ schools engaged with the LRI\_USQ research and development team in a school improvement project (Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools – IDEAS) (<https://lri.usq.edu.au/work-with-us/school-improvement-model-ideas/>). This project involved schools in *journeys of self-discovery* where teacher leaders and principals engaged in whole school processes for the achievement of enhanced school outcomes. What emerged as clarified understandings was the way in which collective action developed intellectual and social capacities for enhancing school outcomes as depicted in Fig. 2 and later explored further by two doctoral studies.

The doctoral works of Conway (2008), *Collective Intelligence in schools: An exploration of teacher engagement in the making of significant new meaning*, and of Morgan (2008), *The principal in a process of school revitalisation: A meta-strategic role*, further explored the processes of capacity building adding value to the concept of parallelism as it applies to leadership in schools of acknowledged success. Conway’s research on collective intelligence encapsulated the power of teacher leaders within a professional community creating new understandings of relevant practice. Teachers engaged in knowledge-generating experiences led to identification of particular characteristics associated with professional learning processes for successful meaning-making; no less the capacity for engagement in collective and reflective practices in knowledge creation and teacher leadership, “described as a state of autopoiesis or self-productive sustainability . . . subject to constant scrutiny



**Fig. 2** Successful school revitalization: The IDEAS way. (Source: Crowther, Andrews, and Cuttance (2004). ARC -SPIRT Grant Report)



and development of rigorous, culturally relevant professional learning processes” (p. 214).

Morgan’s work developed a further understanding of the role of the principal (distinct but interrelated) in whole school improvement processes. The initial understanding articulated by Crowther et al. (2002) and further developed in Crowther et al. (2009) outlined the Role of the Principal, initially for developing teacher leadership and for school improvement. The Metastrategic functions were outlined by Crowther et al. (2009) as:

1. Envisioning inspiring futures
2. Aligning key institutional elements, that is visionary goals, expectations, infrastructures, pedagogical processes, and professional learning
3. Enabling teacher leadership
4. Building synergistic alliances
5. Culture building and identity generation (adapted from Crowther et al., 2009, p. 71)

In acknowledging the importance of developing teacher leadership, Morgan (2008) recognized that principals who were effective in enabling this form of leadership demonstrated seven enabling practices:

1. Communicate strategic intent – making a clear statement of purpose for improvement and one in which teachers see value and in particular a moral purpose (later developed by Conway & Andrews, 2016)
2. Incorporate the aspirations and views of others – the visionary action is not just the province of the principal – rather based on shared beliefs and values
3. Pose difficult to answer questions – this promotes an open-ended inquiry to which teachers can respond
4. Make space for individual innovation – encouraging potentially powerful ideas
5. Know when to step back – akin to providing space, the principal encourages others to lead
6. Create opportunities from perceived difficulties – this encourages risk taking, developing a no blame environment and high level of relational trust (previously reported by Bryk & Schneider, 2002)
7. Build on achievements to create a culture of success – emphasize the positives, build on successes however small – develop meaningful culture building

The importance of enabling culture building processes was emphasized in doctoral studies by Dawson (2010), *Becoming a teacher leader: A grounded theory study* and Petersen (2016), *When the sleeping giant awakes: The lived experiences of teacher leaders and implications for schools and education systems*. Dawson’s study emphasized the need for principals to be proactive in establishing safe and innovative cultures through acknowledgment of the importance of the distinctive roles of teacher leaders and the principal leader in improvement processes. This form of leadership would become a norm in the professional lives of teachers. Further,

principals needed to establish structures to enable internal networking and as such drawing on teacher leaders' expertise to enhance teaching and learning through collaborative action. Petersen's work followed up with many of the teacher leaders Dawson had interviewed, as well as others. She focused on their lived experience since taking on leading school improvement. Her outcomes indicated that where parallel leadership existed, these teacher leaders had remained within the school and had continued to contribute to improvement processes. However, for others, the parallel leadership experience was not a reality. This resulted in some leaving to pursue other opportunities, while those that remained either retreated to the classroom or continued to unsuccessfully influence within their school – they were left *Battle-scared*.

The next phase of the LRI\_USQ research (2008–2010) focused on leadership for capacity building. The research was reported in Andrews and the LRI Research Team (2009), *A Research Report on the Implementation of the IDEAS Project in Victoria, 2004–2008*, and Crowther (2011).

*From school improvement to sustained capacity: A parallel leadership pathway.* Motivated by a focus on sustainability, the LRI research team revisited schools that had engaged with IDEAS and backward mapped observed and participant shared action to uncover the factors that had contributed to schools who reported sustained success (see research design in Crowther, 2011, p. 180). A focus of studies on leadership for school improvement moved to thinking about sustainability of successes. Informing literature on capacity building (CB) influenced studies of the LRI\_USQ research team, particularly that of Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and Senge (1990) as previously cited, together with:

- (a) Mitchell and Sackney's (2001) study that indicated CB happens when personal, interpersonal, and organizational development intersect.
- (b) D. Hargreaves (2001) related that CB was generated by high levels of social and intellectual capital as well as leverage strategies.
- (c) Hopkins and Jackson (2003) indicated the need for CB processes to be in place and dispersed leadership is fundamental for this to happen.
- (d) Fullan (2005) reported successful CB depends on system-wide supports, leadership networks and incentives.
- (e) A. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) stated that sustainable CB in schools depends on values associated with global sustainability and quality of life.

Further exploration of informing leadership literature related to CB (see Crowther, 2011, pp. 67) included Pont et al. (2008, cited in Crowther, 2011) who stated that, "global interest in middle management is spreading and teachers are taking on an increasingly wide range of roles and responsibilities for leading and managing schools" (p. 10). However, as noted by Crowther (2011), "much remains unknown as is known about the machinations of school-based leadership as a distributed quality" (p. 11), even though others (Harris, 2004; Mulford, 2007) had reported on the importance of distributed leadership. Lambert (2007) acknowledged the importance of distributed leadership for CB and noted that "leadership in

different phases of capacity development requires different functions” (p. 316). These phases she described as instructive, transitional, and high capacity. However, further research by the LRI\_USQ found that the *different phases* in capacity development are under researched, as reflected by Hallinger and Heck (2010a), “Leaders must be able to adapt their strategies to changing conditions at different stages in the journey of school improvement” (p. 106), and that there could be a reciprocal effect between school-based leadership and school-based CB by a range of mutualistic interactive relationships.

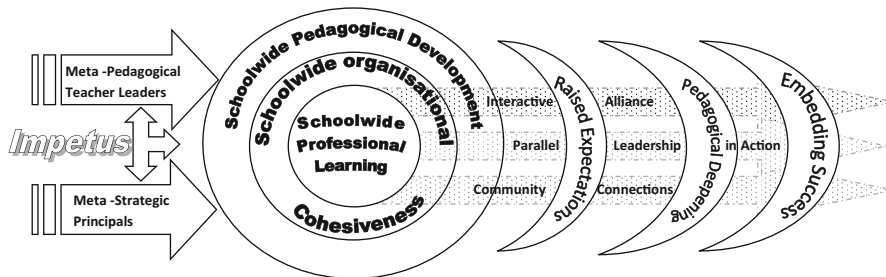
Informed by this research, the LRI\_USQ research team carried out a mixed methods study including in-depth case studies of schools that had completed the IDEAS school improvement project (Crowther, 2011, pp. 172–179). The LRI research team conceptualized the findings from the research in a CB process model (the COSMIC model) which consists of six interrelated dynamics (adapted from Crowther, 2011, p. 18):

1. Committing to school improvement – making a whole school process for improvement a priority
2. Organizational diagnosis and coherence – understanding the degree of coherence (alignment) of all contributing elements to improvement
3. Seeking new heights – developing an aspirational vision for the future and a schoolwide pedagogical framework that links the school’s aspirational goals to the work of teachers in the classroom
4. Micropedagogical deepening – engages teachers individually and collectively to enhance teacher quality outcomes by developing strategies that enhance student learning needs
5. Invoking reaction – disseminating and refining pedagogical and organizational knowledge through networking, transformational learning, and professional advocacy
6. Consolidating success – ensures processes of organizational, cultural, and professional learning strategies are in place

As the capacity building model emerged, the constructs of meta-pedagogical teacher leadership, meta-strategic principalship, and parallel leadership revealed new and clarified meaning, resulting in a revised model for leadership as captured in Fig. 3. What emerged was the understanding of the action of teacher leaders and principals in raising expectations, deepening pedagogical capacity, and embedding school success. Parallel leadership is the thread of the CB-Model wherein each dynamic provides a foundation for the other.

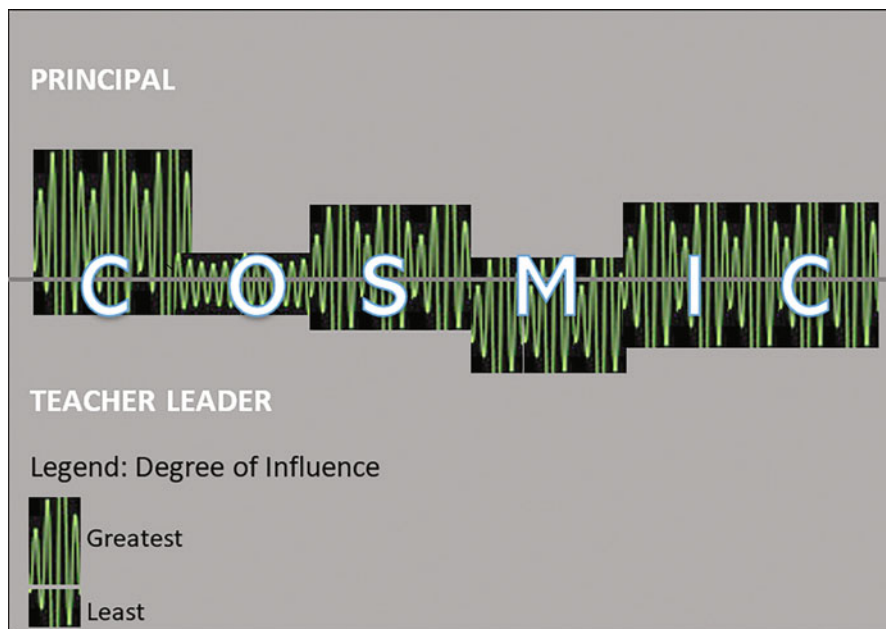
The CB model asserts that each school is unique, as the diagnosis (see dynamic 2) that is uncovered provides a basis for improvement and each school is responsible for its own improvement plan. Other references to the dynamics have been published by Petersen and Conway (2011), Conway (2014), and Andrews and Abawi (2017).

Of further interest in the research was the leadership component of a school’s capacity building (CB) potential. The LRI team captured the interactivity of leadership in a model for CB which indicates the relative importance of principals and



**Creating and Sustaining School Success through Parallel Leadership**

**Fig. 3** Creating and sustaining school success through parallel leadership. (Source: Andrews & the USQ-LRI Research Team (2009, p. 7)



**Fig. 4** Interrelated collective leadership responsibility for capacity building: The synthesizer effect. (Adapted from Crowther, 2011, p. 165)

teacher leaders in the school’s capacity building process. Figure 4 presents a visual image of the interrelated collective leadership responsibility for capacity building for creating and sustaining organizational success.

The LRI team concluded that capacity building in schools requires a whole school approach with a collective commitment to achieving priority goals and the alignment of whole school structures and processes to these goals. However, the success and sustainability of the successes require a form of distributed leadership that

recognizes the equal importance of leadership within the school, both teacher leaders and their principals who have distinctive roles within school improvement processes.

Quickly following was a replicated research study in the Sydney CEO System report (Andrews, Crowther, Morgan, & O'Neill, 2012). Of particular interest in this study were the outcomes related to impetus for school successes left unclear in the previous findings captured in Fig. 4. The Sydney system research highlighted three forces that provided impetus for action:

- (i) Systemic support – primarily from the central office executive, including expert system supervisors and consultants in leadership, curriculum, and pedagogy. The CEO provided resources, accountability systems, and opportunities for networking. Further, the role of regional consultants who provided important sounding boards and high-quality advice for school leaders were exploring new school program priorities and/or examining the practical value of specific programs for their schools.
- (ii) A school improvement process – a proven school improvement strategy (in this instance IDEAS), for pursuing enhanced school success over a period of three or more years and sustaining that success into the future
- (iii) High aspirations and expectations – a culture of “We can achieve more if we set our sights high and increase our internal alignment and cohesiveness,” using the leadership of principals, deputy principals and teacher leaders

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## Parallel Leadership: Current Status

Parallel leadership has come a long way since its initial conceptualization by the LRI researchers in the early 2000s. It is no longer built on just the two distinct leadership roles of the principal and the teacher leaders, respectively, whereupon the visual image of *parallel* means two straight lines on a plane that do not intersect. Increasing evidence gathered through the long-term research and development of the Leadership Research International (LRI) team has strengthened the concept. The combined strengths of clarity of role description, interlaced with varying forms of distributed leadership, together with the overwhelming evidence of relational leadership, now form a robust state of leadership in schools of success. It is the leadership model required for a collective intelligence in schools with the understanding that “Collective Intelligence in schools is when a discerning community develops capacity to continuously create and advance new ways of thinking and acting in concert and with acumen toward enhancing student achievement” (Conway, 2008, p. 238).

The IDEAS project which engages a school in revitalization processes for whole school success has been the basis of an accumulated body of data as it has been co-developed and collected in schools in conjunction with the external LRI facilitators. A strong body of evidence has continued to emerge with the adoption of the IDEAS project in hundreds of schools across Australia in various educational state and independent systems. Several research projects have captured the parallel

leadership concept both directly and indirectly – of more recent prominence are the respective reports to the Canberra-Goulburn Catholic Schools system (2015–2016) (Andrews, Conway, & Smith, 2017) and the Sydney Catholic Schools system (2017–2018) (Conway & Andrews, 2019). For this chapter with an explicit focus on the development of the parallel leadership concept, the leadership perspective in each of these two research reports has been extrapolated and outlined in the following two sections. In doing so, it must be appreciated that some background to each of the studies is unavoidable to highlight the key leadership perspectives.

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## System-School Alignment

Building on the Sydney system research project (Andrews et al., 2012), research conducted in partnership with several Canberra-Goulburn Catholic Schools (Andrews et al., 2017) focused on the research question: How do school leaders use their contextually created SWP© and metathinking about organizational process to respond to school priority areas and respond authentically to system and government requirements?

An outline of this research is key to understanding the development of the concept of parallel leadership specifically in relation to the interdependent nature of the strength of the in-school alignment and the reciprocal relationship of trust between the principal and the system personnel for system-school alignment.

Several schools of the Canberra-Goulburn Catholic Diocese had engaged with the IDEAS project and after some 4–7 years were then keen to engage with the joint research team of the System and the USQ-LRI. These schools had to have demonstrated success in all four components of the IDEAS project as follows: (1) a longitudinal strategy for managing processes of implementing their own school priorities, that is, a deliberate focus on the five phases of the project – initiating, discovering, envisioning, actioning, and sustaining – engaging the professional work of teachers, both pedagogically and in relation to leadership; (2) development and alignment of key variables focused on a school's potential to enhance its outcomes – leadership and strategic management capability, internal and external stakeholder support, infrastructural designs, pedagogical practices, and professional learning mechanisms; (3) evidence of a 3-dimensional pedagogical (3-D.P©) approach encompassing the development of personal gifts and talents, concrete collaborative activities to develop school wide pedagogical understanding, and involving classroom applications of the SWP© and testing of the SWP© against globally authoritative pedagogical theories; and (4) leadership of a parallel nature conceptualized as “a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action for purposes of schoolwide development and revitalization to enhance the school's ‘capacity’” (Crowther et al., 2002, 2009).

The research design involved the tracking of evidence of improvement as guided by the researchers' definition for success: “‘School success’ is defined as enhanced school achievements in agreed high priority goal areas, based on documented evidence of those achievements and teachers' expressed confidence in their school's

capacity to sustain and extend those achievements into the future” (Andrews et al., 2009, p. 4). The two-year data collection involved group discussions with the principal, other relevant leadership personnel and identified teacher leaders of the school improvement process, together with a collection of artifacts and relevant school-based documentation as it pertained to their evidence of success in achieving their priority areas for improvement. The researchers also engaged with the relevant system personnel for each school, identified in this system as the System Support Officer (SSO) for the school. A similar data collection approach was used involving discussions with the SSO and the principal and collection of relevant artifacts and documentation pertaining to the school’s adherence to the system requirements.

Individual school case studies were compiled and then used in an across-case thematic analysis which gave rise to the emergence of an internal-school alignment and system-school alignment model and the relationship between the two (see Fig. 5).

The in-school alignment component was seen to be highly dependent on the development of trusting relationships between the principal and teacher leaders who in concert had developed teacher capacity for ongoing improvement while focusing on the school priority areas for improvement. This realization was a major development in strengthening the concept of parallel leadership – shared contextual knowledge, confidence in sharing practice, and realization that improvement is a continual process. This was evidence of principals and teacher leaders simultaneously working in mutual agreement toward attainment of school priority areas for improvement of their school’s success, each with their specific goals pertaining to their roles, but in ways that enabled a clear focus of collective responsibility (encompassing of the range of varying role descriptions) for alignment of all key variables for school success.

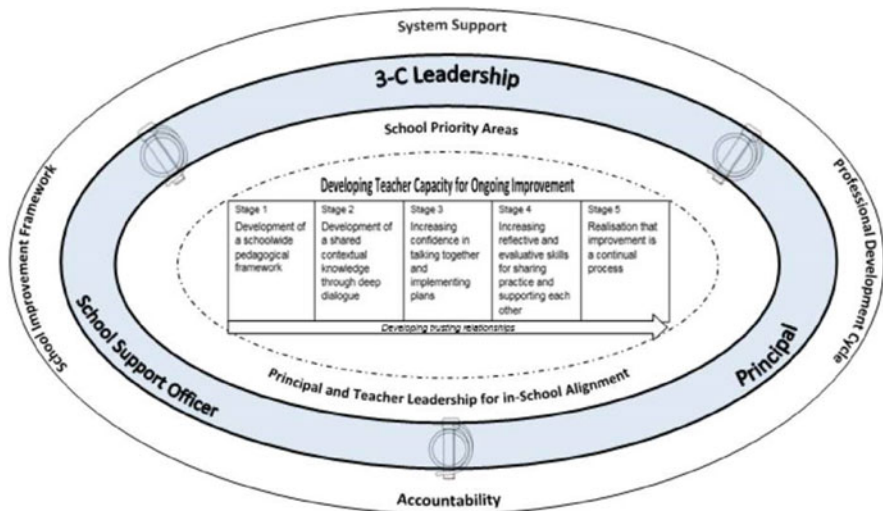


Fig. 5 3-C Leadership for system-school alignment. (Source: Andrews et al., 2017, p. 44)



The System-School alignment component added a richness to the concept of parallel leadership which built on the strength of the in-school alignment. One might say that the principal had the backing of the in-school alignment strength to then more confidently be able to respond to the system requirements. This was clearly evidenced by the explicit nature of the schools' ways of responding to the system requirements relevant to their context – the implementation of their Schoolwide Pedagogical frameworks provided firm foundations upon which to demonstrate their successes aligned to the system frameworks. Key to the success of this concrete evidence was the relationship between the principal and the system personnel of each school. Each was respectful of the other's role, but more confidently able to trustfully share the contextual knowledge of both school and system needs. It was concluded that “cognitive consensus is defined as the engagement in collective thinking to develop agreed goals” (Andrews et al., 2017, p. 9) which also added value to the concept of parallel leadership with, “leadership for system-school alignment conceptualised as an interrelated action between the principal and relevant system-school support personnel. Leadership provides the linchpin for System-School alignment and is actioned through 3-C's of leadership – Collaborative, Contextual, Collegial” (p. 9). The 3-C's represented the way in which leadership was enacted and is defined as:

Collaborative – working with others who share a common language to jointly achieve a shared purpose.

Contextual – tailored support sensitive to individual needs, organizational complexity, and cultural nuances.

Collegial – reciprocal relationship based on mutual trust, empathy, and appreciative perception. (Andrews et al., 2017, p. 40)

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## **The Effective School Leader in Action.**

Key to strengthening the concept of parallel leadership is how principals and their leadership teams understand who they are, where they are and what is required in their current position of responsibility, both in relation to their school and the system to which their school belongs. Hallinger and Heck (2010b) asserted that while leadership is a catalyst for school improvement, there are three ways of qualifying this claim – leadership styles and strategies need to be highly contextualized; the school's culture influences the [leadership] capacity for educational improvement and collaborative [school] leadership, as opposed to leadership from the principal alone is an imperative (p. 107). In addition, Andrews et al. (2017) added that “alignment between systems and schools is dependent upon the relationship between the principals and system support officers” (pp. 8–9).

Research conducted in partnership with several schools of the Eastern Region of the Sydney Catholic Schools system (Conway & Andrews, 2019) focused on exploring if supportive evidence existed for the contention of Hallinger and Heck (2010a) and Andrews et al. (2017). Several principals of schools that were identified



by the system as being “schools of success” in improving student outcomes were invited to participate in the research project. The system determined success by a collation of data in response to the system’s expectations. This study then engaged with the principals, their leadership teams, and the relevant system personnel who had a direct relationship with the schools and their school improvement agendas.

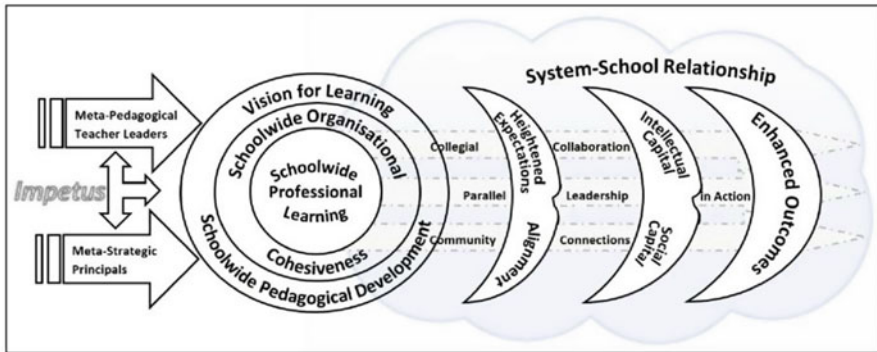
Evidence from this research study revealed a strong connection between the identified successful school factor and the genuine collaborative leadership of the principals both within their school community and with the system. In particular, the principals highlighted the importance of knowing their context and contributing to the building of a healthy trusting culture. The researchers concluded that while roles, structures, and procedures are essential pillars for ensuring organizational behavior both within-school and in system-school relationships, key to leadership success was the meta-thinking and action of the principal, that is, the “the principal’s visionary commitment to action” (Conway & Andrews, 2019, p. 56). Inherent in this complex concept is the principal’s ability to manoeuvre and manage the dynamics of interrelationships, most particularly that of the staff within-school, and in concert with system support personnel for system-school alignment. This study conclusively reported that it is “the collective responsibility of leaders to develop an organisational culture of collaborative leadership . . . with a clearly defined and mutually agreed visionary commitment to action” (p. 61).

Overall, the Sydney research report (Conway & Andrews, 2019) supported the “linchpin” relationship (Andrews et al., 2017) and further enhanced this relationship between the principal and system personnel when the “Principal’s Commitment to Action” is realized (Conway & Andrews, 2019, p. 6). This research report concluded that, “The emergent finding of this study on effective leadership for school improvement is that principals and their leadership teams, together with their system support, have collective responsibility for school improvement” (p. 7), thus further adding evidence of the concept of parallel leadership but moving it from just inside schools to inside and outside with the system.

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## The Maturing of Parallel Leadership

Working with schools and their leadership teams in educational systems is a reminder of the complexity of systems, as applied to their expectations of the schools, and in response to the broader context of societal expectations of education. However, each school operates in an economic, socio-cultural, and political context (Hallinger, 2018) and that level of complexity, while acknowledged, is often under-reported. Principals need to build trusting internal relationships, together with system leaders and support personnel – the 3-C’s of leadership (Andrews et al., 2017). Both internally and externally, each performs and is accountable for specified roles; however, the relationship is only sustainable if an organizational culture within the school and between schools and the system genuinely respects trusting relationships and a clear vision for the priority goals of the school which are reflective of both the system and the school needs. Figure 6 is a visual representation of the



**Fig. 6** Parallel leadership model for organizational alignment

complex and multifaceted nature of the current parallel leadership model highlighting the increasing prominence of relationships and visionary action integral to the sustainable success of educational organizations.

The “impetus” for initiating a leadership approach that will guide the process of organizational alignment has to emerge from within the context in recognition of the contemporary and futuristic needs of the community. Carriage of the process in support of capacity building for development and ongoing improvement calls on and highlights the roles, responsibilities, and interrelationship of the formally appointed leader (i.e., the meta-strategic principal) together with the combination of formally and informally recognized personnel leading the enactment of the core business (i.e., the meta-pedagogical teacher leaders). Individual and collective responsibility for the process of building capacity for success is a concerted effort of ongoing knowledge creation (the Vision for Learning supported by Schoolwide Pedagogical Development), in a cohesive culture (Schoolwide Organizational Cohesiveness) with a strategic approach to value-added professional learning (Schoolwide Professional Learning). This “within-school” capacity for ongoing improvement of the organization’s priority goals (Parallel Leadership in Action) then provides a strong foundation for the principal’s “commitment to the visionary action” in a collaborative, collegial, and connected manner in partnership with external support personnel of the larger system (system-school relationship).

Parallel leadership, while initially conceived as a construct for collaboration within a school between the principal and teacher leaders, has emerged as a powerhouse of collaborative leadership with collective responsibility for enabling the development and implementation of a range of skill sets and emotional intelligence levels in situ. Fundamentally, parallel leadership is the act of “leading together [with] a clearly defined and mutually agreed visionary commitment to action, [requiring] all concerned to enact the collective responsibility of participation and evaluation for continual success” (Conway & Andrews, 2019, p. 61). Thus, the conclusive

realization that processes for acknowledging and building relationships of trust both within the school and between the school and the system must be aligned.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The concept of parallel leadership was initially based on role theory situated within social systems theory and leadership as an organizational quality. While the concept is still embraced, it has been enhanced through an understanding of the dynamics of the interplay between principals and teacher leaders as it applies to capacity building for success within-schools. However, in acknowledging that the relationship between the school and the system in which the school resides is an important element of sustainability of improvement initiatives, the leadership relationship is an imperative beyond the earlier definition for parallel leadership. Long-term partnership with hundreds of schools across multiple systems, reinforced by several research projects, has added value to the concept of parallel leadership as the key approach to genuine collaborative culture building and ultimate agreed success as discerned by the collective in situ. The new conceptualization that emerges is:

Parallel Leadership is a multifaceted relationship developed between those who have defined leadership roles and those who emerge as leaders, together leading improvement with a clearly defined and mutually agreed visionary commitment to action, both within the school and between the school and the system. The relationship is built on action that is collaborative, collegial, and contextual.

Integral to the concept of this multifaceted, interrelational, leadership model is the ongoing interaction of the meta-strategy of the principal and the meta-pedagogy of the teacher leaders. The principal leads with a commitment to visionary action enabling the capacity building potential for social, intellectual, and organizational capital of the organization, and in concert, the teacher leaders forefront the importance of the meta-pedagogical knowledge and action heightening their part in the building of social and intellectual capitals. Thus, parallel leadership is an organizational model that can be enacted within a system when acknowledgment is given to the collegial collaboration and community connections specific to the school context in relationship with the system requirements.

It is not beyond reason that just as many of the earlier principles upon which the emergent model of parallel leadership was conceived were drawn from the field of business and management, this model might be applicable to other organizations in providing their service to community. Current aspirational improvements to local, national, and international socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions beckon enlightened leadership and networking of communities. Explicit interdependency of the social, organizational, and intellectual capacity-building potential of an organization calls for new ways of harmonized thinking and acting. Herein lies a proposal

for organizational alignment with a reciprocal transfer of knowledge from one field (the service industry, specifically education in this proposal) to another (business and management).

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**Part V**

**Interrogating the Logic of Leadership Practice**



# Zombie Notions of Leadership

# 23

Thomas R. Hughes

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## Abstract

Educational leadership in the United States has borrowed from many fields and engaged multiple paradigms. Throughout American history, government and business have had a unique, direct, and lasting impact on public school operations. Government domination and the resulting excessive compliance of recent years have created a seismic shift in this relationship and lead to leadership stagnation. Additionally, business has become a direct competitor in the form of private charter organizations and further strengthened its influence on instruction and operations through mandates to employ research-based and market-ready deliverables. Schools and their leaders have been increasingly forced into a continuing compliance reality. It has become safer for many to abandon who they set out to be as a leader in favor of adopting “experienced” leadership styles, whether they are even effective or right for the times. This chapter embraces the helplessness and resulting lifelessness promoted through excessive standardization. It examines the continuing reanimation of outlived leadership styles that likely continue to

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exist today primarily because of the stagnation fostered by outside intrusions into schools. Organized as a “top-ten” list, the chapter considers multiple outlived administrative styles. It delves into the underlying weaknesses of the individual expired leadership styles and then addresses implications, including why their failure to expire peacefully is less than desirable for leadership realities we face today and can expect in the future.

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**Keywords**

Standardization · Stagnation · Outdated leadership · Status quo · Compliance · Discrimination · Equity · Leadership training · Connoisseurship · Conflict

**The Field of Memory**

Human history has afforded us with an abundance of leadership philosophies and attempts at implementing them. Though American educational history is infinitesimal by comparison, there are already numerous leadership ideologies, mentalities, and practices that no longer meet with favor – at least openly – within professional circles. Among others, these could be considered to include an insistence on favoring the latest trends advanced by other disciplines, awarding privileged positions including nepotism, or a point of view that the *boss* is always right.

**The Field of Presence**

Schools are subject to significant internal and external pressures (Miller, 2018). Leadership efforts are not immune to these challenges or their influences. Therein, the field of presence could be considered transitory or, at the very least, *in flux*. Thought leaders in education and influencers of business and military trends such as Bernard Bass have more frequently emphasized collaborative approaches, including distributed leadership and even transformational leadership processes (Bass, 2003). Related to this, motivational considerations and capacity development are regularly heralded as critical elements of successful leadership. While *standards-based* approaches are still actively incorporated in training and practice, in contrast, emerging voices have reinvigorated the argument that leaders are at their best when they are reflexive, holistic, and multi-perspectival in thought and practice (English & Ehrich, 2016).

**The Field of Concomitance**

Education is heavily influenced by various sources, in part because education provides a vital contribution and makes a critical connection to virtually any field of study or profession. The mutual influence between parties is to be expected and extends to the sharing of leadership philosophies as well. That said, business and organizational psychology impacts are particularly evident in educational leadership circles, with inputs from communication arts, along with sociological and anthropological disciplines, also yielding significant influence. Equity considerations and attention to social justice concerns have direct ties to the social sciences. In contrast,

planning, personnel, and organizational theory applications are more directly aligned with business and organizational psychology.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures From the Different Viewpoints of this Area or Field**

Multiple sources have shaped educational leadership teachings and practices at multiple levels over the years. Much of this influence has been positive and evolutionary. However, these interactions' resulting complexity has also introduced conflict to the educational profession and has also been known to spur opposing viewpoints, approaches, and priorities within organizations. These discontinuities have impacted leaders' perceptions of their professional efficacy and made them aware of external pressures originating from social, community, business, religious, and governmental origins. According to Hughes and Davidson (2020), educators need to become more assertive in standing up to domination from external sources.

Examples of these challenges and resulting discontinuities include leaderships' regular call to supply a guiding *vision*, which could just as likely represent the organization having already bought into one or a series of government mandates. Related to this orientation is how educators have regularly been called upon to adapt and innovate despite having been placed in a mode of compliance for the past two decades (Popham, 2005). Stable leadership is often associated with the ability to reframe situations and challenges (Bolman & Deal, 2013), though federal legislation and established educational norms emphasize fidelity to one-size-fits-all solutions instead and critical thinking is often actually discouraged (Hughes et al., 2019).

Finally, there is the matter of growing cultural conflict throughout the nation and really around the world (Hughes, 2019). Administrators generally lack the training to deal with conflict – in general (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). They also have a growing need for assistance to deal with sensitive social, cultural, and social media issues that make their way into schools (Hughes, 2019). In as much as national training standards do not elevate conflict-focused training to a level of importance, and leaders are often forced to acquiesce to challenging demands because of compliance pressures, the ability to lead through internal conflicts, let alone social justice and equity issues, is not typically nurtured in school leaders (Hughes, 2019). Instead, training and standard setting tend to be tied to what appeared to work in the past. Therein old ideas, methods, and practices tend to linger as a result.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Education has borrowed extensively from many fields and paradigms during American history. Of all the fields and influences education has had to draw from, it could be argued that government and business (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003) have exercised the most significant leverage on the management of their operations – and have also consistently been the most highly critical of the outcomes resulting from their guidance, intrusion, and indirect control.

While business and government's dominion over education has only continued to expand, so too has the scope, frequency, and complexity of the externally triggered leadership challenges administrators face (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019; Hughes, 2014, 2019; Miller, 2018). Often, the conflict embedded within these challenges is tied to cultural problems that disrupt American society's very fiber (Hughes, 2019; Hughes, Ononuju, & Okoli, 2020). Lacking the training to deal with these expanding disruptions, school leaders are often dependent upon one-size-fits-all remedies (Fullan, 2014) that satisfy government expectations but rarely provide satisfactory solutions that eliminate the building strife.

This ongoing conflict makes organizational change impractical and unlikely, if not impossible (Fullan, 2014). According to Evans (1996, p. 5), "organizational change – not just in schools, but in institutions of all kind – is riddled with paradox. We study it in ever greater depth, but we practice it with continuing clumsiness." Paradoxically, the escalating conflict and compliance appear to have only led to increased adherence to standardization as a "fail-safe" option in many instances. The resulting recycling of past approaches that may have met with at least limited success during different times could be responsible for residual leadership approaches waking from a sleepy slumber during desperate times where even those trained for leadership positions are opting to stay clear of them.

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## Introduction

Years ago, we talked about "leadership," then the byword became "morale," then it was "motivation," then "communication," then "culture," then "quality," then "excellence," then "chaos," then back again to "leadership." Along the way we were buffeted about by the buzzwords "zero defect," "management by objectives," "quality circles," "TQM" (total quality management), "paradigm shift," and "re-engineering." (Farson, 1996, p. 12)

As Farson clearly intimated and certainly holds true to this very day, leadership and management paradigms rapidly come and go. Still, many refuse to die off entirely and outright disappear. Much like zombies, which are prevalent if not even chic personifications of the undead, some educational leadership notions cling to a near lifeless existence only to reemerge at some later point in time. This inability to disappear makes zombie forms of leadership stand out from "dinosaurs," which do actually go away. As is suggested by the title of this chapter, the symbolic notion that there may be elements of *the undead* walking among today's educational leaders is tied here to the organizational stagnation often seemingly suffered due to excessive standardization and compliance.

Years ago, Richard DuFour (1997), Robert Evans (1996), Phillip Schlechty (1990, 2001, 2009), and Michael Fullan (2014) were among the prominent educational thought leaders of their time. Each identified ways sustainable organizational change is best addressed at a cultural level capable of engaging personal attitudes

and psychological dispositions. Therein, administrator training was increasingly recommended to follow a *strategic-systemic* perspective more than *rational-structural* approaches by the leading scholars of the day (Evans, 1996).

Despite widespread support for this strategic-systemic perspective in the 1990s, business interests and government interference quickly aligned with one another, therein strengthening the prioritization of compliance and accountability during the past 20 plus years. Instead of settling into an effective human resource-centered approach to leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013), the *business* of compliance leadership encourages educators to turn back to familiar though often outdated styles that may be obsolete in design and a “safe” option for momentary survival.

According to Bass and Bass (2008), there are hundreds of leadership definitions to draw from. This chapter adopts the point of view that scholarship and practice have combined to identify preferable forms of school leadership, which training programs are then expected to nurture in accordance with standards and best practice. These approaches typically strive to cultivate trusting relationships through morally centered leadership focused on serving others and inspiring educators to invest in being their best (Davidson & Hughes, 2019, 2020; English & Ehrich, 2016; Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2014; Hughes & Davidson, 2020; Petersen, 2002; Schelcty, 2001). Though these characteristics are more consistent with who fledgling administrators set out to be (Hughes et al., 2019), there is the dimming reality of stagnation often linked to outside domination and an emphasis on compliance ahead of leadership (Hughes & Davidson, 2020; Popham, 2005).

Rather than completing yet another accounting of the reasons for or against standardization, this chapter’s outstanding balance will concern itself with some of the unintended leadership realities believed to result from excessive compliance and resulting stagnation. In total, ten outlived and outdated “zombie” forms of leadership will be forwarded for examination. This top-ten list will be tied to scholarly work and observation concerning K12 interactions and will be presented in a “countdown” fashion ending with the least desirable of all the zombie forms of leadership being submitted for consideration.

As a point of departure, let us establish this starting point to consider each of the ten zombie incarnations.

For some, leadership is a set of competences: a list of capabilities that can be listed and checked on development programs and standard frameworks that are linked to qualifications, licensure and performance evaluations. Others see that the coherence of leadership concerns how these competences hang together in a meaningful way . . . Leadership is also about influence, movement, and change: it is about how the dots flow on a journey of development and transformation from point in time to another. (Hargreaves & Harris, 2015, p. 35)

Originating from the point of view that leadership truly is about connecting the dots and about creating future leaders more than isolated competencies, there are three groupings of zombie leaders that will be presented. Starting out, numbers 8–10 share a common bond having to do with maintaining the status quo. Numbers 5–7

are largely personality-centered entities, whereas numbers 1–4 are “perspective-challenged” and consistently demonstrate an inexplicable propensity to ignore the more significant realities in an increasingly complex world.

One final general comment that appears to apply to most if not every zombie form of leadership to be detailed is the tendency for them to rely on their natural zombie leanings and follow a path of least resistance instead of adapting to new demands and new challenges in what to them may seem to be an unproven manner. These are educational fixtures who do what they do with little thought of change in their approach. This reality is very likely what got them where they are and is keeping them there as well.

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## Status Quo-Oriented Zombies

This section relates insights concerning *The Musical Conductor*, *The Myth of Isolationism*, and *The Black Hat*. Each of these status quo loving remnants from days gone by will be described in detail individually including the reasons they are out of place and so outdated. Each will be considered from a combination of practical as well as theoretical vantage points. The theoretical foundations will be tied to Bass and Bass, among other sources on leadership. In each instance, there is an attempt to link the practical considerations directly to K12 leadership situations.

**10. The Musical Conductor:** Philip Schlechty (2001) spoke to the #10 ranked zombie’s reality when he compared musical conductors’ leadership styles to jazz musicians in *Shaking Up the Schoolhouse: How to Support and Sustain Educational Innovation*. The musical conductor is as much a manager as they are a leader. Tying into ideas outlined in the *Bass Handbook of Leadership* (Bass & Bass, 2008), both management and leadership are needed to promote achievement. However, these designated leaders are the people who adopt and embrace more of a task orientation than a relations orientation, which tends to align them more vigorously to management.

When comparing and contrasting leadership and management, Bass and Bass (2008) introduced a third variable that administrators need to face – that being change. It can indeed be argued that the conductor interprets the patterns and structures that have already been put to print – but does that interpretation advance change? In contrast and as Schlechty (2001) interpreted, the jazz musicians, too, are about interpretation, as well as innovation, relationships, collaboration, and all sorts of more modern “leader-like” behaviors.

There is more to these differences than mere symbolism – and there are reasons the conductor is viewed as a zombie. According to Bass and Bass (2008), change needs to come from either a relationship or a task perspective. The jazz performer could be better equipped to deal with change and nurturing others as they inspire others through the relationships they establish. Additional reflection on the preferred point of origin responsible for promoting change would seem to suggest that

acceptance and investment in an effort or a cause tend to be far more relational and more sustainable when it is.

In the K12 setting, this is further supported by a viewpoint that adaptation is more successful when coming from a collaborative “relational” undertaking than looking for innovation through old documents and abandoned practices. A connoisseur-type leader (English & Ehrich, 2016) would be better equipped to size up the broader situation and the scope of the challenges that lay before them. Where the conductor strives to deliver the same performance day in and day out, the jazz musician is all about blending the many influences – and doing so at the moment. Whereas the conductor would be expected to delegate roles and responsibilities in traditional top-down settings, the alternative collaborative approach would focus on inspiring performers to stand up and contribute. There are stark differences between the more passive “buy-in” at best approach promoted by the zombie figure and the more inspired “investment approach” fostered by a more vibrant leader (Hughes, 2020).

**9. The Myth of Isolationism:** These are those K12 administrators who stress that since “it did not happen in the school” on their watch, it is not their responsibility to deal with “those” things. That approach and overall disposition may have worked 10 or 20 years ago, but today’s world is a very different place and moves at a much more vigorous pace. Digital technology and worldwide access have combined to bring us into an “around the clock” reality that does not allow us to overlook matters. Some continue to insist that only events on site during school hours can impact organizations, settings, and stakeholders we are responsible to.

Hughes and Davidson (2020) observed that educators tend to share a viewpoint that aligns both symbolically and literally with being able to close the door to their classroom and do what they will. So, the underlying instincts found with this breed of zombie trace back to former classroom teachers’ earliest experiences and can be considered both familiar and deeply ingrained.

According to Bass and Bass (2008), two very present though often competing leadership influences are trait theory and situationism. They indicated that leadership is usually based on a combination of individual differences and situational differences – though they acknowledged situations often alter leadership styles.

Based on their work, the status quo approach and the more trait-oriented approach work better with mechanistic organizations and realities. In contrast, organic organizations and circumstances are more readily aligned with more situationally attuned responses and leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008). The fact is that schools moving along a positive trajectory are far more organic and continuously evolving today than they were 20 years ago when this isolationist approach was alive and well and not expected to become a twenty-first-century zombie. The effort to isolate and live in the past is a telltale sign that this brand of zombie is holding down an administrative position somewhere.

**8. The Black Hat:** To many, this incarnation on the Zombie Leadership List takes on the appearance of a “good cop-bad cop” situation as the more highly positioned leadership figure frequently empowers a zealous subordinate to carry out the more visible and unpleasant parts of their duties on their behalf. In so doing, while

receiving a clear line of authority, the subordinate also typically inherits the stigma associated with these activities. In theory, they serve as the shield or the black hat for their superior.

“Authority is not power” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 355). In the eyes of Bass and Bass (2008, p. 353), “authority is the legitimate right to exercise power” with the added caveat that belief in that authority is dependent on followers witnessing and experiencing the benefits of leadership actions. Responsibility is a related concept and one that says that the leader is behaving in an accountable manner (Bass and Bass, 2008). The ramifications of failing to act accountably are often negative. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) documented how administrators negatively charged behaviors and positions taken by administrators to promote negative emotions and perceptions among subordinates.

The problem with the black hat goes beyond direct impact on affect. According to Bass and Bass, it further complicates and blurs the scope of power and legitimate authority, which can lead to conflict. In the case of the black hat operating within the K12 setting, instead of the true leader choosing to be accountable, they opt instead to take a power approach to authority and allow their deputy to play the “I can make you do it” card. While the black hat zombie can collect what appears at first to be victories, they are instead sucking the life out of the organization’s vitality and will to persevere under the regime in place at the time.

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## Personality-Driven Zombies

This section relates insights concerning *The Hero Leader*, *The Parliamentarian*, and *The Cheerleader*. These personality-driven examples of the walking dead will be described in detail and again collectively when considering why they are out of place and so outdated. Each of these personality-driven zombie remnants from days gone by will be described in detail individually including reasons they are out of place and so obsolete. The theoretical foundations will be tied to Bass and Bass, among other sources on leadership. In each instance, there is an attempt to connect the practical considerations directly to K12 leadership situations.

**7. The Hero Leader:** The hero leader is often considered much in the same mold as the charismatic leader. Originally tied to a form of divine grace long ago, and then recognized based on qualities demonstrated in battle (Bass & Bass, 2008), this has become a form of zombie leadership which has been in place for hundreds if not even thousands of years. While this has long been a widely celebrated symbol of leadership, there are reasons why the general approach it represents would be considered outdated, including its tendency to generate unrealistic expectations of those in charge (Walton, 2007).

In a world that increasingly appears to function better employing collaborative activity, the hero is who they are because of others’ belief that the hero is uniquely able to overcome undesirable obstacles (Bass & Bass, 2008). Whereas it has been offered that these types of leaders might be in a position to inspire the development of transformational leadership in followers, Collins (2001) and



others have been critical of this approach since the organization too often regresses because these agents of administration do not invest in the development of others. It is often said that when they leave, whether for positive or negative reasons, nothing in the form of well-established leadership is left to carry the organization forward.

Understandably, those leadership team members who are in the middle of change efforts might appear to be invested in their undertaking. Still, Bass and Bass (2008) also represent that those who are not close enough to the sphere of influence may not feel empowered or involved. Potentially, in the K12 setting, there would be a reason to expect widespread and passive “buy-in” to initiatives (Hughes, 2020) as opposed to more direct investment, which according to Hughes and Davidson (2020) is more supportive and more sustainable as well.

If not also fate, a final twist of logic is that they appear transformational because of their charismatic or historically “divine” or most capable appearance. If they were “level-five leaders” described by Collins (2001) and committed to transformational, there would be a far clearer and more substantial reason to celebrate their leadership than basing it on appearances. To be viewed as transformational because they are considered to be charismatic or divine or “most capable” clearly seems to be a case of mistaken identity.

**6. The Parliamentarian:** This incarnation is considered the rule-centric leader who is generally concerned with operating within a pre-determined order – even at the cost of progress. An example that has presented itself within the K12 work setting would be a reasonably common effort during contract negotiations where the first order of business becomes confirming strict rules concerning who can talk and when and time limits for caucusing. In an actual work setting, that approach was followed 2 years later by a practice where ongoing communication and exchanges of communication took place ahead of the actual bargaining “session.” In the former instance, little progress was made with the parties on hand, and external mediation was recommended. In the latter example, in the same setting but different district leadership, the contract with two bargaining groups was completed in a total of 15 min of the formal meeting. Appearances and outcomes strongly suggest that the rule-keeping priority did little to promote the locality referenced progress.

There are those in prominent roles who gravitate toward rules and reasons. Bass and Bass (2008) referred to an idea called “cognitive complexity” which has to do with personnel’s ability to sort through challenging concepts and also related an ability to be persuasive. While Bass and Bass linked this ability to promotion in many organizations, the rules making and rules following involved were not considered the norm. The maneuvering tied to the deliberate application of regulations has been seen as having a value at the organizational level, but less so at an interpersonal level.

When it comes to the research on this form of potential interdiction through rules, a lot depends on the purpose linked to any given effort. Bass and Bass (2008) indicated that most leaders fall somewhere on a continuum between being directive and participative. When “the rules” are in place for participative leaders, they can be as limiting as in the just cited example. When they are put in place by directive



authorities, the “rules” can be more restrictive. What makes this approach outdated is the deliberate use of structures or rules to limit others for advantage and gain. It is not an approach, nor is it a priority that a lot of subordinate employees value.

**5. The Cheerleader:** It has been asserted that in some sense, being able to put a positive spin on most things can come across as being an impressive and desirable quality (Mabry, 2005). While society is undoubtedly inundated with “spin,” this variation of the zombie lineage is, however, often associated with the concept of a *laissez-faire* “leader” or someone who prefers to project a view of “smooth sailing” ahead – as a perpetual way of doing business and avoiding challenges and ensuing conflict. In the K12 setting’s real-life workings, this type of zombie behavior is often observed when administrators maintain a near totally disengaged presence, all the while vociferously suggesting a full understanding of a situation and total confidence in the people who are doing the work. According to Hughes, Bechtler, Cruz-Szabo, Hafner, Ortiz, Piel, Quiroz, and Robbins (2020), teachers noticed this type of behavior frequently when their building administrators regularly put distance between themselves and special education concerns. In other instances, these titled administrators are known to urge their subordinates not to come forward with problems unless they are prepared to offer a solution as well.

Within their handbook, Bass and Bass (2008) offered additional insights tied to leadership stress and efforts to avoid it that appear to speak to this form of out-of-date leadership. Referencing the idea of “role overload” where leaders attempt to present themselves as competent by relying on perceptions and organizational trappings, Bass and Bass (2008, p. 819) reported that a *laissez-faire* or “do nothing” approach is often easier for the moment and removes the stressed party from the responsibility of making potentially faulty decisions. As they also pointed out, this approach “looks” like it works in many larger organizations and has been viewed as being a successful though not “effective” form of leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 822).

As mentioned, dealing with conflict is essential for robust and effective leadership that may not be afforded by assorted zombie incarnations. Conflict is on the rise across society and within schools (Hughes, 2014, 2019; Miller, 2018). Whether one is talking about avoiding the everyday challenges tied to special education issues (Hughes et al., 2020) or other stress-producing interactions, this conflict-avoidant approach to administration is commonly observed (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). It provides aspiring leaders with a very lifeless example to model after.

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## Perspective-Challenged Zombies

This section relates insights concerning the Big Data Metaphor, The Toolbox, the Titled Leader, and The Marginalizing Leader. Each will be considered from a combination of practical K12 leadership and theoretical vantage points including reasons they are out of place and so outdated.

**4. The Big Data Metaphor:** Data use is certainly important and has earned additional attention and appreciation within education during the past 20 years. The use of data in and of itself does not make a leader a zombie leader. That said, the

reason big data is part of the zombie countdown and, additionally, is this far down the list is due to the frequent overemphasis and regular misguided overreliance that is often experienced within educational organizations. When mega-data use becomes such an overriding determinant of practically “everything” that administrators and governing boards even go so far as to surrender their roles in goal development – things have likely gone too far.

Educators well versed in data analysis and data use know the difference between reliability issues and validity issues. According to Bass and Bass (2008), it is not enough to define terminology, including reliability and validity. It is far more critical to recognize the limitations of psychometrics and not become so enamored with efforts to beef up reliability that we forget to question the validity of the data we are focusing on. Added to this problem is the lack of deeper understanding most educators have concerning data. Despite this deficit, it is the norm for leadership in the K12 setting to organize data retreats where the “data drives” the decisions being made – despite the data being delved into by people with minimal understanding of validity issues as they are spoon-fed the information they are working with.

Added to the lack of understanding is the fact that the stakes connected to big data are enormous. This leadership zombie can do a lot of damage both in terms of the types of decisions that are supported and also in terms of the way mega-data shuts down other initiatives and viable forms of leadership. As Bass and Bass (2008, p. 554) noted, the use of data can be at odds with leadership forms such as servant leadership because of the way numbers come to be emphasized ahead of insights that would otherwise be shared by people. Even too much of a good thing is not a good thing, which applies to data use that exceeds its useful purpose.

Finally, according to Schildkam, Poortman, Ebbeler, and Pieters (2019), the past decade has seen inappropriate data use that distorts our direction, encourages improper testing practices and student responses, and relates to an excessive emphasis on data-driven practices. Backing the importance of value, they advocate data-informed decision-making, which augments professional knowledge and decision-making practices. This more holistic and insightful approach not only represents a healthier perspective; it also sets their thinking apart from the toolbox mentality that is the #3 zombie form of leadership.

**3. The Toolbox:** This is a prevalent concept and a trendy undead member of the zombie leadership cadre. Much like #4 and concerning data, tools or skills are essential in the right place and the right measure. There is even value in using the term symbolically as authors, including Gupton (2010), have advanced *The Instructional Leadership Toolbox* as a handbook for improving practice. Overreliance on data can create an imbalance concerning what leaders attempt to address or how they go about it. Overemphasis on the “tools” loses sight of the inner workings that pull practical skills together and tend to overvalue isolated approaches and efforts. This difficulty is not so far removed from criticisms that are often leveled toward the overly dominant role standards play in administrator training these days (English & Ehrich, 2016). It propagates the possibility of both the development and the deployment of the wrong skills to the unfair situation. Tied to this is the cheerleader-like invalid assumption that if the standards are addressed on paper,

then all the tools are in place for the team, training program, or approach called upon to make a difference. Sadly, people stop looking at the viability of “the solution” itself because they become so enamored with the subparts that have been collected, and they assume they will automatically work.

According to Bass and Bass (2008), approaches like this one run the risk of personally distancing one’s self from challenges in favor of adopting the viewpoint that matters in question which are perhaps beyond the scope of one’s ability or responsibility (which is harmonious with our #9 Isolation zombie). As much as the toolbox concept is valued, there is evidence that many of the most important tools are not even being included in the approved collection. Practicing administrators have gone on record indicating that they have not sufficiently been trained to address conflict or special education, incorporate critical thinking in their efforts, nor schooled in how to effectively hire new members of their educational team (Hughes, 2014, 2019; Hughes et al., 2019, 2020).

In the K12 setting, the toolbox zombie tends to categorize things. Just like the parliamentarian believes that there is a rule to guide every type of situation or challenge, this zombie tends to do what is expected, to fidelity, utilizing the researched and approved approach that has been decided already – whether it works or not. Again, as Bass and Bass suggested, it may not be prudent to expect a more holistic viewpoint from this type of administrator. In a conflict or crisis, they would potentially be less likely to adapt to the specific needs of the situation and instead employ the default approved approach – all without making a strong attempt to figure out what potential deviations might be in need of additional consideration. In the K12 setting, these are members of a group who see delegating as an iconic tool – and overlook the importance of influence and inspiration that would be capable of creating new leaders likely better versed ineffective practices than they possess in their zombie tool kit.

**2. The Titled Leader:** This is the zombie that identifies with its designated title ahead of anything else, including its duties or responsibilities. In the K12 setting, educators are increasingly learning that leadership comes from places other than “the top” or titled positions (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). This representative of the undead struggles to recognize this emerging distinction and, even more so, fails to utilize the growing amount of talent and passion that could be available to them. According to Bass and Bass (2008), leadership is universal. Though they discussed the need for leadership, note its importance, and discuss followers’ role in fairly conventional terms, they also made particular note concerning “leader-centric” viewpoints. In but a few words, this is the vantage point that holds that the leader is the center of attention, whether talking symbolically, as a source of attribution, or the manager of group activities. The titled leadership zombie comes from the leader-centric point of view.

Bass and Bass (2008, pp. 20–21) identified additional points of view, including “leadership as an effect” as well as “leadership as a relationship” in addition to other diverse roles that are not “about” the person holding the title. These more differentiated viewpoints are more consistent with distributed leadership and servant

leadership, which are livelier and more inclusive forms of leadership. The added benefit of these more modern leadership approaches is, once again, the way they focus on the development of future leaders. The #7 hero leader zombies tend to be focused on their own success and not others' growth. Similarly, while titled leaders may be attuned to who may follow in their role, their attention is often more directly linked to succession considerations than development steps that can inspire and involve multiple future leaders.

**1. The Marginalizing Leader:** This final entry onto the Zombie Leadership List earns its distinction and holds its position because it represents a collection of both deliberate and what some might describe as unintentional "ignorance-based" biases. Borrowing from other entries including Isolationism (if I didn't see it, it didn't happen) along with the smooth sailing "head in the sand" tendencies of the cheerleader, this placeholder is closely aligned with the infamy of titled leadership in as much as its membership consistently values the wrong qualities particularly when identifying desirable leadership qualities. These are the people who become concerned with almost anything instead of understanding and addressing issues such as race and disability (Harry & Klinger, 2010).

The list of marginalized groups is extensive and, among others, includes biases based on racial, gender, religious, and sexual orientation grounds. Put another way, leadership that refuses to recognize and address discrimination in any shape or form, whether it occurs during scheduled school hours or not, is the end-all expired undead form of leadership that anchors the Zombie Leadership List. While a good many of these actors could point to affirmative action and other written statements that appear to honor equity, Bass and Bass (2008) identified sometimes remaining subtle – sometimes not so subtle – biases that are upheld by those in this group who hold leadership titles.

This form of zombie borrows from other defective zombie gene pools. Zombie #10 emerges in the appearance of providing order to a world that would otherwise be said to be chaotic. Zombies #9 and #8 combine to use another actor or "black hat" to provide isolation and coverage for these leaders who "would do something" if they weren't so busy attending to almost anything else. More than maintaining the status quo, we often see these zombies portrayed as #7 heroes who not only act as champions for other causes but pretend to be staunch advocates for the very issues involved with marginalization. Relying on #6 parliamentary type "rules" and espousing their overriding support for law and order, they act as #5 cheerleaders for a version of the truth that best suits THEIR causes. And their perspective is both faulty and jaded as they are known to #4 misrepresent data and act as though the #3 subparts matter more than the whole. They flaunt their #2 title and do everything they can to KEEP their position instead of fulfilling their responsibilities. Whereas a few of these zombies have common genetics, this is the zombie supreme because it draws from each of the other forms and the unquestionable damage it inflicts. Whether this is a school administrator or the state or national political figure they may be emulating, this #1 zombie leader is a remnant from an ugly past that does not play a useful role in today's society.

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## Implications

Philip Schlechty (2009, p. 3) reported, “there is general agreement that the schools of America must be improved. There is, however, less agreement about what needs to be done to improve them.” Though the *strategic-systemic* paradigm appears to be more *life-like* and consistent with the recent literature on educational leadership, the rational-structural approach has persisted and netted multiple victories despite its penchant in the end for creating structure embracing zombies.

Adding to the challenge of educational leadership is the fact that these trends and the abandonment of proactive processes are systemic. The primary responsibilities for governing boards have long been policy development and hiring the chief executive to carry it out. They no longer craft policy. They typically approve purchased language that is written by attorneys to reflect what the legislatures have decided for them in advance. Schools need to be improved (Schlechty, 2009), but how will they be enhanced by making them *leadership-proof* just as bureaucrats have worked to make the classroom *teacher-proof*?

It is troubling enough to know that outdated leadership styles continue to take up space and interfere with other more attuned administrators’ development. The implications of continued zombie existence are more significant than most may perceive. Effective education is vital and does not take place without highly effective leadership. The type of leadership that is called for is that which is evolving and not well-served by holding on to the past. Along with the very recent tensions surrounding pandemic, administrators have long been called on to address equity concerns including special education and social justice reforms. Administrators who avoid the challenges that are coming (Hughes, 2014, 2019; Miller, 2018) by defaulting into zombie practices are not only failing to embrace the future – they are taking education backward and leaving it open to even more calls for accountability and compliance.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Schools need to be improved, and they need to meet the needs of learners with increasingly diverse learning, racial, sexual, religious, and political profiles. The status quo, personality-driven, and limited perspective forms of leadership established long ago and became the standardized forms of leadership no longer meet educational or societal needs. Often, however, they continue to stand out in response to excessive stagnation created through standardization. As pointed out by Hargreaves and Fink (2003), standardization does not align well or do exceptionally well with serving diversity and changing conditions. Instead of insisting on standardization, and taking the leadership roles away from administrators, boards, and classroom teachers, we need to free ourselves from external domination and our primary emphasis on accountability first – people second. To fail to do so will only perpetuate zombie forms of leadership.

We need to ensure we invest in the people’s capacity in our organizations (Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015), rather than turning them into the *undead*.

Zombies are considered chick in many places, though the term truly does not represent an effective form of leadership. We need to focus on hiring the right people, establishing a credible and trusting adaptive and nurturing leadership style, and support everyone's ability to work through the complex and changing circumstances that are on the way (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). If, in the end, it is our administrators' job to manage the status quo, then perhaps and even quite likely much of this is overstated. On the other hand, within a point of view which holds that our administrators are leaders who grow beyond the basic standards, then it should be clear that we need to breathe life into them beyond the minimum requirements referenced in our training, licensing, and performance standards which have not done enough to replace zombie leaders with healthy and vibrant ones.

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# The Social Construction of Leadership Power

# 24

Bev Rogers

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## Abstract

What is *called into being* as “leadership” is what is intelligible as leadership through norms and “truths” at the time. It is not just based on the intent or characteristics of the leader, but on how subjects of the “truths” of the leader are constituted and hence conduct themselves. Leadership and context are connected and hence socially constructed. In fact, traditional, views of “universal” leadership traits as possessed by the leader do not help us explain or understand what has happened in Australia during the last 2 years of the pandemic, seen by most as a crisis in leadership. Having presided over closed international borders and a majority of closed internal borders and lockdowns for most of 2020/2021 the federal government provided heavily interventionist

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wages support for most businesses and workers in that time. Given the closure of international borders, and the priority given to suppression of the virus, the coordinated test, trace, and isolate practices delivered in each state were largely effective. With 90% of people double-dose vaccinated across the country in November 2021 and 9 days into the Omicron variant, the international borders and most state borders opened completely or with exemptions available. The Prime Minister “declared his aspiration to get the government out of people’s lives . . . [becoming] a government in name only . . .” (Felk, 2022). Infections, and deaths skyrocketed and the test, trace, and isolate regime broke down in most places with long queues and people waiting for days for results. The new *pushing through* and *moving forward* “truths” were a major change in how leadership of the pandemic was now presented. By understanding leadership as deploying techniques of governmentality, how most people are asked to reconstitute themselves as “responsible” individuals who now valued their freedoms above social obligations of protecting others from the virus can be examined. In the new narratives of “leadership,” deaths are less important than hospitalizations and managing health systems. The resurgence of the priority of the economy shows a swing from one extreme of zero-suppression of the virus to the other, described by some as the “let it rip” strategy with one of the highest rises in daily cases and deaths in the world. The health/freedom/economy paradox remains and it is uncertain if the government can “strike the most effective response to it” (Grattan, 2022). By understanding leadership as techniques of governmentality where narratives attempt to tell “truths” for a period of time that constitute people in certain ways according to rationalities of governing, how construction of compliance or not and “leadership” or not through norms of intelligibility happens can be apprehended and therefore imagine something better. “*Living with Covid*” might be a better balance between more distanced *pushing through*, *moving forward*, and *taking individual responsibility* alongside social obligations and restrictions on freedoms that prioritizes living in addition to the economy.

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**Keywords**

Intelligibility · Regime of truth · Leadership · Governmentality · Social construction

**The Field of Memory**

In much of the leadership literature, ways of thinking about leadership are limited to Western models (Bush, 2007) with the impact being that our thinking is dominated by managerialist notions of leading, whose primary imperative is to render educational sites and the systems that support them, more efficient and accountable (Gunter, 2012). The study of leadership originally explored what personal traits leaders possessed (Stogdill, 1948, 1974a). Trait theories were often termed “great-man” theories identifying leadership as something of an exception. When the theories were challenged, the research navigated toward

being more situational, with the shift to identifying traits as situationally dependent (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). The complexity of situation and trait has led to many forms of adjectival “leadership,” which struggle to describe the presence or not of leadership.

### **The Field of Presence**

Thomson, Gunter, and Blackmore (2014) argue that when one examines what is on offer to new or experienced school leaders, in relation to learning about educational leadership, there seems to be presented “a single best way to do leading and leadership, and to be a leader” (p. viii). Dominant discourses of educational leadership structure leadership as “a delivery disposition” (Eacott, 2011, p. 52), which strengthens the emphasis on the leader to inspire and influence individuals “towards the purpose of serving policy” (Atkinson, 2004 p. 111), which is becoming significantly similar across nations. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) assert that while most people seem to have little doubt that “leadership” is a “real” phenomenon, important and necessary for organizations, “few acknowledge problems with confusing a socially constructed label with an assumed empirical reality” (Eacott, 2015, p. 35). Leadership tends to be positioned “at the front or input end of the explanatory template normally used to account for the flow of action . . . leaders are conventionally constructed as causal agents” (Gronn, 2003, p. 278).

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Western models of leadership are individualized and rely largely on assumptions of the actor’s intention to lead as the sole criteria of “leadership.” An ever-expanding range of Western models of leadership and management are traversing the globe and “finding their way into traditional cultures” (Wallace & Poulson, 2003, p. 130) since neoliberal-influenced assumptions are made that the purpose and context of leading is the same throughout the world. However, as Harris and Jones (2015) argue, context matters significantly in regard to the preparation and training of school leaders in different countries (p. 311) and in their everyday practices. In current times, with an increasing level of “policy borrowing” internationally (Lingard, 2010), assumptions are made that “ready-made” improvement pathways exist “for weaker education systems to simply follow” (Harris & Jones, 2015, p. 313) and that there is one style of leadership that “works” everywhere.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Decontextualizing leadership extracts “the practice of leadership from the social space in which it occurs” (Eacott, 2011, p. 56). Dimmock and Walker (2005) argue that educational leadership and culture has mainly been focused on as separate entities, with relatively little consideration to their interrelationship yet being intelligible as a “leader” is not guaranteed by the intention or the behavior of the leader. Since being a “leader” is performative (Peck & Dickinson, 2009) it matters how constraints and norms operate in each moment of interaction and therefore leadership is a culturally and contextually bounded process. Ignoring this offers a piecemeal approach and impedes our understanding of it.

### Critical Assumptions

The advancement of leadership practice is dominated by managerialist discourses, which do not question the ends employed but seek to improve individual action and influence described as “performance.” In discourses of educational administration, there is a proliferation of types of “leadership” through an assortment of adjectives, yet minimal critique or problematizing of the label of “leadership” itself (Eacott, 2015). There is then, an *a posteriori* identification and labeling of “leadership” at the same time as an *a priori* assumption that “leadership” exists. Eacott asks: to what extent is leadership “present in a context in which it was already decided that ‘leadership’ existed” – are we *revealing* or *constructing* “leadership”? (2015, p. 38).

### Introduction

Over 50 years ago, Bennis (1959) argued that “the concept of leadership continues to elude us . . . with its slipperiness and complexity” (Eacott, 2017, p. 18). Stogdill (1974b) claimed that there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who define it. The most common source of ideas about leadership seems to be through “regular usage in the ordinary language of the everyday” (Eacott, 2017, p. 18) including social media, television, and newspapers. As Eacott emphasizes, leadership, if it exists, is essentially “a social practice” and “defined moment-by-moment” in interactions (2011, p. 56). The reciprocal interaction between leadership and culture also creates a context-specific meaning to the phenomenon of leadership (Dimmock & Walker, 2005), which contributes to the social construction of “leadership.”

There are two integrated parts to the social construction of leadership – how leadership is conceived from the view of the “leader” and how it is understood and interpreted by those observing or engaged with it. The first part is dominant through individualistic assumptions about the idea of leadership traits and characteristics separated from context. Eacott (2013, p. 93) points out that leadership researchers, policy makers, and practitioners in Western cultures have constructed the epistemic label of “leadership” without acknowledging that the post-event identification of leadership may be a result of the *a priori* assumption that it exists. This means that scholarship pays far more attention to the description of who leaders are, and what they have done post-event, than developing the kinds of explanations, which can inform our understanding of how leadership is enacted and received. Limiting ourselves to the first dominant aspect means there is a neo-trait or neo-behavior abstraction of leadership where “the context in both space and time remains on the periphery” (Eacott, 2013, p. 95). Terms such as *leaders* and *leadership* dominate policy discourses to position those in leadership positions as expected to *transform* and *deliver* mandated outcomes but “also establish that the outcomes are a result of the ‘leadership’ enacted” (Rogers, 2017, p. 112). Traditional ideas about “leadership” are usually preoccupied with an emphasis on traits and characteristics of the “leader” within a set of assumptions that “leaders” stand out through being exceptional (Gronn, 2003).

By focusing on the second aspect of the social construction of leadership, through exploring the discursive practices of leadership (Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2013) the focus can be on the complex set of circumstances through which reception is framed

and “leadership” is spoken *into existence*. Leaders have a key role in shaping the normative frameworks and since subjectivity is framed through multiple sets of simultaneously operating norms, it provides a moment for a concoction of norms to shape understandings, which are unstable and messy. Tingle (2018) highlights that as a society there is a focus on personal qualities and character of the leader “rather than those around them” (pp. 4–5), yet “. . . leaders only get to lead if they have followers whom they can persuade to follow. So she suggests that it is often what followers want that determines whether leaders get to emerge at all (p. 2). Determining “what followers want” is not straightforward. There is a dominance of the “strongman” “leader who succeeds or fails alone” (p. 6) resulting in fragmented communities with people who “don’t think they are being heard” (pp. 9–10).

In this chapter, I explore recent events in Australia as part of the COVID-19 pandemic. I explore the second part of the social construction of leadership through how narratives are created and modified within two contrasting examples of “strongman” leadership, and the associated subject constitution that appears to “go along with it” or not. The contrasting “truths” reflect differing histories and circumstances in perceived majority views, which is important in understanding how leadership is constructed and “received” in each case. This chapter argues that understanding leadership as deploying techniques of governmentality (Niesche, 2014) helps us understand how leadership is established, not by imposing force, but by employing tactics, practices, and mechanisms (Niesche, 2011) to *speak into existence* leadership that seeks to “arrange things in such a way that . . . such and such ends are achieved” (Foucault, 1991, p. 95). Employing techniques of governmentality center on

constituting the terms of social discourse . . . [which] direct each member of society to seek to adjust his or her own behavior . . . Individuals are not as much compelled by force but influenced to produce themselves as proper members of the society or risk being socially isolated (Foucault, 1977, 1994b, 2009) (Stanisevski, 2011, p. 62).

In the chapter I explore firstly the tools I use to examine “leadership” of the pandemic in Australia as described by various media, which includes Foucault’s notions of governmentality, power, and local truth regimes as well as Butler’s concepts of intelligibility, which allows examination of the mentalities of how leadership is understood (Gillies, 2013, p. 66). I then employ these concepts to understand the social construction of leadership in the context of Australia in 2021/2022 in the COVID-19 pandemic. Foucault’s understanding of governmentality used in this argument, “increases our awareness of the role of construction and the constructed . . . and [how we] accept these constructions as facts of nature or universal categories” (Gordon, 2000, p. xxiv).

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## Governmentality

In many senses, what is intelligible as leadership, at its core, is about control so that “such and such ends are achieved” (Foucault, 1991, p. 95). Foucault argues that those who try to control and limit freedom of others “have at their disposal certain

instruments” that take different forms and “vary greatly in intensity depending on society” (1994a, p. 300). Deployment of these “instruments” as “leadership” can be seen as techniques of governmentality (Niesche, 2014). With this perspective, it can be understood that it is not a relation of obedience between governor and governed or “a subjection or a blanket acceptance” (Foucault, 2002, pp. 455–456) but it is moderated through interpellation (Gillies, 2013). The term *interpellation* was introduced by Louis Althusser (1918–1990) to explain the way in which ideas get into our heads and have an effect on our lives, having such a hold on us that are our own. The narratives and rationalities offered by the leader “call out” to people, offering an identity, which they are encouraged to accept. One is not forced to accept, but encouraged to *accept* them through a largely invisible, but consensual process that is taken for granted. The process of interpellation works best when it is invisible, when individuals accept cultural notions as though they are obvious, or natural, when it seems natural. At best, interpellation works when individuals give no thought to being interpellated in the first place. Gillies (2013, p. 71) argues that “lead” can be substituted for “govern” to see the relevance of governmentality to analysis of leadership. “Leadership” is valorized in common everyday language and heavily populated with heroic images in “[m]odern business and media discourse” (Gillies, 2013, p. 73), normalizing its importance for “effectiveness” but hiding the key mechanisms or instruments by which it occurs.

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## Power

Leadership “power” is a product of these relationships created through different rationalities. Foucault’s particular understanding of power is in how it is *exercised* in “power relations” rather than possessed (Gillies, 2013, p. 26), which supports an analysis of the network of relations rather than the traditional approach of looking at leadership through “simplistic behaviours and traits of individuals” (Niesche, 2014, pp. 144–145). The struggle over meaning is central to an understanding of leadership (Nabers, 2010) so that leadership is intimately involved in the representation of universal and dominant ways of seeing the world in which the leader communicates “particular meanings of the social as universals” (p. 937). In competition with other social logics, it is an outcome of struggle and power.

Meanings are constituted by discursive practices in which some become hegemonic and dominate the field. The “power” of leadership depends on the “leader’s” “ability to present his/her own particular worldview as compatible with the communal aims” (p. 938). This works best in situations of crisis, when previous political logics are questioned and more people open themselves up to different discourses, which may occur in succession as a succession of different rationalities (Gordon, 2000, p. xxiii). Such hegemonic struggles occur discursively, encouraging acceptance and “universal significance” (Nabers, 2010, p. 940), calling leadership into being. The struggle over meaning establishes what Gore (1993) refers to as a local *regime of truth*. Gore (1993) modifies Foucault’s use of regime of truth at “a more microscopic or local level” (p. 50) arguing that society can be conceived at “a more

local level whereby discourses and practices can contain a local politics of truth” (p. 56). What is most relevant here is that Gore (1993) emphasizes that it is not being proposed that it *is* a regime of truth but that it is helpful to examine what is happening *as* a regime of truth.

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## Truth Regimes

A regime of truth is “the strategic field within which truth is produced and becomes a tactical element in the functioning of a certain number of power relations” (Lorenzini, 2015, p. 3). Regimes of truth do not rest on any logic or evidence but have the form:

“if it is true, then I will submit; it is true, *therefore* I submit”. This ‘therefore’ that links the ‘it is true’ to the ‘I submit’ gives the truth the right to say “you are forced to accept me because I am the truth.” (Foucault, 2014, pp. 94–95)

Every regime of truth determines the obligations of the individuals who are implicated in it and thus that they must “accept – explicitly or not, consciously or not – the specific ‘therefore’ that links the ‘it is true’ and the ‘I submit’” (Lorenzini, 2015, p. 5). Acceptance of “I submit” takes the form of a subjection or of a subjectivation, since every regime of truth asks of the individuals who are implicated in it, *a specific self-constitution*. There is always a specific subject associated with a given regime of truth for as long as he or she accepts the *therefore* that links “it is true” and the “I submit.” As a tool, viewing what is said *as* a regime of truth, enables us to understand how acceptance of the narrative means that people feel they are to “tell the truth” in order for a mechanism of power to govern (or lead) him or her. Contesting the subjectivity is “not an easy task . . . [since the mechanisms of power give] the impression that there is no real choice to be made” (Cremonesi, Irrera, Lorenzini, & Tazzioli, 2016, p. 72).

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## Intelligibility

The cultural or contextual connection with leadership also means that the *intelligibility* (Butler, 1990/2006, 1993, 1997) of leadership is “constrained and conditioned by what is available for me to do within the culture” (Olsen & Worsham, 2004, p. 345). What is identified as “leadership” has therefore a *context of reception* as well as agency, where, depending on context, certain things are recognized as “leadership” according to current norms. People are “persuaded to follow particular norms because they hold out a promise of recognisability . . . regulated by a need to fit in” (Gowlett et al., 2015, p. 155). People make sense of what a “leader” is doing by being positioned within various discourses or narrative frames spoken by the leader. Discursive practices draw boundaries around what is accepted and valued in society, thus shaping what is seen and considered as “culturally intelligible.” People are

“interpellated (brought into being as subjects) against this backdrop of intelligibility” (Gowlett et al., 2015, p. 155).

Western models of leadership are individualized and rely largely on assumptions of the actor’s intention to lead as the sole criteria of “leadership.” According to Butler, agency is constrained by culture – “what I can do is, to a certain extent, conditioned by what is available for me to do within the culture” (p. 345). To be interpreted as *intelligible*, the subject must, to some degree, internalize and rely upon the social norms, which are reinforced, repeatedly, when the subject is called upon as a “leader” and thus recognized. The constitution of leadership of a leader is actually “an artefact of its performative constitution” (Youdell, 2006, p. 515) even though the leader *appears to pre-exist* this constitution. In interpreting who is intelligible as a leader, in any given context, what is thought to be “leadership” may not be recognized as such by those witnessing the “performance.” While, change can occur through mis-performance, which pushes the bounds of intelligibility (Butler, 1997), not every mis-performance challenges change. Over time, intelligibilities appear as traits or innate or fixed qualities, which are attributed as belonging to the person (Butler, 1993). People are “interpellated (brought into being as subjects who are leaders or followers) against this backdrop of intelligibility” (Gowlett et al., 2015, p. 155). With an approach to leadership as techniques of governmentality, Niesche and Gowlett (2015, p. 382) suggest that methods of inquiry might capture leadership practice as it happens rather than looking for *best* practice and prescription. For this chapter, I use the opportunity to look at “leadership” in the current pandemic in Australia, via newspaper coverage which constructs “leadership.”

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## Australia As a Case for Inquiry

### The Background

The first confirmed case in Australia of Coronavirus was on 25 January 2020 in Victoria (a state in Australia) with a man who returned from Wuhan in China. In March 2020 the Australian government declared a human biosecurity emergency, and established the National Cabinet as a process for states, territories, and the federal government to communicate and make joint decisions. Australian international borders were closed to all nonresidents on 20 March. States and Territories closed their borders to varying degrees and for varying times in response to localized outbreaks. Social distancing rules were introduced on 21 March and “non-essential” services (hotels, clubs) starting to be closed. The first wave of Covid infections peaked and then started falling in April 2020. A second wave of infections emerged in May and June 2020 and was much deadlier than the first wave. Victoria underwent a second lockdown, which lasted 4 months, ending at the end of October 2020.

The nationwide vaccination program began in February 2021. Having identified a phased rollout, which prioritized the vulnerable in aged care, it ran behind schedule with hundreds of elderly residents dying, resulting in lockdowns across states. The



Delta variant emerged in June 2021 in Sydney followed by lockdowns in most major cities from July 2021. The plan to keep infection numbers low through vaccination had a slow start with the Prime Minister describing the vaccine rollout as “not a race” (Murphy, 2021) which was an attempt to disguise the federal government’s lack of planning and ineffective management. On 28 November 2021, NSW Health confirmed two returned travelers tested positive for the new Omicron Covid-19 variant. The National Cabinet had set a 90% double-dose vaccination rate as part of the National plan for post-Covid. Australia was one of few countries to pursue a zero-COVID suppression strategy until late 2021 where there were strict controls on international arrivals and response to local outbreaks with lockdowns and exhaustive testing and contact tracing of domestic clusters. Regardless of the identification of Omicron, international borders opened and many states (except Western Australia (WA)) opened internal borders in preparation for Christmas.

Once international and internal borders opened, there were rapidly rising infection rates and requirements for testing before travel, which meant that there was much more testing and tracing resulting in long queues for PCR testing.

As infection numbers soared, the public response was near panic. People rushed to get tested. As demand for tests exploded, and the test, trace, isolate and quarantine system fell apart, there was no well-thought-through or resourced system to replace it. The foundation of the regulated Covid-19 response of the past two years disappeared within weeks. (Kitney, 2022)

The Prime Minister, convening National Cabinet, made three broad changes to deal with the increasing infection rate and the consequent issues with hospitals and business supply chains, which were crippled through workers becoming ill or in isolation. The *first* step was to shift the goalposts on testing, tracing, and isolating by redefining “close contact” and eliminating the “casual contact” category, primarily aimed at reducing PCR testing queues. The impact put asymptomatic but exposed and potentially infected people back to work, which accelerated the spread of the virus. The *second* step on 30 December was to reduce the isolation period for those who passed the tougher “close contact” test from 14 days to 7 days (10 days in South Australia). The *third* decision was to encourage the use of rapid antigen tests (RATs), which were in short supply for most of the public, and subject to significant price variations. While the UK government ordered rapid antigen tests from manufacturers in January 2021 and distributed them free from April 2021, Australia resisted making a decision for most of 2021, eventually implementing “a 2-tier scheme . . . for the identified poor and not for others,” deciding not to make rapid antigen tests free for everyone (Duckett, 2022). Despite months of the Prime Minister claiming that he needed to “unshackle Australians from the yoke of (his) government’s oppressive regulations . . . border controls, movement restrictions, mask mandates, QR codes and free vaccination delivered Australia one of the lowest death rates and unemployment rates in the world” (Denniss, 2022).

From December 2021, government as it was known for most of 2020/21 disappeared, coinciding with a rapid increase in infections. On 24 January Australia recorded 58 deaths from COVID-19 bringing the pandemic death toll for



2022 to more than 900 (Withers, 2022c) and the total since the start of the pandemic in 2020 to 3225 (Department of Health, 2022). Since the opening of borders in December, Australia's weekly new cases per million people, has followed the rapidly increasing trajectory of France being the world's worst (Ritchie et al., 2022). While rapidly decreasing after 26 January, it is still above the USA, UK, and Germany.

Before the Omicron variant outbreak began in December, Australia's strict lockdowns and border closures had kept daily Covid cases to under 5000. Daily cases have surged to over 100,000 and while this may be a peak, daily deaths will keep rising for some time due to a lag in people becoming seriously sick (Coch, 2022). The *new death rate* lags behind the number of new cases.

## Trajectory of Changing Narratives

What is evident across the trajectory of the pandemic in Australia is the changing narrative of the rationality of governing or leading. Initially, the Prime Minister's narrative justified heavily regulated control of what people could do and where they could go. With the opening of borders in December 2021 and moves to *live with* COVID, the narratives changed to government "getting out of people's lives" (Martin, 2022).

Scott Morrison has stressed for months that governments of all persuasions needed to extricate themselves from the lives of Australians as we all learnt to *live with Covid*. The idea was simple. Once most of the population was vaccinated, let the virus run freely in the community with limited restrictions on people's movements. (Martin, 2022 emphasis added)

"Government," which has been central to Australia's largely successful management of the pandemic, appeared now *in retreat*. The Prime Minister switched "the mantle of responsibility from government to individuals and the free market" stressing that "Australians now needed to make their own choices about their own health and their own lives" (MacIntyre, 2022). People must take "personal responsibility" (Tamer, 2021), with "the onus on individuals to choose to take protective actions as opposed to a "culture of control and mandates"" (Tamer, 2021). He declared that "we're not going back to lockdowns . . . [or] going back to shutting down people's lives. We're going forward to *live with* this virus." (Tamer, 2021 emphasis added). *Living with* the virus did not acknowledge the true per capita rate of those *dying* from it. Despite infections surging across the country, the Prime Minister argued that "Australia must push through . . . Australia *can keep moving forward . . . keeping Australia open and pushing through*" (Ore, 2022 emphasis added). *Pushing through* and *moving forward* meant "monitoring those symptoms" and "people managing their exposure to the virus" while keeping the "economy going" (Morrison, 2022). The Federal opposition leader described it as "a "let it rip" approach" (Ore, 2022). Instead of rushing to expand capacity, state and federal governments restricted access to testing, by narrowing the definitions of who is eligible for a test and what the definition is for "close contact."

## Western Australia “bucking” the Trend

With the increased rate of infections in eastern states, WA announced that its borders would remain closed for an indefinite time, despite initially promising to open on 5 February 2022. Just as WA was to reach a 90% vaccination rate for those aged 12 and over, to be double-dosed, McGowan argued that Omicron had changed things. A booster dose was now required and hence he delayed the border opening “until at least 80 percent of the population is triple-dose vaccinated [with booster] . . . not expected until at least May.” The decision is now at odds with the federal narrative of *pushing through, moving forward, and let it rip*. Yet McGowan’s border decisions throughout the pandemic have tended to be extremely popular within his state (Withers, 2022a). Despite the WA state government’s popularity, the nation, according to the media, is divided (Withers, 2022a). While WA is continuing the process that was used for zero-suppression of the virus, it faces pressure from media, business, and families wanting to enter the state. There is also a suggestion in the conservative media of *alignment with dictatorships* by suggesting that countries with little spread of COVID-19 through their communities (North Korea, China and Turkmenistan) all “impose either communist or totalitarian dictatorships on the people” (Jones, 2022). The Prime Minister is noticeably silent on the WA position, as he faces a significant drop in a poll (conducted on January 11–15), which is prior to the federal election in May 2022 (Coch, 2022).

## The Death Rates

Withers (2022b) highlights that although Covid was always going to entail some death, the Prime Minister’s narratives about *pushing through* and *moving forward* are silent about “what the acceptable death toll actually *was*” and “it’s hard to shake the feeling that the federal government didn’t really care how many.” On 24 January the Deputy Prime Minister claimed on national radio that “people are not dying” from COVID-19. While Barnaby Joyce promptly apologized, his “gaffe was clearly a bungled attempt to deliver one of the government’s talking points: that our death toll remains relatively low by world standards” (Withers, 2022c) to deflect from the fact that Australia’s new case numbers per one million are now among the highest in the world *per capita*.

it points to the flaw in the government’s general argument that not *that* many people are dying . . . [it] is the logical extension of the claim that these hundreds of deaths aren’t worthy of much thought, and are *secondary to reopening the economy*. (Withers, 2022c emphasis added)

There is an overwhelming sense in the media that the death rate is a casualty of returning to *normality* (Bermingham, Lewis, & Iannella, 2022). The Federal government narratives are also significantly *colonial* by being silent about low indigenous vaccination rates and the implications for vulnerable populations in opening

borders. Indigenous people were among the groups initially prioritized in the national plan but there is now a “huge gap” between rates for the general population and Indigenous Australians (Allam & Knaus, 2021). De Kruijff (2022) identifies that Perth’s (capital of WA) has a COVID-19 vaccination rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is the worst of all capital cities in Australia at 57.28%. The WA Department of Health has recognized the “responsibility to protect and safeguard Aboriginal people and communities” and may be a factor in borders remaining closed.

## Different Mentalities of Governing

Morrison claimed that Omicron was “manageable” prior to Premiers’ opening most of the state borders, against the advice of epidemiologists (Kohler, 2022). However, there is little evidence of planning for the increase in COVID cases with the demand for tests exploding, resulting in the test, trace, and isolate systems developed over 2 years, falling apart (Kitney, 2022). The Prime Minister’s “promise to get government out of people’s lives and give back their freedom” (Kitney, 2022) is an attempt to cover up lack of planning and perceived care by appealing to a “truth” that prioritizes the economy. Morrison anticipated that opening up to “live with Covid-19” would come with “a rush of business and consumer confidence, which would generate a positive political mood and favour the Coalition” (Kitney, 2022). Instead with the surge in Omicron infections, people are more anxious and worried and not going out. The claims to be *pushing through* and *moving forward* without acknowledging the huge increase in infections and deaths *per capita* creates a dilemma. For people to feel they are to “tell the truth” about *pushing through*, *moving forward*, and *taking responsibility* for not infecting others they have a dilemma about how to be a consumer in the economy while protecting themselves and their family from increased transmission. The “truth” of a federal government “in retreat” does not connect to daily lives for most people, who are searching for rapid antigen tests, no longer being notified as close contacts, and realizing the promised protection of vaccination is not enough.

Kohler (2022) points to the thrust of neoliberalism coming to dominate again in federal government narratives. In the early days of the pandemic “[g]overnments of all political beliefs followed the advice of the experts and implemented tough policies aimed at achieving zero spread of the virus” (Kitney, 2022).

As governments imposed tight anti-Covid controls, poured vast sums of public money into the economy to keep it from collapsing, and accrued significant levels of debt, there was a growing sense on the right that there had to be an aggressive counterattack to begin reversing these changes as soon as was possible. (Kitney, 2022)

Scott Morrison’s “promise to get government out of people’s lives and give back their freedom” is a clarification that the initial interventionist approaches by government are no longer the norm and “now (is the) time for governments to . . . step back” (Kohler, 2022). In the eagerness to deflect blame for significantly increased

infections and deaths as well as poor planning, the Prime Minister acts like “nothing could have been done differently” (Withers, 2022c). The Prime Minister is deploying the narratives of Thatcher and Reagan to declare there is “no alternative” and that “government is not the solution, but the problem” (Kohler, 2022). The continuing border closure in WA, is at odds with the federal government, showing that there *is* an alternative and government does offer a solution. Government responsible for a zero-COVID suppression strategy is no longer intelligible as leadership of the country for most of the eastern part of Australia. Morrison has read decreasing compliance with the former invasive social restrictions of the eastern states as a governability issue that can be addressed with new narratives of “freedom” and “getting out of people’s lives” so they can spend and support the economy. Living *with* the virus is “remaking our sense of the difference between civil and uncivil, considerate and inconsiderate, benign and dangerous . . . [it is changing] our sense of obligation to one another” (Bongiorno, 2022).

Understanding leadership requires more than the intent of the leader, but also intelligibility of the idea of “leadership.” Individuals are interpellated through narratives of “truth,” which leaders attempt to use to control and limit what people do to meet the ends desired, but the narratives need to connect to experiences and the everyday lives of each person for them to be able to *tell the truth* to be governed in the way intended. Telling the truth in response to techniques of governmentality requires an understanding of how interpellation happens. Dolan (2020) indicates that in regard to leadership, it may be that the perspective of paradox/dilemma is presented to “talk” to a fragmented community. The traditional idea of leadership as about leaders and their intent assumes a largely harmonious community. The Prime Minister had an opportunity to connect his “truth” to the everyday experiences of people by acknowledging the health/freedom/economy paradox present in the pandemic and highlighted by events of December/January with rapidly rising infections and death rates that were not mitigated by the double-dose vaccination requirements. The possibilities for thinking with paradox – and the simultaneity and interrelatedness of its opposing sides – are evident in the example of “leadership” during the Australian pandemic through their absence. Leadership *comes into being* by being intelligible within paradox if it is acknowledged and spoken to. “Leadership” is constructed in context through different ways of viewing the world in different places largely as a result of the interrelationships formed through interpellation of subjects within discourses or narratives. Identifying paradoxes provides insights into the “competing forces that haunt and contradict the simplistic positivist accounts that inform contemporary . . . policy” and leadership notions (Dolan, 2020, p. x). When subjectivity is taken into account and a fragmented community is apprehended in its paradox, it might be possible to go beyond simplified accounts of “leadership.” In a speech to the National Press Club on 1 February, the Prime Minister attempted “a mea culpa for his mistakes during the pandemic that he acknowledges prompted Australians to question his leadership” (Minear, 2022). Thinking that “some form of contrition was needed to address the level of community anger being directed his way” (Benson, 2022), he admitted to mistakes made by his government during the pandemic but refused to personally

apologize, preferring to reflect on the pace of the vaccine rollout and being too optimistic (Malcolm, 2022). He acknowledged that he could have militarized the vaccine rollout earlier, and been less optimistic about people having a great summer (Benson, 2022). His tone was that there was no need to panic and certainly not to “put everything you have all worked so hard for . . . at risk” by voting for opposition parties in the May election (Minear, 2022). He failed to represent the health/freedom/economy paradox present in the pandemic in ways that connected to everyday lives, choosing to reaffirm the priority of the economy and jobs from a more distanced view.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The exercise of leadership in these times is problematic. This chapter moves away from the familiar and orthodox in leadership literature, which views leadership as traits or characteristics of “successful” leaders to try to understand the social construction of leadership “power.” The chapter sits within the challenge to see “leadership” in the context of crisis, revealing paradoxes for leading (Dolan, 2018, 2020). This chapter looked at the pandemic in Australia 2020–2021 in a questioning way to examine how leadership is socially constructed in different contexts. Insights from this situation can inform others thinking about leadership in other contexts and sites.

Throughout the pandemic health/freedom/economy paradoxes have formed at the margins of the narratives of “truth” from the Prime Minister, largely unrepresented as choices and unconnected to everyday lives. His recent new “truths” talk about *getting through, moving forward*, and the priority of the economy and freedom at a time when the rate of infections per capita is only second to France as the highest in the world. The recent WA reversal of its anticipated border opening, highlighted this dilemma of community health and the economy, in a rare acknowledgment that it is not the either/or certainty described by the new “truths” of the Prime Minister. The silence on the per capita death rate holds open the paradox of individual freedom versus social obligation and the mentalities of governing that constitute people. Our capacity to discern and name what is being “seen” as leadership depends on the norms that frame recognition, moment by moment in context. Butler’s interpretation of performativity and intelligibility adds to an understanding of leadership *in* culture through providing tools to reflect on how cultural norms can impact how leadership is “seen.”

As is pointed out in *The Conversation*, the future trajectory of the pandemic in Australia might include a royal commission into Australia’s pandemic response because it is gaining support across the political spectrum (Grattan, 2022). There is much agreement in the media that “Australia’s journey through the Omicron outbreak has not been managed effectively” and it needs to be understood better to plan for future pandemics, which most people think is certain. Most of people have not yet “learned to live with the disruption of Omicron, or as yet to strike the most effective response to it” (Grattan, 2022).

In COVID's early days in Australia, deaths were very much front and centre in public attention. Now, despite a highly vaccinated population and a less lethal variant of the virus, the substantial death numbers are higher than the narrative of late 2021 led us to anticipate. (Grattan, 2022)

Many experts believe Covid will eventually be endemic rather than epidemic because the underlying factors driving the disease will change through increased population immunity either through vaccines or infection, and also through continuing mask wearing, hand hygiene, and social distancing (Mateu, 2022). It will remain part of our lives as influenza does but because statistics are reported most people are reminded of the cost. Prior to being endemic, however, the proportion of cases that are asymptomatic or mild has increased, and the global infection detection rate has declined from 20% to 5% with perhaps 80–90% of infections as asymptomatic (Murray, 2022) and perhaps not detected. While it is predicted that for a few months after March 2022 there should be low levels of virus transmission, eventually immunity, whether infection or vaccination derived, will wane, creating opportunities for continued transmission, especially in winter in Australia (Murray, 2022). The health/freedom/economy paradox remains with us and the question of whether we can “strike the most effective response to it” (Grattan, 2022), which will recognise a better balance between more distanced *pushing through, moving forward, and taking individual responsibility* alongside social obligations and restrictions on freedoms, is still a struggle and a question for all leaders. It might help to understand leadership as techniques of governmentality where narratives attempt to tell “truths” for a period of time that constitute people in certain ways, thereby constructing compliance or not and “leadership” or not through norms of intelligibility.

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# Leadership As Artistic Practice and Connoisseurship

# 25

Fenwick W. English and Lisa Catherine Ehrich

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## Abstract

This chapter examines the evolution of thinking in the field of educational administration/leadership. A field is a site of practice in a contested social space. Bourdieu (*Practical reason*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) indicates that a field contains *doxa*, that is, knowledge, ideas, processes, outlooks, procedural shortcuts, assumptions with an approved set of linguistic words and ideas. Over time the *doxa* of a field undergo changes. The reasons for the change may relate to significant new discoveries, which lead to replacements and shifts among the *doxa*. In other cases, political influence may be behind such changes. The distinctions between Foucault's three enunciative fields are never hard and

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fast. The reason is that a “field” is a fluid social space, one in which there is no final authority to determine or define its “true” nature. A “field” therefore is a social space of constant struggle and uneasy peace. The shifting nature of the field of educational administration/leadership is examined in this chapter highlighting some of the major “turnings” that have endured.

### Keywords

Field · Doxa · Scientific management · Aesthetics · Accountability · Managerialism · Qualitative research · The theory movement · Paradigm · A “turning” · Cognitive aesthetics · Management by objectives · Total quality management · Leadership · Somaesthetics · Connoisseurship · “Whole person” · Leading beautifully

### The Field of Memory

For centuries leaders in the West were described and studied in the arts and humanities. There were no “scientific” studies available since the social sciences are a relatively recent phenomenon in higher education. With some notable exceptions, leaders in past centuries who come to us in written texts were almost uniformly male and heroic. Writers describing and comparing leaders found different yardsticks to conduct their analyses and draw conclusions or didactic lessons from them, but they were nearly always presented as “whole” characters. It was acceptable and even admirable if their inner thoughts were also part of an inclusive reality of leading.

Arguably at the base was *The Iliad* of Homer. Since over half of this epic poem is actually dialogue (Alexander, 2015, p. xxii), readers can derive glimpses of the characters’ motivations for their actions between themselves and others. It should be clear that making judgments about the connections between speech and action is highly and often distinctly cultural. Leaders in these foundational Western texts are situationally placed and presented holistically by their authors. Other classic texts were Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, Seutonius’ *Twelve Caesars*, Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, Vasari’s *Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, and, of course, the tragedies of Shakespeare.

However, these classics in the Western canon were erased with the widespread adoption of scientific management of Frederick Taylor and later the positivism of the Vienna Circle as nonscientific. The result trashed the study of the whole person because emotions, beliefs, and aspirations of the human were excluded. Biography was one of the remaining fields where the full humanity of a leader could be studied for as Barber (1985) observed about US Presidents,

Every story of Presidential decision-making is really two stories: An outer one in which a rational man [sic] calculates and an inner one in which an emotional man feels. The two are forever connected. Any real President is one whole man and his deeds reflect his wholeness. (p. 4)

While the attitude of many academics in educational leadership remains resistant to reopening the debate regarding the classics and whatever they may have any value to inform us about leadership, there is a growing awareness that traditional vocational textbooks in the field leave out what Johnson (1996) has indicated, “[that leadership] is also an inherently humanistic concern where ambiguities, contextuality, and normativity require the interpretive methods and devices of history, literature, and philosophy (among others)” (pp. 13–14).

If leadership is stripped of its dealing with the central moral values of our times in order to pursue a “scientific” study of leadership, T.B. Greenfield (1991) concludes that “it leaves a field that is regrettably and unnecessarily bland and boring” (p. 6). He then goes on to explain:

The difficult and divisive questions, the questions of purpose and morality, the questions arising from the necessary imposition of one person’s will upon another, the questions that challenge the linking of ends and means – all these matters are set aside in a search for a pallid consensus and an illusory effectiveness. (p. 6)

Dealing with moral issues requires that the field return to what is described in an aesthetic or “whole person” perspective. Another is to keep searching for a better science (Lakowski et al., 2017). The line of argument of this chapter is that a vision of an aesthetic approach offers an alternative that may be more promising.

The field of memory contains the early rejection of classic humanistic texts, which for generations were inspirational and instructive in dealing with leadership issues in education, especially the moral issues. It also is centered on the many versions of science that seemed so promising and have all but petered out in the quest for a science of management because “no science, social or physical, can tell us what is right or wrong” (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 146).

### **The Field of Presence**

Educational leadership is an applied field. It has few pure concepts regarding leadership that are not transplants borrowed from other disciplines. The field of presence in educational administration/leadership is bordered by ideas, concepts, or practices that those in positions of influence and power determine to be the most important and/or relevant to good practice. It is difficult to precisely define the borders because of the phenomenon that past practices are often renamed and reinvented to become reconnected to the present. Thus, some of the tenets of scientific management are renamed and reinserted into contemporary thinking. The “one best way” of the former becomes the “best practice” of the latter as one example. This transformation has been called by Pattison (1997) “neo-Taylorism” (pp. 22–23).

The dominant ideologies in the current field of presence are not theories of learning or even teaching. Rather they emanate from the ideology of neoliberalism, economics, and certain business concepts and practices such as the remnants of total quality management and the heritage of scientific management. Collectively they can be grouped under the rubric of *managerialism* sometimes also called

accountability (English & Bolton, 2016, p. 100). The philosophical perspective with dominance in educational leadership research is “positivism/behavioral empiricism” (English & Ehrich, 2015, p. 853). Gunter (2002) similarly noted that a combination of empiricism/behaviorism is the dominant outlook in the United Kingdom.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Almost from the beginning of the serious establishment of departments of educational administration at the university level in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States, the field has been dominated by ideas, concepts, and theories from outside education. The most profound was the doctrine of efficiency as embodied in *scientific management* with tentacles deeply embedded in business and management. These approaches and perspectives remain dominant in educational leadership today. Post *scientific management* concepts continued on only with new titles such as *accountability*, *quality control*, *scaling up*, and *de-skilling the work force*.

In the last century, school leadership/management practitioners went through an infatuation with such business techniques as management by objectives (MBO) (Odiome, 1965). Peter Drucker (1974), a revered business consultant, proffered the view that “management by objectives and self-control may properly be called a *philosophy of management*” (p. 442).

Edward Deming’s (1982) *total quality management (TQM)* had a profound impact on educational leadership thinking, introducing such terms as *constancy of purpose*, *continuous improvement*, *do it right the first time*, *quality built in*, *quality circles*, *the fourteen points*, *quality improvement*, and *zero defects*. Gabor (1990) explains that “. . . in a Deming-oriented process, the goal is to bring workers into statistical control – that is, to have their work be as uniform and predictable as possible” (p. 26).

In turn, with the hero worship of Edward Deming in Japan and later the United States, such Japanese manufacturing terms as *kaizen*, *kamban*, and *warusa-kagen* have attained recognition in education. *Kaizen* has been called “. . . the single most important concept in Japanese management – the key to Japanese competitive success” (Imai, 1986, p. xxix). Essentially, *kaizen* means gradual, systematic improvement within an organization of all people at all levels. *Kamban* refers to the “just in time” system that has reduced the cost of inventories in manufacturing. *Warusa-kagen* refers to things that are not quite correct, but haven’t become problems yet. However, if not addressed such matters could become worse.

Although many other fields and/or disciplines have had an influence on the practice of educational leadership or administration (such as psychology, social psychology, philosophy, and economics to name a few) none has had a more profound impact than sociology and to a lesser extent anthropology, specifically the sociology of organizations and the development of qualitative research methods beginning with ethnography, a historic method of anthropology. The sociology of organizations was spurred by a translation of Max Weber’s bureaucratic theory in 1946 (Gerth & Mills, 1958). A larger body of work in sociology was Talcott Parson’s (1951) *The Social System* and Robert Merton’s (1968) *Social Theory and Social*

*Structure* as well as Blau and Scott's (1962) *Formal organizations: A comparative approach*.

The result has been the nearly universal graduate level course in educational leadership/administration or "Org Theory" as it is commonly known (Hanson, 1979; Owens, 1970). The emphasis of "org theory" has been on organizational structure and social space. The perspective of most "org theory" courses is that they study organizations as wholes and downplay or ignore the individual or the "whole person." Argyris (1972) wryly noted this attribute when he observed, "The 'variable human' seems to be minimally variable and minimally human. Concerning the former there is no place (in the theory) for individual differences. Concerning the latter, feelings, defenses, needs, self-concept, self-esteem, etc. are not included in the theory. The concept of the 'human variable' is only slightly enlarged from economic man [sic] and satisfying man" (p. 33).

While the term *qualitative research* first appeared in the 1970s, the traditions of conducting it can be traced to the seventeenth century and the early 1900s. The basic procedures involved the fields of anthropology, sociology, and ethnography as early anthropologists compiled their field notes (Wanat, 2006). The subjects of ethnographers were usually other human beings living in different contexts. The definition of what has come to be termed qualitative research within the social science disciplines was "the analysis and understanding of the patterned conduct and social processes of society" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 6). Today qualitative research is well accepted within the methods of inquiry in educational research, and it usually involves the whole human being or beings in the conduct of inquiry.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Shifts in thinking within a field have occurred in nearly all professional fields. A "field" is defined here in Bourdieusian terms as a social space, which is in a more or less constant state of tension (English & Bolton, 2016). The reason is that there is no final authoritative source to which to appeal. In some ways a field is much like the internet in that no one owns it. Ideas, concepts, and ideologies must compete for loyalty and dominance from the major players in the field. Three forms of capital enable a particular perspective to attain hegemony: political, social, and economic. Thus, money, political power, and social consensus are and continue to be utilized to advance an individual or a group's power and influence in their field.

Culbertson (1988) indicates that the first textbook in educational administration in the United States was published in 1875, though Mason (2004) has found several earlier books in 1829 and 1832, respectively. According to Mason these early texts were "untouched by theory, comprehensive survey of practices, or controlled experimentation" (p. 17). They were "cookbooks" of thought and classification of tasks.

One of the first major ruptures in the field occurred with the adoption of scientific management and its tenets of cost control and efficiency (Callahan, 1962). The infatuation with Taylorism still exerts a huge influence on the field today. Much of it has morphed into aspects of accountability. Then came the human relations influence and a push for democratic administration.

The second major rupture occurred with “the theory movement”, which led to the founding of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) in the late 1950s. The emphasis behind the establishment of UCEA was a desire to move the field toward a more theoretical foundation based on the social sciences, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. One elusive goal was to create a science of management or administration. The pursuit of this goal has largely been abandoned though Evers and Lakomski (1991) still insist that “we do not need alternatives to science, we need better science” (p. 213). They proposed that the promising alternative is natural science using a coherence theory of epistemic of justification (Evers & Lakomski, 2016).

One of the sharpest ruptures in performing research in educational leadership sprang up over the so-called lack of rigor in applying qualitative research. These were the “quant/qual” debates. The quantitative objections which surfaced were that the objective world “out there” was being misperceived by subjectivist thought, which was unscientific in nature. The researcher’s objective pursuit and interpretation of truth in the world beyond bias was sacrificed with qualitative methods. Only quantitative approaches avoided these traps. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) defined the essence of a qualitative approach to research as combined two prongs: “a commitment to some version of the naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter, and an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of positivism” (p. 4). Whereas in the 1988 *Handbook of Research in Educational Administration* “qualitative research” as an index topic is not even cited, by 1999 in the *Second Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* the topic is cited nine times. By 2010 when Papa and English studied 1027 doctoral dissertations listed in ProQuest in educational leadership completed during the years 2006–2008 they found that based on a review of abstracts, 33% employed quantitative methods, 53% were qualitative, and 12% applied mixed methodology. Two percent were listed as “other.” Qualitative research had become dominant in this time period.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presuppositions**

There are many assumptions and presuppositions, which undergird leadership and management. One is that the world can be best understood or transformed into a logical, rational, and predictable place with the utilization of a scientific perspective. One of the major assumptions of leadership and management is that with the techniques of science applied to managerial practice, organizations such as schools can be improved over time. However, there are other assumptions that challenge that perspective. Pattison (1997), for example, asserts that “management can usefully and credibly be seen as a kind of implicit religion with particular doctrines, rituals, practices and ethics that form a real faith system” (p. 2).

Another critical assumption is that when the “field” is discussed and the major ideas traced to their sources, that the metaphor of a staircase is always present, that is, ideas regarding administration or about leadership are shown as a progression of one model or paradigm at a time. This is the view of theoretical change advanced by Thomas Kuhn (1996) in his widely popular and influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In Kuhn’s world change is linear and occurs when a pre-vailing theory is replaced by a new theory when the weight of the evidence suggests it has become outmoded. Kuhn proffered that this was “normal science.”



An alternative perspective was discussed by Lakatos (1999) who advanced the idea that paradigms usually run parallel with one another and compete with one another. Lakatos advanced the idea of theoretical pluralism and proffered that this perspective is “normal science.” He insisted that Kuhn’s notion of paradigm change was “abnormal science.”

Another assumption which is parallel with the older one is that of social action. The older tradition was that administrative actions work in the external, “out there” world. The emerging perspective is that leadership is constructed. It is a social construction between a leader or leaders and the led. Such a relationship is fluid and contextual.

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## Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the evolution of educational leadership. It traces some of the important ways leadership has been conceptualized as a field of study commencing with portraits of leaders in the ancient world, through to the rise of scientific management prizing the cult of efficiency in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to more contemporary times that have not only provided a critique of the domination of a science of leadership but have also put forward alternative perspectives. An alternative perspective that is proffered in this chapter draws upon insights from the humanities and the arts and is located in the field of aesthetics. In the final part of the chapter, a cogent argument is made for an aesthetic framework to restore the “whole person” to the study of leadership, thus valuing the humanistic and artistic dimensions of leaders’ work including their intuition, emotions, passions, and imagination. The concept of connoisseurship, a term borrowed from the arts, is also considered in this section as providing a way of explaining how leaders (and artists) develop their “discerning eye,” which is central to any understanding of human performance.

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## Portraits of Leaders and Leadership in the Ancient World

A 15,693 word epic poem written around the year 150 BCE arguably marks the formal beginning of a study of leadership in the Western canon. *The Iliad* has enchanted listeners for centuries. Alexander (2015) called *The Iliad* “... a powerful, first-rate story, whose dramatic action is wrapped around such time-tested tropes as insulted love, loss and revenge” (p. xii) *The Iliad* begins in the tenth year of a war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The warriors of *The Iliad* have names familiar to many high school and college students: Achilles, Hector, Paris, Priam, and Helen.

The other feature of *The Iliad* is that its characters are presented in the “round” in that they come to the reader fully formed (Alexander, 2015). They are not sketches but portraits. Both their good features and their flaws are included. The other contemporary aspect of the leaders in *The Iliad* is they interact with one another. They verbally express their thinking. Actions, motivations, and emotions can be discerned and connected. The characters are not simply manikins in department store windows, but real human beings embroiled in a protracted and terrible struggle. The magic of *The Iliad* has charmed readers for centuries. It is said that Alexander

the Great kept a copy under his pillow. Century's leader Heinrich Schliemann actually discovered Troy from his close reading of *The Iliad*.

Other legendary texts dealt with leadership issues and leaders not only in a military venue but in politics and the arts as well. For example, one of the most famous authors of the ancient world was L. Mestrius Plutarchus, or Plutarch as he is more popularly known. Somewhere between AD 105 and AD 115 he wrote *Parallel Lives* or *Dual Lives* (Grant, 1970). In this work, a later source for several of Shakespeare's plays, Plutarch compared the lives of famous Greeks to illustrious Romans. Plutarch thought of himself as a kind of ethical biographer. When he compared his Greeks and Romans he looked for little quirks in their personalities and unwitting telltale verbal cues in their actions and speech. It is from this discerning scrutiny he moved to draw ethical lessons as a kind of didactic. Plutarch's summaries of his famous lives have resonated with leaders through the centuries. At least three US Presidents read Plutarch: Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry Truman (McCullough, 1992) along with US General George S. Patton (D'Este, 1995).

Another contemporary ancient world biographer of leaders was Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus or Suetonius. In his times Suetonius was described by his contemporaries as *scholasticus* (scholarly) and *eruditissimus* (extremely learned). His field was that of *grammaticus*, "a teacher of literature, one who specialized in the meaning and usage of particular words and the explication of obscure names and references" (Rives, 2007, p. xx). Suetonius' most famous work was *The Twelve Caesars*, written somewhere between AD 107 and 118. Although there is much scandal in this text, Rives (2007) notes that "Suetonius was a serious scholar who had already made his reputation with several major works" (p. xxiv). Whereas Plutarch was interested in approaching leaders through a very fine eye to history and ethical detail, Suetonius took a very different approach. He created "a sort of balance sheet, an analytical framework that would allow for a clear assessment of each emperor's relative success or failure" (Rives, 2007, p. xxxi).

Wilson (2017) summarized the classical Greek notion of leadership, which still resonates in the literature of contemporary times, by noting that one of the characteristics of it is that it is concerned with

what might be called their individual character, temperament or what we today understand as personality. It is also what the leader does, incorporating every moment of every day and every action. It is about the outcomes which leadership is said (and called on) to produce, such as order and obedience. Finally, it is about the underpinning knowledge and virtue which guide the leader in their being and doing. This holistic notion thus incorporates the intellectual, moral and personal attributes of a leader, the full suite of activities in which a leader engages, and the outcomes of those activities. (p. 51)

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## Portraits of Leaders and Leadership in Renaissance Times

Two of the most famous writers on leaders and leadership in Renaissance times were Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527). Vasari's most famous work is his *Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Architects* published in 1568.

Vasari was himself a reasonably competent artist and he used his knowledge to critique and rank the artists of his times. In his book were 23 portraits of artists and sculptors, which included Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Only one of the portraits was a woman, *Madonna Properzia de' Rossi*, sculptor of Bologna.

Like other writers of leaders, Vasari's portraits of the famous artists included "... their personalities and idiosyncrasies formed [around] a particular theme ... These were to be seen as models of instruction" (Jacks, 2006, p. xiii). Vasari also began to insert in his portraits judgments about their lives, which represented moral determinations. Jacks (2006) noted that, "To Renaissance viewers, ... the conduct and the psyche of the artist were inseparable from the meaning that might be drawn from his (sic) work" (p. xiv).

The other great portraitist of the renaissance was Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527). Machiavelli was famous in his own time for his satirical, comedic plays. He traveled a great deal and he had many opportunities to observe leaders and their actions. He became a skilled negotiator. In his immortal *The Prince* Machiavelli (1535/1950) modeled his leader after one in real life, Cesare Borgia. The portrait of a leader in *The Prince* is a leader who is ruthless and clear eyed. Machiavelli was most likely the first political scientist of his times. He did not see the challenges as the world should be. Instead he saw it as it was. He indicated that luck had no favorites. Luck could smile on a person without principles as well as on a leader with principles. For a leader to succeed, "he (sic) needed to be bold, daring and audacious, he needed to rise above the base and unworthy pursuit of riches and, above all, he needed to govern in such a way that would bring him glory and honour" (Lee, 2020, p. 388).

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## **The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Decline of Leadership, the Heyday of Scientific Management, and the Rise of School Administration**

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed one of the last of the great landmark books on leadership and the rise of educational administration as an alternative perspective. Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* was published in 1841. By 1935 it had gone through eight reprintings. Both Winston Churchill (Gilbert, 1991) and Mohandas Gandhi (Fischer, 1950) read and were inspired by Carlyle's portraits of great men. Churchill even quoted Carlyle on the floor of the House of Commons. Perhaps it was Carlyle's summary of his judgment about Napoleon that caught Churchill's eye when comparing Hitler to him. "The heavier this Napoleon trampled on the world, holding it tyrannously down, the fiercer would the world's recoil against him be, one day. Injustice pays itself with frightful compound-interest" (Carlyle, 1841/1935, p. 316).

While Carlyle's book was enormously popular and influential in its time, the so-called "great man theory" of leadership has been subjected to derision, debunking, and scorn (Getzels et al., 1968; Jennings, 1960) for among other matters ignoring "great" women with the exception of "Joan of Arc, Elizabeth 1 and Catherine the Great" (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 49). The important point with

Carlyle's work is that it examined and extolled "whole" people. This tradition from ancient history still continues into contemporary times with only a smattering of similar books in educational administration. In contrast, the continuation of "great men" stories remains very popular in the field of business. The modern business CEO has become the equivalent contemporary of the Machiavellian *Prince*.

One year after Carlyle's book was published in 1841, Potter and Emerson released *The School and The Schoolmaster* in America. In this 552 page practical work, the authors sketched out "education most needed in the United States, the present state of common schools, and the best means of improving them" along with the "duties of parents trustees, inspectors" (facing page).

Texts published after the Potter and Emerson (1842) book and up to the turn of the century, and before the heyday of scientific management, were compendia "... broken down into an almost overwhelming array of didactic specifications for school management" (Mason, 2004, p. 17). A description of one of the books published by Samuel Dutton in 1903 could be aptly applied to nearly all of these early professional books. They were "... an example of professional self-consciousness, neither effete nor exaggerated, but arising out of meticulous notation and classification of the array of tasks involved in running schools" (Mason, 2004, p. 17).

It is hard to understand the impact of scientific management on education and the schools without also acknowledging that this ideology is still with us though morphed into other manifestations. The modern accountability movement, as well as *managerialism*, remains the legacy of Frederick Winslow Taylor, a.k.a. *Taylorism*.

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## The Rise and Rise of *Scientific Management*

Callahan (1962) identified 1910 as the key date and the occasion a hearing before the Interstate Commerce Commission as the initial rise to national prominence of something called *scientific management*. The case involved a matter of whether the railroads could raise their rates, which was opposed by an argument that they should be denied the increase because they were not managed well. The claim was advanced that if the railroads used *scientific management* they had more than enough money.

The creation of this approach was the brainchild of Frederick Winslow Taylor. Taylor was not only the most famous of the efficiency experts, but also the first national business consultant (Kanigel, 1997). One year later he published his 1911 book *The Principles of Scientific Management*. While Kanigel (1997) documents the birth of scientific management and its meteoric rise in a broad band of public and private enterprises, he also clearly illustrates that there was little that was "scientific" about it. Taylor wasn't testing any theory. Based on procedures of the day all he did was identify through observation and a stop watch the approach or process then on the shop floor or business that produced the most in the shortest amount of time. Taylor was the first efficiency expert to achieve national prominence.

Scientific management swept into education and was advanced by prominent school superintendents and espoused by professors of educational administration who became some of its most fervent advocates (Callahan, 1962).

As would be expected in an age of efficiency, precious little attention was paid to issues of leadership, understanding the development of human potential or concerns, which grappled with psychological motivation. In the idiom of efficiency, a leader was one who could reduce costs and maximize return. One didn't need to peer very deeply into the human psyche because making money was the most important motivator.

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## **Turnings in the Development of the Field**

The ancient Greeks thought about a “turning” or *strophes* in two ways. The first type of “turning” was *apostrophic*, which signaled a *turning away from*. The second type of “turning” was *catastrophic*, which signaled an *overturning*. The latter is obviously more traumatic (Rapaport, 1989, p. 195).

Following the waning interest in *scientific management*, the academic emphasis within educational administration shifted to democratic administration and later to matters focused on human relations (Campbell et al., 1987). These were *apostrophic* in nature, i.e., a turning away from matters of pure efficiency. However, the next shift in the field was *catastrophic*, that is, an overturning. This “turning” was profound. Culbertson (1995) recalled that in November of 1957 approximately 50 professors met at the University of Chicago for a 3-day seminar. Culbertson (1995) recalled, “. . . the seminar’s central message was that there was a great need to develop theory in the field and to begin building a science of administration. The seminar had an unforeseen impact. It helped spawn what later came to be known as the ‘theory movement’” (p. 34).

The “theory” movement’s intellectual twists and turns spawned an overwhelming emphasis on rationality, an overreliance on quantitative analytics, a push for more advanced and sophisticated statistical procedures, and a dominance of sociological perspectives and models. There was little room for the individual (see Born, 1996). Long before the theory movement had run its course, some of the early founders were commenting on some of its anticipated shortcomings. Halpin (1960) had observed:

Here I shall perform the *coup de grace* which I supposed will alienate me from the camps of both superintendents and scientists. I suggest that if we are to learn how to observe, how to see what is ‘out there,’ we had better avail ourselves of a rich heritage which superintendents and scientists alike have studiously ignored: the heritage of the humanities. (p. 17)

The shortcoming of the impact of the “theory movement” on preparing future educational leaders amounted to, “the endless accumulation of empirical data [which] has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership” (Stogdill 1974, p. vii). Bennis and Nanus (1985) echoed the same sentiments when they

wrote, “thousands of empirical investigations of leadership have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders” (p. 4).

What is missing from the empirical/structural and empirical models and methods that have long dominated the field was captured 180 years ago by the much maligned Thomas Carlyle (1841/1935):

Science has done much for us; but it is a poor science that would hide from us the great deep sacred infinitude of Nescience [unknown], whither we can never penetrate, on which all science swims as a mere superficial film. This world, after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, *magical* (italics original) and more, to whosoever will *think* (italics original) of it. (p. 10)

The purpose of repositioning a study of leadership in aesthetics as a way to restore the “whole” person is now explored.

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## **Aesthetics As a Framework to Restore the Individual in a Reconsideration of Leadership**

For at least the last 50 plus years in the field there has been a steady trend to restore the “whole person” in studying leadership. The first forays were advanced in anthropology and sociological ethnography with research-based accounts such as Harry Wolcott’s (1973) ethnography, *The Man in the Principal’s Office*; Larry Cuban’s (1976) *Urban School Chiefs Under Fire*, and Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot’s (1983) *The Good High School*. It is interesting that Wolcott (1995, 1999) refers to his ethnographic fieldwork as a kind of artwork and talks about *the ethnographer-as-artist*.

Shortly after Larry Cuban’s (1976) portraits of school superintendents dealing with issues of school integration, R.H. Brown (1977) sketched out what he referred to as *cognitive aesthetics* in his text *A Poetic for Sociology*. His objective was to reconcile science and art by tapping into “the aesthetic dimension of sociological knowledge” (p. 3).

Brown (1977) outlined five dimensions of a text, which would provide an example of *cognitive aesthetics*. They were as follows:

- *Makes use of varied individual points of view, sometimes borrowing a specific person’s “angle of vision” when it is appropriate*
- *Employs a dramaturgical or theatrical technique of showing and not telling and sometimes momentarily becoming “objective” within this perspective*
- *Engages in generalizations from narratives using critical comments*
- *Assumes a panoramic view of events, presenting a narrative of “simultaneously happenings or sometimes disassociated scenes that a narrator agent could cover only by the use of the most improbable devices”*

- *Discovers, describes “multiple traits and facets of characters (or cultures) under study readily and plausibly without having to work things around to bring any single point of view within discovery range”* (English, 2008, p. 48; Brown, 1977, p. 62)

Using Brown’s notion of cognitive aesthetics pushes out the boundaries of the so-called “scientific” study of leadership. It strikes at the whole idea of a *science of leadership*. Further, it calls into question the adequacy of scientific method to finally peer into the closet of leadership and tell researchers something they do not already know from a dominant behavioristic perspective.

So emboldened by continuing critics of the inability to learn much more about leadership than was already known (Born, 1996; Heilbrunn, 1996), Bass (1981) reviewed and analyzed some 4, 725 studies of leadership and summarized his judgment as “the endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership” (p. vii).

In a quest to move away from both a scientific and business model of leadership and to restore the rightful place of the “whole person” in leadership studies, Ehrich and English (2013) and English and Ehrich (2016) drew inspiration and insights from the humanities and the arts as a different entrance point to understand leadership. They were mindful of the saying, ostensibly attributed to Marcel Proust, that “The voyage of discovery lies not in bringing old eyes to new landscapes, but in bringing new eyes to old landscapes” (Conord & Conord, 2002, p. 171). Their first foray led them to explore the metaphor of dance that not only presented them with a new vocabulary to explore leadership but also underscored the significance of kinesthetic and emotional knowledge. The dancer and the dance yielded a venture into somaesthetics (Ehrich & English, 2013), which as Shusterman (2008) averred, resolves the old trap of the mind/body dualism since somaesthetics combines “the critical, ameliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and the creative self-fashioning” (p. 267).

In their paper, Ehrich and English (2013) constructed a model of leadership as dance which identified three inter-related elements including the context which they described as the “aesthetic space in which the dance is visualized, interpreted and performed” (p. 462), the music which “provides the tempo and . . . provides structure and direction for the dance” (p. 462), and the dance itself, a form of human action that uses “body language . . . to represent knowledge, feelings, ideas and beliefs reflective of the broader culture and context in which the dance has emerged” (p. 462). Central to the metaphor are the dancers who shape and are shaped by the music and the context. So too with leaders who live and work within a social, political, and cultural context that shapes and constrains what they do and how they perform. Both leaders and dancers were viewed as being involved in artistic performance that requires kinesthetic knowledge.

As a means of exploring the parallels between leadership and dance, Ehrich and English (2013) identified a set of perennial tensions that are inherent in both leadership and dance. Two are identified here. The first is the tension between discipline and passion. Discipline refers to a set of rules or techniques that govern



practice and both dance and leadership as performative fields require the mastery of complex skills and techniques. Yet discipline or technique on its own is limited; what is needed for artistic performance and expression is intensity, passion, and emotions. Both discipline and passion are vital and when one dominates the other, it can have a detrimental impact on the overall aesthetic experience.

The second tension is hierarchy versus democracy. In dance companies and in schools, there can be a tension between distributed leadership and hierarchical leadership. A distributed leadership approach would see participants actively participating in decision making and exercising autonomy in their work in contrast to traditional leadership approaches where individual strong leaders (or choreographers), due to their legitimate role position, would be the key decision makers with the positional power to make important decisions impacting on followers (Ehrich & English, 2013). Both in dance and in leadership, “visions of egalitarianism democracy are always in tension with conceptions of strong leadership” (Schutz & Sandy, 2011, in Ehrich & English, 2013, p. 472).

An empirical 3-year investigation by English and Ehrich (2016) enabled them to continue to reimagine the field of leadership. This time, they turned to artists for inspiration and insights regarding how they perceived their work, how they overcame obstacles, and how they became more expert or developed a “discerning eye” in their chosen artistic fields.

English and Ehrich (2016) deliberately commenced their investigation with artists before moving on to educational leaders because of their desire to “bring new eyes” to their work. The interviews with artists and educational leaders in Australia and the United States revealed both similarities and differences. Both groups of participants underscored the importance of relationships with colleagues and clients (for leaders, this included students, parents, and members of the wide community) in facilitating their work, and both referred to the sheer joy inherent in the nature of their work (for leaders joy often equated with seeing happy children who were learning). A point of difference was that the artists were more comfortable with ambiguity than the educational leaders. The artists saw constraints and obstacles as opportunities to create something new and different, while the educational leaders indicated that ambiguity in their work was a source of anxiety and grief.

Based on the artists’ and leaders’ experiences, and insights from gestalt psychology, phenomenology and portraiture, English and Ehrich (2016) developed a set of dimensions of connoisseurship that revealed its core qualities. These dimensions included knowledgeable perception (or the ability to make fine-grain judgments); experience (honed after many years of learning); competence (which embraces both technique and passion); framing (an ability to see how the particulars fit within the larger structure); desire (motivation to create or to act); aesthetic vision (a combination of imagination and agency); cultural awareness and reflexivity (an ability to step outside one’s culture and see it anew); discipline (hard work and the rules that describe a field); and identity (being comfortable in one’s skin) (English & Ehrich, 2016, pp. 14–19).

In arriving at this set of dimensions, the authors were also influenced by the seminal work of Eisner (1985) who describes connoisseurship as “the art of



apperception. It is grounded in the ‘consummatory function’ of aesthetic knowing – the developed ability to experience the subtleties of form” (Eisner, 1985, p. 28). Connoisseurs, then, are persons who are able to not only look but to see, to appreciate, and to discern the subtle and the complex (Eisner, 1979). As Schwandt (1994) says, for connoisseurs, perceiving “is a kind of heightened awareness or educated perception – a particular kind of attention to nuance and detail, to multiple dimensions or aspects – that come from intimate familiarity with the phenomenon being examined” (p. 129). For Ehrich and English, the artists and leaders in their study developed a “discerning eye” over many years of experience and they exhibited several of the core dimensions of connoisseurship including, for example, knowledgeable perception, drive, competence, and motivation that enabled them to develop their fine grain skills and understandings. The study by English and Ehrich revealed that connoisseurship is not a destination but a process that is part of the human journey of learning (English & Ehrich, 2016, p. 214).

More recent work by the authors (Ehrich & English, 2017, 2020; English & Ehrich, 2020) has seen them continuing their pursuit of an aesthetic agenda for leadership. For example, they explored classical composer Franz Schubert’s “Winterreise” as an illustration of the leadership identity journey (Ehrich & English, 2017) and Maria Callas’s life and work as a study of leadership at the intersection of aesthetics, identity, and self (English & Ehrich, 2020). Their ongoing work can be summed up as considering a wide range of leadership actions as aesthetic activities.

The aforementioned discussion has considered an alternative perspective to leadership that moves away from the dominance and limitations of social science models and instrumental approaches that view leadership as a rational and technical activity. The alternative approach considered aesthetics as a useful framework to view the full human being as a person not only with reasoning ability, but one who has passions, emotions, empathy, imagination, and intuition.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

According to Grint (1995) it is estimated that “. . . approximately every six hours, somewhere someone publishes a paper on leadership in English” (p. 134). At this moment in the development of the field the aesthetics of leadership holds some promise of breaking out of the familiar “old eyes” within a well-traversed field, which has ostensibly been mined so hard that the veins have all but petered out by many long time critics. But “new eyes” may see ore deposits that were already there waiting to be discovered. Schwandt (1994) avers that the kind of narrative that makes up the aesthetic presentation “. . . is not an iconic image or mirror of reality but a poetic, expressive that is a reconstrual or reconstitution of the experience from which it originates. It represents not a scientific way of inquiry but an aesthetic mode of knowing” (p. 129).

It is from this more ancient “whole person” perspective that researchers, writers, critics, and scholars can reopen a more productive and holistic pursuit of leaders centered in performance and beauty, i.e., *leading beautifully* (English & Ehrich,

2016). This approach offers antidotes to what Born (1996) describes as “. . . two disturbing trends where leadership studies and the liberal arts converge. These are: (1) a variety of anti-intellectualism in some leadership circles, and (2) a brand of unreflective communitarianism which celebrates groups and demonizes individuals” (p. 46).

Finally, the approach of conceptualizing leadership in aesthetic terms and within an aesthetic lens does the following:

- It challenges the borders that science has established as inadequate and unable to explain, and in some cases improve leadership practice because science has set limits on what it will examine or consider as legitimate ways of knowing.
- It positions leadership as a product of culture, which is rarely context free or neutral and does not view followers as inferior human beings who must be subservient to leaders, but as human beings capable of leadership in many contexts and at many levels.
- It accepts the full humanity of human action, which includes the irrational, contradictory, pejorative, or even destructive actions. The effects of leadership are not always good or beneficial.
- As an aesthetic activity, leadership is intimately involved with the production and manipulation of symbols to provoke individual or collective action.

Today it is much clearer than ever that leadership is a human artifact and a special kind of human invention, and as Wilson (2017) so cogently observes as a social invention it is “wide open to re-invention” (p. 2). Such reinvention requires the development of an alternative and more open theoretical view than what is usually offered in the typical university-based leadership curricular prescriptions ostensibly centered on preparing better educational leaders. Such curricula are too narrow and limited to come to terms with a serious reinvention of the full potential, which would produce substantive changes in scope or effectiveness in school leadership. That project begins with reimagining the full scope of human motivation, enlightenment, realization and self-actualization, and new borders of development and discovery that are now regnant.

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# When Best Practices Are Neither Best nor Discerned

# 26

Connie M. Moss

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## Abstract

Best practices, masquerading as perfect solutions to educational issues, often lead to simplistic notions of good teaching. The way best practices are communicated to educators and then implemented in classrooms can weaken and derail teacher discernment.

The chapter begins by exploring the foundational concepts of best practice rooted in scientific inquiry that led to concepts of common personhood, political arithmetic, and normality. Then it examines the work of John Dewey noting his arguments against prescribed practice over teacher inquiry and discernment to build connections between what teachers do in the classroom to their beliefs about teaching.

Next, the focus turns to Lortie's apprenticeship of observation and its influence on teacher beliefs. The construct of teacher beliefs is further investigated through the semiotic framework of C.S. Peirce with particular focus on belief fixation and genuine doubt as they relate to best practices.

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Beliefs and best practices are then explored using complexity theory and the need for teacher discernment and the ways that fidelity of implementation muddies both best practice and results in flawed belief systems.

The chapter concludes by arguing for practice-based evidence as a way for teachers to strengthen discernment and develop better practices in their own classrooms.

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**Keywords**

Best practice · Effective practice · Complexity theory · Fidelity · Belief · Genuine doubt · Belief fixation · Evidence-based practice · Practice-based evidence · Adaptive expertise

**The Field of Memory**

The idea of an educational practice that is an absolute good. A practice considered to be an appropriate aim for all teachers in all classrooms. An approach to instruction deemed to be the right practice for assuring that learning happens with certainty. A practice, based on the results of research, that is highly regarded. A practice or technique that teachers should aspire to precisely replicate to ensure outcomes. The idea that teachers should adhere to, adopt, and strive to incorporate certain techniques and procedures with uncritical fidelity to standardize the most efficient practices and eliminate inferior ones. Practices designated as best were often over reliant on quantitative methods and clinical research trials and then generalized to the complexity and diversity of real classrooms. Based on the research findings tied to standardized testing, teacher education was structured to train preservice teachers to adopt certain specific methods of teaching and provide building principals with lists of superior practices against which to audit the quality of teaching.

**The Field of Presence**

Certainty often distorts rather than corroborates the value of research. Classrooms are complex environments where relationships, dynamic conditions, and ever-changing culture challenge one-size-fits-all solutions to create when it comes to optimal learning environments. Best practices continue to dominate educational improvement efforts although the practices often include soft to no supporting criteria in order to monitor fidelity. Disagreements among what is actually best for specific learners and learning environments coupled with uninformed adherence to arbitrarily designated best practices can derail actual improvement. Teachers are asked to get better at doing the same things. Current trends advance arguments for effective teachers who command a wide range of processes along with the cognitive acumen to continually monitor and evaluate what they do based on whether it advances learning for diverse students across a range of learning situations. These decisions, therefore, rest on highly developed skills of discernment.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The fields of complexity theory, improvement research, and semiotics inform investigations of a best practice mindset. They support the importance of developing teachers as adaptive experts with the confidence and discernment to harness practice-based evidence. These fields of thought reveal that it is up to educators themselves to create conditions and systems that move educational practice in *better* directions while keeping in mind that what counts as success for educators is that they impact all students' experiences in school.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

The need for more scientific and reproducible methods in education has been historically bolstered by citing the fields of medicine and business. The role that evidence in medical research plays and the ways the medical field communicates its research findings are seen as aspirational for educators. Others laud how business leaders and their companies actively seek and replicate practices from more successful businesses to employ as best practice benchmarks to create improved standards for their own companies. While comparisons to what works in medicine and business can generate ideas for educational improvement, both enterprises differ in crucial ways when compared to education. General concepts like medical rounds, clinical trials, and evidence-based decision-making, for example, do not translate in their entirety to educational contexts and cannot be shoehorned into the overlapping contexts of education that interact and influence one another in nonlinear ways. These approaches cannot and should not be carbon copied by educators.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The assumption that best practices actually exist and translate perfectly from clinical trials to the dynamic complexity of classrooms. It is assumed that teachers implement a practice with maximum fidelity. The assumption that classrooms are homogeneous environments where practices can be replicated. The assumption that getting better at doing the same things leads to improvement. The assumption that practices can be dictated and are not impacted by the beliefs that teachers hold. The assumption that practices researched in the twentieth-century classrooms meet the needs of twenty-first-century learners. The assumption that best practices enhance teacher decision-making.

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## **Introduction**

The purposes of this chapter are to explore the development and impact of best practices on teacher beliefs and actions and to highlight the negative influences they can have on teacher judgment. The chapter employs a semiotic framework to examine belief fixation and genuine doubt to argue for teachers as adaptive experts and discerning practitioners who employ practice-based evidence to select *better* practices to address the complexity of real-world classrooms.



## Chapter Content: Best Practice and Common Personhood

The concept of “best practices” is neither new, modern, nor attributable to current ideals of professional growth. At its core, the idea of a best practice in education, or any other field for that matter, is that a certain practice is an “unqualified good” to be adopted for its ability to improve conditions and outcomes. The best practice concept can be traced to a quest for certainty that originated in 1667 with the publication of Thomas Sprat’s *The History of the Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge*. It was an attempt to harness early methods of inquiry to identify singular, effective responses to human problems to develop and distribute knowledge and expertise. It was a way to identify and package truths that resulted from experimental investigations. The Royal Society believed that by enacting these truths, their members could avoid human arrogance, set aside partisan debate, and reduce guesswork. They viewed these experimentally based practices as indisputable, factual, and right practices that promoted consensus and assured certainty and reliability (Bullough, 2019).

At the same time that the Royal Society sought certainty through modernity and scientific methods, the concept of “political arithmetic” was emerging (Porter, 1986). The goal of political arithmetic was to decree official policy based on as much information as possible about the citizens who the policy would govern in order to make it easier to centralize bureaucracy and promote social engineering. Political arithmetic, the root of modern statistics, theorized that the erratic nature of individual humans could be averaged out to “equalize subjects” so that decisions could be made on a “common personhood.” During the 1600s, the prevailing view was that it made no sense to consider people “if their common personhood was not seen as somehow more significant than their individual differences” (p. 25). Political arithmetic facilitated the identification of commonalities that could be used to make decisions about the average person.

Later, nineteenth-century statisticians promoted the concept of wise political leaders who understood “political economy”; used political arithmetic to understand the structure of human society based on statistical investigations; and could begin to chart the path of social evolution (Porter, 1986, pp. 26–27). To do this, statistical methods were used to reveal averages and dominant types, or what Porter called, “common personhood” (p. 25). Common personhood presented the basis for defining “normalcy,” a pursuit that has guided and fascinated scholars ever since. Having the ability to reveal what was normal meant that “the objective average” could be used to plot the collective destiny. And, in doing so, “the word ‘normal’ [became] one of the most powerful ideological tools” (Hacking, 1990, p. 169). The concept of “normal” ushered in a new kind of “objective knowledge” and created new criteria for what counted as evidence. Statistical laws were used reductively to reveal underlying causes and to both describe and explain events (p.iii). In terms of education, for example, statistics could be used to explain typical needs and normal progressions. Educators could compare a first grade student learning to read to what was typical progress, or quantify the percentage of fourth grade students who were

deficient in mathematics, or identify the students who showed particular proficiency for science. And, they could do it with certainty.

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## Dewey's Argument Against the Quest for Perfect Certainty

Dewey (1929a) characterized the hunt for certainty as a “quest for a peace which is assured. . . unqualified by risk and the shadow of fear. . . Perfect certainty is what man wants” (pp. 8, 21). Dewey characterized certainty as a dangerous pursuit and drew sharp contrasts between the complexities inherent in human existence and the seductive allure of certainty and objectivity. Humans, in Dewey’s view, should resist trying to control human dilemmas with perfect fit solutions; face complex human questions with courage, humility, and responsibility; and reject inhuman and dispassionate certainty. For Dewey, understanding should be purposeful, effective, and tempered by the humble realization that educational knowledge is always incomplete and imperfect. In his estimation, certainty was only possible in theory, and what was theoretically best for a given situation was in fact only probable in real-world practice. Dewey fought against prescribing practices for teachers to blindly adopt and characterized it as an attempt to separate theory from practice and knowledge from action. Dewey deemed it impossible to discern the likely outcomes of theoretical conclusions by preaching certainty and removing doubt. Theory does not operate in a vacuum nor do all theories apply to all situations. For theory to have value, Dewey argued, it must be observed and investigated as it operates inside of practice. Deep understanding of relevant theories, then, comes from applying particular theories to complex environments like classrooms and seeking to understand both theory and practice through active inquiry. According to Dewey, simply applying prescribed best practices does not develop new knowledge or expertise.

Clearly, Dewey (1929b) saw inherent danger in promoting guaranteed outcomes. Especially troubling for him was the notion that research could be used to reduce educational practice to definite rules, which in his mind was not related to scientific methods but rather showed a “departure from it” (p. 14). He argued that “laws and rules do not yield rules of practice.” Instead, research conclusions were there to promote intentional investigations of the conditions and relationships in schools and classrooms that might otherwise be missed (p. 30). To expect teachers to copy a practice and then strive to precisely reproduce it better overtime was irrational and distorted the premise and muddied the value of research. According to Dewey, research should never be sold to teachers as a promise of certainty, similar to the way retailers use guarantees to sell products. Research should be characterized as a process that “illuminates and liberates” teacher discernment and practice (p. 15) to encourage educators to use theory and research to inform their practices based on specific classroom conditions and particular student needs.

Dewey (1929b) drew a distinction between those who attempt to constrict teachers asking them to enact a list of best practices and those who foster an educational culture that values research for its ability to widen educational scrutiny.

Perfecting practices already commonly used does nothing to improve school operations and should not be viewed as the ultimate goal of quality teaching (p. 54). To put a finer point on his argument, Dewey posed the question “How far do the existing ends, the actual consequences of current practices go, even if perfected?” The important quest for Dewey was not perfecting best practices, but rather committing to the dogged pursuit of *better* practices. He encouraged educators to “devise new means in contradistinction to improved use of means already given” (p. 60). Dewey valued the questions that arose from everyday educational practice. He credited those questions, along with the conditions and actions that raised them, as key to quality investigations that promote continuous improvement of both practices and practitioners. In other words, Dewey encouraged educators to use research to help reveal and challenge the beliefs and assumptions that underlie their classroom practices rather than as a guarantee that certain practices were best.

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### **Beliefs Formed Through the Apprenticeship of Observation**

Teachers do not always adopt the research-based best practices they read about or learn in workshops (e.g., Devine, Fahie, & MacGillicuddy, 2013; Turner, Christensen, & Meyer, 2009). Rather, teachers teach in ways they *believe* to be best, often ignoring the findings of educational research. The distinction here is critical. Teachers’ beliefs not only determine what they do in the classroom but also influence what they count as evidence that learning has occurred (Moss, 2002, p. 10). The beliefs teachers hold, along with the beliefs that hold them, play an important role in any investigation of educational practice. Best practices were designed to promote certainty and precision in the classroom and regulate the practice of teaching itself often carrying with them an inherent mistrust in the capacity of teachers to grow on the job as they develop better and more effective practices (Brill, 2011).

Some who argue against teachers as discerning experts cast them as flawed from the start since they enter the profession armed with delusions of familiarity based on simplistic views of good teaching. They develop their delusional views over their 12 or more years of experience as students in PreK-12 classrooms. Lortie (1975) called this phenomenon the “apprenticeship of observation.” Throughout preK-12 education, students see their teachers “front stage and center like an audience viewing a play.” As spectators, they watch teaching play out and learn about how to teach indirectly through intuition and imitation. Through this partial view of teaching, they never witness the behind-the-scenes deliberations that go into classroom decision-making. Instead they learn about teaching through osmosis and never recognize or analyze explicit interconnections (p. 62). Since many of the observations probably occurred in more traditional schools and classrooms, the observers witnessed “folkways of teaching” and formed viewpoints embedded in “ready-made recipes for action.” Interpretations of the observed actions did “not require testing or analysis while promising familiar, safe results” (Buchmann, 1987, p. 161). These defective beliefs formed during their apprenticeship of observation continue to exert

unwarranted influence on the choices teachers make in their own classrooms. Teachers' unquestioned beliefs in the merits of what they observed create a foundation so seductive that it often overrides the effects of teacher education (Boyd, Gorham, Justice, & Anderson, 2013). Munby, Russel, and Martin (2001) summed it up by saying "[t]o the uninitiated, teaching unfolds as a set of skills, but to the initiated, teaching depends on, is grounded in, and constitutes knowledge" (p. 895).

Many dispute Lortie's (1975) conclusions as deterministic arguing that the term "apprenticeship of observation" pertains to the general milieu of teaching, rather than specific instances of teaching and learning" (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006, p. 31). And they strongly disagree with the inference that learning to teach primarily occurs through cultural transmission during one's own schooling. Moreover, twenty-first-century teachers enter their classrooms a half-century beyond Lortie's work making it more probable that they observed process-oriented, constructivist approaches as students and had those practices reinforced in a variety of ways as professional educators (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014).

Yet, the apprenticeship of observation cannot be ignored since many teachers continue to unwittingly draw upon it. To overcome its impact, therefore, teachers must recognize and question its influence as well as confront the limits it imposes on their professional knowledge and educational practice (Conner & Vary, 2017; Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016).

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## Beliefs Formation and the Fidelity of Implementation

Flawed beliefs about teaching often develop during the pursuit of best practices. Telling teachers that something works and then directing them to enact that something does little to improve teaching practice or lead to professional discernment. After practitioners have best practices identified for them, they are still faced with the challenge of implementing those practices with fidelity. Poorly implemented practices can lead to failure just as easily as poorly designed practices and often produce less predictable results (Dariotis, Bumbarger, Duncan, & Greenberg, 2008; Grow et al., 2009).

Fidelity refers to the ways that a practice is implemented in a real-world setting. Although the process of enacting a practice with fidelity seems simple enough, it is quite complex (Harn, Damico, & Stoolmiller, 2017). Fidelity includes factors such as degree of compliance, adherence to steps, directions, and processes, monitoring actions with integrity, and faithful replication. Some practices are more conducive to fidelity because they are highly structured and have accompanying detailed manuals or lesson plans, but many interventions do not have these features. Others are accompanied by criteria for implementation that are often soft or nonexistent and rarely explained to teachers. Teachers, therefore, are routinely asked to enact a practice without detailed explanations of which aspects they should reproduce with utmost faithfulness and which they might modify. It is extremely rare, therefore, that a practice is implemented with 100% fidelity. Most are shaped by a myriad of modifications resulting in countless diverse outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

Teachers who enact practices without monitoring fidelity can become disillusioned by less than desirable outcomes. As a result, they determine the practices to be ineffective and quickly abandon them (The IRIS Center, 2014). Without implementation fidelity, then, teachers are not enacting a best practice, but more likely enacting “something like it” that is neither best nor capable of contributing to improvement (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). These dissatisfying results promote distrust for the next assigned best practice along with the research that supports it. Most troubling is the beliefs about teaching that result from their experience. They are more likely to overvalue the original ways they teach, prize too highly the security of their own beliefs about good teaching, and are less likely to call into question the effectiveness of their own practices to seek what truly works best in their classrooms.

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### **A Semiotic View of Best Practice, Fixation of Belief, and Genuine Doubt**

Schreiber and Moss (2002) examined teacher beliefs using the semiotic framework of C.S. Peirce (1877; 1931–1958). All humans, they explained, resist doubting their beliefs since the process is both uncomfortable and dissatisfying. Doubting a belief, or even entertaining the notion that a belief is wrong, is painful. Humans hold onto their beliefs, identify with them, and grow comfortable with them. Once established, beliefs are the way that individuals make sense of their world. Beliefs are so strong that they tend to persist in spite of evidence to the contrary. Teachers use their beliefs to establish and stabilize their worldview through a process that Peirce called “fixation of belief” (Schreiber & Moss, 2002, p. 26). Established beliefs are highly resistant to change, and even when they are insufficient or illogical, they can persist. Individuals tend to ignore or dispute evidence – even research evidence – that runs contrary to a belief they hold. For example, even the classroom practice of “round robin reading,” long declared “a disaster” (Sloan & Lotham, 1981, p. 135), can be found in today’s classrooms. Certainty is the enemy of doubt, and Peirce argued that beliefs, and the actions they promote, can only be altered or a new belief created to replace it when an individual enters the state of cognitive dissonance he termed “genuine doubt,” a condition of recognized inadequacy. Best practice, therefore, holds particular danger when Peircian theory is considered since it can promote belief fixation (Schreiber & Moss, 2002).

Schreiber and Moss (2002) applied Peirce’s four sources of belief fixation noting that the first three sources are the nemeses of teacher discernment. The first, *tenacity*, happens when a teacher holds onto a belief, despite evidence to the contrary, to preserve self-identity. Teacher beliefs form a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that rarely changes even after extensive teacher education. This can explain why some teachers may resist adopting any new practice that is contrary to what they already do.

The second way beliefs become fixed is through *authority*. Well-meaning researchers, teacher educators, and professional consultants often tell teachers what to think and how to teach when they promote the blind adoption of best practice strategies and methods. Peirce argued that when fed a steady diet of what

to think teachers can become “intellectual slaves” who think and believe what they are told to think and believe. In this way, best practices can lead teachers to subordinate their own reasoning and yield instead to authoritative influences. Should a different authority introduce a practice contrary to what the teacher already does, tenacity chimes in encouraging the teacher to ignore the new practice being touted as best.

The third source of belief fixation, *a priori*, happens when individuals refrain from doubting a situation by seeking conceptual coherence to preserve their worldview. Teachers experience regular pendulum swings as textbook companies, researchers, and others promote new and replacement methods. “Yet all of these. . . approaches are sold to teachers as the technique de jour, the best practice. Too often, those best practices become the dogmas of tomorrow that are out of fashion and provoke another round of teacher training in the new and ‘latest’ technique. In other words, each new technique is delivered to teachers as a whole package, *a priori* beliefs included”(p. 27).

These three sources all resolve doubt by further fixating belief. In fairness these sources can be positive forces in life – being told not to jump off a building because it is dangerous should fixate a belief. A person should not have to doubt it or experiment to learn its validity.

The fourth source, *experimentation*, was favored by Peirce and explains the crucial need for teachers to develop as adaptive experts. Experimentation employs skepticism, openness to alternatives, discernment, negotiation, cooperation, and compromise to fix or stabilize beliefs. Teachers profit more when they find their beliefs irritated, doubt those beliefs, hold them up to scrutiny, and change, refute, or replace the beliefs based on evidence. For this, teachers require the precious luxury of time – time to become comfortable with complexities of the teaching learning process and time to gain comfort with genuinely doubting simple solutions (Schreiber & Moss, 2002).

Peirce concluded that it is only when confronted by new experiences or unfamiliar territory outside of individual comfort zones that teachers experience unease about the logic of their structures. Unease and genuine doubt, Peirce declared, are good things, not to be interrupted by canned solutions. Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which individuals struggle to free themselves. The “irritation” of that doubt moves individuals to act. They take steps to remove doubt and restore the state of comfort. Peirce labeled this struggle to eliminate doubt and restore the state of belief as *inquiry* (Cunningham et al., 2005), a stance very much akin to inquiry described by Dewey (Dewey & Bentley, 1949).

The crucial inquiry process arising from genuine doubt can only occur via real struggle during real experience. Education, to great disadvantage and by placing too much store in best practices, has assumed that teachers must be told which beliefs are true so that they can acquire isolated bits of knowledge, skills, and techniques. Education must acknowledge the complexity of its systems and recognize teachers as worthy decision-makers able to work with uncertain information and free to use skepticism and reasoning to examine issues in real time. Rather than adopting a best practice, teachers must be supported as adaptive experts who are comfortable with doubt and able to navigate complexity with discernment.

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## Navigating Complex Educational Systems

The ability to recognize patterns within educational problems and analyze them from complex rather than reductionist perspectives is aided by complexity theory – a diverse collection of research that examines how systems change, develop, learn, and evolve (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008; Walby, 2007; Wheatley, 2006). While there is no single definition of complexity theory (Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff, & Aitken, 2014; Davis, Phelps, & Wells, 2004), the definitions applied to education are especially relevant here. Applying complexity theory to social issues allows researchers and practitioners to examine wholes, relationships, open systems, and environments rather than their isolated parts (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Central to these examinations is the distinction complexity theory draws between complicated and complex systems (Bryne, 1998).

Although both complex and complicated systems have multiple parts and relationships and are difficult to understand at first glance, they are not the same. Some systems are simple, like following a recipe. They include some basic skills, techniques, and vocabulary, but once mastered, following the exact steps yields a high probability of success (Glouberman & Zimmerman, 2002, p. 1). Complicated systems include things like launching a rocket, or the modern automobile engine. Complicated problems contain subsets of simple problems but are not simply reducible to them. Complicated systems can be taken apart and their pieces closely examined to reveal the way the system functions. That is because in complicated systems, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts (Cilliers, 1998). Their complicated nature is connected not only to the problem's scale as in a rocket launch but also to issues of coordination or specialized expertise. Complicated problems, though generalizable, are not simply an assembly of simple components (Glouberman & Zimmerman, 2002).

In complex systems, wholes are much bigger than the mere sum of their parts. The consequence of taking a complex system apart is that the key aspects of how the system works are lost since unexpected outcomes can arise from the dynamic interactions of its parts. These consequences are unpredictable and evolving, yet not arbitrary nor unexplainable (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Complex systems include things like bacteria, the brain, and processes like child rearing. They are not completely knowable yet can be approached with measured optimism. For example, parents look forward to raising a child despite uncertainty and complexity (Glouberman & Zimmerman, 2002). Like the process of raising a child, educational systems are in constant states of emergence and self-invention (Haggis, 2008).

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## It's a Systems Thing, Not a Single Thing

Education at all levels – PreK-12 classrooms, schools, in-service professional learning, university teacher education programs, school-university partnerships, and educational leadership programs – has been increasingly recognized for its complexity (Bullough, 2019; Chang et al., 2019; Cochran-Smith et al., 2014;



Davis, Sumara, & D'Amour, 2012; Jerdborg, 2020; Nielson, Triggs, Clarke, & Collins, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Schneider & Sommers, 2006; Waks, 2011). New questions and novel approaches would foster and support educators who embrace approaches, processes, and practices to monitor and enhance learning for all students, including learners not served, underserved, and poorly served by existing systems. It will take more than archiving best practices for educators to let go of dogmas of the past that impede innovation and improvement. Rather than making education more efficient, best practice approaches tend to identify the status quo, define embedded assumptions, and frame reward systems like teacher evaluation and resource allocation. Instead of strengthening the kind of discernment educators need to navigate complex systems, best practices encourage educators to do more of the same, better and better. This quest for certainty cements behavior patterns.

Instead of being subject to “pendulum swings of polarized teaching policies that rest on simplistic ideas of best practices. . . teachers need to know how and when to use a range of practices to accomplish their goals with different students in different contexts” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 304). Effective educators must develop habits of mind that “problematize unrecognized assumptions, implications and consequences” to “foster dissonance and discomfort” with conventional educational practices (American Educational Research Association, 2009, p. 482).

There is a false sense of security related to the idea of best practice. Complexity theory suggests that it is unreasonable to assume that “a full proof set of one-size fits all practices” regardless of the student, content, context, and teacher certain practices are always the best. Furthermore, complex, organic learning environments cannot be improved with simple “add water and stir” solutions (Moss & Brookhart, 2015, p. 17–18). To unquestioningly engage in a best practice without examining its fit for the myriad of conditions operating within complex learning environment means ignoring the diversity of needs and adopting Porter’s (1986) notion of “common personhood.” It flies in the face of crucial reasoning processes that are harnessed through the discomfort of what Peirce termed genuine doubt. It fixates beliefs through *authority*, promoting “trickle down decision making” that is expert rather than practitioner driven (Moss & Brookhart, 2015, p. 17–18).

A best practice orientation fails to recognize educators as adaptive experts who are informed, capable, and able to continuously sharpen their professional knowledge and skills (Hatano & Oura, 2003). Making trustworthy decisions within the complexity of real classrooms, buildings, districts, or universities in real time requires educators who understand the needs of diverse learners, recognize the demands of the content, and consider the influence of context considerations to create “infinite variations of what is best” (Moss & Brookhart, 2015, p. 24). Contemporary learners pose a range of learning situations are contextualized by distinct languages, cultures, identities, and learning approaches. Educators who serve them need deeper knowledge bases than ever before coupled with the intellectual discernment to assess barriers to learning and guide their decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Discernment, the capacity to see the significance of a situation, imagine various possibilities for action, and judge ethically how one should act



promotes systems thinking. It allows teachers to notice the fine-point details to understand the system and know what to focus on and how to appropriately interpret a given context.

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## **Conclusion and Reflection: Practice-Based Evidence Within a Culture of Discernment**

*“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”* Max Dupree

Implementing a best practice begins something like this – a researcher has an idea and designs an intervention, sets up a study, gathers evidence that it works, schools embrace it, and then assigns teachers to implement it with fidelity. But just because something works in a clinical trial does not ensure that it will work in every classroom. It is “the difference between knowledge that something can work and knowledge of how to actually make it work reliably over diverse contexts and populations” that is important for teachers (Bryk, 2014, p. 469). Seeking to understand the “how” and the “why” promotes teachers as adaptive experts who can use evidence from their classroom practices to monitor and improve what they are doing during the act of teaching (Moss & Brookhart, 2015).

Each child, teacher, classroom, district, and community are different and operate as overlapping systems to produce infinite variations of complexity throughout a school day. Simply adopting a practice doesn’t ensure that it works to improve the conditions of learning for students. The most compelling evidence for the impact of a practice is not handed down from an authority or research study. The evidence needed to discern what is actually working and what is not comes from the students themselves.

An educational culture that over embraces best practice strategies, invariably promotes two fallacies: “the pipeline” and “the empty vessel.” Originated by Lawrence Green (2008) both fallacies are apt to this discussion. Green argues that practitioners are seen as “empty vessels” positioned at the end of a pipeline that “looks upstream” for research that is “rendered increasingly irrelevant to the circumstances of practice by the process of vetting the research before it can qualify for inclusion in systematic reviews and the practice guidelines derived from them. It . . . [is a] one-way conceptualization of translation, dissemination and delivery of research to practitioners. As the empty vessel the practitioner is cast as the recipient of the evidence-based guidelines from research” (p. 20). The research and best practice guidelines that arrive at the end of the pipeline are often a poor fit for the complex conditions of practice (Green, 2001).

The complexity of the classroom is real and ill addressed through best practice solutions that try to sidestep complexity by standardizing the instructional environment to “teacher-proof” it. Instead, education must come to grips with the exceptional demands placed on teachers seeking to advance the learning and potential of diverse, responding to the dynamics of each classroom, and honoring the distinctive features of each school community (Bryk, 2014).

Recent events related to the COVID-19 pandemic heighten the call for educators who can reinvent schools (Darling-Hammond, Edgerton, Truong, & Cookson, Jr, 2020). These teachers must believe in their ability to “innovate within constraints” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005, p. 364). For improvements of this caliber, educators cannot look to best practices that were derived from twentieth-century research in classrooms that were teacher, textbook, and test driven (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Innovative processes that enable in and out of class instruction as seamless conditions of learning will require teachers who can gather evidence during each learning event and use it to improve their practice. That means moving beyond a best practice mindset where a specific set of strategies offer guaranteed solutions to educational issues to creating an educational culture focused on *practice-based evidence* (Bryk, 2014). Teachers will need to be skilled in the pursuit of evidence that is constantly gathered during daily practice locally in schools and classrooms and used to improve learning for students. Too much time has been wasted admiring the replication of certain instructional strategies without enough time devoted to using evidence from what students do, say, make, and write during the lesson in order to learn. This formative evidence tells teachers what is working and what is not in real time for the students in their classrooms (Moss & Brookhart, 2015, 2019). This evidence will help educators discern what is actually working and if certain practices actually improve student learning and overall well-being.

This chapter argues that the concept of best practice continues to be employed far too casually with the potential to mislead and fixate the beliefs teachers hold in ways that encourage them to doubt their own authority and discernment. Teachers who are encouraged to engage more rigorously in inquiry that includes monitoring and improving their own practice informed by practice-based evidence from each lesson are better able discern what practice is “best” for each of their students. This cultural shift cannot happen by adhering to a “best practice” concept that proclaims certain actions as surpassing all others. It is an unwarranted superlative that creates clones, not innovators and promotes compliance rather than discernment.

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# The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the “Neoliberalization” of Educational Leaders

# 27

Chris Dolan

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## Abstract

The hegemonic tendencies of neoliberalism as a political rationality informs a significant segment of the educational leadership literature. From within this field, this chapter draws mainly from authors who provide critique of the marketization of education and the concomitant narrowing of its purposes. While these writings are susceptible to “bulldozer” portrayals of the inevitability of neoliberalism’s global dominance (Larner, 2003), it is argued that, in its subject forming work, neoliberalism may also be usefully characterized as a “specter” – a haunting and insistent presence that becomes constitutively powerful as it insinuates its way into the thoughts and practices of educational leaders. In a shift from this spectral reading to a more tangible and scrutinizable representation, neoliberalism is conceived as a “political rationality” that intertwines with specific “technologies” and “freedoms” of government to make governing thinkable and practical, while judging the conduct of “economized” subjects (Brown, 2015) as reasonable and knowable according to the truth claims it promulgates. These power/knowledge arrangements are given expression in the idealized form of *homo aeconomicus* before attention shifts from the constitutive triumph of neoliberal subjectivity to

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the more diverse and localized possibilities held in Foucault's governmentality and in "neoliberalization" as a subject forming process. A "processual" reading of neoliberalism is taken to highlight its variegated, contingent, and inconsistent qualities and, by extension, illuminating how educational leaders might engage in a struggle to occupy different subject positions and to work at and beyond the limits of the currently dominant discursive order. Various theoretical, rhetorical and practical resources – configured as "struggle tactics" – are described and the risks and possibilities of their individual and collective deployment are evaluated.

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### Keywords

Neoliberalism · Neoliberalization · Educational leadership · Political rationality · Technologies of government · Governmentality · Power/knowledge · Freedom · Subjectivity · Resistance · Aporia · Agonistic practice

### The Field of Memory

Critique of the post-war Keynesian model of welfare and governance – including its advocacy of a more interventionist role for government in education – helped pave the way for the global expansion of neoliberalism. Broader purposes of education related to democratic participation, active citizenship, and social inclusion were largely subsumed or replaced by the constitutive logics of the market and a focus on the economic advantage to be derived from education and educators.

### The Field of Presence

From the 1980s onwards, the imposition of neoliberalism on education has become increasingly influential and pervasive. Under a marketization insignia, a preference for directing education toward skilling a productive workforce and contributing to wealth in the market economy has been enacted. Educational leaders, as entrepreneurial managers, are deeply implicated in these workings when they submit to its common-sense rationale and to fashioning individuated acts of compliance, performance, and self-promotion.

### The Field of Concomitance

In neoliberal times, a managerialist rationale largely borrowed from the fields of business and organizational studies has become inculcated with the subjectivity of educational leaders. Leaders must embrace the language and processes of free enterprise, respond to calls to be resourceful and agile participants in the education market, and accede to external demands to achieve, compete, and be accountable.

### Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field

The hegemony of neoliberalism is interrupted and confounded by inconstant and differentiated accounts of its historical and geographical presence. A reading founded in the process of neoliberalization exposes variegated, contingent, and

inconsistent qualities that, in turn, allow possibilities for critique and resistance, and for envisioning the counter-rationalities held in other discourses.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Against the treatment of neoliberalism as a worldwide specter, a critically oriented response calls for both a critique of its position of dominance and some support for working with and against the truth claims of its power/knowledge arrangements. This support runs to provision of theoretical, rhetorical, and practical resources for educational leaders and to consideration of the individual and collective efforts that remain accessible, prudent, and feasible.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter is positioned within a broader catalogue of educational leadership literature concerned with the hegemonic tendencies of neoliberalism as a political rationality and its related capacity to shape the subjectivity of educational leaders. For definitional clarity, “educational leaders,” following Mifsud’s reference in Chapter 15 of this publication, are cast broadly as “practising leaders in present-day educational institutions”. While the use of the term at times extends to emphasizing teaching and learning concerns over neoliberal interests in market participation and competition, this pedagogical emphasis in educational leadership is not expounded in detail (for more comprehensive insights into the history, meaning and demarcation of educational leadership, see ► [Chap. 2, “The Archaeology of Educational Leadership as an Enunciative Field”](#)).

The initial interest of this chapter is in neoliberalism as a *political rationality*. Drawing from Foucault’s (2014) description of the art of government neoliberal rationality is taken to provide both a prescription for rational government and a mode of reason for governing practices. Neoliberalism as a “political rationality“ is subsequently treated not only as a way of making a particular type of government and ways of governing thinkable and practical but also as a power/knowledge pairing that makes the conduct of government, organizations, and subjects possible and knowable according to the truths it promulgates.

The reference in the chapter’s title to “specter” is used quite deliberately in these early sections to convey a concern with the real and extensive effects of a political rationality that carries insistent, haunting, and omnipresent qualities, not generally of the ethereal or disembodied kind, but rather as they apply to the actual and existing practices of neoliberalism. The *specter* of neoliberalism is not, therefore, about the imagined fears or desires of educational leaders or their anticipation – dreaded or otherwise – of what is to come. Rather, it is about the demonic (see Dean, 2017; Kotsko, 2017), ubiquitous, and often beguiling imposition of neoliberalism into the lives and work of educational leaders.

As a governing rationality neoliberalism is taken, after Brown (2015), as “economising” all aspects of political life so that its reach extends to “heretofore non-economic spheres and activities” (p. 21). As one such sphere, education is



positioned as a central cog in economic markets and, in turn, markets are taken to be the solution to perceived problems in education. As a result, educational institutions are “fundamentally transformed” by the market-based principles and practices that guide and enclose their operations (Savage, 2017, pp. 143–144). Educational leaders, in this process of *neoliberalization*, are beckoned to available subjectivities that signal their active participation in the education market and privilege personal qualities such individualism, business savvy, agility, and enterprise.

Significant attention is paid to the hegemonic tendencies of the neoliberal project – what Brown (2015) terms its “stealth revolution” – and the insistent shaping of leaders and their work that marks its dominant influence in educational settings. Accounting for this dominance involves shifting discussion from the rationality or mode of reason for government to the *technologies* that apprehend, shape, and enact this rationality in practice. Technologies that appear to be influential in shaping the subjectivity of leaders are identified in the extant literature and their entwinement with the power/knowledge arrangements held in the rational truth claims of neoliberalism is posited. Among these technologies, freedom, as a practice of government, is subject to extended analysis in order to reveal both seductive and deceptive qualities.

Following this near totalizing account of a worldwide specter and of a process of neoliberalization that appears to both define and confine educational leaders, the theoretical interests of the chapter move to less pervasive and less pessimistic readings. Interest is now directed to testing the epistemological prospects of thinking about the neoliberalization of educational leaders inside of an influential and strident discursive field that proposes their positions and instructs their practice but remains, at the same time, vulnerable to the vagaries and contradictions of local histories, knowledges, and contexts and to practices (or tactics) that depart from expectations of docility and compliance. The aim is to expose what Springer (2012) calls the “processual character” (p. 135) of neoliberalism by opening a critical space adjacent to the vast array of literature that takes neoliberalism as an impenetrable, globally dominant political-economic project.

To help frame this move, references to neoliberalism as a far-reaching rationality give way to the “mentality of rule” as encapsulated in Foucault’s own neologism “governmentality.” While this shift to “neoliberal governmentality” may seem little more than a change in semantics, it also follows a shift in emphasis in Foucault’s work (albeit, at times faint and contradictory) as he develops the nexus between government and rationality by pushing his work from the dimension of power-knowledge to the dimension of the subject and the “purpose of subjectivation” (Foucault, 2014, p. 232) (see also Cornelissen, 2018, p. 145).

The case made for a processual reading of neoliberalism, which forms the balance of this chapter, is not one which refutes the ubiquitous presence of neoliberalism in the lives and work of educational leaders or which plots its grand demise. Rather, it offers a tentative explication of the different possibilities the process of neoliberalization brings to practices of educational leaders and, concomitantly, to subject forming possibilities. The intention, following Brown (2015), is to interpret neoliberalism as “a loose and shifting signifier” (p. 20) by exploiting its variegated, contingent, and inconsistent qualities and its “endlessly unfolding failures and

successes” (Springer, 2012, p. 137). In a more active tone, this approach supports the formulation of a struggle at the frayed edges of neoliberal governmentality and the development of various *struggle tactics* that educational leaders might use. In evaluating the possibilities and risks for leader who choose to take part in this struggle, the chapter concludes with a claim that the tactics for engagement are best and most safely utilized in the caucusing efforts of local coalitions and alliances.

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## Rationality, technologies, and the “Specter” of Neoliberalism

Treating neoliberalism as a *rationality* draws from Foucault’s (2014) description of the “art of government” as both “a certain way of governing” and “a rationality elaborating the very practice of government” (p. 12). Put another way, neoliberal rationality provides both a prescription for government that makes good sense (i.e., “rational”), as well as a mode of reasoning from which practices of government can be formulated and shaped. In terms of its ubiquitous political presence, neoliberalism invokes Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge in suggesting that, as a coherent rationality, it carries potent claims to truth that order reality and transmit relations of power according to a specific determination of the division between true and false. The success of this neoliberal rationality can be read from the hegemony it now assumes over any other in the discursive landscape and in its tendency “to structure and organise not only the action of rulers, but also the conduct of the ruled” (Dardot and Laval, 2014, p. 4).

Complementing the pervasive and eerie undertones of a “worldwide spectre,” Larner’s (2003) “bulldozer” descriptor of the many readings that highlight the global reach of neoliberalism provides a decisive metaphor of monolithic and irresistible machinery flattening everything in its path. Applying heavy-duty metaphors to neoliberalism should not, however, suggest conspicuous or ostentatious governmental control. Rather, following Harvey (2007), neoliberalism installs a common sense “conceptual apparatus” that can be “taken for granted,” is “not open to question,” and contains “compelling and seductive ideals” that cater to individual desires and the promise of a better society (p. 5). Along more insidious lines, Brown (2015) claims that neoliberalism “settles, nestles and gains affirmation,” so that the process of “neoliberalization is generally more termite-like than lion-like . . . its mode of reason boring in capillary fashion into the trunks and branches of workplaces, schools, public agencies, social and political discourse, and above all, the subject” (pp. 35–36).

In terms of the constitutive effects on educational leaders, the forceful and insistent workings of a neoliberal rationality are, *prima facie*, the realization of the effects of power exerted *on* and *over* them – effects that permeate, characterize, and constitute their subjectivity and work to render them as uniform, submissive, and docile. One manifestation of this figuration of power is the resurrection of *homo aeconomicus* or “economic man,” albeit somewhat transformed from the classic liberal conception of a partner of exchange left alone to fulfill her/his own needs. In neoliberal times, *homo aeconomicus* renders the educational leader as an “eminently governable” subject of interest (Foucault, 2008, p. 270) – a

productive and agile individual, who is entrepreneur of her/himself and who is amenable to contributing to the power of governmental reason shaped according to the market and competition. Thus, the subjectivity of *homo æconomicus* is pegged to the enterprise form. Individuation ensures the conditions of control over conduct and the rationality of the market creates a willing acceptance of “the obligation to maximise one’s life as a kind of enterprise” (Rose, O’Malley, & Valverde, 2006, p. 91). In this way, *homo æconomicus* becomes a depoliticized subject, imbued with her/his own desires and prone to egoistic choices – shaped to meet market demands, but infinitely flexible in adjusting to inevitable shifts in the arts of neoliberal government.

This idealized depiction of *homo æconomicus* functions to signify the constitutive triumph of neoliberal subjectivity over other subject positions in the broader discursive field. As Brown (2015) claims, neoliberalism “in letting the markets decide our present and future . . . wholly abandons the project of individual or collective mastery of existence” (p. 221). Such an observation shifts emphasis away from an abstract reading of rational government and toward an interest in how forms of neoliberal rationality so fully inscribe themselves in the practices of educational leaders. This shift is toward the various concrete practices which are founded upon, and work to enhance, the promulgated truth claims of neoliberalism and which, in turn, give leverage and credibility to certain ways of governing. Thus, while neoliberal rationality renders government as agreeable, intelligible, and reasonable it is these instruments and techniques – the *technologies* – of government that seek to “grasp and shape the reality that rationalities have rendered as an appropriate domain for governmental action” (Brady, 2016).

Barron (2017) posits a virtually “limitless” array of these technologies, including “behavioural routines, organizational procedures, architectural arrangements, institutionalised modes of calculation, inscription and recording” (p. 280). Drawing closer to the focus of this chapter, the relevant literature describes how these technologies are founded and enacted in educational settings. For example:

- Ball and Olmedo (2013) target the individualizing practices of *performativity* showing how they create for educators “a routine of constant reporting and recording of their practice” (p. 90) as they respond to demands to align themselves and their work to targets, performance indicators, and appraisals.
- The neoliberal logic of *self-interest* is, according to Hamann (2009), instrumentalized as a tool for making rational choices and cost-benefit calculations “to the express exclusion of all other values and interests” (p. 38).
- *High stakes testing and auditing* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013), *accountability* (e.g., De Lissovoy, 2016), and *standardization* (e.g., Slater & Griggs, 2015) are mechanisms of the market that confine and enmesh educators in processes of data-driven improvement and benchmarking and in covetous and blameful practices of competition, comparison, and appraisal.
- Many of these technologies are borrowed into education from business and management, with *managerialism* (e.g., Ball, 2003), *standards* (e.g., Higgins & Larner, 2010), and *entrepreneurialism* (e.g., Slater & Griggs, 2015) dotting a

discursive field that makes education into business and takes educational leaders as akin to company executives.

The benign qualities of their programmatic form and operational intent seem to obscure the power relations within which such governmental technologies are framed and constituted. However, Ball and Olmedo (2013) fit these “apparatuses of neoliberalism” with the less furtive disguise of normality, describing “seductive, enthralling and overbearingly necessary” qualities that produce and animate available subjectivities (p. 88). In this reading, the neoliberalization of educational leaders is a process of normalization, as the entwinement of these technologies with the power/knowledge arrangements held in the rational truth claims of neoliberalism fix and mobilize expectations of what is acceptable and legitimate. As these “technologies of power” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) do their objectifying work, educational leaders enact their subjection as if an obvious and conscious choice and a matter of their own free will. These technologies have their practical manifestation, for example, in the pressing and essential status attached to new work educational leaders are urged to undertake, in the replacement of coercive and prescriptive controls on the leader with more surreptitious tactics of empowerment and “responsibilisation” (see Brown, 2015; Wright, 2012), and in the attachment of their success and survival to principles of self-enterprise and market awareness.

Foucault’s (1982) notion of “dividing practices” (p. 777) is also revealing in showing that this type of normalization divides off and rejects that which is considered aberrant or wrong. This fragmenting of knowledge under neoliberal conditions of “restrictive rationality” (Pignatelli, 2002, p. 165) can be construed as directly influential on the neoliberalization of educational leaders. It warns against the absurdity of thinking otherwise about the organization of education and the dangers of occupying subject positions beyond those specified. This division of practice into right and wrong not only impresses upon educational leaders a confined representation of preferred reality but also creates the conditions within which they quite readily identify with this reality, embrace its modes of “fantasy and enclosure” (De Lissovoy, 2016), and, as if by conscious choice, reproduce the practices that define them. Moreover, these inducements to prescribed ways of being and acting are framed inside of arguably the most deceptive and intermingled of the apparatuses of neoliberalization – *freedom*. It is to freedom as a governmental strategy that the attention of this chapter now shifts.

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## Neoliberal Governmentality and an Illusory Freedom

As a rationality of government, neoliberalism reflects a particular “mentality of rule” which “rearticulates classic liberal concerns for limited government, economic freedoms and individual responsibility” (Bailey, 2013, p. 816). Positioned as a politics of “not governing too much” (Foucault, 2008, p. 17), this *neoliberal governmentality* is, accordingly, described by Rose et al. (2006) as creating a

“problem space” which is concerned with “new ways of thinking about and seeking to enact the government of freedom” (p. 92). The paradoxical qualities of the phrase “government of freedom” are dissolved in the interpretation, following Foucault (2008) and many others (e.g., Dean, 2010; Rose, 1999) that, in neoliberal times, freedom is not opposed to government but rather becomes a *strategy of governing*. Understood in this way, subjects are required and obliged to adopt a certain set of freedoms that are made possible and shaped within government.

Accordingly, a neoliberal rationality founded in the logics of the market calls for individuals to become autonomous, entrepreneurial, and self-monitoring and self-possessed – calls made in the name of freedom but designed to further the aspirations of government. Moreover, individual acquiescence is, at the same time, mobilized in expectations of a willing contribution to these freedoms. As Kotsko (2017) notes, neoliberalism derives its power by holding to the core principle “market competition is the purest instantiation of human freedom.” Kotsko claims:

The market is the purest democracy, because market outcomes are the spontaneous synthesis of all participants’ free decisions. The more deeply society is shaped by market forces, the freer it will be—and therefore the more legitimate the outcomes will be, because they will be what we all, collectively, chose. (p. 497)

The most accessible freedom available to leaders under conditions of neoliberal governmentality is one that is shaped and illuminated within the constraints of available subjectivities. It is a freedom drawn from a specific form of self-interest that relies on the leader’s active participation in the educational marketplace and on their willingness to make themselves agile, enterprising, and competitive. Gobby (2017) provides an example of this ready involvement when discussing the “risky freedoms” of school principals “under neoliberal devolution of decision-making and responsibility.” He highlights their active participation “in practices of self-formation” as “individual principals self-steer, exercise their freedom and govern themselves and their schools” (p. 277).

Further entreaties to which leaders accede relate to a willingness to be held accountable for their participation in the market and agreement that the success of this participation is properly measured by standardized processes operated from outside of their leadership context. In agreeing to audit, appraisal, and judgment the work of leaders includes communicating the best possible performance of themselves and their institutions as a measure of productivity, authority, and worth. These standardized processes of accountability not only create a field of successes and failures and winners and losers but also illicit feelings of trepidation, resentment, and wariness. They are accountabilities that reward compliance over curiosity and along the way work to allocate and shift the blame to the individual. In what Kotsko (2017) calls “the trap of freedom” the individual is demonized not just for the comparative shortcomings that market metrics reveal about them but for the broader failures of a neoliberalized system. Kotsko concludes that “neoliberalism is the social order that has most thoroughly grounded itself in freedom-as-

blameworthiness, that has most completely entrapped its subjects into the negative sweet spot of freedom” (p. 506).

Neoliberal governmentality is not, therefore, marked by the freedom of a withdrawal or retreat from state control and intervention, but rather by new acts of subterfuge, incentive, and “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995 in Ball, 2006, p. 10) and by taking the enclosure of subjectivity as one of its key modes of power. The technologies and institutions of governmental power now develop, conjoin, and operate in the guise of more benign and apolitical processes. They steer the performance of individuals and groups by acts of measurement, appraisal, and comparison – they incite people to govern themselves and posit an “artificially arranged” liberty (Lemke, 2012, p. 45) by championing entrepreneurial and competitive instincts. In short, following Kotsko (2017), they make policies “that effectively create a world full of isolated individuals who yearn to express their freedom through participation in market competition” (p. 500). The constrained freedoms of neoliberal governmentality are a resource of government that implicates educational leaders directly in ruler ambitions. As Bailey (2013) notes, they fold the “mundane and everyday practices and conducts” of individuals “in with the requirements and exigencies of the state” (p. 816). These freedoms also reveal a new marking out of constitutive and constraining powers – an elucidation of a political rationality that shapes leaders and their work “through the coalescence of circumstances of their everyday lives” (Springer, 2012, p. 139).

In looking away from the haunting presence and bulldozer imprint of neoliberalism and toward the possibilities in exploiting its “inconstancy and plasticity” (Brown, 2015, p. 21), freedom might also form a type of conceptual hinge – a fulcrum between the freedom that accompanies the powerful rationality of rule underpinning neoliberal governmentality and the emancipatory possibilities in more contingent, variegated, and precarious readings. In drawing this chapter closer to what Foucault (1984) describes as “the undefined work of freedom” (p. 46), the deterministic and confined portrayal of neoliberalism will now be used as a counterpoint to processes of neoliberalization that are missing, subjugated, or forgotten in more pessimistic readings. To this end, it invites different theoretical perspectives and rhetorical resources that work to illuminate different subjectivities and to make imaginable practices that counter, resist, and push-back the current orthodoxy.

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## Unsettling Possibilities: The Process of Neoliberalization

The threefold schema of political rationality/technologies of government/constrained freedom appear to form an unholy trinity so impenetrable and so deeply intertwined that it becomes difficult to imagine any other way or any form of resistance to the status quo. Against its promised freedoms, Harvey (2007) captures this feeling of enclosure in claiming the “contemporary condition” is one where “neoliberalism has turned . . . authoritarian, forceful and anti-democratic” (pp. 37–38). Treated as a global specter, crucial questions arise about whether a compelling neoliberal rationality and

its attendant technologies have exhausted the production of other subjectivities and if, therefore, it is any longer possible to think of the educational leader as anything other than a product of imposing outside forces. Rather than take a defeatist position on these questions, the suffocating presence of a dominant neoliberal order is now set against a more contingent and variegated reading based on a *processual* reading of the neoliberalization of the educational leader.

Understanding neoliberalism as a process derives from the field of geography and its interest in uneven global development (Harvey, 2007), “the processual character of space and time” (Springer, 2012, p. 135) and “the problematic of variegation” (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010, p. 182). Working from this understanding, it becomes more feasible to treat the uptake of neoliberalism in educational settings as uneven, mutable, and inconsistent. The balance of the chapter looks to bring the more unsettled qualities of “neoliberalization” to the “many subject forming strands” (Peck & Tickell, 2002) of a neoliberal rationality. The intention is to use the processual character of neoliberalism to weaken monolithic and totalizing accounts of a coherent global policy logic and to provoke new and discordant ways of imagining educational leaders.

Ideas threaded through critically oriented literature reveal a distinct lack of consensus about how the joined-up tasks of “changing the shape of the thinkable” (Gordon, 1991, p. 8), resisting the neoliberal status quo and understanding the nature, targets, and strategies of any struggle against the current orthodoxy might proceed. Taken collectively, however, critical writings do convey some distinct lines of struggle, fashion some resources for productive participation and call on individual and groups to think deeply about getting involved. Another significant body of literature focusing on the empirical findings of research into educational leadership provides perspectival accounts of actual practices of resistance and explores associated themes of professional risk, the precarity of different subjectivities, and the possibilities held in leaders caucusing around issues in common (e.g., in Dolan, 2020; Heffernan, 2019; Theoharis, 2007; Thomson, 2008). The inductive qualities of these empirical texts are essential to exposing the processual character of neoliberalization and in highlighting the diverse and contingent forms that the process takes when it is actually enacted in educational settings. From local accounts of practice they gather markers of contingency, insufficiency, and variability and allow the imaging of practices of resistance within the subject positions available to educational leaders.

This body of literature forms a backdrop to the more schematic attempts that follow to capture the “struggle tactics” that educational leaders might adopt to gain access to practical ways of resisting, reframing, and refusing the dominant neoliberal rationality.

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## **Struggle Tactics: Stepping into the Undefined Work of Freedom**

De Lissovoy (2016) shifts attention to freedom not as “a set of formal conditions or rules” but as “an active expression of agency” that might expose the “lie” of domination (p. 168). In subsequent deliberations on power and freedom he



concludes that “the project of critical education may be not only to hammer away slowly at the edifice of the official story but also to find the courage to imagine and build a different society” (p. 169). To this end, I posit a field of contestation brought on by instability and ambiguity in the processes that underpin neoliberal policy discourses. This processual reading of neoliberalism, in breaking from the theoretical enclosure of a vast store of monolithic and omnipresent literature, is attentive “to *both* local peculiarities *and* the generic features of neoliberalism” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 388). In this section, the arrangement of these local peculiarities positions certain leadership practices as tactics directed to questioning, countering, and opposing the propensity to doctrinaire and hegemony in bulldozer readings of neoliberalism. These tactical responses are organized in four broad categories: *rhetorical resources*, *critique*, *counter-conduct*, and *agonistic practice*.

**Rhetorical resources.** Many of the seductions and enticements of neoliberalism reside in a persuasive language that names up the processes and categories of the prevailing logic, often in “neutral and abridged discursive formats like lists, statistics, facts, and how-to manuals” (Nguyen, 2017, p. 1), and describes ways of talking that are logical and sensible in the current reality. In demonstrating its support for the status quo, it is also a language that speaks to a normative truth and must, therefore, “steer clear of contradictions and ambiguities” (Svedberg, 2004). The neologisms, buzzwords, and pseudo-scientific jargons (Ramey, 2015, p. 7) that mark this language convey to educational leaders a deficiency in their own rhetorical resources while, at the same time, suggesting the acquisition of language from beyond their own repertoire will join them to an inner circle of educators who are on-message and well fitted to contemporary trends. To dismiss leaders’ use of the rhetoric of neoliberalism as simply “talking the talk” is to overlook the powerful role of language in maintaining the dominance of a neoliberal rationality in the broader discursive field.

In keeping with the “linguistic turn” in social sciences (see Svedberg, 2004), this is not just a language that describes, observes, and shores-up the neoliberal order. Rather, it is a language of action that is enmeshed with construction of the current reality and with decisions at its boundaries about what is true, reasonable, and possible. For educational leaders, the rhetorical resources of neoliberalism speak directly to their perceptions of meaningful practice and the subject positions to which they are drawn. As such, in their constitutive work, they are resources that are integral to a broader conception of discourse, famously described by Foucault (1972) as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 54).

One way to counter the significant language effects of neoliberalism is to add some different rhetorical resources to the repertoire of leaders. Resources that can be used by educational leaders to formulate oppositional positions that keep alive the ideas of personal and collective rhetorical power even as they “ensnared” within neoliberal discursive regimes (Danisch, 2017). Two examples from a broader field are now described.

The first of these rhetorical resources draws on “the aporia of a freer self” proposed by Webb, Gulson, and Pitton (2014) and is here deployed to look beyond the currently favored subjectivities of educational leaders by working *with* the obdurate paradox of their freedom rather than railing *against* it. To this end, Webb



et al. describe the “conundrum” of the free subject “ironically, evidenced in the choices that regulate the self” which they suggest, under neoliberal conditions, are “largely determined *a priori* and regulated within appropriate identifications, metrics and performances” (pp. 39–40, italics in original). The use of “aporia” is to signal “an attempt to not resolve such conundrums, but rather, to examine and better understand how such a puzzle has been constructed and to discuss possible effects that such a puzzle produces” (p. 32). The aporetic qualities of this freer self are useful for considering the struggle that attends the neoliberalization of educational leaders. They create extended puzzlement about the construction and activation of freedoms beyond and aside from those that disguise the covert control of government and raise ontological questions about the possibility or otherwise that leaders might have available “any kind of self-originating ethical intention” (Leask, 2012, p. 57). They suggest a stepping back from instrumental concepts such as principal autonomy and local governance, and a consideration of the meaning-in-practice of a language that reconstructs ideas about *participation*, *struggle*, and *resistance*.

In this aporetic reading, the process of neoliberalization is held open, so that new lines of questioning and different ways of thinking and speaking about the “messy process” (Niesche & Gowlett, 2015, p. 381) of subject formation might emerge. In a space of macro/micro influences, the everyday lived experience of educational leaders is taken as exceeding the neoliberal order, so that they are not just rendered obedient servants in the thrall of irresistible global forces. Rather, educational leaders can also be “locals” who are legitimately and strategically situated to speak at the nexus of external governance requirements and home-grown issues and priorities. In terms of “rhetorical agency” (Danisch, 2017), the aporia of the freer self appears to provide leaders with a resource for speaking of more plural and nuanced ways in which their neoliberalization might actually happen in practice. It may, for example, authorize leaders to speak about and convey other versions of their subjectivity, fit them with a more persuasive language of opposition, and better position them to “tell stories of destabilisation to monolithic representations” (Niesche & Gowlett, 2015, p. 382).

To better link neoliberalization with resistance, the second of the resources proposed uses Phillips’ (2006) “rhetorical maneuver” for enhancing the possibility of meaningful challenge. Phillips describes a “maneuver” that is “performed at those moments when we choose to violate the proscriptive limits of our subject position and speak differently by drawing upon the resources of another subject position we have occupied” (p. 311). This “maneuver” fits usefully with a variegated and contingent reading of the discursive effects of neoliberal policy and the subsequent production of multiple subject positions. It invites educational leaders to exploit the processual character of their neoliberalization in order to remember, re-establish, and reinvigorate other versions of themselves and to talk inside of discourses other than those that anchor them to the hegemony of the neoliberal project. In this conception, Phillips (2006) notes, “the notion of the ‘self’ is a constantly changing object crafted and re-crafted out of the points of identification provided in the exterior fields of power and knowledge” (p. 310) so that it becomes possible that “a ‘palette’ of multiple patterns of self” might emerge (p. 314).

**Critique.** In testing how a processual reading of neoliberalization might interrupt the coherence of subject formation, the qualities of Foucauldian critique – such as questioning of established norms, creating critical explanation of discursive and constitutive limits, and interrupting the hegemony of dominant discourses – can be usefully configured as tactics of introspection and oppositional constitutive recognition. This is a shift toward what Foucault (1984) describes as “practical critique” in the form of a “crossing over” so “that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value but, rather, as an historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying” (pp. 45–46). This critique of what we are, Foucault (1984) describes as a “labour of diverse inquiries . . . at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and experiment with the possibilities of going beyond them” (p. 50).

A concern with finding discursive limits is well captured by Butler (2004) in “What is critique? An essay on Foucault’s virtue.” Butler’s insights suggest the presence of blockages, silences, confusions, and ambiguities in the current “epistemological field” and foreground a predicament for educational leaders as they inhabit preferred and endorsed subject positions:

One does not drive to the limits for a thrill experience, or because limits are dangerous and sexy, or because it brings us into a titillating proximity with evil. One asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives. The categories by which social life are ordered produce a certain incoherence or entire realms of unspeakability. And it is from this condition, the tear in the fabric of our epistemological web, that the practice of critique emerges, with the awareness that no discourse is adequate here or that our reigning discourses have produced an impasse. (p. 307)

Insights into critique from Foucault and Butler develop possibilities for educational leaders to face and resist excessive governing and suggest the adoption of what Foucault (1997b) calls a “critical attitude.” He describes this attitude as:

both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, of finding a way to escape from them. (pp. 44–45)

Importantly, notions of “driving to the limits” and “adopting a critical attitude” acknowledge the crucial role played by the will of the individual within the framework of governmental power mechanisms (see also Lorenzini, 2016). For educational leaders these notions presuppose an individual’s propensity to accept that they no longer recognize themselves within available governmental truth regimes and the subject positions they make available. Beyond acceptance, these notions also suggest a voluntary risking of the self in acts that exceed the limits of established truths.

As Foucault (2007) introduces “the ugly word” (p. 161) governmentality in *Security, territory, population*, his target of critique shifts to governmental power or what he what he calls the “conduct of conduct.” In advocating practices that

challenge the truth claims imbricated with this power and the technologies that hold it in place, Foucault (2007) pursues a “striking back” theme in proposing a “tactically effective analysis” of “the circle of struggle and truth.” In this, he describes “tactical pointers” and says that this imperative should be of the kind: “If you want to struggle, here are some key points, here are some lines of force, here are some constrictions and blockages” (p. 3). Foucault’s (2007) insights into how these pointers might run to acts of refusal and resistance are framed by what he calls “counter-conducts” – the “sense of struggle against the processes implemented for governing others” (p. 201).

**Counter-conduct.** While the “stiff bit of utility” that Foucault (1997b, p. 25) attributes to critique connects usefully to choices educational leaders might make about their subjectivity, the notion of counter-conduct (Foucault, 2007) shifts attention to the “conduct” of the educational leader as political “actor” and to a broader conceptualization of their involvement in a constitutive struggle. Counter-conduct infers a contest, with one side formed around shaping of conduct by the imposition of governmental power the other by refusal among the targeted to be conducted this way and a desire to be conducted differently. As Lorenzini (2016) notes, at the core of counter-conduct is “the struggle in order to claim and obtain an *other* conduct” (p. 130 italics in original).

In finding (and finding out about) counter-conducts, Foucault (2007) explicitly advocates a focus on politically oriented practices when he says, “by using the word counter-conduct . . . we can no doubt analyse the components in the way in which someone actually acts in the very general field of politics or in the very general field of power relations” (p. 202). The emergence of counter-conduct, Davidson (2011) claims, indicates Foucault’s careful and deliberate attempt “to find a specific word to designate the resistances, refusals and revolts against being conducted in a certain way” (p. 28). For various reasons, Foucault departs from the more unruly registers of revolt, dissent, disobedience, and insubordination, and embraces the variability and intrinsic ambiguity of counter-conduct and the implied simultaneity of its work in transforming relations of the self and others and in the formulation of a countervailing power that subverts its dominant oppositions.

In the process of neoliberalization it is the various expressions of these transformations and subversions by leaders that shift counter-conduct away from its theoretical potentialities and toward “a counter-conducts approach” where “modes of protest . . . form in parallel to techniques of governmentality” (Death, 2016, p. 202). In a rather limited library of empirical studies into educational leadership and resistance (see Thomson, 2008; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003), examples of these modes of protest provided in the literature include activism and strategies of “irresponsibility” (Anderson, Cohen, & Seraus, 2015), silence and the formulation of counter narratives (Niesche, 2013), resistance, subversion, and refusal (Dolan, 2020), challenging the status quo and pushing back against injustice (Heffernan, 2019), and rigorous analysis of policy documents to expose taken-for-granted conservative assumptions (Ylimaki, 2012). Counter-conduct may also run to privileging aspects of practice that do not align obviously with neoliberal logics. For example, DeMatthews, Mungal, and Carrola (2015) describe an “ongoing struggle” focused “on the day-to-day realities

of creating more socially just schools in inequitable societies” (pp. 18–19). Commenting on leadership development programs, Smolović Jones, Smolović Jones, Winchester, and Grint (2016) claim that they can “act as important forums for resistance and the crafting of new identifications” (p. 426) even though they are generally sites for control and regulation of identity (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014).

Counter-conducts form the broad inventory of practices that function as correlatives to instruments of government and position educational leaders as various actors engaged in ongoing contestation. This inventory is generally oriented away from grand gestures of refusal (see Foucault, 1978, pp. 95–96) and toward a “general mobility” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 123) based on a shift to more equivocal and invigilated acts of participation. The practices of educational leaders that might be construed as counter-conducts are moderated by a strong tendency to compliance and acute awareness of the professional and personal risks involved. The contribution of counter-conduct to a more variegated and contingent process of neoliberalization is, therefore, dependent upon the willingness of leaders to embrace those conducts that exceed, interrupt or oppose the more general governing apparatus of neoliberalism. In what amounts to particular take on the political project for leaders, the risk of engaging in a struggle both within and against the orthodox expectations of the system to which they belong (and which employs them) is set against the potentially hazardous confinements of apathy and inaction.

**Agonistic practice.** A fourth resource for operating in the spaces opened up by a processual treatment of neoliberalism is fashioned from Foucault’s (1982) summation of the tying together of power and freedom. He says:

At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an “agonism” – of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. (p. 790)

The agonistic quality of relations of power that Foucault alludes to is here fashioned into a type of agonistic practice. Wenman (2013) describes *agonism* as “a strategic and tactical doctrine concerned with the capacity of human agents to challenge the tragic forces that seek to govern their lives and determine their conduct” (p. 39). Therefore, *agonistic practice*, in the first instance, denotes a positioning of educational leaders as subjects able to wrest back possibilities for self-formation by contesting the “tragic” effects and dominating tendencies of governmental power in neoliberal times. Belgian political theorist, Chantal Mouffe (2000) emphasizes the value of conflicts and confrontations in political activity, claiming that “far from being a sign of imperfection (they) indicate that democracy is alive and inhabited by pluralism” (p. 93). Elsewhere, Mouffe (2013) proposes an “agonistic model of democracy” in which the struggle over competing ideas is between “adversaries” who share a belief in the right to defend their ideas, rather than between antagonistic “enemies” bent on destroying each other. From this distinction, Mouffe claims that “a well-functioning democracy calls for a confrontation of democratic political positions” (p. 7).

Applying Mouffe's perspectives to the political practices of educational leaders helps inform choices about their participation. Recognizing both the importance and inevitability of conflict invites them to embrace the possibilities conflict holds for seeing and performing intelligible subjectivities beyond the versions favored in the current doxa. In drawing attention to the need for plurality and to the distinction between agonism and antagonism, Mouffe's description takes on a certain resonance in exploring the importance of oppositional practices to the shaping of a neo-liberalized policy subject. Mouffe (2013) also alludes to a preferred tenor for participation in adversarial contests. She advocates the ever-present prospect for mutually destructive antagonism between political "enemies" be transformed into, and played in, a more constructive form of rivalry with an "adversary." Agonistic practice is laced with warnings of the dangers of hurrying to consensus in decision-making, with an expectation of consensus likely to obscure the power differential between participating parties and quiet the possibilities for local disagreement and push-back.

This brief consideration of struggle tactics attempts to link the neoliberalization of educational leaders with what Niesche and Gowlett (2015) term "the ambivalence and fragmentary nature of discourse construction of subjects" (p. 377). Bringing a more malleable interpretation of Foucault's neoliberal governmentality to contingent and dispersed reading of neoliberalization gives additional efficacy to this link. Neoliberal governmentality, with its "ensemble of rationalities, strategies, technologies, and techniques" (Springer, 2012, p. 137), submits individuals to relations of power that re-interpret and re-locate outwardly focused disciplinary pressures. While hegemony and its vertical domination continue to be important, the decentering of government imbues educational leaders with a desire to govern themselves and connects them to promulgated notions of freedom and autonomy. Thinking with Leask (2012), it is this "profoundly normalising" rationality of the self as enterprise that creates a more immanent and material dispositif and, concomitantly, more multiform and various power relations (p. 63). Of course, it does not follow that leaders may now more easily transcend the dominant discursive order from which they draw their existing subject positions. Rather, pairing conditions of neoliberal governmentality with the process of neoliberalization allows for the possibility that leaders may work on themselves in ways that are beyond or contrary to the dominant order. Following Phillips (2006), this pairing may create "a crucial space in which an element of creativity can be introduced" and "a potential for disruption," brought on by competing subjectivities, can occur (p. 314).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The lives and work of educational leaders are both constituted and haunted and by the worldwide specter of neoliberalism. As this reach extends to the practices of educational leaders, their neoliberalization is often depicted as a process of tight conformance that ties them intimately to the logics of the market and implores their willing participation in governmental technologies and freedoms that shape and

support its practices. In this chapter, depictions of neoliberalism as an insidious, hegemonic, and damaging global presence were described alongside of a processual reading of its many subject forming strands. The possibility was subsequently mooted that the neoliberalization of educational leaders might be taken as a more variegated, contingent, and unstable process of subjectivity than hegemonic readings of a “worldwide specter” suggest. When joined with Foucault’s (2008) identification of a reconfigured relationship between governing and the governed under conditions of neoliberal governmentality, a further possibility emerged for understanding how leaders might be “neoliberalized” from the outside by policy discourses and, at the same time, take responsibility for their own neoliberalization. While much of the analysis directed to unpicking and resisting the status quo relied on hard-to-reach and, at times, imaginative possibilities, three summative claims are advanced for the use of a processual understanding in consideration of the neoliberalization of educational leaders:

1. *A processual understanding complicates accounts of neoliberalism as a universal and inevitable force by providing insights into its local constitution, variability and politics.* Rendering neoliberalism as contextual and contingent highlights its complexities and contradictions. As Lerner (2003) claims, it “allows us to think about the multiple forms that political strategies, techniques, and subjects take” (p. 511). This understanding invites analysis of internal ambiguities, lines of weakness and contradictions that reside in hegemonic conceptions, and foregrounds, revives, and imagines other discourses that might work to unseat its dominance.
2. *Linking the process of neoliberalization to the constitution of the policy subject allows in more fine-grained, variable, and locally responsive accounts of subject formation.* Applying a processual understanding of neoliberalism to subjectivity helps account for differences in the priorities and perspectives of designated educational leaders and in speculating on variations in their intervention and compliance in policy work. Cast more broadly, consideration of the subject as formed in a variegated and uneven process has individual leaders occupying a more *or* less distinct position in the discursive realm. This means that each subject is taken to be differently influenced by the discourses in play and that the truth claims of dominant neoliberal discourses may be diminished and interrupted by others from outside.
3. *Neoliberalization makes available a multiplicity of subject positions and, subsequently, helps interpret subjectivity as a resource for resistance.* In raising the prospect of a multiplicity of subjectivities, a processual reading of neoliberalism also keeps alive the possibility of educational leaders choosing into “minority” and even “radical” subjectivities (Demetriou, 2016) formed in the risky politics of counter-conduct and in practices of opposition, refusal, and resistance. Nicoll and Fejes (2008), after Foucault (1982), mark out this agonistic territory when they claim that “there is always on the one hand an incitation to act in a particular way and on the other the possibility of acting wilfully in disregard of this incitation” (p. 10).

In focusing on leader subjectivity, this chapter tried to engineer a move from the totalizing tendencies of a dominant governmental rationality to the possibilities of including various forms of resistance as interventions in constitutive practices of compliance and docility. Such a discussion flounders at an emphatic and telling question about the possibilities of turning theory into practice, including the temptation to make a pessimistic estimation of the practices of resistance that are actually possible. Hamann (2009), in accordance with much of the theoretical analysis in this chapter, reinforces the importance of the will of the individual in understanding such possibilities:

the proof will be in our practices . . . a better understanding will emerge by attending to our everyday activities, what we say and how we think, our commitments and obligations as well as the kinds of truths about ourselves we rely upon and reinforce in the process of doing so. (p. 58)

Willful individual acts of resistance and critique, however well intended, carry with them serious professional and personal risks (see Anderson et al., 2015; Thomson, 2008). These acts work against neoliberal entreaties to educational leaders to cultivate their individuality as active participants and enterprising subjects in the educational market. This call to the individual, which “is key to the rhetoric of neoliberalism” and carries with it the “rhetoric of personal responsibility” (Wingard, 2017, p. 141), thus renders acts of non-conformance and confrontation risky and unwise. Following Rose (1999), neoliberal governmentality allows in “a technological rationalisation of the human soul . . . a reduction of human subjectivity and creativity to that which can be acted upon in the interest of government” (p. 54). These workings on the “soul” of educational leaders (see also Foucault, 1977) are abetted by the profoundly individualizing tendencies of a rationality that champions those who are competitive, enterprising and triumphant. The effect is to divide one leader from the other, to set up colleagues as rivals and to depict those who will not come onboard as lone wolves or as a poor match to the job at hand.

In holding to the idea that the subjectivity of educational leaders might continue to be a resource for resistance, this chapter finishes on a more emphatic note. It advocates, with some urgency, that individual counter-conducts held in acts of courage, silence, disobedience, and resistance be tied to strategies of risk mitigation founded in the caucusing of like-minded leaders and the possibilities, in their collective voice, of speaking back more safely and assuredly to the current neoliberal hegemony. This is work directed to agonistic thought and action, guided by the “counter-power” of “pluralistic association” (Myers, 2008, p. 125) and the public demonstration of a productive resistance that refuses to be reduced to the fragmented “discontents, murmurings, indifference and disengagements” (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 150) of disaffected individuals.

An appeal to the power of association and to productive caucusing possibilities also implies a need for more research into effective group processes and strategies. Following Thomson’s (2008) observation of headteacher associations, such a study focus “would allow a more nuanced and critical discussion of the potentials of . . .



collective organizations to effect widespread educational change” (p. 99). Such research could usefully extend to consideration of the power of the group as both an antidote to individuation and its attendant vulnerability, and as a “chemical catalyst” (Foucault, 1982, p. 780) to more productive apprehension of power relations.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Foucault’s Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses](#)
- ▶ [Leadership, Leaders, and Leading](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism: Structured Doubt Within Leadership Certainties](#)
- ▶ [The Archaeology of Educational Leadership as an Enunciative Field](#)
- ▶ [The Social Construction of Leadership Power](#)

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# Refocusing Educational Practice Through an Ethic of Care

# 28

Val Catchpoole

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## Abstract

This chapter begins by examining why the work of educators can be regarded as an ethical social practice at both procedural and substantive levels, based on the virtues of the teaching profession itself and involving a deeply relational approach to ethics, coalescing round the moral concept of care.

Despite the highly ethical nature of the daily work of educators, there is not necessarily an appreciation of how the ethics of the profession can be applied to improve day-to-day professional practice by teachers and school principals.

This chapter offers two ways of remedying this situation: firstly by developing a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of care as it relates to caring

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for students and colleagues within schools and by outlining a plan for educators to problematize care in their educational practice.

Initial theorizing about education as an ethical social practice has its philosophical foundations in the work of virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 1985), while an examination of the meaning of care as a central moral concept for education is based on a revised understanding of care as developed by Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (1984) in their ethic of care and then revised and expanded by various theorists.

The plan for problematizing care in educational practice outlines an action research framework based in the key dimensions of caring practice, namely, *responsiveness*, *responsibility*, and *critical reflection*, and related personal and interpersonal competencies. It is an approach to ethical professional practice which is dynamic and evolving and which involves educators developing an intersubjectively realized form of moral autonomy and agency in the specific sociocultural context of the school as a collaborative, democratic, and ethical learning community.

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### Keywords

An ethic of care/care ethics · Relational basis for ethics · Moral interdependence · Intersubjectively realized moral autonomy · Ethics of the teaching profession

### The Field of Memory: Some Innovations and Disjunctures

Over the last 50 years, there have been some quite dramatic developments in understanding what is involved in being ethical and appreciating how we develop as ethical or moral human beings. It is argued that the older moral paradigm involved a moral self conceived as a sovereign self, devoid of social and emotional context, who, typically, adopted either a deontological or principle-based approach or who based their moral reasoning on a consideration of the consequences of action. An example of the former approach could be to follow Kant's (1785/1993, p. 30) categorical imperative "to act only according that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law," while the latter approach could be illustrated by following John Stuart Mill's (1863/1962) utilitarian manifesto to seek "the greatest happiness for the greatest number."

Lawrence Kohlberg's (1981, p. xii) cognitive developmental approach was an example of the deontological approach to ethics as it combined Kantian principles with developmental psychology based on the work by Piaget. Kohlberg's (1981, p. xii) approach was based on the belief that "the first virtue of a person, school or society is justice interpreted in a democratic way as equity or equal respect for all people" and has been applied in schools known as *Just Community Schools* throughout America.

Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s were decades that saw a number of fundamental challenges to deontological and consequentialist approaches to ethics. Post-modernism, in particular, denied the assumptions of the very metanarratives on which most existing ethical approaches were based. As Lyotard (1979) declared:

In contemporary society and culture – post-industrial society, post-modern culture – the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.

However, postmodernism provided a focus on the hegemonies hidden in plain sight within various mainstream discourses, such as those associated with patriarchy. Postmodern analysis such as that undertaken by Foucault (1977, p. 27) revealed regimes of power and illuminated the particularities of contexts where “knowledge linked to power, not only assumed the authority of the truth but has the power to make it true.” Within this disbelief in the great Western tradition of the Enlightenment, two feminists, Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (1984), proposed a more phenomenologically based approach to ethics based in an ethic of care within relationships. Gilligan (1982), as she reported in her book, *In a Different Voice*, had observed that many women undertaking Kohlberg’s justice-oriented program often seemed to justify their moral positions in terms of care within relationships rather than in abstract conceptions of justice as in Kohlberg’s (1981, p. xii) higher stages of moral reasoning. The concept of care as originally proposed by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) did not link care to justice and stressed the overriding importance of the particularities of context and rejected the possibility of any application of universal principles.

Nevertheless, there were those like Jurgen Habermas (1984) who insisted that the Enlightenment Project was not yet over. Habermas (1984, 1987) adopted the *linguistic turn* of the twentieth-century Western philosophy in proposing a theory of communicative action based on the belief that all speech acts have the inherent goal of mutual understanding and that human beings have the capacity to achieve this.

It was also in the early 1980s that virtue ethics, which traces its origins to ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, was reinvigorated by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) who argued that it was possible to find a basis for ethics in the virtues inherent in various social practices.

However, the prevailing global ethos of neoliberalism, with its focus on markets, commodification, and profits, has been in the ascendancy in the Western world. Even where there has been a reorientation of the modernist project, such as that undertaken by Habermas (1984) in developing discourse ethics based in communicative action, there is still concern with the possible usurpation of individual moral choice by the *mediatization of the lifeworld*. This refers to the influence of the media or the Fourth Estate in shaping and framing the processes and discourse (conversation) of political communication and thus reducing, or even of distorting, the capacity of the individual to exercise independent, rational autonomy. Ironically perhaps, the meta-narratives of the Fourth Estate have now become widely disparaged, especially by those courting populist opinion, and the term *fake news* has become ubiquitous.

### Field of Presence

After drawing on the work of virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 1985) to make a case for accepting an ethical base for the teaching profession in the moral

concept of care, the chapter then examines the meaning of care as outlined by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984, 2002, 2005, 2018) in an ethic of care. This involves the presentation of a new moral paradigm for ethics in which the moral process is seen as relational and interdependent.

This relational approach is aligned with a very different basis for moral development to that proposed by Kohlberg (1981). Moreover, it is suggested that educators themselves need to develop various personal and interpersonal competencies in order to exercise an intersubjectively realized form of moral autonomy and agency in their professional practice.

### **Field of Concomitance**

In this chapter the term ethics is used interchangeably with the term moral, and the interpretation of the term ethics is based in Peter Singer's (1993, p. 174) explanation that:

To live ethically is to think beyond one's interests. When I think ethically I become just one being, with needs and desires of my own, certainly, but living among others who also have needs and desires. When we are acting ethically, we should be able to justify what we are doing, and this justification should be of a kind that could, in principle, convince any reasonable being. (Singer, 1993, p. 174)

The "should" or "ought" of ethics presupposes the "can" of human capacity, which is now informed by a range of disciplines.

Sociobiologist E.O. Wilson (1975, 1978, 1998) believes that as members of a socially interdependent species, we have an evolved capacity for altruism. Psychologist Martin Hoffman's empirical research has also demonstrated that children typically begin to demonstrate empathy between ages 2 and 3 and by age 12 can show empathy to groups of people experiencing discrimination or other forms of distress. Other developmental psychologists, such as Bowlby (1975), Damon (1988), Kitwood (1990), and Noam (1988, 1991, 1993), have shown that we learn to care through being cared for and that we continue to be sustained morally in and through the care we receive and give in relationships. So these theorists propose a very different view of moral development to Kohlberg's (1981) non-variant stages of cognitive moral development.

Moreover, the emotions, once seen as a threat to the proper exercise of rational moral autonomy and moral agency, have been reappraised to echo and exceed the positive role accorded to moral sentiment by just a few earlier philosophers such as David Hume (1777/1975). Contemporary theorists such as Ridley (1996, pp. 5 & 135) see our emotions as intrinsic to our capacity for positive moral response, with our higher emotions even acting as "guarantees of our moral commitments."

### **Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions**

The relational approach to Ethics recommended in this chapter is based in the ontological assumptions that we are a socially interdependent species with evolved predispositions for bonding with close others in relationships of attachment but also with a capacity to reject those who are not of "our tribe" (Wilson, 1975, 1978, 1998).

We co-construct moral meanings within our family, workplace, and friendship circles and are shaped morally across our lifetimes by relationships of care or the lack of such relationships (Bowlby, 1971; Kitwood, 1990), as the nature of our interactions with others is deeply reciprocal. We learn to care through being cared for by others and develop a capacity for trust and mutuality through the care that most of us are fortunate enough to receive from our parents or first caregivers.

### **Disruptions in the Field**

The moral relativity of much of the wider neoliberal culture of developed Western nations is one where individualism and personal preference have been in the ascendancy. So much so that the illusory meme of teachers being “values neutral” can persist and even provide justification for teachers to avoid discussion of controversial issues in the classroom. Schools are also faced with meeting multiple accountabilities, such as those related to externally imposed testing of students. Where there is an overemphasis on this type of “performativity,” an appreciation of the deeply ethical work of educators can be obscured.

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## **Introduction: An Overview**

The chapter begins by confronting the anomaly of an apparent lack of ethical discourse by teachers and principals about their professional practice despite the deeply ethical nature of their work. This provides an impetus for exploring why education can be considered an ethical social practice as defined by virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) and why care could be considered a preeminent virtue among those virtues and values typically listed in Codes of Ethics for Teachers and Standards of Professional Practice for Teachers and School Principals.

However, care is rather like a self-evident truth that can remain abstracted and largely unproblematized in theory and practice. This chapter addresses this problem in two ways. Firstly, it provides an analysis of care within an ethic of care as initially outlined by Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (1984) and identifies both the strengths and limitations of the theory in providing a base for understanding the nature and scope of caring for others.

It is proposed that the highly relational approach of an ethic of care, or care ethics, can provide the basis for an intersubjectively realized form of moral autonomy and agency to assist educators to maintain and sustain dialectical engagement with students and one another within the school operating as a collaborative, democratic, and ethical learning community.

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## **Some Reasons for a Lack of Ethical Discourse in Schools**

Over the last 30 or more years, the deeply ethical nature of education has been recognized by many theorists, as the following small sample of references suggests (Campbell, 2008; Carr, 2016; Duignan, 2015; Hansen, 2007; Noddings, 1984, 2002,



2005; Purpel, 1999; Slote, 2007; Sockett, 2012; Starratt, 1994). Given such wide recognition of the ethical nature of the teaching profession, it was intriguing that none of the school principals involved in an Australian study conducted by Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, and Spina (2015, Discussion, para. 2) “reported overtly speaking with their staff about the topic of ethics” and “one principal (Carey) said he thought there is a paucity of talk about ethics throughout the school system.” In considering possible reasons for such a lack of ethical discourse about educational practice, Elizabeth Campbell (2008, p. 357) offers the following explanation:

The moral dimensions of teaching and the ethical nature of the teacher’s professional responsibilities often seem to be taken for granted in both the academy and practitioner communities, overshadowed by cognitive theories connected to teaching and learning, effective approaches to measurement and assessment, classroom management strategies and other aspects, that, while important are rarely viewed from a moral or ethical perspective.

Schools in many countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, and Canada are also facing challenges associated with externally imposed testing of students, such as the Australian Government’s NAPLAN or National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, for students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 in Australian schools. While this kind of testing was designed to make sure no child was left behind, it can literally lead to a situation where:

Current definitions of equity are linked to the introduction of multiple layers of technical and numerical mediation to measure equity, translating life in schools and communities into a series of abstract representations of graphs, grids, league tables and indices. (Lingard, Sellar, & Savage, 2014, p. 715)

The dialogic, dialectical interaction between teacher and student can be compromised, and the teacher’s role and capacity for exercising intersubjective autonomy in meeting the needs of individual children can be severely curtailed.

The lingering and illusory myth of teachers being “values neutral” simply amplifies the silence about ethical issues in day-to-day practice. This can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s when the Values Clarification (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978) movement became popular in American schools and elsewhere. Values Clarification seemed to provide a way of tactfully acknowledging that while you could identify and clarify your own values, this did not involve proving by recourse to rational justification that your set of values was superior to those held by someone else.

The pervasive influence of moral relativity in the wider society and the effect of postmodernism in discrediting moral metanarratives like those implicit in Kant’s categorical imperative have eroded bases for moral consensus in the wider society. As Bellah, Maden, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985, p. 76) observed in their classic study of the values of middle-class Americans:

If selves are defined by their preferences but those preferences are arbitrary, then each self constitutes its own moral universe and there is finally no way to reconcile competing claims about what is good in itself.

However, despite the moral relativism and plurality of ethical approaches in the wider society, it will now be argued that it is still possible for members of professions like medicine, law, and education to have an agreed basis for professional ethics through an approach suggested by virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre (1985).

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## Why Teaching Is an Ethical Social Practice Based on Care

While MacIntyre (1985, p. 11) thought that the West was left with just the remnants of various traditions and that “the nature of rational argument was interminable,” he offered the hopeful possibility of finding a solution to this impasse in the virtues intrinsic to social practices within various traditions. In this approach the virtues contribute to the attainment of a *telos* or goal such as the Aristotelian one of *eudaimonia* or flourishing.

When we examine the virtues and related values typically outlined in codes of ethics for teachers and in standards of professional practice for teachers and school principals, we can see a range of virtues and values for educators such as care, justice, responsibility, respect, dignity, and integrity, with these contributing to attaining a *telos* where “the ultimate aim of education is nothing other than the creation of human beings in the fullness of their capacities” (John Dewey, 1930/1984, pp. 289–298).

This *telos* is remarkably similar to the Aristotelian one of *eudaimonia* and clearly places the education of the child “front and center” (Duignan, 2012, p. 2). Such an aim, Dewey (1916, *Democracy in Education*, p. 99) argued, depended upon the creation of a democratic school culture and would ultimately contribute to the flourishing of a democratic society.

The Code of Ethics for Teachers in Queensland (QLD College of Teachers, 2011) identifies care, justice, integrity, responsibility, respect, and dignity as key values to be upheld by teachers ([www.qct.edu/standards-and-conduct/code-of-ethics](http://www.qct.edu/standards-and-conduct/code-of-ethics)), but the detail about these is quite minimal in terms of the kind of behaviors that it is suggested teachers should ideally demonstrate. *Responsibility*, for example, is seen as involving

- Giving priority to the education and welfare of all students in our care
- Engaging in ongoing professional development and improving teaching and learning strategies
- Working collaboratively and cooperatively with colleagues in the best interests of the education and welfare of our students

while *care* is seen as being demonstrated by

- Having empathy for and rapport with students and their families and caregivers, colleagues, and communities
- Committing to students’ well-being and learning through the practice of positive influence, professional judgment, and empathy in practice

But, as can be seen from the above, these values are only illustrated by a few examples, with no explanation for their selection or how they might be interrelated and are rather like self-evident truths which hover at the edge of professional educational practice but remain largely abstracted. The codes are also static, whereas ethics is dynamic (Forster, 2012, p. 14), and there is a need to problematize and share the meaning of the moral concepts in the codes. Moreover, as Forster (2012, p. 1) has noted, while formalized codes of ethics for teachers can define “the terms of trade” between the profession and school administration and the public, they can also have unintended consequences, such as teachers treating the codes superficially or their very existence producing a false sense that “all is well.”

There is a need for those who lead education in schools, both principals and teachers, to develop much “thicker” understandings of what moral concepts like care involve and how these concepts can inform, and even potentially transform, professional practice.

This study has chosen to consider the concept of care within the theory known as an ethic of care or care ethics, as this provides a way of examining care as a practice, as an interaction between the carer and the cared-for, and as a relational, dynamic, and evolving professional practice.

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## Understanding the Concept of Care Within an Ethic of Care

A recognition of care as a contemporary basis for ethics was first recognized by Carol Gilligan when she noticed that some people, especially women, responded differently to Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1981) moral dilemmas. Instead of justifying their moral responses in terms of justice, some subjects, especially women, were drawing their moral responses from perspectives of care, connection, and responsibility within relationships. Gilligan reported her observations in her now classic book, *In a Different Voice*, and noted that while this ethic of care was not the exclusive preserve of women, it related to the lived experience of many women in caring for children, spouses, elderly parents, and disabled members of family. Gilligan (1982, p. 19) also realized that this ethic of care was not based in abstract principles but was narrative and contextual in character. As Blum (1993, pp. 51–52) has concluded, “Gilligan has seen the moral self as radically situated and particularized, and as utilizing the inter-related processes of cognition, emotion and action. Kohlberg, on the other hand, has argued for a rational impersonal approach that he believes transcends the particularities of the social and cultural context.”

Nel Noddings (1984, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2013, 2018) consolidated and extended the theoretical base for an ethic of care, beginning with her book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Noddings (1984) stressed the importance of the interaction between the carer and the cared-for, with the latter regarded as making a crucial contribution to the moral interaction. As Noddings (2018, Chap. 12, Care and Education, para 6) has said, “Dialogue is implied by the phenomenology of caring” because “when we care we receive the other in an open and genuine way.” Noddings calls this receptivity to the other, to the one cared-for, “engrossment,” which is not meant to suggest

infatuation or obsession but rather “a non-selective form of attention.” She says that as the dialogue unfolds, there is a mutual construction of the frame of reference. Ideally, the one cared-for also shows some positive receptivity to the carer which encourages and supports the carer in the action of caring. So the moral action involved in the caring interaction does not reside in the carer alone. The interaction between the carer and the cared-for involves the exercise of intersubjectivities which are often exquisitely nuanced to enable the carer and the cared-for not only to interpret what is said but also to read approval or disapproval in the slightest differences in tone of voice, facial expression, or body posture. It is through the exercise of interpersonal intersubjectivities that both the cared-for and the carer can potentially build mutual appreciation and trust. It is in the light of this understanding of moral interdependence that Noddings (2002, p. 88) was able to claim that: “How good I can be, depends, at least, in part, on how you treat me. My goodness is not entirely my property and the control I exercise as a carer is always a shared control.” Instead of moral agency being exercised by a lone, autonomous Kantian self, an ethic of care proposes moral selves who exercise a form of intersubjectively realized moral autonomy and moral agency.

However, as Annette Baier (1987, pp. 51–52) realized, given the non-contractual nature of many relationships, such as those between parents and children, and between teachers and students, there can clearly be differences in power between the carer and the cared-for, and sometimes those most vulnerable in the relationship can become victims of abuse. The findings detailed in the final report of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to the Sexual Abuse of Children (2017) revealed shocking evidence of the harm done to individuals who were sexually abused as children, as shown by these comments from one of the survivors of such abuse:

As a victim, I can tell you the memories, sense of guilt, shame and anger live with you every day. It destroys your faith in people, your will to achieve, to love, and one’s ability to cope with normal everyday living. (Final Report, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse of Children (2017). <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>)

An ethic of care is characterized by a concern for the rights of both the cared-for and the carer but especially for those most vulnerable, oppressed, or marginalized. Given this orientation, Noddings (1995a, p. 188) declared that if A claims to care for B but B denies that A cares, then the relationship between A and B is not one of care. Despite the protective intention of Noddings’ approach, what if B is not correct about a lack of care from A? How can both parties in a supposedly caring relationship be protected from abuse, manipulation, or incompetence?

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## Issues of Justice

Initially, “an ethic of care” provided no way of integrating “justice” with care. Gilligan (1982, p. 19) saw a morality based on caring as being focused on developing an “understanding of responsibility and relationships,” while she

thought a conception of morality as “fairness” concentrated on developing an “understanding of rights and rules.” Care and justice were seen as separate and as involving:

Two moral injunctions – not to treat others unfairly and not to turn away from others in need . . . two lines of moral development” with “different standards for assessing moral judgments and behavior.” (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1988, p. 115)

There was a clear division between care and justice with no means of reconciling these two major moral concepts. Noddings’ (1984, 1992a, 2005) work also suggested a highly subjective approach and a focus on caring for close others but with no suggestion as to how this could be extended to distant others or ways of dealing with multiple, simultaneous, caring responsibilities. Moreover, Noddings’ (2002, p. 14) division of caring responses into “natural caring” which was a spontaneous response to care for close others and “ethical caring” where there was a more duty-driven motivation to care for others potentially aligned women with the cultural stereotype of women as “natural carers” (Edgar, 1995, p. 277) who were expected to selflessly carry the burden and responsibility of caring for the young, the elderly, and the disabled within their families. Gilligan and Noddings’ early theorizing also did not suggest an approach for caring for global others or even those within one’s local geographical region who were unknown to the carer. It soon became obvious that care raised many issues of justice.

A number of theorists challenged Gilligan and Noddings’ demarcation between the perspectives of care and justice. Elizabeth Porter (1991, p. 159), for example, believed that there was not an inevitable and irreconcilable division between the *rights* focus of the justice and the *responsibility* of the care perspective. Other theorists agreed with Porter, and Paul Crittenden (1992) and Robert Starratt (1994) suggested combining justice and caring perspectives.

Crittenden (1992, pp. 92 and 261–265) proposed “a reflective ethic of care” where there was a need to distinguish between selfishness and self-sacrifice and where the individual could be expected to meet certain standards of behavior associated with virtues or rules, such as respect for persons and a commitment to justice within a democratic framework.

Robert Starratt (1994, pp. 45–54) advocated a somewhat similar amalgamation of care and justice by suggesting a multidimensional ethic that combines caring, justice, and critique where each of these compensates for the shortfalls in each of the others and where these are seen as interdependent. Starratt (1994, pp. 29–40) believes that commitment to ethics of care, justice, and critique requires the personal qualities of autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. Starratt (1994) also sees an interconnection between autonomy and connectedness to produce an intersubjectively realized form of autonomy which has also been endorsed earlier in this chapter, in connection with the moral interdependence proposed within an ethic of care.

Care ethicists like Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher (1990, p. 40) extended the scope of care in proposing a broad definition of care as:

A species of activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible.

Tronto (1993, 2008) like a number of other theorists (Held, 2008; Fischer, 2008) appreciated the relevance of care ethics to global concerns as well as the possibility of evaluating various forms of care by suggesting that levels of attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness might be able to be used as measures for various forms of care involved in caring about, caring for, care-giving, and care-receiving, respectively.

Other theorists such as Diemut Bubeck (1995, pp. 213 and 216) and Catchpoole (2001, p. 139) also believe that justice is intrinsic to care, because it cannot be otherwise if care is to be authentic.

Noddings (2002, p. 22) herself acknowledges that while

The emphasis in care ethics is on the affective . . . this does not mean caring is irrational or even non-rational. It has its own rationality or reasonableness and in appropriate situations carers draw freely on standard linear rationality as well.

Virginia Held (1998, p. 14) also realized that

Caring, empathy, feeling with others, being sensitive to each others' feelings, all may be better guides to what morality requires in actual contexts than many abstract rules of reason, or rational calculation, or at least they may be necessary components of an adequate morality.

Indeed, Michael Slote (2007, p. 15) has observed that “an ethics of empathetic caring” could provide the basis for a general normative theory applicable to both public and private morality. So while Slote (2007), like various other theorists, has been critical of certain aspects of the feminist ethic of care, he has appreciated its rich possibilities and potential.

Any adequate general normative theory of care needs to be grounded in a credible theory of moral development, and it is to a consideration of this that we now turn.

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## Moral Development Within an Ethic of Care

Noddings (2018, Chap. 12) believes that we develop the capacity to care for self and others through the experience of being cared for ourselves. There is a great deal of evidence from a variety of disciplines (Bowlby, 1971; Damon, 1988; Kitwood,

1990; Noam, 1993; Wilson, 1978, 1998) to support this idea of finding a basis for morality/ethics in the care that most of us are fortunate enough to receive from our parents or first carers and then in caring relationships across the rest of our lives. None of us would survive our first year without the care of others, so we are all cared for, and most of us also care for others and exchange these roles throughout our lives within the complex web of our private, workplace, and community relationships.

While Gilligan and her colleagues (Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1990, p. 113) have only sketched the outline of a theory of moral development, they have seen this process as “fraught with vulnerabilities” and entailing “losses and gains,” so their view of moral development aligns with that of Noam, Powers, Kilkenny, and Beedy (1990) as being an uneven process marked by both advances and reverses. This is also recognized by Tronto (2017, p. 32) who observed that:

Care presumes that people become autonomous and capable of acting on their own through a complex process of growth, in which they are both interdependent and transformed as they live. They can become more or less attentive to the effects they have on others and the world.

Evolutionary biologist, E.O. Wilson (1975, 1978, 1998) believes that reciprocal altruism is a genetically evolved human predisposition because our very survival as a species has depended upon our capacity to bond to close others. It is also within these close relationships that we learn to value ourselves and to return affection and love to those who have loved and cared for us. Psychologist Tom Kitwood (1990, p. 109) thinks “the self is relational, and in a sense, moral in its very essence” and

that we may well suppose that the strength of the self – the person’s ontological security, depends on the extent to which ... relationship (with parents or first carers) embodies empathy, respect, concern and reliable provision: qualities that are usually taken to be of the essence of morality. The infant comes to an awareness of self as one-who-trusts.

Psychologist Gil Noam (1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1998) and his colleagues (Noam, Powers, Kilkenny, & Beedy, 1990) have recognized the continuing importance of trust within relationships to individual and collective well-being across the life span and have noted how difficult it can be for individuals to trust and care for others if they have suffered abuse or neglect as a child from primary caregivers.

So our early social relations are critical in terms of what we learn about ourselves and others and develop our capacity for social perspective taking. “In this sense personhood is an ineluctably moral concept which is embedded and embodied in social interaction”(Catchpoole, 2001, p. 53). As Vygotsky (1935/1978, p. 37) realized, what is experienced interpersonally over time is translated into intrapsychic experience which moderates our further interpersonal relations. Work undertaken by Selman, Watts, and Hickey-Schultz (1997) and Noam (1993, 1998) suggests that children who suffer abuse from adults who are supposed to be their primary caregivers experience disconnection. These children are then unable to develop proper self- or other-perspectives and make progress through positive dialectical

engagement with others, to reach higher levels of social perspective coordination. Hickey-Schultz (1997) identifies the highest level of social perspective coordination as “autonomous interdependence,” but this depends on being sufficiently “secure and connected” (Staub, 1993, p. 353) to be truly responsive and responsible in dealings with others so that it is possible to be less defensive, less psychologically precarious, and more able to be sufficiently “decentred” (Gibbs, 1992, p. 223) “to attend to and inter-relate multiple perspectives in a social situation, or, in general terms, multiple features of a problem situation.” It is this self who is less preoccupied with self, who can be more *responsive*, *responsible*, and *reflective* in relationships with students and colleagues within the school operating as a democratic, collaborative, and ethical learning community.

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## The School as an Ethical Learning Community

Given the importance of creating a caring culture to support cycles of positive reciprocity, it is suggested that schools become democratic ethical learning communities, comprised of the school principal, teachers, and other members of staff, as well as students, parent representatives, and other members of the wider community, where all are valued and respected and given the opportunity to share in decision-making (Sergiovanni, 1992) by contributing to the development of a shared vision of what caring involves for their particular community. This could reveal different cultural perspectives about care but also reveal deeper levels of commonality about the nature of care. It is a scenario where the vicissitudes of school life would not suddenly disappear but one where trust, mutuality, and positive cycles of reciprocity would be more likely to flourish. Certainly, the Child Development Project (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 2003) in the USA has achieved extraordinary success over a long period in integrating care into all aspects of school life.

It is now proposed to present an action research framework and related personal and interpersonal competencies that are required to undertake key stages in the caring process.

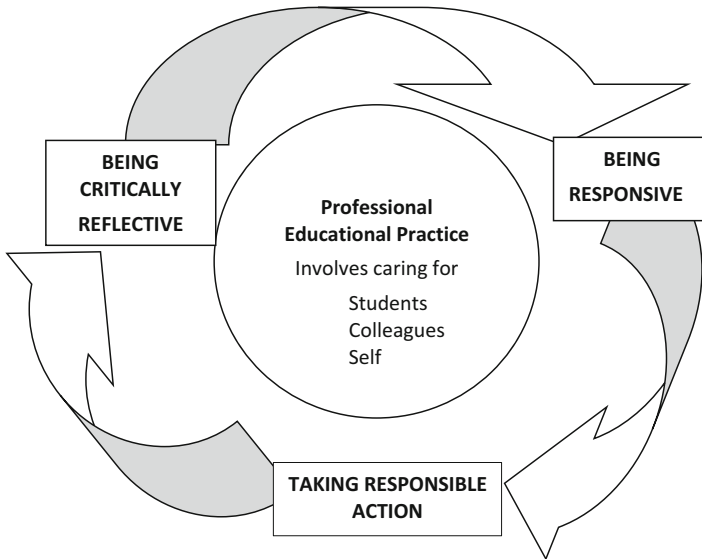
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## An Action Research Framework Based on the Key Dimensions of Case

A simple analysis of *care* reveals three key elements:

- *Responsiveness*
- *Responsibility*
- *Critical reflection*





The action research framework outlined above can be used by teachers and educational administrators working together to focus on the learning needs of particular groups of students, individual students, or their own professional development. This is an approach which is consistent with the respect for the particularities of context, as advocated by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) within an ethic of care and one which allows participants in these relationships to “negotiate between them a shared interactive social reality” (Sammut & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 4) that enables the carer and the cared-for to become attuned to each other and to develop a much more nuanced understanding of the needs of the other. It also provides a model where the needs of the carer are seriously taken into account, and this can potentially prevent teachers and school principals from being overburdened with professional caring responsibilities. For example, no teacher should be expected to carry an unreasonably heavy teaching load, and all educators, including the school principal, should be encouraged to find a healthy and ethical balance between meeting professional needs and their own personal needs. The school principal could have a particularly important role in tactfully helping members of staff to set reasonable boundaries on the scope and intensity of their professional caring practice and, by example, could demonstrate the importance of responsible self-care. As mentioned earlier, justice is an intrinsic part of care if care is to be authentic. Moreover, ethics requires the individual to find a balance between meeting the needs of others and their own needs; it does not require a life of self-abnegation. Indeed, within an ethic of care the focus is on moral interdependence within relationships and maintaining positive caring relations which generate trust and are more likely to contribute to positive cycles of reciprocity. As Damon (1988, p. 74) realized,

Moral living revolves around the assumption that social actions are reciprocal. This assumption has implications for one's conduct towards oneself. One therefore takes responsibility for the former and asserts rights with regard to the latter, and these responsibilities and rights exist in reciprocal relationship to one another.

As Virginia Held (2008, p. 51) realized, care ethics focuses “on caring relations rather than on the virtues of individuals” and therefore prioritizes the development of “trust, empathy, sensitivity, natural considerations, solidarity and responsiveness to need.”

It is now proposed to consider some of the personal and interpersonal competencies required by teachers and school administrators to be *responsive*, *responsible*, and *reflective* in their professional practice.

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## Personal and Interpersonal Competencies

### Being Responsive

It is suggested that the competencies required to be responsive to students and colleagues include:

- (i) The dispositions to care about others where this involves developing (a) self-esteem and (b) empathy
- (ii) An understanding of the nature and scope of what is involved in caring for self and others which requires a range of critical and collaborative competencies
- (iii) A capacity for intersubjectivity which requires the development of social intelligence – the capacity to interpret, respond to, and evaluate verbal and social cues from others

An educator's capacity to be responsive to their students relies on maintaining and sustaining their dispositions to care about their students. While it could be expected that teachers should automatically care about their students, it is certainly possible for even the most enthusiastic teachers to have their motivation reduced through the vicissitudes and demands of their day-to-day work. Christopher Day (2017, p. 85) has noted that there is a range of research internationally that suggests “that governments world-wide in placing persistent emphasis on the functional aspects of teachers' work have implicitly denied, minimized or neglected to ensure teachers' ongoing commitment to having a positive sense of professional identity, care, well-being and resilience in order to teach at their best.” As Sharp and Splitter (1995, p. 173) have also observed, “given the reciprocity inherent in personal development, self-esteem goes hand in hand with esteem for others.”

Hoffman's (1988, p. 509) research related to the development of empathy has suggested that even quite young children between ages 2 and 3 demonstrate empathy by often becoming upset when they see someone else, such as another

child, becoming upset. By age 12, Hoffman (1988, p. 509) says that the child is typically able to empathize with groups of people experiencing discrimination or mistreatment. Moreover, sociobiologist E.O. Wilson (1978, 1998) believes that as members of a socially interdependent species, we have evolved to be “soft-core altruists,” and this suggests that our capacity for sympathy, and probably empathy also, is hardwired. But the very neuroplasticity of our brains makes us vulnerable to negative experiences within relationships across our life span so it seems that nothing is necessarily assured, even when we have received the love and attention of our first caregivers. Nevertheless, it is possible to hypothesize that whether school administrators and teachers can maintain high levels of empathy for students might be dependent upon how supportive individuals are within the school community.

Finally, as already discussed, being truly responsive to students and colleagues ideally involves a capacity for interpersonal intersubjectivity as developed in social psychology by George Herbert Mead (1934/2009) and which involves the ability for mutual engagement and the capacity to interpret, respond to, and evaluate a range of verbal and non-verbal cues to try to appreciate their students’ perspectives. Michael Carrithers (1992, p. 43) thinks “intersubjectivity” is dependent upon a level of “social intelligence” which he defines as “the ability to attribute to others various mental states, plans, intentions and so forth – to guess what others are thinking and planning with a fair measure of success.”

## **Taking Responsible Action**

The competencies that are needed to take responsible action for students include being able to:

- Assess the nature and scope of one’s professional responsibilities
- Investigate and decide what action is most likely to contribute to responsible care for students, colleagues, and self, given the sociocultural and socioeconomic context of the school
- Work collaboratively and cooperatively with colleagues to promote a shared vision for caring for students, one another, and our world
- Respond calmly and non-defensively to critique and then consider alternative suggestions for action as well as demonstrate tact, diplomacy, and patience

Responsible professional action by teachers and educational administrators crucially depends on developing a particular kind of moral identity that is secure in being able to take an autonomous moral position and yet also demonstrate a sense of connectedness to, and interdependence on, others. As Staub (1993), Gibbs (1991, 1992), and Noam (1993) have argued, it is only when an individual has developed the capacity to form a strong and well-integrated moral self that he or she is literally free to be concerned with others and therefore more fully able to meet the challenges of professional commitments and responsibilities. As secure and connected selves,

educators can be self-critical and accept reasonable critique from others without becoming angry or defensive or unfairly blaming others.

## Being Critically Reflective

Critical reflection is an integral part of educators' professional caring practice as learning is a dynamic and evolving process which needs to be refined, amended, and progressively developed as the learner's needs and circumstances change. Educators therefore need to be able to undertake critical review of their work and be unafraid to face feedback about their professional approaches and performance. Once again, educators need to be secure and connected selves to avoid being defensive about critique or tempted to unfairly externalize blame. Instead, educators need to explore alternative approaches after undertaking further investigations and consultations with those for whom the original approach had been devised. This consultation within the caring interaction has been the characteristic way of evaluating and adjusting caring practice within an *ethic of care* as theorized by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984). However, it is also suggested that teachers and school principals can evaluate the effectiveness of their professional practice through various existing forms of accountability as well as through peer and self-evaluations.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

As Tronto (2017, p. 33) has observed:

Care conceptually offers a different ontology from one that begins with rational actors. It starts from the premise that everything exists in relation to other things; it is thus relational and assumes that people, other beings and the environment are interdependent.

As suggested in this chapter, there is a very considerable body of theoretical and empirical research to support a relational and interdependent basis for the ways in which we develop and exercise moral autonomy and moral agency. While an ethic of care has had a number of limitations, especially in its initial separation of care from justice, it provides the basis to revolutionize our understanding of the moral process. As mentioned earlier, Michael Slote (2007) recognized that if care takes empathy seriously, it can, and should, provide a comprehensive normative theory at both personal and political levels. While further research remains to be undertaken to achieve this goal, it is proposed that there is already enough contemporary research and theorizing to support educators in basing their professional practice in a relational approach to ethics within relationships of care. In increasing their own moral resilience in and through positive cycles of reciprocity in and through the care they give and receive, educators also have the opportunity to become more secure and more connected selves and hopefully increasingly able to exercise an intersubjectively realized moral autonomy and agency. Engaging with students in ways which

help them to learn and flourish goes to the heart of the teaching profession and is to the mutual benefit of the student and teacher. As David Purpel (1999, p. 941) realized over two decades ago, schools have a crucial role to play in appreciating

a dynamic dialectic between the social and the individual, between the forces of social realities and the possibilities of individual responsiveness and between individual rights and social responsibility.

As our world has reeled under the impact of a global pandemic, there is a sense of urgency about what we need to learn. A philosophy of care based in our moral interdependence as human beings has never seemed so cogent.

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# The Dilemmas of Leadership in the Iron Cage

# 29

Tuncer Fidan and Türker Kurt

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## Abstract

Since the urbanization of many nations' populations, schools have become increasingly bureaucratized, often becoming the basic building blocks of larger school systems. Despite this, schools have retained some of their unique properties because of varying student needs and expectations of the immediate cultural and economic environments. Since the late twentieth century, the market ideology within neoliberalism has become a dominant feature of them, often advanced in the guise of education reforms. In this regard, strict standardization and accountability policies have been introduced to push schools to produce uniform student outcomes, often embedded in the agenda

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of reducing or eliminating achievement gaps between identifiable student groups by race or class. Within the scope of these policies, competition between schools has been encouraged through school choice reforms and ranking of schools. Professional associations and educational agencies at different governmental levels have supplemented these policies through identifying the so-called result-oriented leadership practices for school principals. Despite much legislation and financial investment, schools have produced overall disappointing results, especially in the academic subjects. Competition between schools has worsened the situation of low performing and culturally different students. Teachers have not always supported the applications and goals prescribed by these policies, and their unions have sometimes adopted a hostile reaction to them. However, school principals have struggled to be effective leaders, even as their increased workload has resulted in pushing it to the classroom teacher level. Accordingly, rigid policies have failed to address the highly variable human aspects of education, and the one-size-fits-all approach centered on eliminating achievement gaps has not been able to transform school contexts to conform to policy requirements. One paradox of this dilemma is that as instruction becomes more effective it increases rather than decreases the achievement differences between students. The aim of decreasing achievement gaps through standardization is therefore somewhat of “a fool’s errand.”

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**Keywords**

Institutional environment · Machine bureaucracy · Iron cage · Leadership dilemmas · Standardization · Accountability policies · Market ideology · Neoliberalism

**The Field of Memory**

The schools have mostly been operated as parts of education systems regulated by bureaucratic hierarchies since the urbanization of the population movement from rural areas to the cities. The structures and functioning of schools have increasingly been shaped by bureaucratic hierarchies while they have retained some of their unique challenges depending on critical variances within the student population and their immediate idiosyncratic environments. The growth in the administration of the schools has paralleled the transformation to the dominant bureaucratic form so prevalent in modern times.

**The Field of Presence**

Since the late twentieth century, market ideology has increasingly come to dominate the development of education policies. Strict standardization and accountability policies have forced schools to produce uniform student outcomes particularly in academic subjects. Competition between schools has been encouraged through school choice reforms and the establishment of reward and punishment systems. High-stakes assessments have been used to determine whether schools meet the requirements about

standards and to rank schools according to students' test scores. Schools and school systems that do not perform well are subject to further strictures and punitive measures.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

There is a surprising level of homogeneity between the organizational forms and practices in a specific industry. Behaviors that are routinized, repetitive, habitual, and performed without being questioned have a great weight in professional life. Restrictions, rules, and norms may shape individuals' actions, leading to interorganizational homogenization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). In this regard, machine bureaucracies are generally associated with simple and stable environments as dynamic complex environments cannot be made repetitive and standardized easily. Furthermore, machine bureaucracies are identified with regulating technical systems (teaching), which reduces work complexity and makes it easier to control. External pressure exerted by punitive legislation is employed to ensure the stabilization of these features. The effect of these changes in educational systems has been to reduce its capacity to engage in organizational specialization and unique work demands (Mintzberg, 1993). The model of the factory from industrial management practices fits this situation perfectly.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The publication of Milton Friedman's 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom* in the USA marks the beginning of a serious turn in school administration. While schools and school systems in urban areas had long been bureaucratized, it can be argued that the implementation of Friedman's ideas, oftentimes advanced as "reforms," accelerated this bureaucratization. It also marked an increasing encroachment of regulation and standardization into the lives of teachers and the control of their work. Legislative punishments prompted by low test scores and the inability to remove achievement gaps meant the loss of jobs of principals and teachers in chronically low performing schools. This draconian and punitive aspect of particularly No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was among the hallmarks from specifically those of industrial models, which depended on extreme standardization as their means of exerting control of job performance and cost containment.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Strict standardization and accountability policies have dictated schools to produce uniform student outcomes, but schools have mostly failed to reach this goal. These policies have highlighted that competition between schools could lead to better outcomes for students, yet it has aggravated the situations of low performing and culturally different students. School principals have been expected to lead teachers in complying with policy requirements; however, there have always been teachers unconvinced about the potential outcomes of these policies. School principals have been supposed to undertake additional tasks required by these policies; nevertheless they have become so overwhelmed that they have needed teachers' sharing their administrative workload. One key assumption behind these developments is that more direct control is required to force school leaders and the teachers in them to conform to a standardized set of tasks and focus on only one set of educational outcomes.

## Introduction

Schools predominantly operate as a part of education systems. Whether centralized or decentralized, the administrations of educational systems typically have the authority of affecting in-school activities through determining legitimate organizational structures and setting the rules and procedures regulating administrative and instructional work and the relationships between school stakeholders. Schools and in-school structures, rules, and procedures are all parts of the same environment. Schools represent a layer within this environment while retaining their unique features like in-classroom teaching and relationships with immediate environment to some extent. School principals practice leadership in such a highly structured school environment. When making decisions, they must take structures, rules, and procedures regulating the functioning of the schools into consideration. This also implies that environments in which schools operate can constrain the actions of school administrators and teachers (Berends, 2015).

Hierarchical structures, rule-bound routinized activities, and standardized outcomes in schools are frequently depicted by using the metaphor *iron cage* when they function merely as a prisoner's structure strictly confining individuals' actions within certain patterns (Weber, 1930). Schools are usually regulated by bureaucratic organizations, such as ministries, departments, and district administrations. This primarily leads school administrators and teachers to be seen as officials representing different layers of a bureaucratic hierarchy that functions on the basis of a set of rational and neutral legal regulations and procedures. In addition, societal expectations fueled by politics, standards set by professional associations, and prescriptions provided by scientific communities contribute to the establishment of highly rationalized comprehensive *cages* (Ashworth, Boyne, & Delbridge, 2009). Such an *iron cage* can be so internalized by administrators and teachers that predetermined standards and methods to realize specified uniform outcomes can be seen as the most efficient and plausible *modus operandi* (Mintzberg, 1993; Weber, 1930).

In this respect, almost all reform attempts have put emphasis on standards, testing, and accountability worldwide since 1970s to overcome the widespread achievement gaps between schools and between students (Lessinger, 1970). Standards indicating the minimum attainment level of learning outcomes and the methods to be employed to attain these outcomes have frequently been used as a means of control. National and international large-scale testing of students and widespread reporting of results have been used to check whether standards have been met and to compare the schools publicly. Schools, school administrators, and teachers have increasingly been held accountable when they have failed to meet those standards (Froese-Germain, 2001; Holloway, Sørensen, & Verger, 2017). It can then be argued that policies promoting standards, testing, and accountability create highly rigid environments in which school administrators and teachers are expected to perform in narrow *cages*.

Particularly school principals are deemed as the main undertakers of the burden of accountability in schools. They have negligible effects on highly variable social capital and cognitive characteristics of students, but they are supposed to lead

teachers to produce uniform student outcomes. They are supposed to collaborate with other principals to accomplish district-level goals, nonetheless at the same time they need to compete with them due to school rankings. They are confined by the *cage* of prescribed goals and means; however, they are expected to be leaders of their schools. They are expected to devote much time and effort to instructional matters to improve student learning, while spending their work hours on administrative tasks (Allen, English, & Papa, 2014; DeMatthews & Serafini, 2021). Accordingly, such an *iron cage* gives rise to a series of leadership dilemmas. Some of these are discussed in the sections which follow.

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## Institutional Environments of Schools

The constraining environmental factors (e.g., standards, policies, rules, laws, and others) that “lock” school administrators and teachers into “grid lock” can be portrayed by analyzing institutional environments of schools. The process of institutionalization is one of the central concepts of organizational sociology. These concepts are used to describe prescriptive rules and social structures, which have the power to put individuals under obligation. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991), the institution is social actors’ habitualized repetitive actions. Expressly, the concept of institution is a social order (e.g., organizations, agencies, associations, and others) or pattern (e.g., habits, norms, procedures, and alike) that has acquired a certain status or characteristic within a period of time. Institutionalization refers to this process of acquisition. Institutions are generated and sustained not through collective interventions toward social consensus but rather through routinized procedures that are not prevented by deliberate collective actions or environmental shocks, and which encourage the arising and maintenance of the patterns. In this way, institutionalization turns into a recurrent pattern, consistency, or persistence (Jepperson, 1991).

Either as an action or an organization, institutions do not solely exist on their own; they survive in an environment together with many other institutions that are specialized in (dis)similar areas. This environment can determine legitimate organizational forms via establishing the rules and standards on the functioning of a whole industry or system (Öztürk & Tataroğlu, 2018). This environment consists of many actors and agencies, namely, governments, political parties, ministries, departments, local educational authorities, educational organizations at different levels, teacher unions, and nongovernmental organizations (Fidan & Balcı, 2018).

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## Types of Environmental Pressures

Coercive pressures denote the existence of a common legal environment and/or superior organizations that impose certain ways of operation on schools. They arise from the formal and informal pressures by other organizations schools are affiliated with and the society’s cultural expectations. Such pressures can be

sensed through coercion, persuasion, or agreement. Factors like legal regulations; supervisory and regulatory activities; standards, rules, procedures, and policies dictated by public organizations; legal obligations in financial matters; and service conditions of monopolies are within the scope of the mentioned coercive pressures. To give an instance, schools can accept and graduate students with qualifications specified by other organizations, employ teachers at certain standards, and appoint administrators. Likewise, curriculum goals predominantly reflect the expectations of outside bodies, other organizations, or those of the society (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Normative pressures signify the expectations from schools and educators about playing certain roles considered appropriate by professional associations and values, and the professional scientific community. Professional knowledge, skills, abilities, habits, and ethical principles acquired through professionalization create behavioral similarities between administrators and teachers. At the end of the professionalization process, teachers with similar subject matter knowledge levels, competencies, tendencies, and orientations emerge in different schools (Fidan & Beyhan, 2020). Two characteristics of professionalism lead to this homogenization. The first one is formal education. Education provided in the universities and later, on the job, aim at bringing in similar qualifications to a large extent. It is not surprising then that there exist great similarities between contents and goals of teacher education programs worldwide. The second factor that leads to homogenization is the professional networks of school administrators and teachers. Particularly professional associations and societies do play key roles in this by issuing professional standards (Puttick, 2017).

Mimetic pressures allude to the following of the successful exemplars in uncertain situations (Puttick, 2017). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) averred that technical or environmental uncertainties encourage organizations to imitate what are perceived as successful models or procedures. Consonantly, when the goals that will be reached at the end of the education period are uncertain, or when the methods and techniques to realize these goals are not certain, even though the goals were determined, educators usually observe others before taking actions as a way of coping with uncertainty (Puttick, 2017). The spectrum of examples to be followed in case of uncertainty can indeed be considerably wide for administrators since the strategies of educational administration and leadership are often from those in noneducational areas, viz., rationalized systems of business management and marketization of educational services that appear popular (Traver, 2006).

When coercive, normative, and mimetic institutional elements are tightly coupled, the *iron cage* arises. Tightly coupling refers to situations where institutional elements like legal regulations, policies, standards, and scientific prescriptions are so strongly dependent on each other that it is difficult to change any of them without affecting the others (Ashworth et al., 2009). Standardization of work processes and the existence of professionals, to illustrate, analysts, experts, and high-ranked officials who bear the task of standardizing others' works, are some of the major character(istic)s of the *iron cage*. Ministerial, departmental or district divisions, to wit, instruction, personnel, research, and development units usually undertake this

task in education systems. Furthermore, decision-making is centralized in the hands of administrators at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchies. Standardized work processes and goals lead to the routinization and formalization of school work, which typically requires a highly stable environment and repetitive work procedures (Lunenburg, 2012; Mintzberg, 1993).

In the *iron cage*, administrators and teachers are interned into spheres set by these elements and expected to follow certain presumptively rational and efficient ways of operation to reach predetermined quantifiable ends (English, 2015). For instance, strategies to be applied to realize a student outcome, a test score, or decreased absenteeism, to name a few, are well formulated and documented as logical prescriptions, best practices, or field-proven cost-effective measures (Chen & Ke, 2014; Traver, 2006). Leadership is predominantly reduced to compulsive rule compliance (Lumby & English, 2010).

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## Leadership Dilemmas in the Iron Cage

It can be argued that market ideology has emerged to dominate the development and application of many education reforms since the late twentieth century in a global scale. Competition, which is regarded as the main driving force behind the productivity and efficiency in economics, has been applied to schools. The assumption that the competition between schools creates positive outcomes for students has been situated at the core of education policies. Families want their children to study in high performing schools. Regulatory agencies want resources allocated to schools to be used with increasing efficiency. Due to these reasons, student achievement and the quality of education have been transformed into common measurable criteria to make comparisons between schools possible. Meeting standards regarding learning outcomes has become the main criterion of competition between schools (Linn, 2000).

What is more, criticisms claiming the evaluation criteria of school principals have become both shallow and narrow paved the way for the development of leadership preparation programs at the university, which aim to consolidate their shortcomings. The said endeavor is oftentimes reinforced by national/state accreditation as a form of policing. This situation has given rise to the below dilemmas:

### **Dilemma 1: Producing Uniform Student Outcomes Despite Highly Variable Student Differences and Needs**

Students' acquisition of common knowledge and skills prior to graduation has been among the fundamental aims of mass public education systems since the industrialization of public schooling in the late nineteenth century. The standardization of curriculum content and goals has gained momentum due to the acceleration of accountability policies over many decades beginning with Leon Lessinger's (1970) *Every Kid a Winner*. A strong expectation has been set for schools to produce

uniformly equal student outcomes. Supporters of this standardization assert that assessment variations among schools, districts, provinces, or states have hindered effective functioning of education systems. A general accountability scheme for schools at a national scale is very difficult. Furthermore, categorizations of low performing and high performing schools may vary in accordance with comparison criteria specific to each district, province, or state (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010).

High-stakes standardization is a global phenomenon. For example, in Turkey, a highly centralized system, curriculum content, and goals are determined by the MoNE (Ministry of National Education). To be able to study in high performing secondary schools, students must take national high-stakes exams. What is more, they must take national high-stakes exams again to get admission to a university program. The coverage of these mass assessments largely determines which knowledge and skills are to be acquired by students and forces schools to produce highly uniform student outcomes to be categorized as a high performer (Yalçın & Ereş, 2021). Even though the USA is a decentralized system in which schools, districts, and states bear the main responsibility in curriculum development and assessment matters, similar standardization quest has been observed since the emergence of accountability legislation in recent decades (Allen et al., 2014).

As can be seen, coercive and normative institutional elements facilitate the creation of the *iron cage* by exerting pressures on school principals to use contextless leadership practices while leading teachers toward the aim of producing uniform student outcomes at predetermined levels. However, one-size-fits-all style of education is not ideal for every student. Schools are heavily affected by the socioeconomic discriminations and tensions in a society, which leads to great differences among schools in terms of student profiles. Plus, there is always a great diversity of student backgrounds and learning needs within each school (Deas, 2018).

## **Dilemma 2: Competing Rather Than Collaborating with Peers**

Market ideology, which has dominated education reform movements since the late twentieth century, pretends that competition between schools is the prerequisite of efficiency. Friedman (1997) is without doubt one of the pioneers of the introduction of market ideology into public sector. According to him, the inefficiency of public organizations was the main reason of economic crises arisen in the second half of the twentieth century. What he proposed as a remedy is the marketization of public services. In this sense, competition not only between public and private schools but also among public schools is promoted to increase the efficiency of the overall education process. Competition can force public schools to improve for the retention of students (Friedman, 1997). Verily, the main criterion of competition between schools is the production of better student outcomes. Those who succeed are rewarded and those who do not are punished. Such a reward and punishment mechanism is thought to encourage schools and school principals to show high performance.



In order for this to happen, competition must infiltrate into institutional environments of schools. To cite an example, Education Reform Act (ERA), enacted in the United Kingdom in 1980s, has aimed at building an institutional framework in which competition between schools is encouraged to produce better outcomes for students. In this direction, the autonomy of schools to enable them to compete with each other is increased and families are granted the right of school choice. Schools' meeting standards prescribed by national curriculum and student achievement have been publicized as league tables (Levin & Fullan, 2008). In the USA, NCLB has established a similar institutional framework. It has introduced reward and punishment mechanisms based on student achievement. Families whose children are enrolled in a chronically low performing school are able to transfer their children to a high performing one. NCLB has given rise to a framework promoting market-based competition and choice (Sunderman & Kim, 2007). Turkey tells a different story. There is no legal regulation dictating a competition between schools. However, the results of high-stakes national exams for the entrance to high performing secondary schools or university programs function as an informal performance evaluation mechanism for families and top educational administrators. These results are transformed into performance lists and shared with all schools in a district or province. Families tend to choose schools according to their past performances in high stakes exams. Principals of these schools are more advantageous in reaching financial resources and finding high performing teachers. This puts pressures on school principals and teachers to compete with others and attract promising students to increase the average score of the school in high-stakes exams (Buyruk, 2014).

Either formally or informally, it would be fair to accentuate that institutional environments of schools have created competitive settings. The main struggle of school principals is toward not being the last one on the list, or at least not being at a lower place than a peer working in a similar school. This is because they want to protect their principalship positions (Buyruk, 2014; DeMatthews & Serafini, 2021). School principals compete with each other to reach promising students, to hire high performing teachers, and to move up to higher positions (DeMatthews & Serafini, 2021; Jabbar, 2015; Shipp & White, 2009).

Competition puts pressure on schools to attract and retain students. Higher scores attract higher numbers of students. In a similar vein, more students mean more financial rewards. School principals' first reaction against such a competition is to improve school quality and functioning (Buyruk, 2014). In this direction, improving test results to build a positive image and changing curriculum and instruction to attract gifted students are frequently observed in competitive settings. This also yields the cutting of unnecessary activities and channeling financial resources to those that can enhance student outcomes. Some principals prefer differentiation to refrain competition. To give an example, schools may choose to specialize in a subject such as arts and language to occupy a niche in district through attracting families demanding a certain kind of education. Similarly, increasing the number of extracurricular activities in certain areas (e.g., sports) can be useful to attract families (Jabbar, 2015). It can be argued that the most frequently used strategy is to find students whose prior

performances hint that they can accomplish outcome expectations and not to choose those who are regarded as not good fit (Shipps & White, 2009).

Due to the competition, school principals feel the pressure of recruiting high performing teachers. High performing teachers are deemed as a very effective advertisement for schools as families usually monitor and scrutinize not only the performance of schools but also that of teachers (Kotok, DiMartino, & DeMatthews, 2021). Allocating extra financial resources to hire the most demanded teachers is a frequently used strategy; but the most effective one is to take advantage of personal networks in this frame. Building high quality relationships with education professors in universities, student associations and professional associations to identify high performing teachers or promising novice teachers can be effective in recruitment processes. Also highlighting collaborative school culture and teacher autonomy can turn schools into attractive workplaces (Shipps & White, 2009).

Some principals may see winning such competition as a means of promotion to higher positions like a superintendency. When the main criterion of school leadership evaluation is students' test scores, the effective principals are the ones who can get scores up. Higher test scores mean more advantages in the pursuit of higher positions (DeMatthews & Serafini, 2021).

It can be argued that competition requires school principals to act like a marketing manager trying to sell their schools and programs with a view to increasing their financial resources. Advertising has become an integral part of principalship (Kotok et al., 2021), even it risks surpassing traditional administrative and instructional tasks of school principals. Competition leads to the isolation of school principals. It pushes social and democratic purposes of education into the background while highlighting individual gains. It also prevents principals' appealing to the help of others while seeking a solution to educational problems or contributing to effectuate district-level performance goals (Keddie, 2016; Reid, 2010). Furthermore, as the competition escalates, it risks the emergence of unethical actions to the detriment of low performing students. As an illustration, classifying low performing students as the ones needing special education, excluding these students from tests, exclusively concentrating on promising students, and suspending low performing students close to the examination date can frequently be observed in highly competitive environments. Focusing on merely test-based instruction can surpass the importance of education or learning suitable for all students (Jennings, 2010).

### **Dilemma 3: Leading Without Constructing Leadership Appropriate for School Contexts**

One of the most substantial tasks of school principals, as designated leaders in an *iron cage* is to change school settings in accordance with the demands of the institutional actors (Fidan & Balci, 2018). In such cases, educational leadership as individual agency is reduced to ushering in standardization and accountability pressures of social and institutional actors and motivating in-school stakeholders to meet these pressures (Kohansal, 2015; Murphy, 2015).

The aim of the principalship in an *iron cage* is not preserving the interests and identities of in-school groups, but just convincing them of the legitimacy of institutional demands (e.g., policy requirements and directives of higher authorities). In this manner, school principals are limited with contextless result-oriented practices that emphasize arriving at the strictly predetermined goals. While groups whose interests overlap with the institutional demands tend to approve the leadership of the school principal, the others tend to see them as caretakers of the status quo. Institutional actors commonly prefer to preserve the status quo and apply interventions to refine current activities (English, 1999, 2007). The *iron cage* permits only highly narrow spaces for school principals to exert leadership as they dictate the goals to be achieved and the methods to be employed. When the main aim of the principalship is just promoting the standardization of school work, the incentive to seek alternatives is greatly reduced (Ashworth et al., 2009).

For instance, in Turkey, the education system is a highly centralized bureaucratic structure at the center of which MoNE has the authority of decision-making over the allocation of resources, the assignment of teachers and school principals, the development of course curricula, and the preparation of textbooks. The functioning of each school, the output of education, and actions of school principals are heavily shaped by the policies and directives of MoNE. School principals are expected to strictly follow directives of MoNE and keep the stability of school activities. In situations where school principals choose only to convey the directives of MoNE, it is not surprising to encounter teachers who think “there is no need for a school principal in this school. Because the same routine goes on so that everybody knows his work” (Hammersley-Fletcher, Kılıçoğlu, & Kılıçoğlu, 2021, p. 197).

On the other hand, leadership is largely co-constructed by school principals and in-school stakeholders through informal relationships, which renders leadership a contextual phenomenon affected by needs, expectations, emotions, and past stories of individuals taking part in the co-construction process (English, 2007). The *iron cage* inhibits school principals’ from effectively responding to the needs and expectations of in-school stakeholders unique to each school context in which leadership is compromised.

What is worse, their developing and employing leadership practices unique to each school context instead of those encouraged by institutional regulations can be harshly criticized and disapproved by their superiors. They can be labeled as low performers. For instance, strict standardization and accountability policies have led to the removal of some school principals since their schools failed to meet policy requirements and performance expectations of superior organizations (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Even though their autonomy in goal setting is restricted and the number of leadership strategies they can employ is lessened, school principals do not frequently content themselves with only conveying policy goals and directives of higher authorities. Instead, they generally make an effort to persuade teachers to work toward goals and directives by informing them about potential positive outcomes and gaining their support through the help of informal relationships (Fidan & Balci, 2018).

#### **Dilemma 4: Pressures of Principalship Allowing Little Space and Time for Leadership**

Standardization and accountability policies have restructured the operational aspects of schools. The principalship has become more stressful, unhealthy, and a difficult position than it was in the past. It demands higher levels of energy, time, flexibility, and resilience (Oplatka, 2017).

Administrative tasks, such as paperwork, meetings, family/community issues, security issues, communication, data entry into management information systems, budget preparation, resource allocation, procurements, payments, and maintenance and repair work, occupy the majority of school principals' work hours (Spillane & Hunt, 2010). As these tasks are rule-bound periodically repeated activities dictated by legal regulations, they turn into restrictive routines for school principals and decrease the time that can be allocated to instructional matters. Similarly, school principals in Turkey complain about spending most of their time for paperwork and data entry into management information systems like teacher attendance, student attendance, and test scores (Ayyıldız & Baltacı, 2020; Balıkcı & Aypay, 2018).

What is worse, competition fueled by standardization and accountability policies has led to the increase in the frequency of some tasks, such as budget preparation, resource allocation, and marketing. Marketing in particular has become the most frequently undertaken administrative task by school principals. They endeavor to render their schools more attractive for families, recruit high performing teachers, and enroll promising students (Jabbar, 2016).

School principals usually spare lesser effort and time for instructional tasks than administrative ones. Preparing for high-stakes assessments comes to the fore as the most significant instructional task (Cranston, Ehrich, & Billot, 2003). Leadership in the *iron cage* is thoroughly transformed into management.

School principals around the globe generally employ similar strategies to cope with excessive workload and time constraints. For instance, Israeli principals delegate some tasks and responsibilities to assistant principals and teachers. They also set priorities and give up certain tasks (Oplatka, 2017). Turkish principals use the same strategies; apart from that, they distribute work among administrators and teachers, and prepare detailed schedules about periodical tasks (Altun, 2011). School principals in the USA emphasize the distribution of the school works and the encouragement of teacher leadership as coping strategies (Wells & Klocko, 2015).

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#### **Conclusions and Reflections**

The metaphor of the *iron cage* created by Max Weber (1930) has come to represent the intersection of the ideology of neoliberalism (English & Papa, 2018) with its emphasis on market logic and dynamics, competition, and efficiency, combined with the need for absolute control of the educational environment obtained by eliminating differences through the characteristics of what Mintzberg (1993) has labeled *the machine bureaucracy*. Such an organizational structure requires rigid

standardization and workplace homogenization and very close supervision. The space for difference, individualism, idiosyncrasy is severely reduced and punished. A machine cannot deal with exceptions. It requires environmental stability and homogenization to operate at maximum efficiency. The existence of achievement gaps caused by a lack of differentiation to cultural, economic, and social differences of students is ignored let alone eliminated. The presence of gaps is testimony to the fact that the rules of efficiency are inefficient.

Principals face a number of distinct dilemmas, which have been described in this chapter. The *iron cage* pushes school principals to adopt result-oriented leadership practices, which include leading teachers to produce standardized learning outcomes in only a few core subjects (e.g., mathematics, reading, language arts, and science). This has led to the decrease in the instruction time of subjects that have not been parts of accountability frameworks (Pederson, 2007). On the flip side, it is impossible to confine individuals' abilities and skills within a few subjects due to cultural, socioeconomic, and cognitive differences. Similarly, economic and cultural needs of societies are too variable and heterogeneous to satisfy with narrowly defined homogeneous human capital. What is worse, competition has accelerated the engagement of schools in subjects included in accountability frameworks and worsened the situations of students whose needs, competencies, and interests fall outside these frameworks. In addition, the *iron cage* overlooks different opinions and tendencies of administrators and teachers about the process and outcomes of education. They are expected to follow homogeneous methods to reach homogeneous outcomes, which complicates the co-construction of leadership unique to each school context. The fact that the *iron cage* creates highly structured work conditions for school principals causes them to focus on management rather than leadership.

What is firstly required to exit from the *iron cage* is to reorganize teaching activities in accordance with the existing situations in schools. Rather than expecting students to adapt to standards determined by policymakers, teaching should adapt to individual needs and differences of students. It can be argued that cultural, economic, and social differences are effective in learning experiences of students. Such differences should be taken into account while organizing teaching activities and in-school relationships. This requires teachers' understanding of each student's cultural community and home life. In a similar vein, students are encouraged to understand others' cultures and engage in positive relationships with culturally different students. Such a culturally relevant teaching has positive effects on academic achievements of particularly low performing students. Moreover, it gives rise to decreased prejudice against other cultures and increased critical cultural consciousness about weak groups in a society (e.g., Byrd, 2016; Howard, 2001).

Notwithstanding, a single school cannot always provide adequate opportunities for the individualization of teaching activities. Collaboration, in lieu of competition, among schools can produce cost-effective solutions for the scarcity of resources. The employment of teachers and administrative staff who can overcome lingual and cultural barriers, and the development of teaching methods and materials for each cultural group mostly surpass the human and financial

capacities of individual schools (Kayes, 2006) and require them to combine their resources. At this point, it can be argued that rigid accountability frameworks hinder efforts to develop culturally relevant teaching activities unique to each school. The loosening of these frameworks has inevitably invited the support of external stakeholders like political figures and school district administrators (Fusarelli, 2002). Such a support can alleviate the obligation of producing standard results through regulatory changes and policy exemptions and create relatively more flexible work environments in which school principals and teachers can co-construct a value-oriented leadership emphasizing individual student needs and differences. This can also encourage teachers to engage in administrative tasks and share the workload of school principals by enhancing teacher autonomy and empowerment.

Implementing policies toward assessing students in only few subjects to produce standard outcomes and eliminate achievement gaps between students has inevitably created new gaps. Not only the subjects that students are proficient in, but also their levels of proficiency tend to be highly variable. The differences among students necessitate the use of multiple assessment criteria enabling the implementation of teaching activities sensitive to individuals' cultural and social backgrounds. Here, it should also be noted that the origins of achievement gaps largely lie in students' cultural and social capital that schools and students have little or no effect to make significant changes. Racial, cultural, and socioeconomic discriminations in a society create detrimental conditions for students from weak groups. The disadvantages they inherit from their families mostly constrain them to reach the same academic standards with others even if they are treated equally. The intervention of large governmental agencies through welfare programs and policies is needed to address cultural, economic, and societal inequities leading to such gaps. It can also be argued that focusing on growth and improvement suggesting the value added to individual student knowledge and skills can be a more acceptable indicator of progress. This does not mean to reinforce or sustain the existing inequalities among students; on the contrary, such an approach can allow school principals and teachers to spare more educational resources and time for low performing students and minimize achievement gaps in the long run.

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# Fantasy Leadership and the Reality of Practice

# 30

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## Abstract

The large discourses about leadership have created understandings that are often glamorous, dramatic, and devoid of the skills real leaders use in everyday practice. Fantastic depictions of leadership in the zeitgeist also perpetuate notions that leadership is a seemingly effortless endeavor devoid of disciplined training and reliant on “natural talents.” This discussion extends understandings of leadership within the extraordinary times of the COVID-19 pandemic. A dialectic approach was applied to the literature focused on stoicism (Epictetus, *The discourses of Epictetus: the handbook, fragments*. Everyman’s Library, London, 1995), resiliency (Duggan B, Theurer B. *Resilient leadership 2.0: leading with Calm conviction, and clarity in anxious times*. Infinity Publishing, New York, 2017), and neurobiology (Hanson R. *Dr Rick Hanson: hardwiring happiness* [Video File]. Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_)

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[continue=641&v=jpuDyGgIeh0&feature=emb\\_logo](#), 2013; Hart AW. *Educ Urban Soc* 22:153–169, 1990; Hanson, 2020). This effort was framed in a naturalistic lens, which allowed emphasis on the everydayness of individual leadership practices and the deconstruction of the relationship between stoicism and resiliency. Major insights from the chapter include identifying differences between fantasy leadership and authentic practice and defining specific resiliency skills as a central contour of everyday leadership.

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### Keywords

Reality · Stoicism · Neural pathways · Organizational leadership · Communication

### The Field of Memory

Ideas of reality as fixed or one-sided. The idea that leadership is based on scientific constructs. The idea that the quality of leadership practice is directly related to age and experience. The idea that leadership skillsets and styles are gender based. The idea that fixed models of leadership reform can authentically change organizations without employee turnover.

### The Field of Presence

Teaching as a form of leadership practice. Learning as a form of leadership practice. Creating “as safe as possible” spaces as a contour of mentorship and leadership. The idea that trust-building is essential to authentic communication. The idea that those new to leadership practice can influence and enhance the practice of experienced leaders. The discord between large discourses about leadership challenges and practice and the everydayness of leadership challenges and practice. The idea of change management and leadership development.

### The Field of Concomitance

The fields of medicine, social science, and political science, business, the arts, history, gender studies, critical theory, and philosophy are rich areas to draw ideas, notions, and theories of leadership. The idea that self-compassion and self-care are legitimate leadership skillsets. The connections between self-compassion, mindfulness, and resiliency. *Resiliency* versus *Grit* as a skillset.

### Critical Assumptions

The idea that there is a construct of fantasy-based leadership that co-exists with the reality of everyday leadership practice. The idea that a regular practice of disciplining the mind to understand leadership challenges through reflection, self-care, and dialog affects the physical body’s reactions to leadership challenges.

### Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form Different Viewpoints of Leadership

The idea that authentic leadership and leadership development can only be studied and quantified in a positivistic way. The lack of identity, intersectionality, and

intentional inclusivity paradigms in leadership models. The predominance of western philosophy and the exclusion of other philosophies in leadership understandings. The fantasy of leadership and the reality of everyday leadership practice.

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”  
*Henry IV, Part 2* (III. I. 31)

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## Introduction

Henry the IV sighed this famous line to a colleague at the end of a lousy day that capped off an awful week at work. He was tired, enmeshed in Machiavellian politics, and faced a percolating rebellion. The authors of this chapter cannot help but wonder if Henry just wanted to end his week with a hearty game of cards over a beer and good music. Shakespeare’s timeless consideration of a crown’s weight highlights the difficulty of navigating obligation and privilege within a leadership practice. Many of the Bard’s plays focus on this phenomenon, including *Henry IV Part 1*, *Henry IV Part 2*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, and *King Lear* (Corrigan, 2000). While issues of identity formation, power, and corruption undergird all of these dramas, the purpose of this discussion centers on the struggle for resiliency amid challenging times.

At the time of this writing, the world is mired in the extraordinary COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has widened the crevasse in global discourses between the fantasy of “leadership” and the reality of *leadership practice*. The understandings of everyday leadership practice presented in this chapter took place through a 2-year-long dialectic approach which augmented the review of the literature. Focused reflections within the dialectic centered on bridging stoicism (Epictetus, 1995), resiliency (Duggan & Theurer, 2017), and neurobiology (Hanson, 2013; Hart, 1990; Hanson, 2020). Resiliency, like other mind-body-based practices, focuses on the neural pathways between the psychologic *mind* and the physiologic *brain* (Coutu, 2002; Hart, 1990; Ledesma, 2014). While there is a wealth of inquiry dedicated to strategic planning, crisis management, and leveraging change, few scholars (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Ledesma, 2014) have deconstructed resiliency relative to everyday leadership practice.

A naturalistic paradigm grounds this examination of the mind-body connection to leadership practice. This epistemology has other aliases such as postpositivistic, ethnographic, or phenomenological (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A dialectic approach within this paradigm (Shields & Edwards, 2005) emphasized structured dialogue focused on individual leadership practices and traditions of stoicism. This chapter begins with an introduction to *Social Constructionism and the value of a dialectic*. Next, *The brain, the mind, and the body in real leadership practice* are examined. The discussion concludes with *Fantasy leadership, real leadership skills, and the stoic mind*.

## Social Constructionism and the Value of a Dialectic

Reflective practice and authentic communication have long been core tenants in healthy leadership practices (Andrews & Grogan, 2001; Hart, 1990; Larrivee, 2000; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Schön, 1983; Short & Rinehart, 1993). Researchers have noted collaboration, reflection, and a focus on the primary task (James, Dunning, Connolly, & Elliot, 2007, p. 551) are essential and integrated dispositions for both practitioners and scholars of leadership. And while there is a robust line of inquiry focused on these areas, the connection between mind and body relative to the authentic practice of leadership remains significantly hollow (English & Ehrich, 2019; Nhat-Hahn, 2007; Tooms-Cyprès, 2019). Additionally, those focused on leadership in education can easily confuse theories of *Social Constructionism* with *Social Constructivism* (Ogawa & Malen, 1991). *Constructivism* is a theory frequent to the academic silos of teacher preparation, teaching, and learning because of its focus on how the mind codes and decodes symbols (letters, words, and numbers) into reality (Ratner, 1989).

Alternatively, Social Constructionism “...underscores the central importance placed, not on individuals, but on relationships as the site of world construction” (Gergen, 1999, p. 8.). The two terms are closely related. Some scholars see fit to cleave the difference between the terms, and some do not. Like (Gergen, 1999), these authors underscored the importance placed on the relationship between two leaders in shared reflection as the site of the construction of leadership realities. Scholars such as Berger and Luckman (1966) have further argued that reality is co-created by humans through interactions; in turn, this affects the creation of other realities. In other words, “The world creates humans, and humans create the world” (Gergen, 1999, p. 47). According to Gergen (1999, p. 47), there are four contours that best define Social Constructionism:

1. The terms by which the world and the self are understood are not based on “what there is.”
2. Modes of description, explanation, and representation are derived from relationships.
3. Describing reality reflexively fashions how the future is understood.
4. Reflection on how reality is understood is vital to one’s future wellbeing.

These contours demonstrate the immense challenge found in sustaining valued traditions and yet creating new realities. Such a crux of leadership highlights the intersection of societal (“up there”) and everyday (“down here”) discourses framing *the work* of leadership (Gee, 1996; Stevenson & Tooms, 2010). Constructionists believe that reality comes from a tradition of constructions built and passed on in a group through inculcation (Gergen, 1999; Tooms-Cyprès, 2016). What is a good leader? What is the true purpose of an organization? Who counts? All of these questions are examples of how Social Constructionism plays out in bureaucracies (Gouldner, 1954; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010; Tooms-Cyprès, 2013).

Social Constructionism has also played a role in leadership development as a tool to help leaders understand the mechanics of work and the nuances of politics. Barnett (1985, p. 1) noted that “Peer Assisted Leadership is a year-long activity of professional development in which leadership peers partner and analyze each other’s practice in nonprescriptive and non-judgmental reflective dialogs of shared observation.” Building a network of peers with similar experiences is one of the first steps in growing a robust practice of leadership (Collins, 2000; Collins & Scott, 1978; Derrida, 1995; Tooms-Cyprés, 2014). The tenants of Social Constructionism allow leaders to seek out *what is* and *is not* reality through shared, reflective dialog about the everyday mechanics of decision making and working with groups. In terms of modern leadership practice, *reality* (along with accountability) is rooted in honoring the work expectations assigned upon hire. Examples include “Implementing a strategic plan, managing a budget per the organization’s mission, and ensuring a safe and orderly work environment.” A difficult and common thread through a leader’s portfolio of work is the expectation to leverage change. Unfortunately, resistance to change is common because it is uncomfortable for many. This discomfort/resistance is framed colloquially as “noise.” This consists of a spectrum of activities ranging from employee coffee klatches of complaints to organized strikes by a workforce. Authentic change leadership requires maintaining the level of noise to such a degree that new way of working occurs without losing the followership of employees. Sometimes this is possible and sometimes this is not. Additionally, factors that enhance or constrict the level of organizational dysfunctionality impact both the management of change and noise. In the midst of this kind of turmoil, the leader’s ability to stay focused on what is real (i.e., reaching specific goals) and what is noise (i.e., gossip, complaining, and false accusations) is paramount to a resilient and real practice of leadership. Such practice is strengthened through understanding of connections between the mind, the brain, and the body.

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## The Brain, the Mind, and the Body in Real Leadership Practice

Research has long recognized the ways in which life experiences build and reinforce the neural pathways connecting the psychologic mind to the physiologic brain (Hanson, 2020). Simply put, the *mind* reacts to the external environment by telling the *brain* what chemical cocktails to release to the machinery in our bodies. These cocktails (typically in the form of hormones) travel around the body via an ever-growing series of interconnected pathways made of neurons. Understanding of this phenomenon and its relationship to various life events has moved from the arenas of medicine and other professional disciplines to global discourses about mental health and its relationship to work. The forced isolation brought by the COVID-19 pandemic fostered heightened discourses around the world about the mind-brain-body considerations through umbrella terms such as “wellness” or “work-life balance” which devolved into hollow understandings of resiliency. Currently, there is a dearth of research illustrating the day to day impact the body endures while meeting the requirements of authentic leadership practice.

Recent research has demonstrated that living through various stressful and traumatic events leave revenants within the physical body (Menakem, 2017). In other words, enduring what the mind and brain perceive as stressful and traumatic events wreaks permanent havoc on the body (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Real leadership requires encountering noise every day. Noise is often enrobed in drama because of how followers react to events and information. Ominously, noise surrounding everyday discourses can sour far beyond employee water cooler complaints and votes of no confidence into entrenched cultures of toxic work environments. Differentiation between the two is vital for leaders. Toxic work environment includes persistent and pervasive microaggressions, mobbing, coordinated smear campaigns, and threats to a leader's physical safety (Bernstein, 2012; Samier & Schmidt, 2012; Tooms-Cyprés, 2014; Westhues, 2004; Wittgenstein, 1972). The following brief explanation of how the brain reacts to noise extends discussions focused on the physical effects of every day leadership practice.

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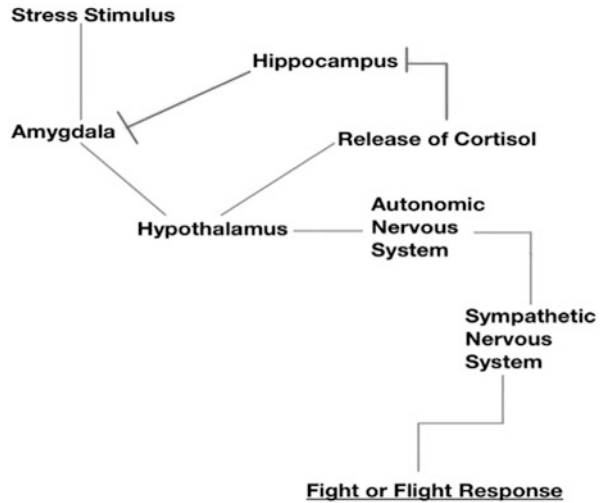
## The Neurobiology of the Brain-Mind-Body Leadership Connection

To begin a deconstruction of how the brain-mind-body connection functions in leadership practice, it is important to recognize that universities were among a litany of enterprises that suffered catastrophic fallout in the 2020 year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior level administrators around the world were responsible for delivering the fear inducing news to employees that steep budget cuts and furloughs were eminent on many campuses (Doyle, 2020). For the leader planning and then facilitating such meetings, the pressure was amplified by the awareness that audiences under duress are unpredictable and can erode into incivility quickly and that effective facilitation required a demeanor of calm resolve.

The awareness of such dynamics awakens a portion of the leader's brain called the Amygdala. As tensions in such a meeting unfold, the Amygdala continues to alert the Hypothalamus (the control center of the brain) to flood the body with a chemical cocktail consisting mainly of cortisol, a hormone produced in response to stress. Cortisol also increases the ability to break down sugar into usable energy. This primes the body for the *fight or flight response*, a warp-speed reaction of the overall nervous system that occurs when humans (like many species) believe they are in danger (Hanson, 2020). Cortisol, along with a host of other chemicals rages through the body resulting in dilated pupils, accelerated breathing and heart rate, increased blood pressure, and flushed skin as noted below in Fig. 1:

These primal reactions give the leader (as well as the audience members disheartened by brutal news) a heightened readiness to react to others (known as the fight or flight response). Fight or flight responses can play out in several ways within a group meeting: a red face, the increased tapping of one's writing pen, an elevation in the tone and speed of speech within a difficult discussion, or the inability to refrain from interrupting a colleague. An unchecked fight or flight response is also what escalates meetings into shouting matches. Because leaders are often

**Fig. 1** Pathway of fight or flight inhibition and activation (Jenkins, G)



responsible for facilitating difficult discussions within a group, keeping the tone of a meeting even-keeled and focused on specific tasks is crucial.

The skill of facilitating a group discussion through the noise is regularly oversimplified as “listening more than talking.” In this context, “listening” requires no less than the Homeric effort to harness a chemical assault inside the human body in the midst of the discursive chaos brought on by disgruntled followers. The prolonged escalation of fight or flight chemicals in neural pathways also results in a sense of exhaustion after they return to normal levels. This rapid decompression is most easily seen in children who shrink into a space of quiet after throwing a temper tantrum.

Neural pathways (like an invasive vine) grow and deeply embed themselves in response to both negative and positive stimuli over our lifetimes. The body also acts as a kind of scorecard for trauma events over a lifetime by growing more networks of neurons (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Thus, similar experiences for two different leaders can result in differing degrees of internal responses. For example, two leaders explaining budget cuts to two separate audiences can experience heckling very differently. For the first leader who was shamed publicly as a child, the ever-growing neural pathways fired up by consistent hostile meetings reach deeper into an entrenched undergrowth growth of pathways created through the endurance of years of bullying. The second leader, in an equally stressful meeting, may experience very little firing of trauma laced neural paths as their childhood experiences were different. In both cases, controlling these neural pathways a key to the discipline required of those who wear the crown, as real leadership practice centers on managing conflict, facilitating difficult conversations, and telling people things they do not want to hear. Because some “shared decision making” meetings are kabuki theater that feign shared governance and others are arenas where input is



valued and utilized, it is difficult for many leaders to tame surging neuropathways that flare within the context of daily leadership work. Many have developed the ability to control the fight-or-flight response through the use of a stoic practice which contributes to an overall resiliency as leaders. Because this skill is often framed with the umbrella term “experience,” stoic practice is not widely recognized as a specific, modern, and useful skillset necessary to leading in turbulent times.

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## Leadership, Resiliency, and Stoicism

This discussion is not concerned with the gestalt of leadership as an idea. Instead, the focus is on the *authentic, everyday practice* of leading. The heart of such a disciplined and real practice is resiliency. Resiliency is defined as the ability to persevere in executing daily responsibilities and ultimately thrive, despite sustained difficulties (Ledesma, 2014; Tooms-Cyprés, 2019). This ability separates the wheat of authentic leadership practice from the chaff of leadership mythology. President Theodore Roosevelt alluded to the crucial relationship between resiliency and leadership when he gave a speech at the Sorbonne over a century ago:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming.; but who does strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasm, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; Who at best knows of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. (Roosevelt, 1910)

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## Resiliency and Grit

The COVID-19 era has seen a heightened focus on striving valiantly in the face of adversity (Brown, 2012; St. John & Haines, 2017). The trend has brought forth a constellation of terms used interchangeably by many to define nuances of leadership. Like other notions in the global zeitgeist, these words have warped into misunderstandings of *what is* and *what is not* leadership practice. Such is the dynamic that feeds leadership mythologies. *Grit* is “The passionate perseverance that distinguishes high achievers” (Duckworth, 2018). *Resiliency* is distinguished by “. . . the ability to bounce back and even thrive from adversity, frustration, misfortune, and is essential for the effective leader” (Ledesma, 2014, p. 1). *Thriving* is what differentiates grit from resilience. It refers to growing beyond one’s original level of leadership functioning despite repeated instances of adversity. Resiliency speaks to the evolution of skills within the chaos of adversity. Grit speaks to a distinguishing characteristic that supports the completion of a task. Resiliency is characterized by: positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, low fear of failure, hardiness, high tolerance of uncertainty, and a deep value of strong

social resources (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Hart, 1990; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Tooms-Cyprès, 2014).

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## Stoicism

Like resiliency and grit, *stoicism* is a term identified with effective leaders. It is a unique Hellenistic philosophy concerned with the daily practice of committing to a life of virtue and reacting to the world in a particular way. Founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early third century, Stoicism was first practiced in a radical venue, the *Stoa Poikila*: A porch located on the north side of Athens' grand marketplace, the Agora (Salzgeber, 2019). The term stoicism takes its name from the *Stoa Poikila*, a public and democratic forum of its birth. Citium understood the co-construction of reality as a democratic exercise. He argued opinions beyond the bounds of privilege are necessary to co-construct and understand reality. Thus, his bold choice to hold class in a public market rather than the sterile spaces typically used by the Athenian elite. Major leaders of the Stoic movement include Marcus Aurelius, one of the most effective emperors of the Roman Empire; Seneca, a tutor to Roman Emperor Nero; and Epictetus, the slave who earned freedom and founded his own school dedicated to stoicism. The meditations of these men are regarded as touchstones of a stoic practice (English & Ehrich, 2019; Hart, 1990; Epictetus, 1995). The tenants of stoicism (Epictetus, 1995) include:

1. The only thing humans truly control is our thoughts, judgments, and reactions to the world around us.
2. Once it is understood what is truly within one's control, it is possible to apply value judgments of good, bad, or indifference to the external things that we encounter.
3. Good things are of benefit, bad things cause harm; everything else is considered indifferent and not important.
4. Life's highest goal is to live every day in a space of integrity through actions based on wisdom, justice, courage, and restraint.
5. Enduring hardship in an honorable manner is exponentially preferable over seeking wealth, fame, and joy in a shameful manner.
6. Putting ideas into action is the key to a life of integrity

To bring these tenants to life in everyday practice, one must learn the stoic practice of being *in* the moment, but not *of* the moment. The first step requires deciding if an experience is good, bad, or indifferent. The Stoics use the word virtue to define good. They frame all virtues into these silos: wisdom, justice, courage, and restraint. The ultimate goal of a stoic life is to live virtuously. That is, to practice the virtues previously listed every day in service to others and thus, nature. Vices (the "bad" things) are identified as those that do not benefit the self and are rooted in injustice, cowardice, foolishness, and intemperance. Everything else is considered something indifferent. In other words, actions of indifference are simply noise.

Interesting examples of indifference that manifests as noise are attempts by others to disrupt our health, wealth, reputation, sense of fear, and pleasure. These, as with all other things of indifference, can be acted on in the name of vice or virtue.

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## Noise and Toxicity: A Look at the Neurobiology of Stoic Leadership

A stoic practice requires more than simply approaching an issue with objectivity (Salzberger, 2019). Specifically, when a stoic leader encounters one of the many surprises of their day, the clash of real leadership practice and neurobiology goes something like this: The *brain* recognizes the event (encountering a vitriolic rant from a colleague in a public space) is *a threat*; the Amygdala activates the cascade of chemicals that results in the fight or flight response. Simultaneously the *Stoic mind* struggles to inhibit the Amygdala through the hippocampus by considering the true reality of the surprise. In effect the Stoic mind says “Slow down. . . Is this simply noise reverberating from those who do not like change, (an event of indifference) or is this truly a threat to me?” Is this event a contour of a toxicity? Depending on the judgment of the event, the mind then tells the hippocampus to soothe the Amygdala or tells the Amygdala to unleash the fight or flight Response through the body’s matrix of neural pathways. The discipline to choose in the heat of an event if something that *feels* harmful, *but in reality, is not*, (i.e., noise) requires us to go against our biological nature and is the very definition of courage. Over time, the practice of calming the fight or flight response rewires neural pathways to become less reactionary to the noise leaders encounter on a daily basis (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Hanson, 2013; St. John & Haines, 2017; Van Der Kolk, 2014).

As the pathways become rewired, their new elasticity contributes significantly to a leader’s resiliency and ability to manage stress. In other words, a stoic practice of leadership is a skill that contributes to one’s mental health, physical wellness, and resiliency (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Brown, 2012; Coutu, 2002; Hanson, 2020; Schön, 1983; St. John & Haines, 2017; Van Der Kolk, 2014). The process is reflexive: The more fluent one becomes at transcending challenge; the more neural pathways are rewired and/or created. Enriching as well as depleting experiences create the neuropathways that affect our levels of resiliency. Because authentic leadership is based on conflict management and making difficult decisions, the professional practice of administration can be akin to “living off a thin soup” (Hanson, 2013). In other words, the crown of leadership is heavy because solving problems can often be more depleting than enriching work. A day (or months) rife with repeated fight or flight synapses along neural pathways leads to the “hollowness of existence” (Hanson, 2013) bemoaned by Shakespeare’s poor Henry IV. The antidote to this is found in nurturing the growth of neural pathways linked to learning

something new, acceptance, creativity, kindness, and joy (Hanson, 2013; Ledesma, 2014).

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## **Fantasy Leadership, Real Leadership Skills, and the Stoic Mind**

There are several factors that diminish recognition contours of real, professional leadership practice. They include:

1. Employment requirements in government, hospitals, prisons, and universities around the globe do not consistently require leadership training for employment in leadership roles.
2. The literature on leadership preparation struggles to recognize resiliency as a necessary skillset.
3. Intellectual pursuits of stoicism are typically housed within studies of philosophy or history and not included in leadership preparation.

Additionally, leadership is often understood within a loose framework based on fantastic instances of overcoming. Examples of this include the cult of the superhero. Cultural references to the fantasy of superhero leadership permeate societal cultures to such an extent that the tools used in everyday work (journals, writing instruments, drinking glasses, and computer screen savers) are emblazoned with images of them; as if possessing such an object would imbue the owner with the virtues mythologized. One of this chapter's authors admits to cherishing a gift of a tiny replica of Mjölnir. This is the hammer of Thor, God of Thunder, War, and Protection of Humanity. While this object does not bring thunder from the heavens to quiet rude colleagues during a meeting, it remains amusing and a reminder of the importance of a stoic practice and the seductive traps and messages of Fantasy leadership.

Unfortunately, these fantasy-based symbols and discourses are disconnected from the authentic work of real leadership because they do not unpack of what to do in the moment when the neural pathways fire. The hard truth is that whacking the tiny Mjölnir on the desk during a tense meeting over budget issues will not stop frustrated colleagues from yelling over budget problems. In considering the hallmarks of Fantasy Leadership and Real Leadership (as outlined in Appendix A), perfectionism is arguably the most potent as it sets up achievement-driven aspiring leaders for cognitive dissonance (Klibert et al., 2014; Schön, 1983). Modern studies on achievement seeking personalities, self-esteem, and brain biology have proved that acts of self-compassion are extremely effective in rewiring trauma laced neural pathways (Hanson, 2020; Menakem, 2017; Neff, 2011). In Western culture, self-compassion is often mistaken for self-pity and weakness. In actuality, self-compassion is a practice of opening a space to admit and take responsibility for our mistakes and move on to self-forgiveness (Neff & Germer, 2018). Examples of acts of self-compassion include:

1. Recognizing that making a mistake and failure is part of the human experience and real leadership practice
2. Giving ourselves credit for a virtuous action regardless of the outcome
3. Recognizing that humanity is connected to others who share our experiences of struggle
4. Forgiving ourselves for our shortcomings as human beings and as leaders

One “feeds” neural pathways when self-kindness is practiced through mindfulness, the practice of savoring moments of joy for a few seconds longer than is typical. Mindfulness can be particularly challenging for leaders who are natural multitaskers. A great first step to mindfulness is to start or end the day free from technology (Neff & Germer, 2018). Or, when eating, focus on the pleasure of the meal (Hanson, 2013). Quietening the mind in stillness ten minutes before addressing a group is another example of mindfulness. The research on mindful activities is rich with pragmatic suggestions and the practice of yoga or meditation being the most prominent examples (Menakem, 2017). Engaging in mindful behavior as part of a resilient leadership practice has demonstrated drastic long-term changes to the landscape of neural pathways (Duggan & Theurer, 2017). As with a stoic approach to noise, this is the stuff of a resilient leadership practice.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The large discourses about leadership have created understandings that are often glamorous, dramatic, and fantastic. The historic depictions of leadership throughout global cultures perpetuate notions that leadership is a somewhat effortless endeavor that is both dependent on one’s innate talents and devoid of the practice of disciplined skills. This chapter argued that real leadership practice requires the use of skills centered on the mind-body connection that is rarely valued within the literature on leadership or in the circles of leadership preparation. The authors wonder if this was due to the cognitive dissonance between preconceived notions of leadership weakness found in the literature (Brown, 2012). Real Leadership is more often a mundane difficult activity that lacks the grandeur associated with fantasies linked to the word. The stakes of leadership practiced without attention to resiliency skillset that includes self-care and a stoic mindset is clearly present in the literature focused on the politics of leadership, burnout, and maladministration (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Westhues, 2004). *Real leadership* is a disciplined practice based on intentional inclusivity, resiliency, grit, self-care, courageous vulnerability, and reflection. Real Leadership forges ideas into action and is the unsung, disciplined energy behind innovation *Real leaders recognize that the process is hard as hell: Yet they engage in the work anyway.* What inspires such authentic leaders to stay on this path is knowing the challenge of service, failure, reflection, compassion, forgiveness, and ultimately success – triumphs over the difficulty of the journey.

## Appendix A

### Hallmarks of Fantasy and Real Leadership

Fantasy leadership. . .	Real leadership. . .
Is an imbued monolithic gift people have akin to a physical trait Has no tolerance for a leader's imperfection or trajectory of growth	Is a practice of collecting and honing a constellation of skills and dispositions Understands the practice as imperfect and requires the commitment to constant improvement
Recognizes that the leader is wiser than others	Recognizes leaders must value others' perspectives
Conflates age and experience with wisdom and leadership acumen	Defines leadership as a fluid cultural construct
Sees "good" as always triumphing over "bad"	Defines "good," "bad," "winning," and losing" as fluid constructs
Defines courage as a product of drama	Understands courage as a mundane practice
Assumes physical attractiveness, physical strength, wealth, and charisma are leadership requirements or qualities	Does not consistently recognize physical attractiveness, physical strength, wealth, and charisma as leadership requirements
Equates charisma with intelligence, preparedness, and authentic skill	Recognizes the difference between intelligence, charisma, preparedness, and disinformation
Assumes success in one field (i.e., medicine) is a predictor of leadership abilities	Defines leadership as a skillset and profession unique to other fields of intellectual endeavor
Often defines the motivations and rewards of leadership with extrinsic factors such as glory, fame, wealth	Often defines the motivations and rewards of leadership with intrinsic factors such service and changemaking

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# The Changing Nature of School Supervision 31

Sally J. Zepeda, Sevda Yıldırım, and Salih Çevik

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## Abstract

This chapter examines the historical developments in the field of supervision focusing on key time periods from the 1900s to the present. Starting with Frederick Taylor's approach to supervision from the field of management and John Dewey's focus on Democratic principles of education, several approaches that contribute to today's practices of supervision are examined through a Foucauldian lens to understand the vestiges to bureaucratic and humanistic tenets. Clinical supervision evolved as a preservice teacher model in the 1950s, providing the foundation for its use in K-12 schools, and in the 1980s, the constructs of developmental and differentiated supervision emerged followed by classroom walkthrough models in the 1990s. Fueled by several reports that highlighted the failure of American education and suggesting more accountability, input-output and value-added measure debates emerged in the 1990s where students' test scores were used to gauge teacher effectiveness. Supervision was embedded in teacher evaluation systems.

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**Keywords**

Accountability movement · Classroom walkthroughs · Clinical supervision · Developmental supervision · Differentiated supervision · Foucauldian analysis · Supervision

**The Field of Memory**

For school supervision, the field of memory includes inspectional, bureaucratic functions that included tight oversight as envisioned by Taylor (1911) and the Industrial Age of efficiency. Between the late 1950s through the late 1980s, more humanistic approaches including clinical, differentiated, and developmental supervision emerged. Memory resurfaced in the 1990s with the emergence of accountability.

**The Field of Presence**

The accountability movement caused disruption with federal programs (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top) that increased the tensions between the purposes and intents of supervision and evaluation with efforts and mechanisms that persist with test scores and blinded, standard, and uniformed expectations. Clinical, differentiated, and developmental supervision in schools supplanted inspectional supervision briefly but remain, albeit limited and embedded as secondary processes in high-stakes learning environments in K-12 schools from the 1990s to post No Child Left Behind.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Supervision in K-12 schools for in-service teachers found its own model through the evolution of the clinical supervision model – a model originally developed and envisioned for preservice teachers. The constructs of developmental and differentiated supervision evolved from the fields of cognitive/social psychology, adult learning theory, and human development and career stage theory.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Moving from the 1990s to the present, accountability demands further confused the underpinnings of supervision, by often negating the individualization as described in the constructs of differentiation and developmental approaches to supervising teachers and by attempting to shape students and teachers in the same manner.

**Critical Assumptions**

Historically, educational supervision has been shaped by two main philosophical assumptions. The first assumption was that schools operate in the same way with other industrial workplaces and that a one-size-fits-all approach in which all teachers were supervised the same could lead to highly effective teachers in the classroom. In contrast, the second major assumption was that teachers could develop professionally based on meeting their needs through supervisory interactions and supports that were developmental and differentiated. This view assumed that teachers were

professional, capable of making decisions about what types of supervisory support would be more beneficial to their growth and development.

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## Introduction

Supervision and its practices date before the early formation of schools in the United States. Its purposes and methods have evolved undergoing paradigm shifts based on community accountability (Rousmaniere, 2013) and scientific management (Taylor, 1911) aligned with efficiency and control of teachers by direct oversight (Cubberley, 1916; Drake & Roe, 1999). Moving beyond custodial and scientific supervisory methods that relied on the inspection of teachers were the more humanistic methods that focused on teacher growth through differentiated and developmental approaches (Glatthorn, 1984; Glickman, 1981, 1985; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2017; Zepeda, 2017). With the emergence of more humanistic views, differentiated and developmental approaches replaced for a short time, scientific supervisory practices. Although accountability often overshadows supervision, the clinical model of instructional supervision has been a consistent part of the field of presence in debates that illustrate the tensions between supervision as a way to support teacher growth or supervision embedded as part of teacher evaluation systems that seek to rate teachers.

With formative and growth-oriented processes, developmental supervision focuses on feedback about instruction (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013) as well as the development of teacher's knowledge, skills, and abilities to make informed instructional decisions (Sergiovanni, Starratt, & Cho, 2013). Differentiated supervision engages teachers as decision makers (Glatthorn, 1984) and as active researchers about their own practices (Glanz, 2014) to support teacher agency and voice (Zepeda, 2017, 2019).

Political and public demands for increased accountability have accentuated the tensions between supervision and evaluation most notably as a result of federal legislation including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and to a lesser degree, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA); federal programs (e.g., Race to the Top and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009); and harkened calls in national reports and research that identify, debate, contest, or advocate for value-added measures as a way to gauge teacher effectiveness through evaluation systems (Glazerman, Loeb, Goldhaber, Raudenbush, & Whitehurst, 2010; Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014).

This chapter provides a brief overview of supervision with an examination of the clinical supervisory model (Cogan, 1955, 1973; Goldhammer, 1969) and the constructs of differentiated supervision and developmental supervision primarily from the late 1950s to the present day. This time period, model of supervision, and these constructs pivoted supervision not only as a helping and applied process in schools but also illustrates how supervision was supplanted by evaluation by the heightened focus on high-stakes test results of students as a measure of teacher effectiveness. This chapter also brings forth thinking about school supervision and the Foucauldian notions related to the field of memory, the field of presence, the field of concomitance, the discontinuities and ruptures found in

school supervision, and critical assumptions that ground thinking about supervision in schools.

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## Supervision

A broad overview of the definitions, the purposes, and intents of supervision are examined followed by a brief history of supervision starting from the industrial period through the present with a focus on the 1950s through the 1980s, and then an overview of supervision from the 1990s to present is offered. This historical overview examines the clinical model of instructional supervision and the constructs of differentiated and developmental supervision tracing ruptures and changes necessitated by accountability and that illustrates disconnection in practice.

The prevailing beliefs about supervision are that it supports “the ongoing, non-judgmental, collaborative process that engages teachers in dialogue that encourages deep reflective practices for the purpose of improving teaching and student learning” (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013, p. 28) and as such, “supervision promotes growth, interaction, fault-free problem solving, and a commitment to build capacity in teachers” (Zepeda, 2017, p. 60). In this view, supervision is developmental, differentiated, and requires ongoing and collaborative work between teachers and supervisors to pivot efforts to “help increase the opportunity and the capacity of schools to contribute more effectively to students’ academic success” (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 7). These beliefs about the intents and purposes of supervision did not fully evolve until after the Industrial Age that focused on scientific reasoning and efficiency.

### Scientific Period – 1900s to End of World War II, 1945

The efficiency movement emerged in schools as an extension of Taylor’s (1911) scientific management model. Scientific management was a workplace approach that relied on efficiency and productivity through the standardization of labor. This model was based on judging quality and efficiency through a focus on inputs (teacher behavior) and outputs (student results) (Shaw, 2016; Taylor, 1911). From a Foucauldian perspective, the main objective of this movement was based on the assumption that if scientists could study the most effective teachers to capture descriptors of behaviors, then administrators could rate the ineffective and inefficient teachers based on what they captured from observing effective teachers (Glanz, 1998; Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009).

In its early stages, Bobbitt (1912) applied Taylor’s model in educational management and planning by arguing that schools, like businesses, should be efficient and focus on outcomes that illustrate the degree of the usefulness of curriculum to shape students into adult workers. Bobbitt (1913) proposed that teachers, due to their inability to make instructional decisions, must be required to follow the methods determined by their administrators. During this time, social system and organizational change theory focused supervisory attention on linking student outcomes to observable teacher behaviors illustrating the influence of behaviorism and learning

concepts found in behavioral psychology from the writings of B. F. Skinner and others (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). This behavioral approach included classroom research that tried to identify effective teaching methods. An unprecedented number of classroom observation checklist systems emerged (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Ponticell et al., 2019). The checklist has influenced and expanded with accountability rubrics, remaining contentious in the supervisory context of classroom observations (Donaldson & Papay, 2015; Van Geel et al., 2019).

Two competing philosophical views of education influenced supervision. The first philosophical view was grounded in scientific management. The works of Taylor (1911), Spaulding (1913), Cubberley (1916), and Wetzel (1929) applied scientific management in supervision to address inefficiency in schools and to promote a factory-like model where principals controlled and directed educational methods and rated teachers (Fine, 1997; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). The second, competing view advocated for democratic and more humanistic educational and supervisory approaches (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) assumed that teaching was not a mere performance of particular teaching strategies or behaviors; instead, it was a deliberate process and a tool for helping students come to know themselves as learners.

## Humanistic Period – 1950s to the 1980s

The era spanning from the late 1950s through the 1980s included a shift in supervision from scientific management methods focused on efficiency to supervisory practices focused on human resource development and organizational change (Glanz, 1990; Zepeda, 2006). Historically, the United States lost its bid to be the first in space with the launching of Sputnik in 1957. The precedent setting *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 (ESEA) was legislated. The 1960s witnessed great social unrest. With the release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) report, teacher evaluation and accountability became the main tenets of the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s, teachers were under scrutiny through a series of reports that criticized education. Each one of these events in history created discontinuities and ruptures in the practice of supervision in schools.

Three major concepts emerged during this timeframe: clinical supervision, developmental supervision, and differentiated supervision, supplanting temporarily the scientific models of working with teachers. Vestiges of these concepts remain today.

*Clinical Supervision:* Departing from behavioral checklists where the events of teaching were pigeon-holed to fit predetermined instructional behaviors, clinical supervision emerged in the mid-1950s. Originally conceptualized by Morris Cogan (1955) as a way to support students enrolled in an advanced degree in teaching at Harvard University, clinical supervision proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s (Goldhammer, 1969), and by 1980, approximately 90% of school administrators used some form of this model (Marzano et al., 2011). The goal of clinical supervision was to improve instruction by observing, analyzing, and supporting teachers (Cogan, 1973). Cogan's model included eight highly intensive phases that were streamlined into a five-phase model by Goldhammer (1969), and then a three-phase model by Acheson and Gall (1980) as elaborated in Table 1.

**Table 1** The evolution of the phases of the clinical supervision model

Cogan (1973)	Goldhammer (1969)	Acheson and Gall (1980)
1. Establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship	1. Preobservation conference	1. Planning conference
2. Planning with the teacher		
3. Planning the strategy of the observation		
4. Observing instruction	2. Observation	2. Observation
5. Analyzing the teaching-learning processes	3. Analysis and strategy	3. Feedback conference
6. Planning the strategy of the conference		
7. Conference	4. Supervisory conference	
8. Renewed planning	5. Renewed planning	

Source: Adapted from Zepeda (2006)

Inherent in the clinical model was the focus on “supervision up close” instead of supervision “conducted at a distance” (Goldhammer, 1969, p. 54) to promote “face-to-face interaction between the supervisor and the teacher in the analysis of teaching behavior and activities for instructional improvement” (Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980, p. 19). In the late 1990s and early part of the 2000s, the clinical model was further shortened with the emergence of the walk-through (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004; Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010).

*Developmental Supervision:* In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. This report described the educational system in the United States as failing students due, in part, to untalented and under-prepared teachers (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The premise was that teachers were “broken,” and the assumption was that teachers needed to be remediated. Much like the ruptures in thinking and practice with the emergence of more humanistic thinking and supervisory methods to support teachers in the Industrial Age, Glickman (1981, 1985) and Glatthorn (1984, 1997) introduced the developmental and differentiated constructs that served as the foundation to supervision in schools. The tensions between supervision for growth and development tied to models (as in clinical supervision) continued.

As a field and as outlined by the mid-1980s, researchers began to articulate alternative perspectives to clinical supervision primarily as a response to prescriptive, one-size fit all applications. Building from the premises of Cogan (1973) and Goldhammer (1969) to situate teachers as active learners, Glickman (1981, 1985) added a developmental element based on the supervisor’s ability to assess the level of adult development (Zepeda, 2006) and to apply supervisory approaches that reflected this level. The term developmental, in the behavioral sciences, is associated with growth and improvement often defined as “changes in *observed* behavior across age” (Overton, 1998, p. 109, emphasis added). Initially, Glickman (1981) focused on teachers’ developmental level on two elements of teacher effectiveness: (1) teacher’s

commitment and (2) teacher's ability to think abstractly. According to Zepeda, Alkaabi, and Tavernier (2020), the responsibility of the supervisor was to identify the teacher's developmental stage based on her/his place on the commitment continuum and continuum of abstract thinking, then use appropriate techniques to assist with professional growth.

For the field of supervision, this construct was a milestone in that developmental psychologists focused on a limited segment of the life span, particularly child and adolescent development, but almost no attention to adulthood (Blake & Pope, 2008). Glickman (1981) built this construct on the premise that applying the developmental principles from human development, particularly, how children and adults grow cognitively, socially, physically, and aesthetically, was beneficial for the field of educational supervision.

Glickman (1981) suggested that supervisors use a nondirective approach with teachers of high conceptual levels, a collaborative approach with teachers of moderate conceptual levels, and an informational directive approach with teachers of low conceptual levels. Glickman and Gordon (1987) explained this model was based on the critical assumptions that teachers operate at different levels of professional development due to their varied personal backgrounds and experiences and that teachers needed to be supervised in different ways.

*Differentiated Supervision:* Built on similar premises as developmental supervision, the construct of differentiated supervision considered the differences in teachers' experiences, skills, abilities, and professional needs (Glatthorn, 1984). Glatthorn's (1997) foundation for differentiated supervision necessitates a professional culture of collaboration, inquiry, and continuous improvement; supportive work conditions; and facilitative structures for decision making.

The differentiated construct evolved historically when the clinical supervision model was condensed to a more efficient three-part process (Acheson & Gall, 1980), and Glatthorn (1984) first wrote about it the year after the release of the publication, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Differentiated supervision allowed teachers the latitude and flexibility to make decisions about the types of support they needed from their immediate supervisor.

Glatthorn (1997) identified three main supervisory options: intensive development, cooperative professional development, or self-directed development. The intensive development option should be required for nontenured teachers and tenured teachers who have instructional problems. In cooperative professional development, a small number of teachers would work together to assist one another in developing professionally and to empower teachers to take control of their own growth. The self-directed development option provides opportunity for teachers to work independently to foster their own individual growth by setting their own goals, implementing the plan to achieve these goals, and then self-assessing their own instructional growth. The overriding assumption was that teachers needed to be engaged in ways that made sense for where they were in their careers.

Both the developmental and differentiated constructs of supervision were formative in nature, focusing on teacher growth, and these constructs avoided



entanglements with teacher evaluation. Ruptures began to evolve with supervisory thought and practices most notably associated with accountability and the legal responsibilities to evaluate teachers for continued employment.

### **Accountability Period – 1990s to Present Day**

The tensions between teacher evaluation and supervision became more acutely present as the formative-summative views gave way to accountability. The 1990s forward were known as the era of increased accountability that focused attention on growth models and value-added models (VAMs) that looked at teacher effectiveness and its relationship to student test scores (Dooley, Owens, & Conley, 2019). During the twenty-first century, the focus of supervision shifted on two levels – from teacher behavior to student achievement and from supervision to evaluation (Jewell, 2017).

Reminiscent of the scientific era, inspections, checklists, and prescribed behaviors were organized to illustrate teacher performance in rubrics embedded in lock-step teacher assessment models that included classroom observations to be conducted with predetermined rubrics to assess teachers (e.g., Danielson Teacher Evaluation System, 1996). From 2001 to present, teacher growth and development was tied to teacher evaluation through the federal government's involvement fueled by funding streams. This era boasted an even more efficient incarnation of the clinical supervision model.

*Classroom Walkthroughs:* Beginning in the 1990s, a new model of classroom observations evolved – classroom walkthroughs – that have undergone numerous incarnations (David, 2008; Downey et al., 2004). This model's origins date to the 1970s when Hewlett Packard introduced Management by Wandering Around (MBWA) (Peters & Waterman, 1982) and made its way into schools in the 1990s. Enacting MBWA situated supervisors to close physical proximity with workers to engage in formal and informal communication about their work (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

In the context of schools, classroom walkthroughs were originally designed to be short and focused visits by school principals to gather data on instructional practices, student engagement, and provide feedback to teachers (Downey et al., 2004; Kachur et al., 2010). Two pioneering books examined walkthroughs in schools. In *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time*, Downey et al. (2004) promoted that supervision was at times cumbersome and tied to the three phases depicted in clinical models (see Table 1). Kachur et al. (2010) in their book, *Classroom Walkthroughs to Improve Teaching and Learning*, reported findings from their empirical research that teachers do not resist support when it is nestled in an environment that embraces the examination of practice. The walkthrough was also envisioned as a way for school leaders and teachers to identify professional development needs to support school improvement goals (David, 2008; Zepeda, 2017).

Although there are numerous iterations and falling within the Foucauldian field of memory, the classroom walkthrough incorporates at least one component of the clinical supervision model: the classroom observation. The preobservation conference



is not customary and follow-up conversations are often eclipsed by well-meaning notes and completed rubrics left in teacher mailboxes. Evolving from a one-on-one “face-to-face” supervisory support exclusively from a building administrator, the walkthrough evolved to include small teams (school leaders, teachers, and central office leaders), focusing the observation on local or state learning objectives and using a rubric or some routinized form to track information and communicate the results.

There were advocates and critics of classroom walkthroughs. Advocates believed the walkthrough would encourage “teachers [to] closely examine their practices and become increasingly reflective, self-directed, critical thinkers focused on continually improving their teaching” (Kachur et al., 2010, p. 113). Critics such as City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel (2009) stated, “unfortunately, the practice of walkthroughs has become corrupted in many ways by confounding it with the supervision and evaluation of teachers” (p. 4). The amount of time spent in classrooms during walkthroughs became a point of tension. Kachur et al. (2010) indicated that time spent in classrooms ranged from 1 to 25 min while in most schools, these observations lasted approximately 10 min. Downey et al. (2004) suggested the 3-min classroom observation. However, such short observations may not be an effective practice in that “the egg-timer approach to classroom observations of this duration is a ‘blitz’ in which the observation’s brevity minimizes data collection” (Zepeda, 2005, p. 19).

Although the intention of the walkthrough was to support teachers, many in the field of supervision believed that the foundational basis for the classroom walkthrough and the practical applications were tied to accountability (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013; Zepeda, 2005). With the passage of NCLB (2001), federal policies mandated accountability-based systems that held teachers and school leaders responsible for their students’ achievement results. As a result of NCLB’s insistence on providing highly qualified teachers in every school, teacher evaluation became a federal policy target (Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009). Highly qualified, however, was not synonymous with highly effective (Zepeda, 2017).

When the goals of NCLB were not met, waivers incentivized states to implement a new playbook with different policies to hold teachers accountable for their students’ growth in learning and achievement over time. With NCLB waivers and funds from Race to The Top (RTTT) grants as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the federal government stipulated the use of test results not only to measure students’ growth in learning over time, but also to measure teachers’ impact on students’ growth in learning over time. The uses of value-added measures to assess instruction diverted attention from focusing on classroom observations, the mainstay of the clinical supervisory model.

The passage of ESSA in 2015 has provided flexibility on teacher evaluation practices to the states; however, VAMs persist in statewide teacher evaluation systems (Close, Amrein-Beardsley, & Collins, 2020). In light of the recent research and court cases regarding VAMs (Close et al., 2020), many states have reduced significantly the weight that VAMs are factored in teacher evaluation systems as a way to shift away from the overreliance on these measures (Ross & Walsh, 2019).

## Conclusions and Reflections

Three primary periods of supervision in schools were examined, including:

1. Scientific period [1900s to the end of World War II, 1945] situated in the efficiency era illustrating the highly scientific model where teachers were supervised akin to workers in a factory
2. Humanistic period [1950s to the end of the 1980s] grounded in democratic processes, the clinical supervision model situated in a graduate teacher preparation program that found its way into schools
3. Accountability period [1990s to present] reverting to highly mechanical and efficient methods embedded in evaluation systems where teachers are supervised with classroom observation rubrics with predetermined areas to focus the evaluator, not necessarily the teacher, whose final evaluation is more dependent on value-added measures that link student gains in learning to classroom teachers

Throughout each period, key ideas about the methods, models, and constructs about school supervision evolved. Of primary focus is the clinical supervision model, two trains of thought – developmental and differentiated supervision – and the proliferation of the classroom walkthrough.

This section offers conclusions and reflections about supervision through the lens of Foucault's field of memory, presence, and concomitance as well as the ruptures and discontinuities from changing historical and policy contexts and most notably, the critical assumptions that fueled the tensions throughout the scientific, humanistic, and accountability periods. The supervisory tensions throughout these periods include issues of power and struggle, a central theme of Foucault's works (1972). Moreover, the critical assumptions that grounded the thinking about supervision across time have remained consistent.

The first assumption was that schools operate in the same way as other industrial workplaces and that if highly qualified and effective teachers were in classrooms, the outcomes, or student achievement, would be greater (Taylor, 1911). The second assumption was that a one-size-fits-all approach to working with teachers was needed to ensure compliance with teaching the curriculum according to standards. Practices aligned to this assumption included value-added measures vis-a-vis student test scores and rubrics with predetermined categories to rate teacher performance during classroom observations (Harris et al., 2014). These assumptions created tensions as they were at odds with others. The third assumption valued the need for humanistic approaches found in developmental (Glickman, 1981, 1985) and differentiated supervision (Glatthorn, 1984, 1997) that championed that teacher effectiveness can be developed by supervisory practices based on the needs of teachers through face-to-face interaction with supervisors (Dewey, 1938; Glatthorn, 1984; Glickman, 1981; Zepeda, 2017).

During the Scientific Period, two competing philosophical views of supervision emerged – methods that were scientific and efficient as espoused by Taylor (1911) and supervisory practices that were based on Democratic principles espoused by

Dewey (1938). As background, Taylor developed the theory of scientific management in the context of a steel factory through a mechanical engineer's perspective. Scientific management related to supervision became a temporary part of the field of memory during the 1980s with the emergence of differentiated and developmental supervision constructs in which growth and development were the primary focus for teachers across their career spans considering experience, education, and other factors that shape meeting their needs. However, scientific methods resurfaced in the 1990s as part of the accountability era with vestiges of Taylor's (1911) principles of scientific management (e.g., merit pay based on student performance). Dewey (1938) positioned that the democratic and more humanistic side of education could support supervision where teachers and school principals could work together. This view was at the extreme end of the spectrum of scientific management and a business/factory-like model where principals controlled and directed educational methods and rated teachers (Marzano et al., 2011). The changing the nature of instruction through a more child-centered and constructivist model further challenged the scientific management approach that trailed to the concept of clinical supervision (Duffy, 2016).

Supervision in the Humanistic Period spanning from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s evolved *from* an inspection and control model *to* a more collegial model (Moswela, 2010). Supervisors began using their time to work with teachers in a collegial manner to improve instruction versus merely inspecting it. Cogan (1973) focused on the collegial relationship and nonjudgmental observation and inquiry processes involved with working with preservice teachers. Although the stages of the original clinical supervision model were reduced from eight to three as the model moved from preservice to in-service applications in schools, the major elements of the preobservation conference, the classroom observation, and the postobservation conference continue more in theory than practice (Ponticell et al., 2019). The classroom observations associated with clinical supervision have remained in the field of presence in that they are embedded in most teacher evaluation systems. The field of supervision was and continues to protest bundling supervision as part of the teacher evaluation process and contests supervision and evaluation being conducted by the same person, perpetuating the formative summative tug-of-war (Zepeda et al., 2020).

In the 1980s, two constructs in the field of supervision emerged – developmental supervision and differentiated supervision. During this period, seminal works about supervision in schools were published in response to clinical supervision and illustrate ruptures. For example, McGreal (1983) examined the disparities in supervision practices for teachers based on their tenure status in *Successful Teacher Evaluation*; Glatthorn (1984) published *Differentiated Supervision*, supporting teacher's involvement in their own professional development and growth; and Glickman (1981) published *Developmental Supervision: Alternative Practices for Helping Teachers Improve Instruction*, intending to support instruction through supervision.

The differentiated and developmental constructs of supervision became foundational to the field as each acknowledged the understanding of developmental

psychology, adult learning, and career span and stage theory as ways to support a better developmental life for teachers (Zepeda, 2017). Tensions in school supervision related to teacher development and growth in the 1980s were exacerbated with a series of national reports such as *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and increased testing requirements for students (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). From these ruptures moving to increasing accountability from the 1990s to the present, the emphasis shifted almost fully away from supervision to evaluation. Several shifts in the teacher evaluation process, such as performance-based accountability, merit pay, high-stakes testing, and the adoption of value-added models, changed the nature of instructional supervision to focus more on results than the needs of teachers (Zepeda, 2017). Moreover, the accountability movement with the introduction of education policies embedded in NCLB (2001), ESSA (2015), and federal initiatives such as RTTT (2009) forced school systems to link supervision to a lesser degree *from* classroom observations *to* standardized test results and high student achievement through teacher and leader evaluation systems. To be clear, value-added measures trumped classroom observations that had been reduced by including checklists and rubrics that focused the attention of the classroom observer on predetermined areas making it easier not to engage teachers in preobservation conferences prior to the classroom visit. Procedurally, the focus of classroom observations was determined *a priori* based on standards. In a review of many state-wide evaluation systems, postobservation conferences have become “optional.”

Several tensions have emerged about supervision in schools. These tensions have not been fully reconciled and as such, they continue often becoming more complex as changes occur in the context of schooling in the United States. The tensions over time include:

- The irreconcilable differences between supervision and evaluation including whether or not the same person can supervise and evaluate teachers. This tension suggests a power struggle between teachers and leaders.
- Accountability demands have further confused the underpinnings of supervision, by negating the individualization as described in the constructs of differentiation and developmental approaches to supervising teachers and by attempting to shape students and teachers in the same manner. Conjoining test scores to teacher evaluation systems does not offer “a robust view of teacher effectiveness” (Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009, p. 5).

These tensions have been manifested in discontinuities and ruptures (Foucault, 1972). The consequences of these ruptures are that supervision has been situated in almost universal contexts that are characterized with practices that are standards-based, test-fueled, teacher evaluation-bureaucratic, and highly political. The narratives around these ruptures have monopolized the discourse about public school education, further eclipsing opportunities for teachers to grow and develop in ways that address their own learning needs.

In conclusion, supervision as a field has in many ways lost its identity from the original intents of being a growth-oriented process that employed its first model, clinical supervision, that moved from an eight-step process to a three-step one for efficiency purposes of school leaders who had to fill the dual function of supervising and evaluating teachers. With the advent of embedding supervision vis-a-vis classroom observations in teacher evaluation systems often without any expectation for pre- or postobservation conferences, the clinical model of supervision has been further diluted and the constructs of developmental and differentiated supervision founded in the 1980s have been eclipsed with the accountability era focusing on teacher evaluation and the summative functions including federally mandated uses of value-added measures to assess teacher effectiveness.

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## Cross-References

► [A History of Leadership Thought](#)

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# Exploring the Dynamism in the Leader/Follower Dyad

# 32

Doris Adams Hill and Jonte' C. Taylor

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## Abstract

Good leaders understand that they have a responsibility to inspire the led through modeling good followership. This is a key trait in effective leading. Good followers are their own leaders, who understand the role of supporting the leader. Competent and effective followership, leadership, and collaboration skills are necessary in K-12 educational settings, including teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals. Effective followership skills are in line with cohesive organizations that stress collaboration skills. Understanding the relational skills of the leader/follower dynamic are important to developing teacher effectiveness, a positive school climate, workplace satisfaction, and improved student and teacher outcomes.

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**Keywords**

Followership · Leadership · Teaching · Administration · Education · Collaboration

**The Field of Memory**

Followership is often less valued than leadership. However, by looking at historical examples (e.g., in the military, Meilinger 1994; grassroots movements, Ehrich & English, 2012), successful models for followership can be derived.

**The Field of Presence**

As it relates to education, current models of maximizing educational outcomes through followership exist when explored as identities (Kellerman, 2008; Taylor & Hill, 2017), categories of and approaches to change (Ehrich & English, 2012), or as collaborators to achieve co-flow (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015).

**The Field of Concomitance**

The importance of followers has been increasingly recognized in the literature. The need for leaders to develop good followers and the ideas that empowering followers can educate them as future leaders is an essential component of the leader/follower dynamic (Suda, 2013). The leader/follower dyad is impacted by organizational context. In leadership vacuums (e.g., where no leader exists, when leaders are ineffective, where leaders are locked in battle for overall control), engaged and committed followers can emerge as new leaders (Bullington, 2016; Changing Minds, 2020).

**Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

Leadership and administration are often seen as synonymous in education – the authors look at all roles in the organization and how leadership and followership are fluid relational constructs.

In education, teachers as their own leaders is a new concept. The sharp difference in how this chapter views followership as a skill to develop stands apart from the traditional view of the leader/follower dynamic.

**Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

We make critical assumptions that leadership/followership skills apply in educational settings, that leader/follower dynamics are relationship based. We critically assume that every follower is their own leader (self-determined and making decisions based on knowledge and data), that competent followers enhance organizational outcomes, and that climate and professional relationships are important up and down the leader/follower chain.

## Exploring the Dynamism in the Leader/Follower Dyad

“A good leader must first learn to follow”  
(General Martin Dempsey 2020 NPR Interview)

Followership in itself is not a new concept. Virtually every individual spends more time in the role of follower than leader and there have been both effective leaders and followers throughout the course of history. Currently, followership as a construct for examination is relatively fresh, especially in education. In many cases, leading and following roles occur simultaneously, since most of us have a supervisor or a higher person who evaluates our work. With a focus on leading, the importance of following is rarely highlighted and certainly under-studied. In fact, this focus on leaders is at the expense of followers, fostering the belief that followers are less important (Kellerman, 2008). Organizations can benefit from tapping into followership and the impact effective followership has on organizational success.

Situations related to cultural and organizational phenomena (i.e., shared experiences of vast groups of people), such as those found in the military and large business structures, have had research conducted associated with followership. The research around followership in these cultural structures has existed for decades. Comparatively, followership research in educational structures is scant with a most of the available research focused on higher education and postsecondary settings (Taylor & Hill, 2017). As schools are comprised of teachers and administrators in the roles of followers and leaders, understanding nuances in the leadership-followership dynamic provides opportunities for improving collaboration and school climate.

If leaders effect change, both good and bad, followers facilitate and foster change (Kellerman, 2007). There are numerous programs and structures in place to create and improve leaders. So many in fact, that leadership training is its own profitable industry (Kellerman, 2008; Ready & Conger, 2003). Recently, there have been several books published that address followership as part of the discussion on leadership (see Kellerman, 2008; Schindler, 2014). This includes the practices of following established rules, implementing policy, engaging in personal and professional development, complying with instructions, and supervising or being supervised by others. As followership applies to K-12 teachers, the role of follower is in addition to teaching students daily.

As defined by Kellerman (2008), followership implies a relationship (rank), between subordinates and superiors, and a response (behavior), of the former to the latter. Applying this definition to primary, middle, and high school settings, followership refers to the behaviors of teachers in response to the overt or implied behaviors of the administration (Taylor & Hill, 2017). For example, how do teachers (both individually and as a collective group) respond to the directives or requests of the principal of the school? More specifically, if a principal continuously requests a small group of preferred teachers to perform preferred tasks, the followership for those teachers may be different (more positive) than that of other nonpreferred

teachers. Based on this scenario, relational leadership processes, reputation, overall school climate, and effective collaboration between teachers and teachers/administrators may be adversely affected (Seers & Chopin, 2012; Taylor & Hill, 2017; Treadway et al., 2012).

Teachers and administrators (as followers and leaders) would benefit from training in group dynamics, relational leadership, and navigating transformative environments to adapt to these changing dynamics. Understanding the impact of implementing evidence-based practices, managing staff, and remaining positive affect while coordinating the work of diverse and specialized educational professionals can enhance and elevate trust from followers and leaders alike (Ashkanasy et al., 2012; Humphries & Howard, 2014). Northouse (2013) defines leadership as influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal, guided and influenced by the leader's core values. Leadership and followership are emotionally relevant, interactional, and transactional (Ashkanasy et al., 2012). The relationship requires one to motivate and shape the effectiveness of the other as part of a multidisciplinary team to provide professional and evidence-based educational services. When applied constructively, there are individual and group benefits to leading and following with common purpose. According to Kellerman (2008), thinking leadership without thinking followership is flawed thinking. The affective nature of the leader/follower dynamic cannot be understated (Ashkanasy et al., 2012).

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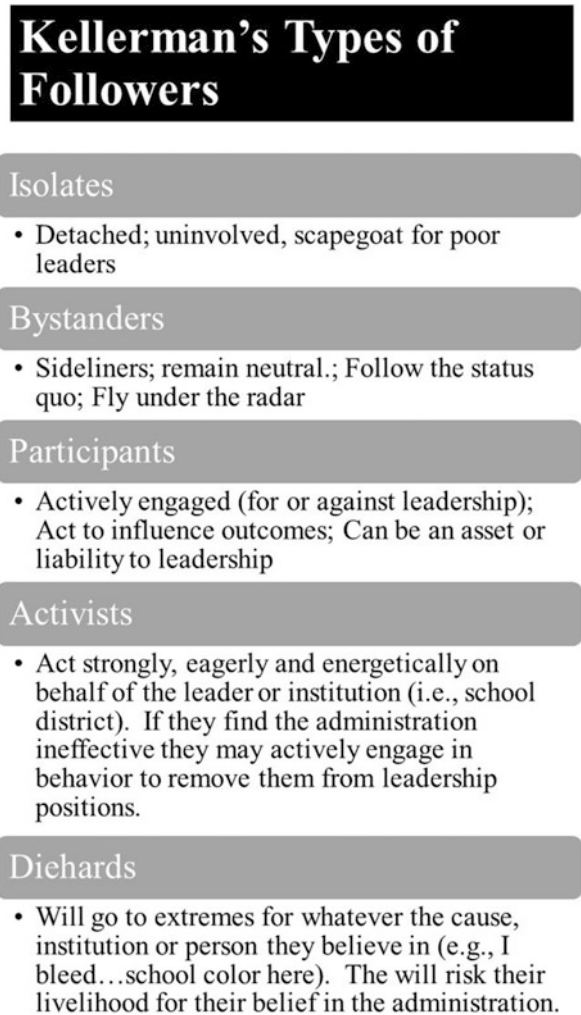
## Examining the Leadership/Followership Dynamic and Models of Followership

In her book *Followership: How Followers are Creating Change and Changing Leaders*, Barbara Kellerman (2008) takes a broad world view of followership and how it effects multiple aspects of life. She goes on to define followership, what it means to be a follower, and identifies types of followers in four different contexts/industries. In fact, Kellerman (2008) asserts that followers are more important than ever due to their ability to enact change and sometimes become more influential than the leader. Followers can be identified by rank (as subordinates in the hierarchical structure) or by behavior (enacting the intentions of another).

Based on her theory, followers fall into five types (i.e., isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards) with behaviors specific to each type (Kellerman 2008; see Fig. 1). Each type of follower is represented regardless of cultural group (i.e., military, society, business organizations, etc.).

Other broad models of the leadership/followership dynamic exist as well. Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015) provide a partnership-based model. Their model presents the leadership/followership dynamic in a paired manner that emphasizes how each person in the dynamic compliments each other (i.e., as a partnership). The authors posit that the relationship between leaders and followers is dynamic and context dependent. Each followership adaptable skill that is identified by the authors is complemented by a matched adaptable skill that leadership should display. See Fig. 2 for Hurwitz and Hurwitz's (2015) list of complementary skills.

**Fig. 1** Kellerman's types of followers. (Note: Adapted from Kellerman (2008))

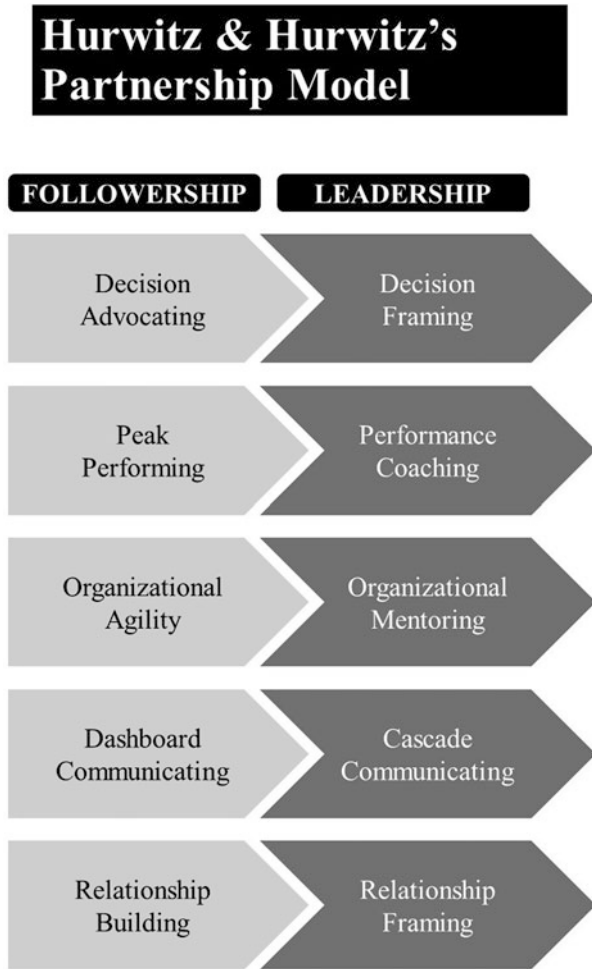


Kellerman (2008) and Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015) provide frameworks for examining followership, leadership, or both. Both frameworks can be applied to a variety of organizational structures across fields in disciplines. However, when discussing followership, it is important to investigate models of followership more in-depth. That is, examining followership specifically by organizational culture.

## Military Models

Understandably, the military arena, due to the nature of the enterprise, establishes followership as a construct to develop. Within any organization, there exists the defining culture. Culturally competent followers and leaders will make changes

**Fig. 2** Hurwitz & Hurwitz’s partnership model. (Note: Adapted from Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015))



within an organization to model respect and foster collaboration across disciplines. Competent followers are prepared to work with leaders and followers of diverse demographic backgrounds by developing inclusive relationships within organizations (Offermann, 2012). In their book *Extreme Ownership* about the United States Navy Sea Air and Land (SEAL) Team, Willink and Babin (2017) discuss how their SEAL team adapted their uniforms (which were adjusted depending on the environment to blend in with civilians) to meet the standards of their partner units of other branches of the military. This was done to show respect for their Army and Marine comrades, who viewed appearance as a measure of professionalism. This willingness to become part of a larger culture helped develop mutual respect by putting their own SEAL Team practices second to the overall unit mission. Willink and Babin (2017)

also cite that leaders must not only lead but be ready to follow when a subordinate is in a better position to develop a plan, make decisions, or lead in specific situations, again putting ego second.

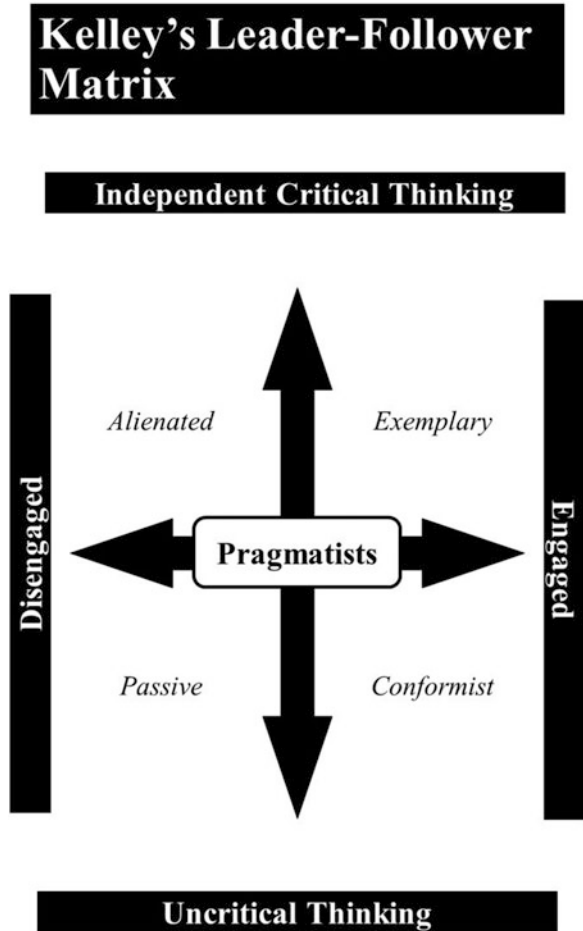
Meilinger (1994) outlined principals of followership (see Fig. 3). Exhibiting good followership mirrors the traits that make for good future leadership. Kelley (1992 & 1996) focused on two behavioral dimensions of effective followership: critical thinking and participation and engagement in the organization (see Fig. 4). Critical thinkers process situational information for implications and possibilities before action, a skill valued by most successful leaders. Participation involves anticipating requirements and planning in accordance with them. Effective

**Fig. 3** Meilinger's ten rules of good followership. (Note: Adapted from Meilinger (1994))

## Meilinger's Ten Rules of Good Followership

1. Don't blame your boss for an unpopular decision or policy; your job is support, not undermine.
2. Fight with your boss if necessary; but do it in private, avoid embarrassing situations, and never reveal to others what was discussed.
3. Make the decision, then run it past the boss; use your initiative.
4. Accept responsibility whenever it is offered.
5. Tell the truth and don't quibble; your boss will be giving advice up the chain of command based on what you said.
6. Do your homework; give your boss all the information needed to make a decision; anticipate possible questions.
7. When making a recommendation, remember who will probably have to implement it. This means you must know your own limitations and weaknesses as well as your strengths.
8. Keep your boss informed of what's going on in the unit; people will be reluctant to tell him or her their problems and successes. You should do it for them, and assume someone will tell the boss about yours.
9. If you see a problem, fix it. Don't worry about who would have gotten the blame or who now gets the praise.
10. Put in more than an honest day's work, but don't ever forget the needs of your family. If they are unhappy, you will be too, and your job performance will suffer accordingly.

**Fig. 4** Kelley's Leader-Follower Matrix. (Note: Adapted from Kelley (1996))



followership involves working well with others, embracing change, accepting responsibility for your actions, building trust, engaging in professional self-development, and communicating with courage. Competent followership from teachers can translate to productive administrative leadership in creating atmospheres where all team members adopt the vision of the administration as their own through communication and joint collaboration (Kelley, 1992, 1996; Maxwell, 2007; Schindler, 2014). Major General Michael Rothstein (2019) developed nine rules for dynamic followership. In them, he writes that most computer general searches focused on leadership (3.8 billion hits) compared to followership (1.1 million hits). Being a great follower is just as important to an organization as being a great leader. In fact, modeling good followership improves the skills needed to lead organizations. See Fig. 5 for Rothstein's Rules of Dynamic Followership.



**Fig. 5** Rothstein's rules of dynamic followership. (Note: Adapted from Rothstein (2019))

## Rothstein's Rules of Dynamic Followership

1. **Think Two Levels Up:**
  - Leaders must contend with different priorities. Understanding those priorities helps you think through operations and add value to your participation on the team (visualize the bigger picture).
2. **Speak Truth to Power:**
  - Disagree professionally, provide constructive criticism, and provide alternative perspectives (behind closed doors). Once a final decision is made, support it.
3. **Bring a Problem; Bring a Solution:**
  - Think in terms of what would fix the situation (logistically, strategically, ethically).
4. **Internalize and Work the Boss's Priorities:**
  - Understand unit and leader mission, vision and values and determine priorities before problems arise.
5. **Give Good Readback:**
  - Make sure you understand the mission and your role in ensuring completion.
6. **Hold Yourself Accountable for Your Performance:**
  - Plan ahead to ensure success.
7. **Don't Pass the Buck:**
  - Be accountable for your own actions.
8. **Demonstrate Professional Loyalty:**
  - Be accountable your unit, group, or organization.
9. **Excel at your Job:**
  - Be a competent and committed professional.

An important facet of disciplined followership includes the courage to speak truth to power (Chaleff, 2009a). In a healthy leadership/followership environment, a courageous follower can assume responsibility, support the leader and/or group, display mutual trust, constructively challenge poor policy and behaviors, participate in systemic change and transformation, and take moral and ethical action (including leaving the organization if necessary). Followers are not position to solely serve leaders. Followers, as well as leaders, serve a shared mission and share a common set of values (Chaleff, 2009a, b). Although this model was conceived in business, it has been embraced through research of military leadership.

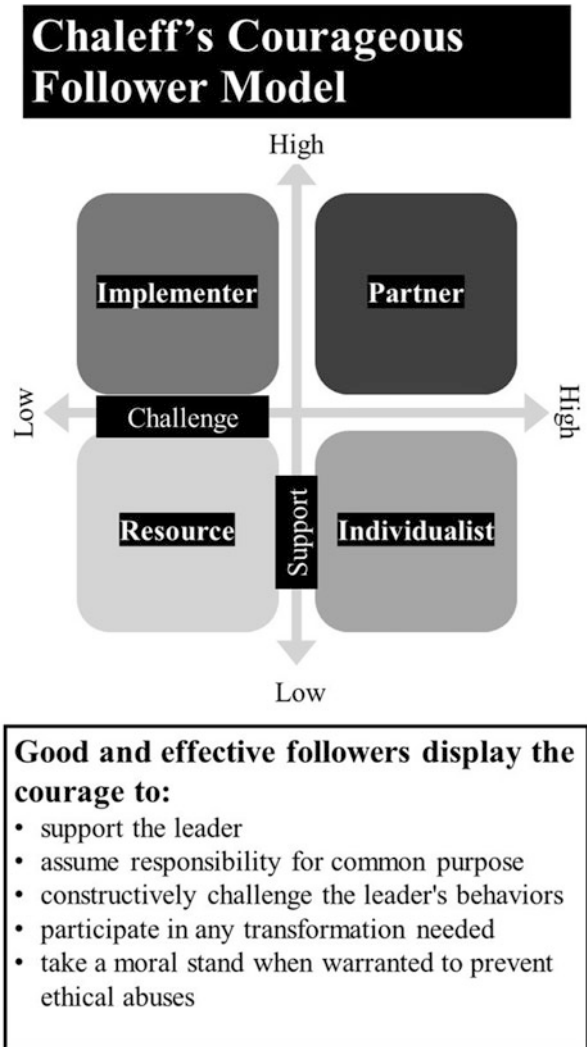
## Business Models

Suda (2013) posits the questions “if followers didn’t exist would we have leaders?” and “how and where do we groom the next leaders?” Research on business organizational structures and human resource management has provided some insight into the leader/follower dynamic. In business, and broadly in society, the idea of followership has a negative connotation. The emphasis on developing leaders and leadership has led to an over-abundant focus on those skills while mostly underappreciating the necessary elements that responsible followership develops for effective leaders. That is not to say that some followers’ behaviors do not warrant poor perception. However, to place the term followers and all those who would be identified as such as a negative is erroneous and shortsighted. Positive and negative types of followers in organizational structures (e.g., business organizations) exist in any system. Kelley (1992) identifies five types of followers (the sheep, the yes-people, the alienated, the pragmatic, and the star followers) based on independent and critical thinking and on active or passive engagement. The more leadership can foster positive followership the better the organization. In fact, company and organizational initiatives do not get accomplished without both good leadership and better followership. Followers provide support for goals and objectives by adding expertise and input to what needs to be accomplished (Business News Daily Editor, 2020).

The dynamics related to good leadership are so intertwined with good followership that some of the same qualities are needed for both. Broadly, effective followership includes displaying commitment, independence, initiative, support, and courage (Suda, 2013). Courage being essentially important in that followers should be empowered to challenge unethical or ineffective leaders who may not value the goals and objectives of the group, team, or organization. Chaleff’s (2009a, b) followership model focuses on dimensions and styles positioned as courage a follower must have when interacting with leadership. See Fig. 6 for components to Chaleff’s (2009a) Courageous Follower Model. Specifically, for effective followership to occur, followers should possess a number of qualities and skills to maximize the outcomes that a team or organization will strive to accomplish. See Fig. 7 for a list of qualities and skills (Business News Daily Editor, 2020; McCallum, 2013).

Ultimately, the creation of effective followers leads to the development of good leaders. McCallum (2013) notes that the stigma of followership, the negative belief of subordination, is a paradoxical exercise; in that, most people in any organization are followers, even those in leadership (i.e., managerial) positions. Weak followership can be a sign of weak leadership. Ineffective leadership can lead to followers with poor examples and execution of work ethic, morale, and goal completion which lead to lost revenue due to dissatisfaction among clients (McCallum, 2013). Business News Daily Editor (2020) acknowledges that being a competent and content follower is a personal choice. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that not everyone wants to be or is cut out to be a leader. Paperwork and bureaucratic demands may not appeal to all individuals. Additionally, the desire to being doing the “real work” or being a part of a team (as opposed to leading it) or personal

**Fig. 6** Chaleff's courageous follower model. (Note: Adapted from Chaleff (2009a))



nonwork decisions influence each person's ambitions in the leader/follower dynamic. Regardless of reason, followership is vital to the success of any group or organization.

### **Educational Models**

The broader field of education, aside from business and military postsecondary education, has fewer studies focused on followership. As with most, Susan Cain's

**Fig. 7** Skills and characteristics of followers. (Note: Adapted from Business News Daily Editor (2020) and McCallum (2013))



(2017) observations about leadership focused on the rush for acceptance to prestigious universities and institutions of education by graduating high school students. Students highlight their leadership skills on their resumes in pursuit of leadership positions in various organizations to increase their chances of acceptance to top-tier and selective universities. Cain (2017) suggests that universities should not focus entirely on leadership, but also excellence, passion, and a desire to contribute beyond the self in service to others (i.e., as followers).

Beyond looking at followership for students entering postsecondary school, Ehrich and English (2012), Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015), and Kellerman (2008) introduce broad models of the leadership/followership dynamic applied to university educational settings. Conversely, while Kellerman's work does not specifically focus

on K-12 educational settings, Taylor and Hill (2017) applied the followership identities to the K-12 school environment. In addition to applying the Kellerman (2008) model to identify teacher follower types, Taylor and Hill (2016) connected followership and leadership as equally important skills and identities that promote collaboration and ethical responsibility to students taught.

Ehrich and English (2012) use the experiences and histories of grassroots movements as a way to better understand leadership and followership dynamics and how these movements can be applied in contemporary educational settings. Through their examination, they create and provide a framework for the leader/follower dynamic in the form of a quadrant-based matrix that focuses on what they deem as categories of change (i.e., reformist and refinement) and approaches to change (i.e., conflict and consensual). Combinations of these factors from their developed cells are represented by the following terms that influence the leader/follower dynamic:

- A: reformist/conflict = tactics of confrontation
- B: reformist/consensual = tactics of collaboration/democracy/distribution
- C: refinement/conflict = conflict avoidance
- D: refinement/consensual = collaborative/democratic/distributive

Ehrich and English (2012) also provide advantages and disadvantages of each approach for establishing the leadership/followership dynamic.

The leader/follower dyad is not always clear cut and the informal leadership chain can be as strong as the formal one (Willink & Babin, 2017). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) discuss four criteria around which the leader/follower dyad can be discussed. They include *leader centrism* (leader as the active agent with influence, who act on rather than with followers, who are the passive receivers of influence and of lesser importance), *entitism* (fixed traits of leaders/followers which exist in isolation, neglecting leader/follower dynamics and relationships), *romanticism* (Leaders as perfect, positive and productive, offering ideal solutions that should be celebrated), and *objectivism* (leadership variables to be measured and controlled in isolation rather than a construct impacted by social interaction individual definitions). The authors contended that studies of leadership must broaden the approach to include social interactions and their influence networks with others to move beyond the four criteria above.

Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015) explore the leader/follower dynamic through the prism of teamwork and collaboration. The authors stress that the increased emphasis on collaboration warrants a reimagining of leadership/followership. In support of their position, they describe the idea of co-flow, which is based on the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Co-flow expands upon the original theory to express a level of motivation and achievement as a group or team of individuals. Along with co-flow, Hurwitz and Hurwitz (2015) describe what they call a FLIP model which stands for followership, leadership, innovation, and partnership.

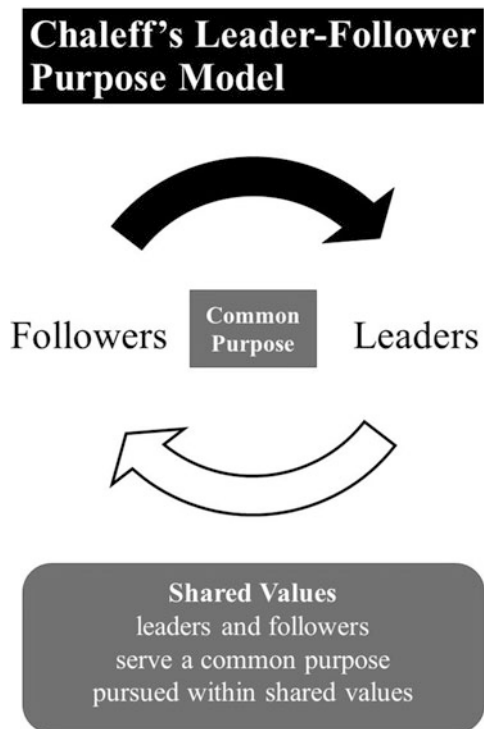
Kellerman (2008) focused specifically on followership and identifying followers by type (i.e., isolates, bystanders, diehards, participants, and activists). Each identified type of follower is further explored based on characteristics that each would exhibit. Taylor and Hill (2017) expanded on the identities and characteristics of

followers by applying Kellerman's (2008) identities to the K-12 school environment. They focused on examples of each type of follower and the behaviors they characterized in scenarios specific for primary, middle, and secondary schools.

## Ethics and Followership Behavior

Kelley (1992) cites values and ethics as a trait of exemplary followers, which feeds courageous and moral acts, even when under significant social pressure. In a healthy organizational environment, leaders and followers share information, maintain shared understanding, and critically assess organizational progress through mutual trust (Department of the Army, 2012). Ira Chaleff (2009a) addresses the responsibility of the follower to be courageous in his book *The Courageous Follower*. Chaleff (2009a) identified key variables needed to prevent the abuse of power. They are proximity and courage. Proximity provides access to exercise the courage to help leaders improve. His dynamic model of followership is based on the common purpose and core values that the leader and follower share. Chaleff (2009a) noted, "followers and leaders both orbit around the same purpose; followers do not orbit around the leader" (p. 13; see Fig. 8). Followership ethics include having the courage

**Fig. 8** Chaleff's leader-follower purpose model.  
(Note: Adapted from Chaleff (2009a) and Chaleff (2009b))



to: (a) assume responsibility for yourself and the organization, (b) serve the leader and a shared common purpose (usually summed up in a stated mission, vision, and values), (c) challenge the behaviors or policies of the leader that conflict with an individual's core values and sense of right and wrong, (d) participate in transformation, and (e) leave ineffective leaders who are detrimental to the organizational common purpose and to disavow destructive leaders.

Competent followers are their own leaders, who believe in their own decisions and integrity, and have the power to make choices about whether and how they follow and to withdraw support of the leader if their actions are not in line with the followers values (Chaleff, 2009a). Competent followers/leaders develop relationships of trust up the chain with their leaders and down the chain with subordinates. This trust goes both ways. When a follower moves above peers to a leadership position they need to plan and lead, give simple, clear, concise direction (this is easier to accomplish if leadership and trust are already well developed). They need to maintain humbleness (check their ego), take input from former peers (now subordinates), and to listen (Willink, 2019). When courage and moral acts are not fostered, the organization erodes through neglect and a lack of trust (Paolozzi, 2013). When deviance is normalized, and unacceptable practices or a lack of standards are reinforced, they become the organizational norm and can lead to disaster. Often these normalizations occur when individuals and organizations are under time and budget constraints, and shortcuts impede safe acts (e.g., BP oil spill, Chernobyl disaster, health care, and combat). In a fluid environment where professional discretion is allowed to ensure the spirit of the law through challenging times, this normalization and erosion is less likely to occur (Thomas & Berg, 2014).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Educators are expected to be a society of caring, creative, and committed people who are called to service rather than stature. This positionality goes toward recruiting the type of teachers that will excel in our schools. Excellence, however, is not just comprised of good leadership. It is a function of inspiring leadership that encourages effective followership. Followers make up the bulk of the teaching force regardless of grade level or school setting. Cultivating a motivated follower force of competent and empowered teachers is in the best interest of our schools and the students we teach. These qualities are explicitly expressed in statements from Kelly (1992):

- Quality followership is the ultimate test of leadership.
- Exemplary followers add value above and beyond by championing new ideas and increasing competence through self-development.

The benefits of competent, ethical followership with shared values cannot be overstated. These benefits include increased academic success through student/teacher engagement, positive school climate, increased accountability and attendance, a reduction in teacher turnover, and reduced office referrals. Administrators

who understand relational dynamics and foster effective followership and collaboration skills in teachers will reap the benefits in enhanced school climate and overall professional effectiveness. In school settings, as there are more teachers (as followers) than administrators (as leaders), and having a positive dynamic is essential for success. Cox et al. (2010) suggested that the leader-follower relationship could be interchangeable.

Furthering this notion, Hollander (1992) described effective followers as having the potential to demonstrate effective leadership capabilities. Ultimately, understanding the types and behaviors of followers can enhance a leader's ability to lead. It also helps develop those who aspire to be successful future leaders. Developing collaboration skills is important to enhancing the distributed leadership responsibilities across principals, assistant principals, and teachers within schools and across districts (Crockett, 2007). Understanding effective followership and nurturing the practices associated with good followership can provide the basis for effective leadership later. These foundational skills can set the example to model professionalism and active followership to other teachers (Price, 2008). Developing good leadership, followership, and collaboration skills are essential to developing effective leaders and healthy school climates as we make the transition to twenty-first-century schools.

McGrath (2007) stresses continuous communication and notes that when classroom teachers are oriented toward inclusion and collaboration the following occurs: (a) professionals share leader-follower responsibilities; (b) they establish goals that can be achieved; (c) they understand the broader mission to accomplish; and (c) they work together to solve problems on behalf of the student. For these reasons, it is imperative to develop strategies aimed at reducing stress, increasing collaboration, sharing leader/follower responsibilities, improving school climate, and developing effective future administrative leaders by demonstrating and encouraging good followership as professional development. Coupling followership skills with the skills requisite to overcoming barriers can be extremely helpful to educators, especially since training time for teachers is limited (Lerman et al., 2004). These strategies have the potential to enhance retention, job satisfaction, collaboration, professionalism, and improve the teaching environment for all students. Administrators (i.e., leaders) should demonstrate and encourage the skills for effective collaboration as a model for followers to foster a positive working environment. In examining how individuals become leaders, it is important to study the origins of leadership which lie in the practices of good followership, particularly related to education and the educational outcomes for students.

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# African American Women Superintendents **33**

## Leadership, Schooling, and Social Change

Tonya Bailey and Judy A. Alston

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### Abstract

African American women have always been in positions for formal and informal leadership. Yet, there has been a consistent underrepresentation of the African American women in the superintendency. Additionally, there has been the lack of published literature on the African American female superintendent. In the larger microculture, the lack of representation of African American women that are actually in leadership positions is across the board in all organizations. There is still the lack of research on, about, and by African American women in leadership in general and more specifically African American women superintendents. For many who are African American women leaders, the call to leadership is deep and it does indeed represent the gospel or the “good news” that they have to share. Many heed the call to leadership because they are clear of the plans for and purposes of their lives as

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African American women. Their gospel is a gospel of education, liberation, and love. Using the Foucault lenses presence, memory, and concomitance, this chapter will illumine how the lived experiences of African American women superintendents can lead change and reconstruct theory and practice in the field of educational leadership.

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### Keywords

Servant leadership · Transformational leadership · Transformative leadership · Social justice · Social activism · African American women superintendents · Spirituality

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## Foucault's Frame

### The Field of Memory

In the field of memory, Foucault (1982) noted the historic discourse, research, and teachings. In the case of this chapter's focus, the field of educational leadership, it is seen that while there are some historical beliefs that are no longer accepted and seen merely as precursors, there are also some antecedents of our original ancestral knowledge that ground and inform the leadership practice of African American women today.

### The Field of Presence

In this area, all forms of practice must be open to constant scrutiny; so-called "evidence based" research is a form of legitimization of one form of validation and truth telling; hegemonic practices depend upon forms of political power; knowledge is never neutral and is an expression of power. Kusch (1991) stated, "the field of presence of Boyleans contained the philosophical discourse on vacuism and plenism only as something to be rejected and transformed into the language of experiments" (p. 68).

### The Field of Concomitance

In the field concomitance, Foucault (1982) noted that it consists of statements outside the discourse that serve as points of analogy or higher authority, such as cosmology for natural history. These are statements that are transferable and usable to current contexts.

### Discontinuities and Ruptures

For Foucault (1994), discontinuities and ruptures were a part of the flow of history and things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way from one era to the next. These are paradigm shifts. Black women leaders in education are a true paradigm shift from the dominant narrative and models.

This is who I am, this is what I do  
 I'll spread the gospel, share the good news  
 This is who I am, this is what I do

I'll spread the gospel, share the good news  
Lord, You knew me long before I was here  
Shaped my destiny, had a plan for me  
Then you sent me to the world to proclaim  
Your love and grace, so in spite of what men say  
This is who I am, this is what I do. . .  
(Price, 2006)

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## Introduction

Not until the late twentieth century did literature on leadership make gender an observable factor. There have been some studies that suggested that there are differences between male and female leaders, while others suggested that there are no significant differences (Adkinson, 1981; Frasher & Frasher, 1979; Shakeshaft, 1989). However, most of the characteristics that are associated with leadership are those with masculine connotations. In addition to the lack of “gendered leadership research,” there was also a lack of research and problematic research of “raced people” individuals who “have faced discrimination because of race and/or class, and have been oppressed psychologically, physically, educationally, or economically” (Tate, 1997). Without such culturally inclusive perspectives (gender and race), the field of leadership is weakened. In addition, without such perspectives, current theories of leadership remain narrow in scope lacking a more inclusive frame (as cited in Gooden, 2002, p. 135).

Race-neutral theorizing (Parker, 2005) has been the mainstay in the study of leadership. White male privilege has been the standard to define, research, and report about leadership. African American women do not fit neatly in these various models of leadership as presented. Understanding the intersections of work and family in black women’s lives is key to clarifying the overarching economy of domination and leadership (Collins, 2000). In the famous words of Sojourner Truth’s rhetorical question, “Ain’t I a Woman,” Black women have been addressing the concerns of White male domination and hegemony from the very beginning.

Black women have played and continue to play a pivotal and prominent role in leadership, from ancient periods with Egypt’s Queen Hatshepsut to the twenty-first century leadership of US VP Kamala Harris and many others. As Alston and McClellan noted (2011):

By contextualizing Black women’s experiences as leaders within traditional leadership theories, we are answering the call of scholars (Allen, 1997; Walters & Smith, 1999; Walton, 1994) who beseech the black academics to theorize and analyze the contributions of black women within leadership concepts and definitions. (p. 30)

## Historical Context

For too long, an African American woman leader has been an oxymoronic concept (Alston & McClellan, 2011). The fact is African American women have always been in positions for formal and informal leadership. Historically, by the 1930s, African

American women in educational leadership were represented by what was known as a Jeanes supervisors (Alston, 2005). The vision of Anna T. Jeanes, a Philadelphia Quaker, was to hire and train college educated, African American teachers to supervise African American schools and to improve African American communities. Given that background and believing that in order to effect educational change, many African American women choose to leave their lower-level administrative and teaching positions in search of a leadership role as a superintendent (Tillman & Cochran, 2000). "African American female educators and African American female superintendents, however small in number, demonstrate that they are well prepared to lead" (Alston, 2005, p. 681).

Yet, the underrepresentation of the African American female superintendent and the lack of published literature on the African American female superintendent is problematic. The foremother in research on African American women in educational leadership, Barbara Jackson (1999) stated, "without accurate information, we cannot measure progress in equity or identity and thus remedy the condition of underutilization of women [and persons of color] school leaders" (p. 144). Not only is the physical presence of the African American woman absent from the superintendency, but also missing is the African American women's lived experiences and perceptions as a superintendent (Shakeshaft, 1989). Brunner and Peyton Caire (2000) argued that by no means are African American women superintendents "invisible to themselves. . . their scarcity in school districts makes their practices in the role of superintendent invisible to most African American women and others in the academy who may aspire to the position" (p. 537). Alston (1999) submitted that the literature on the career paths of female superintendents, especially African American female superintendents does not exist, primarily because the current literature on superintendents' careers documents the career paths of men, and this literature has been produced and promulgated by men, specifically White, cis-gendered, heterosexual men.

## Present-Day Context

Another part of this problem hinges on the lack representation of African American women that are actually in leadership positions across the board in all organizations. To specifically look at the field of education, the U.S. Department of Education (2018) noted:

In fall 2016, of the 1.5 million faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 53% were full time and 4% were part time. Faculty include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, assisting professors, adjunct professors, and interim professors. Of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2016, 41% were White males; 35% were White females; 6% were Asian/Pacific Islander males; 4% were Asian/Pacific Islander females; 3% each were African American males, African American females, and Hispanic males; and 2% were Hispanic females.

By the same token, a closer look into higher education leadership positions reveal that in toto, there is a very small percentage of women of color in the professoriate. According to a National Center for Education Statistics report, among full-time

professors across all disciplines, 1% were African American females, 1% were Hispanic females, 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander females, and making up less than 1% each were professors who were American Indian/Alaska Native and of two or more races (NCES, 2016).

In the same vein for public schools, in 2017–2018, about 78% of public school principals were White, 11% were African American, and 9% were Hispanic. This research also showed that 46% of public school principals were male and 54% were female in 2017–2018 (NCES, 2020). Furthermore, African American women represented only 12.9% (6340) of the principalships (90,410) in public schools in the USA, and 23% (1290) of those women held a doctoral degree (NCES, 2020).

Even with these numbers, the fact remains that there is still the lack of research on, about, and by African American women in leadership in general and more specifically African American women superintendents. The words from Brunner and Peyton (2000) still ring true that

“. . .there is still very little published specifically about African American female superintendents or other women of color. Certainly, the lack of published research about African American female superintendents is further evidence that they are scarcely represented in the superintendency ranks.” (p. 534)

The words of Kelly Price in the abovementioned song, “This is Who I Am” are some of the guiding words for many who are African American women leaders. The call to leadership is deep and it does indeed represent the gospel or the “good news” that they have to share. Many of them heed the call to leadership because they are clear of the plans for and purposes of their lives as African American women. Their gospel is a gospel of education, liberation, and love. Using the Foucault (1982) lenses presence, memory, and concomitance, this chapter will illumine how the lived experiences of African American women superintendents can lead change and reconstruct theory and practice in the field of educational leadership.

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## **Out with the Old (Memory)**

Systems of education (PreK-graduate education) claim to promote diversity and want to increase social justice, but the daily activities and functions of the both perpetuate the “good ole boy” network (Alston, 1999; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000). There must be a creation and construction of a new way of doing and being in the field of educational leadership that is inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially just. While the position of superintendent has been a gender biased, male-dominated position (Alston, 2005; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000), it cannot and should not remain that way. Through the redevelopment of leadership training programs and improved hiring practices among school boards and search firms, African American female superintendents can contribute to closing the gender and race biased superintendency gap.

Women should have equal access to leadership positions within “formal structures,” like the superintendency, which have been historically “systematically advantageous to men” (Levac, 2008, p. 41). Search firms can be a barrier for African

American female superintendents, primarily because of the role they play in who they present as a candidate for the superintendency to school boards. The research has shown that African American women are often excluded from the selection process. The barrier is not in the application and interviewing portion of the recruitment process but the “problem lies in the decisions made by those in power” (Brown, 2014, p. 577).

How appropriate for this present discussion as African American women who are most often excluded in foundational and secondary discussions, examples, and research in the leadership field. The fact is that African American women have historically been present in lead positions throughout human history, from ancient Egypt to this contemporary, twenty-first century current day. As noted by McPherson (2013), African American women have been present in leadership roles within the household and developed their skills inside and outside of classroom before and after the Civil War.

In her research on African American women superintendents, Bailey (2018) found that their lived experiences served as the advantage of them being an African American superintendent. The participants in her study shared that as an African American superintendent, they were able to connect more with the community and with the students. One participant in the research noted the following:

*Obviously, serving as an African American superintendent to primarily African American students, I think it's an advantage. I think that for me it's been beneficial because these are my children. Just keeping it real; these are my children. I think that it has helped me in actually knowing the community, knowing the culture; and knowing what to expect and what not to expect; and know how to deal with it effectively. So, I think that that has been an advantage.*

Another African American woman superintendent stated:

*The advantage, you truly relate with the on the ground troops...the teachers, parents, students, that is the advantage. If you have a White male sitting here, particularly in an urban district, the chances that you relate to my plight are slim to none. I think I have the advantage of being an African American female in this community. I am going to say you are more than just the superintendent; you have been called to heal this community, to unite this community and because I think I have the passion, now my people understand the passion.*

As African American women in the role of the superintendent, these women have a greater ability to connect with the students and community, but also as African Americans they understand that they are role models for the marginalized and the disadvantaged students. They are in positions to advocate for these students, faculty, staff, and community as well. These women serve as what Horsford (2012) called bridges which is as an effective model for leading diverse school communities where race and class divides continue to stifle learning opportunities for large numbers of poor, Black, Latino, and immigrant children and youth.



Another participant in the Bailey (2018) study shared that it was important for the students to see an African American who had beaten the odds and who overcame difficulties.

*I feel the biggest advantage is being a model. When I walk into the schools and the kids see me. We have a lot of disadvantaged kids in this district. So, when I walk through the school buildings and they see me, it is a source of pride for those children. I am an example of somebody who has beaten the odds. I am the person in charge and the kids appreciate and like that.*

As a result of these experiences and being able to overcome these challenges, African American female superintendents are more apt to inspire their students toward achieving success because they are a living example (Tillman & Cochran, 2000) and an advocate.

Along with being an African American as an advantage within their roles as superintendent, African American female superintendents are more aware of the lower expectations placed on poor and minority students by educators because this may have been a barrier for them to overcome in their own educational experiences. The participants within the Bailey (2018) study talked about their plight to make education equitable for all students. The superintendents shared their intolerance for the low expectation being placed on minority and disadvantaged students. One noted the following:

*I would say in African American leadership; I don't want to hear excuses about what kids can't do. I don't want to hear the excuses about where they come from; what they don't have and how unprepared or their situations at home. I don't think we are doing our kids any favors by giving them a free pass because they are impoverished. In fact, I think we are doing a disservice to kids by writing them off for those reasons. Because the only way out and I am living proof; the only way out of that situation is through education. I am going to continue to advocate for all kids, but particularly those kids...disadvantaged, special education, ESL, African American, girls in STEM.*

These African American women superintendents understand the importance of “being and becoming” in their positions. Being and becoming present (not locked in a past that constrained them) is central to their success in their leadership roles. It is the South African Zulu concept of Ubuntu – “I am because we are” (Williams, 2018). Simply put, it is about humanity, caring, and advocating for one another.

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## **Servant Leadership and Spirituality (Presence)**

For African American women superintendent, the field of presence is planted in her ancestral DNA – those shoulders upon which they stand and are grounded in the servant leadership and spirituality of their culture. These are core to their belief systems. Through her ability to possess a strong sense of efficacy, dedicate herself to the

education and well-being of the children, and the ability to foster relationships and unanimity, the African American female superintendent is able to demonstrate her servant leadership (Alston, 2005). This servant leadership is often grounded in her spirituality. For many African Americans, spirituality is at the core of who they are and it connects them to their past, present, and future. It is what Dantley (2003) defined as “that internal mechanism that guides human beings to make meaning for their lives, to establish purpose for themselves, to enter into connections or relationships with others, and serves as the facility for people to create through inspired imagination” (p. 3). This connection between spirituality and servant leadership is illuminated in the context of how they relate to others (Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999). For many of these women, their spirituality is directly aligned with their religious beliefs and practices.

Bailey (2018) found that many African American women superintendents in sharing their lived experiences that a strong sense of faith and belief in God surfaced. As servant leaders, the African American female superintendents in this study demonstrated a strong belief in God. The participants believed that they had a purpose and a calling from God in their lives to serve as the superintendents of their school districts. They attributed their successes as superintendents to their faith and spiritual connection to God. Prayer is something that participants referenced. Prayer was a strategy for overcoming barriers. It was also used as a support for staff. One participant noted that she would be willing to pray with staff, when and if they requested. The idea of prayer as a way to address barriers or troubled situations promotes the message that, “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive,” (Matthew 21:22 [New King James Version](#)). This is the action of the critical servant leader; it is the connection to marginalized communities and people; it is the willingness and commitment to care and promote equity, fairness, and justice (Alston & McClellan, 2011). It is the construction of their [our] own type of leadership based on our individual and collective epistemologies and ontologies.

The primary concern of servant leaders is serving others; they have a social responsibility to be concerned with the “least privileged” (Alston & McClellan, 2011, p. 58) and to recognize them as equal stakeholders in the life of the organization (Northouse, 2010). Alston and McClellan (2011) further argued that African American women leaders throughout history have surmounted the solicitation and execution of critical servant leadership within their communities through their service and activism. The African American woman superintendent as a critical servant leader is willing to take risks to lead in poorly managed and maintained urban school districts that have a high minority population (Alston, 2005; Alston & McClellan, 2011; Jackson, 1999). She does this through her ability to possess a strong sense of efficacy, dedicate herself to the education and well-being of the children, and the ability to foster relationships and unanimity (Alston, 2005). This type of leadership builds on the advocacy of the aforementioned field of presence and constructs the space for the field of memory.

As shown in the research of Bailey (2018), each participant shared that an advantage that they had as African American female superintendents was being able to develop the relationships with their community, parents, and students. These superintendents shared how making education equitable for all students was a major priority and that being an advocate for marginalized students was a major focus for

them in their roles as superintendent. In other words, this critical servant leadership is not just a modern-day lip service activity. This is a way of being for many African American women superintendents and is in their leadership DNA to navigate the world this way. It is the belief in the notion of reciprocity and commitment to service to others that is the goal for these women.

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## **Social Change and Activism (Concomitance)**

Concomitance is defined as the fact of existing or occurring together with something else ([lexico.com](http://lexico.com)). This is work that is grounded in the field of presence. For African American women superintendents, this is viewed as her being a representation for social change. Social change is the transforming of cultures and social institutions due to human interactions and relationships (Dunfey, 2019). Through her daily interactions and transformational as well as transformative leadership, the African American female superintendent is an activist for social change. The educational system as it is known in America is inequitable to the underrepresented and marginalized populations. When considering leadership as it pertains to women and women of color, transformational leadership is apposite because it can be altered to ensure that leadership responds thoughtfully to underrepresented and marginalized populations (Levac, 2008).

These women are effective leaders who have a passion for social change and they “engage in discourse analysis; deconstruct the discourse; and strategically determine the most effective method of intervention to have a transformative impact on the lives” (Pratt-Clarke, 2010, p. 41) of those children and adults entrusted to them. This is social activism on a very needed level. For so many underrepresented and marginalized groups, it is often noted that if you can’t see it, then you can’t imagine being it. So, the very presence of African American women superintendents is an act of advocacy and social activism.

Hudson, Wesson, and Marcano (1998) shared that an educational leadership quality of African American female superintendents is their activism for all children. Not only is she a change agent but also because she has concern for all students; the African American female superintendent is a transformational and transformative leader (Alston & McClellan, 2011; Brown, 2014; Northouse, 2010; Shields, 2010).

## **Transformational and Transformative Leadership**

According to Levac (2008), women who continue to be excluded from positions of leadership, like the superintendency, can recognize the benefit in these newer perspectives on leadership, such as transformational, because they highlight their extraordinary leadership skills displayed in the maintenance of their families, churches, and communities. One explanation for this is their ability to take positive attributes of their cross-cultural differences and combine them with empirically effective leadership practices (e.g., transformational leadership), which for them has resulted in different and often positive outcomes. Some believe that

transformational leaders are not just exceptional leaders but leaders who can change their environment (Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992).

Many of these women take the step from transformational leadership into transformative leadership. Transformative leadership in this twenty-first century and beyond sometimes requires stepping out of the boat like our foremothers and forefathers, stepping out of the traditional, the comfortable. Weiner (2003) noted that transformative leadership is “an exercise of power and authority that begins with questions of justice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility” (p. 89). Furthermore, Shields (2010) stated, “transformative leadership takes account of the ways in which the inequities of the outside world affect the outcomes of what occurs internally” (p. 584). This African American woman transformational and transformative leader is what Alston (2018) named as a Refined Revolutionary: one who has survived the processing, become improved and stepped out of the boat to lead in a bold and subversively profound manner toward a new destiny.

## **Transformational, Transformative Change Agent for Equitable Education**

Combining the transformational, transformative, and opportunity for change, one participant in Bailey’s (2018) study discussed a need for change in her district and exhibited attributes of being a change agent. She stated:

*They want you to be the face of things and what I have pushed was that I’m going to be the face, but the plan is going to be something that we work on together. So, one of the first things that I did was start on a five-year strategic plan. That’s the first thing we did here and part of that plan was; here’s where we are academically; here’s where we are financially, and in order to sustain that we cannot go further. So, I brought together communities, students and parents and we worked for six months on a five-year strategic plan which included an equity goal.*

Even though the responsibility of the transformational and transformative leader is to introduce the initiatives that will bring about change, in the end the followers need to express their true desires for change (Alston & McClellan, 2011). This African American woman superintendent was not only able to bring about change by influencing the community, but also, she was able to display her ability to be “self-effacing, stimulating others to put forth their best efforts rather than making [herself] too active or prominent” (Brawley as cited in Alston, 2008). This superintendent noted:

*The community wanted that, they said we believe that this district has not focused on equity and there are a lot of inequities; so, our go to is equity. So, we put the plan together and it was a new mission. We came up with a decision-making criteria of how we are going to make decisions in this district, even our core values. It was even important to the community that we established some consistency in programming for all students. So, that really gave me the*

*opportunity to say if I am going to focus on inequalities then the focus is on the goal and not [my] focus. The plan cannot be [my] plan; it has to be something that we all agree on and come together; something we can live with and it has to outlive [me]. I had the Board adopt the strategic plan. I was able to push for an equity policy. So, we are the only district in the county who has an equity policy.*

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Oftentimes for African American women superintendents a common self-reflecting statement surfaces: “why bother?” “Why bother” with the unfairness of accountability; “why bother” with the glass ceiling, the glass escalator, and the concrete ceiling; “why bother” with the politics and demands; and “why bother” with choosing a career over family or even having a family. Regardless of the “why bother” statement, African American women superintendents have chosen to be the leaders of their school districts, displaying their ability to be transformational, transformative, visionary, critical servant leaders.

In order for more of these women to take their right places in the superintendency, some changes must occur within the various systems. The literature has suggested that colleges and universities have shown a lack of commitment toward diversifying their superintendent training programs (Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Therefore, a leadership recommendation for superintendent training programs is for there to be a more diversified recruitment process. It is suggested that indicators be in place to monitor the number of women of color admitted into these training programs. This recruitment process should be reevaluated yearly to address any cultural differences or gender-biases that may impede women and women of color from entering into the training program.

With a large portion of women excluded from literature, an assumption is made that educational leaders are male (Alston & McClellan, 2011). This perpetuated flaw needs to be challenged by the superintendent training programs. It is recommended that the superintendent training programs include literature that reflects the educational leadership experiences of women and women of color. The course work in administration or educational leadership programs naturally reflects the White male perspective but is a disservice to African American women entering the field of educational leadership because the experience and perspective is different for women of color (Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000). A recommendation for superintendent training programs is to incorporate literature authored by women and women of color within the curriculum. In addition to this, it is recommended that superintendent training programs have existing African American, Latino, and Asian female superintendents share their perspectives and lived experiences with both male and female aspiring superintendents.

As an avenue toward closing the gap of a male-dominated industry, it is also suggested that superintendent training programs should prepare aspiring African American women in the area of “self-recruitment and self-retention” (Brown, 2014, p. 583). Superintendent training programs should develop curricula that teach women of color various ways of how to market themselves so that they can be considered for superintendent positions. Rooted within the concept of self-

recruitment and self-retention are the concepts of mentoring and support networks, which are also strategies of success for African American women who aspire to be superintendents (Alston, 1999, 2000; Anderson, 2000; Brown, 2014; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). As a result of this information, it is recommended that superintendent training programs provide African American women with mentors. The superintendent training program should have the resources to connect aspiring African American female superintendents with other superintendents. There should be an assertive effort on the part of the superintendent training program to connect aspiring African American female superintendents with other African American female superintendents or women of color in educational leadership.

In the end, the resiliency of the African American woman allows her to place the focus on the whole student, ensuring that every student receives a quality, equitable education, that prepares the student for the global community. African American women leaders have been and will continue to be sempiternal in our commitment to our advocacy (presence), their service, (memory), and their activism (concomitance) because they were made for such a time as this.

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# Re-thinking Education Business Leadership and Its Purposes **34**

Karen Starr

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## Abstract

Global free market neoliberalism has spurred widespread change in education’s purposes, policies, and practices, with concomitant repercussions for school business. As a consequence, school business demands and accountabilities continue to escalate in scope and complexity, while governments, education authorities, and school communities increasingly appreciate the importance of specialist business leadership in schools. This chapter documents the work, impact, subsequent rise, and rapid professionalization of school business leaders as pervasive policy imperatives continue to influence school business priorities, before discussing issues in this field that are looming across the developed world. Finally, the chapter proposes some foundational evocations for future developments and research in this emerging area of education leadership.

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**Keywords**

School business leadership · School business management · Education business

**The Field of Memory**

School business “managers”/bursars positioned as backroom functionaries; school business “managers” without formal qualifications who learnt “on-the-job”; “business” as a dirty word in education.

**The Field of Presence**

Education business influenced by global free market neoliberalism; school business “management” refocused to emphasize business “leadership”; education business repositioned as socially focused, socially responsible business; the rise of specific school business professionals; the professionalization of school business personnel; school business leaders enable school principals to concentrate on teaching and learning.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Increasing importance placed on astute and competent education business leadership; education business leaders require business skills in addition to specific education-related knowledge; school business professionals are leaders who work in leadership teams alongside education leaders.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

“Hidden” education business practices; a dearth of research interest in the business aspects of leading education institutions or in the education business profession; “anti-business” sentiments and a lack of understanding about business in education.

**Critical Assumptions**

Education business leadership is very different from other forms of business: it is business for good, business with a social purpose; every education decision has a business implication; increasing expectations that education resources (inputs) will lead to measurable learning enhancement (outputs).

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**Introduction**

Worldwide, education is BIG BUSINESS. From early learning to higher education, from basic training to vocational education to professional learning, from knowledge transfer to knowledge creation – no matter what form it takes, where it is conducted, or at what level – education is a multi-trillion dollar industry. Education supplies the world’s insatiable appetite for learning and creates millions of jobs through its continual need for services, products, and facilities and stimulates countless millions of ancillary enterprises built on supplying its needs (Starr, 2012a). Education would

not exist without a host of business activities that are essential to enabling and supporting it – business work that is extensive and never-ending.

It is staggering, therefore, that this essential and fundamental area of education is greeted with general disinterest and receives so little attention in education research (Aldridge, 2008; O’Sullivan, Thody, & Wood, 1999). The work of education business leaders and managers, who are responsible for overseeing this extensive business activity, is likewise, under-theorized. Hence, even though education business work is expanding exponentially, a paucity of research reveals a very incomplete public picture of this hidden yet critically important field of endeavor and its labor force. Amazingly, many texts on education leadership pay scant attention or elide mention of education business altogether.

While all organizations at every level of education conduct a host of business functions and rely on the work of a host of employees to undertake myriad business activities, this chapter focuses specifically on schools and those employed to lead school business. First the chapter focuses on the functions of school business leaders and the changing nature and impact of the school business profession. The chapter then discusses looming issues before concluding with a series of contentions that underpin education business and its distinctiveness.

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## The Rise of the School Business Leader

Global free market neoliberalism has intensified the focus on school leadership and improvement. Education policy has been increasingly focused on fundamental neoliberal tenets – individualism, autonomy, competition, privatization, choice, efficiency, productivity, improvement, innovation, entrepreneurialism, and emphasizing accountability and performativity – while governments expect greater value for money, enhanced “outputs,” and systemic risk reduction (Starr, 2021 forthcoming). One common policy move across nations has been increasing institutional autonomy as “small government,” individualism, choice, and competition imperatives are pursued in neoliberal education policy (see Starr, 2019a). The USA and Canada’s empowered district school business model (where school business officials and their teams work closely with school superintendents and school boards to oversee school provisioning and services to students within a defined geographical area); Canada’s provincial-specific variations of site-based management (such as Alberta’s public charter schools); England’s academy schools and multi-academy trusts; Australia’s Independent Public Schools initiatives and “default autonomy” policies; and New Zealand’s school restructurings since the 1980s *Tomorrow’s Schools* reforms – are all forms of school autonomy with the rationale of driving up school performance outcomes by devolving decision-making authority and responsibility to the local level. In many of these jurisdictions, each school has a dedicated school business leader (such as in Australia, New Zealand, UK – except in the case of very small rural or remote schools where services may be provided by business services hubs that work across several schools). They are referred to with

titles such as Manager of Corporate Services in Schools, School Business Manager, School Business Official, and Director of Finance and Administration, for example.

Neoliberal policy motivations and their concomitant accountabilities are inherent in reforms impacting directly on school business and its leadership, with much work that used to be conducted at the systems level being diverted to schools, making schools more businesslike and attentive to business and governance issues (Aldridge, 2008; Bottery, 1994; Starr, 2012b, 2019a, 2021 forthcoming). Neoliberal policy ambitions have, therefore, accelerated growing recognition that effective education business management is an essential component of education leadership.

Schools must prepare and operate budgets; hire and remunerate staff; pay for goods and services; maintain campuses, assets, and resources; observe legislative and policy mandates; manage risk; and control communications, public relations, image, and reputation. They are overseen by, and report to, independent school boards. Schools cannot avoid “doing” and managing their business. In many respects, managing education business *is* the same as managing any other business endeavor. The difference is the organization’s core focus and important social function.

Schools are important community assets, and the public expects them to operate as smoothly, efficiently, and effectively as possible. Propitious education business decisions save schools money and time, support the work of school leaders and teachers, enhance the fulfillment of strategic education goals, and improve learning experiences and opportunities for students. School business leaders and their teams are integral to every aspect of successful schools.

Individuals leading school business come from diverse backgrounds, possess various qualifications and skill sets, and work within all kinds of education institutions at all levels of education, in sectarian and non-sectarian organizations. They work in publicly and privately funded institutions, as well as education institutions that are “for profit” such as proprietary colleges and publicly traded companies.

There is ample evidence to suggest that schools operate more effectively when they use the services of a qualified school business leader/official (National College, 2011; Southworth, 2010). Leading school business demands specific education-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions, in addition to business and, increasingly, governance expertise. Expected requisites include:

- Delineated technical knowledge, skills, and competencies (relating to school administration, finance, human resource management, marketing, plant and facilities, asset and ICT management, for example)
- Non-negotiables: trustworthiness, integrity, honesty, reliability, respect, courtesy, and time-management skills
- Effective communication skills, risk aversion, ability to work effectively with others and a commitment to equity and inclusion, highly developed “people” skills to work with and provide service to teachers, students, parents, governing councillors, education authorities, suppliers, and the general public
- Capabilities to lead and develop staff, report to and work with governing councillors, and work in a distributed school leadership environment

- Taking a broader outlook on education and the school business profession beyond the school – actively participating in discussions and actions for improvement, including committing to continuous professional learning
- Entrepreneurship, taking professional initiative for improvements
- Working outside and beyond usual hours of employment as required to get work completed (Starr, 2012a, 2019b, 2021 forthcoming; Stevenson & Tharpe, 1999)

School business leaders, like school principals, have roles that have intensified – their attention is diverted in quick succession from one task/situation/meeting/phone call to another. Their work spans an enormous range of activities and responsibilities and is continually interrupted. Demands on the role are increasing, as are expectations. Current job descriptions – where they exist - do not fully represent the range of tasks and responsibilities undertaken by school business officials. Further, the role is expanding and becoming more complex as expectations are heightened, work commitments grow, and accountabilities intensify (Starr, 2012a, 2019b; see also Armstrong, 2018).

Within this context, expectations for school business leaders to be involved in strategic governance decisions and to play a more visible role within the education system are heightened. School business leaders are expected to demonstrate initiative to benefit schools – for example, seeking new funding sources, collaborating with other schools or institutions to secure mutual benefits, and saving time and money to focus finite resources on learning and teaching (Starr, 2012b; O’Sullivan, Thody & Wood, 2000). They have to be strategic and future-thinking, ensure legislative and regulatory compliance, and oversee education administration (Aldridge, 2008; Moorcroft & Summerson, 2006; Southworth, 2010; Summerson & Green, 2010).

However, having professionals “taking care of business” and leading the gamut of school business and administrative responsibilities is a relatively recent phenomenon. Previously school principals had to control or do this work themselves. The status and standing of school business leaders has thus changed rapidly, from backroom book-keeper to a strategic leader of business and administration (see Starr, 2012a, Chap. 2).

Education authorities expect continual school improvement and enhanced student learning achievement in all schools, so there is growing awareness that school principals should primarily focus their efforts on learning and teaching and not be diverted by time-consuming and increasingly extensive business and accountability tasks. To this end, there is a trend for school business leaders to go beyond leading usual business activities to oversee much of the work previously undertaken by principals and teachers, for example, timetabling, yard duty, student enrolment, and managing student learning record-keeping.

Now considered indispensable members of school leadership teams, school business officials lead and manage myriad responsibilities emanating from within and outside schools. Mounting and more complex business imperatives have positioned school business leadership and management as a “fledgling” profession (Moorcroft & Summerson, 2006), which has taken off, such as been the growth and need in this field. Southworth (2010) refers to this emergent acknowledgment of education business professionals as a quiet “revolution.”

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## Leadership and Positioning

School business leaders manage and lead “the other side of the school” – the business, administrative, compliance, services, assets, resources, information, and governance side; the side of the school that also has its own staff for whom business leaders are responsible for building capacity, ensuring work quality, developing teams, and fulfilling expectations for innovation and improvement; and the side of the school behind every aspect of educational provisioning and delivery (Armstrong, 2018; Moorcroft & Summerson, 2006; Odden & Busch, 1998). School business leaders advise principals and governing councils and take a leading role in education business decisions – they are education leaders (see, e.g., Grieve, 2014; Marchant, 2018; Starr, 2012b; Woods, 2014).

There are some things over which school business leaders have complete discretion and considerable freedom and others where they have little or no control. Traditional power and positional structures ultimately exist – residing with politicians and government departments, district authorities, and governing boards – but others at the school level are less overtly hierarchical as leadership functions are distributed, with leadership being evidenced at all levels (Starr, 2014; Summerson, 2006). Hence, school business leaders work within multiple layers of authority, some dispersed and delegated, some concentrated and tightly controlled. They mediate intersecting authorities, interests, and levels of decision-making. Organizational reporting reflects these multi-layered accountabilities with their varying levels of authority.

The skills of school business leaders are used more propitiously when they work alongside school principals and governing councillors. However, moving the school business profession from one formed initially around notions of “management” to one expecting “leadership” has required considerable cultural change. As mentioned in the previous section above, school business “managers” were largely hidden, their role considered to be mostly technical, perfunctory, and “behind the scenes.” School business “leaders” have come into prominence through increasing necessity.

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## Impact

The role of school business leaders is both educative and developmental and has positive impact. School business leaders:

- Provide ideas and advice to educators and governing councillors to aid astute decision-making
- Support the work of school leaders and teachers, enabling them to focus on learning and teaching improvement. Principals save between 35% and 45% of their time by delegating business, administrative, governance, and compliance work to a school business leader (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010; see also Moorcroft & Summerson, 2006; Southworth, 2010)
- Ensure greater levels of job satisfaction and less stress and anxiety for school principals, especially in matters relating to finance, strategic, and operational management (McKinsey, 2007; National College for School Leadership, 2011;

PWC, 2010; Starr, 2012; see also Bergman, Corabian, & Harstall, 2009; Phillips, Sen, & McNamee, 2007)

- Support and oversee school support staff
- Educate colleagues – school principals and governing board representatives – in business, legislative, and governance matters
- Source and secure resources making a return on investment for school business employment costs of more than 80% (National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services and the Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2010; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010)
- Recuperate most costs associated with school business salaries (Oakleigh Consulting, 2010). The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services and the Training and Development Agency assert salary recuperation within 3 years (National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services and the Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2010), while Oakleigh Consulting suggests the return on investment of UK school business leader salaries is 575% (in Starr, 2012, p. 31). Further, the more qualified and experienced the school business leader, the more cost-effective the position becomes.

Education business leaders ensure schools meet compliance and risk management obligations and oversee an increased range of accountabilities including audit reporting. By taking increasing responsibility for business, they enable busy principals to focus on the school as a learning organization and spend more time on pedagogical leadership. This, along with benefits brought about by propitious resource management, supports educational aims and priorities.

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## Looming Issues

Despite education policy differentiations, there are some common features and issues concerning school business leadership across the developed world, and it is to these matters that the discussion now turns.

## Professionalization

As school business work has expanded and become more complex, and as school business leaders are increasingly recognized as essential members of school leadership teams, various jurisdictions have invested in the rapid professionalization of school business personnel (Woods, 2014; see also Starr, 2012). A range of school business-related qualifications/certifications, professional standards, and codes of ethics have been developed, recognizing that school business professionals must retain current relevant skills and knowledge and be able to demonstrate their expertise and value in schools (see, e.g., ASBO International, 2005; Institute of School Business Leadership, 2018).

It is still possible in some contexts (but less commonly so) for school business leaders to hold no formal qualifications. However, emphasis on raising qualification levels has spurred the development of bespoke courses and professional learning programs including at tertiary levels. While such programs have a long history in some countries, in others they are new or emerging. What is common in all countries is a new emphasis on credentialism. This remains an ongoing issue and work in progress – more easily addressed in jurisdictions that are investing in school business leadership learning and development than in those where incumbents have to find the personal time and funds to undertake such a commitment (e.g., see Starr, 2019b).

## Succession and Renewal

Demographic data around the globe presents a similar picture – an urgent imperative is the school business profession’s renewal. Problems stem from aging incumbents, too few young appointees (see, e.g., ASBO, 2018), and difficulties attracting newcomers to what has been a “hidden” group of employees within education (Moorcroft & Summerson, 2006; Southworth, 2010). Succession efforts are also hampered as the profession at large is considered too homogenous and requiring diversification.

Persistent obstacles to supply and renewal include some of the issues discussed above such as role invisibility and a general lack of understanding about the role. However, the general elision of the business aspects of schooling and business leadership in systemic strategic plans exacerbates this issue.

## School Governance

Being the main business authority often means having to “educate” or explain business matters to other school leaders and governing councillors – it is concerning when the business and governance knowledge of principals and governors is lacking, which becomes a significant risk, in and of itself. Profligate or unwise spending, a lack of understanding about important considerations such as budget planning or cash flow, failure to see the connection between budgeting and strategic planning, being unable to read financial statements, boards’ skill set deficiencies, or failure to appreciate the extent or seriousness of board responsibilities and liabilities or the difference between governance and management are some of the common governance concerns expressed by school business leaders (Starr, 2012, 2021 forthcoming; see also Connolly, Farrell, & James, 2017).

In the context of new accountabilities and heightened expectations, the rapid professionalization of school boards is viewed as an essential education business priority – an issue being taken up by different jurisdictions to varying degrees.



## Business Backlash

Education institutions serve communities and individuals and produce knowledge and sociocultural benefits. However, education leaders cannot simply focus on “educative” concerns – they must juggle teaching and learning matters with necessary and inescapable business and budgetary concerns, much to the chagrin and disgust of those who dislike the thought of education being inextricably bound up in business affairs (Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Most schools exist in the not-for-profit sector, and their purposes are not concerned with profit-making, but they cannot avoid involvement in business. Hence, while school business is in ascendance and increasingly recognized as an important aspect of education leadership, it often engenders negative connotations as some individuals are offended by the thought of schools being associated with business or of being a business.

“Anti-business” sentiments in education are not new. In the mid-1990s, Bottery noticed a pervasive sense of disapproval about business matters within education cultures and defended business being a valid area in the leadership and management of education, arguing that, “[e]ven a nodding acquaintance with businesses makes one conscious of the host of functions which *all* organisations must perform” (Bottery, 1994, p. 1), and he wondered why business antagonists did not appreciate this obvious point.

Much of the negativity surrounding school business concerns widespread beliefs that education is now negatively influenced and manipulated by free market and neoliberal precepts (Starr, 2019a; see also, e.g., Ranson, 2003; Ravitch, 2010; Smyth, 2006). And many education leaders would agree that activities and memes associated with the business and corporate sectors have woven their way into education and diminished its goals (Ball, 2014; Marginson, 1997; Perry & McWilliam, 2007; Starr, 2019b). Greenfield and Ribbins (1993), however, proffer a different view – that being anti-business sentiments are due to literature and research in the field of educational management, administration, and organization being so utterly boring as to turn most people off! But boring or not, the fact remains that every education enterprise would unravel without the foundations of sound business leadership and management.

Whatever the stance, the links between schools, education, business, and the market are inextricably linked and intractable. Educating the public and school-based personnel as to what school business is, what it entails and what it achieves, is an important goal for the school business profession.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Education would not exist without a host of business activities required to support it. Propitious education business leadership pervades every aspect of education. Schools are fundamentally important community assets, and the public expects

them to operate as smoothly, efficiently, and effectively as possible for the benefit of all. School business leaders and their teams are integral to this essential community-building pursuit. If school business flounders, education suffers or ceases to happen (Starr, 2021 forthcoming).

The following propositions are foundational to school business leadership and the work of school business leaders (Starr, 2019b, 2021 forthcoming):

- Every education decision has a business implication. This incontrovertible fact needs to be broadly understood and acknowledged by all stakeholders in education.
- Education business is business for good – it is business with a social purpose. “Business” is not a dirty word in education: it enables educational aspirations and objectives to be met and enhances the school experience for students and educators.
- Education business focuses on meeting strategic education goals – it is not an end in and of itself.
- The more education business leaders understand and know about education, education policy, pedagogy, and the aims of educators, the better able they are to lead and manage the business of education.
- Education business supports and thrives on a “leadership at all levels” leadership stance with school business personnel working alongside educators in executive leadership teams. Hence, while it is imperative that school leaders and board members understand school business, they do not have to conduct it.

As education continues to be a turbulent, contested, and uncertain terrain, it will become equally dynamic and difficult for business decision-making. As a result, school business professionals will continue to be, and are increasingly expected to be, more specialized, qualified, and recognized leaders within education to ensure its social, economic, and political utility and future advancement.

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# Performance Appraisal and Performance-Based Pay in Universities

# 35

In Taylor's Shadow

Megan Kimber and Lisa Catherine Ehrich

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## Abstract

Neoliberal reforms in higher education have shaped the nature of academic work since the 1980s in Australia and other countries. These reforms have resulted in the use of private sector performance practices designed to improve productivity, efficiency, and customer service in research and teaching within public universities. The use of these practices within public sector institutions has been termed “managerialism.” A key component of these reforms has been the establishment of performance management schemes and the process of performance appraisal

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for individual staff members (Morris et al., 2007). The central argument in this chapter is that, given the current pervasiveness of managerialism in higher education, collegiality, autonomy, and the traditional role of academic work are being compromised.

The focus in this chapter lies with two aspects of performance management – performance appraisal and performance-based pay. The role and purpose of performance appraisal is reviewed alongside the argument that an approach recognizing the traditional values of academics and is developmental in focus holds merit and is preferable to an approach based on control and surveillance. Caveats are raised regarding the adoption of performance pay within universities. In the final part of the chapter, some discussion is afforded to the actions that managers within universities can take that may help mediate the tensions between traditional and corporate roles of the university.

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**Keywords**

Performance appraisal · Performance pay · Universities · Scientific management · Managerialism · Human relations theory

**The Field of Memory**

Contemporary perspectives of performance appraisal and performance management have been influenced by scientific management. Scientific management is thought to have originated in the early part of the twentieth century and is associated with the work of engineer, Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915). It is a term used to describe a series of approaches that were designed to improve workers' performance. As part of this approach, Taylor implemented a pay system so that those workers who exceeded the target level of output received more pay (Davidson & Griffin, 2003, p. 41). The metaphor of a machine might be used to describe scientific management as work is considered predictable, highly regulated, standardized, and focused on efficiency (Taylor, 1911). Under New Public Management, which emerged around 40 years ago in Australia, there was a resurgence of interest in scientific management's basic principles. A revised version of scientific management is a key feature of the contemporary landscape of universities demonstrating its location in the *field of presence*.

**The Field of Presence**

Performance appraisal and performance-based pay in universities continue to be viewed as controversial and highly divisive practices in Australia and other countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. While performance-based pay has not been embraced widely in Australian universities, performance appraisal schemes are ubiquitous. Performance appraisal has been described as damaging, limiting, dehumanizing, undermining creativity, and at odds with the traditional values of academe. There have been strong calls for alternative perspectives and practices ranging from eliminating them altogether to implementing more humane and developmental types of schemes. Academic managers, those charged with

carrying out performance appraisals on staff, have been identified as key players who have some discretionary power to make performance appraisal not only more palatable for staff but also relevant and useful.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Foucault's (1981) field of concomitance refers to ideas, theories, and perspectives borrowed from other fields and applied to a particular field. Performance appraisal and management have been influenced by several different disciplines over the last hundred years. Proponents of scientific management (following Taylor) were influenced by insights from manufacturing, engineering, accounting, and science. Critiques of performance appraisal in universities have come from a number of different perspectives including the human relations movement which was embedded in industrial and organizational psychology, labor process perspectives, and sociology. Micropolitics (Blase & Blase, 1997; Hoyle, 1982), a type of organizational theory, has also been used to explore the way formal and informal power is used by academic managers to achieve performance appraisal goals. A more recent perspective has used the insights of cognitive science and "neuroleadership" (Kairuz, Andriés, Nickloes, & Truter, 2016).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

There were three broad ruptures that emerged in the twentieth century which formed different viewpoints about performance appraisal. The first was in the early 1900s with the advent of Taylor's scientific management which was designed to lead to more efficient and productive workers by close supervision and a standardized approach to work. The second "was a reaction to [the dominance of] scientific management" and was known as the human relations movement (Kimber, 2001, p. 10). Its researchers came from industrial or organizational psychology and their concern was to reinstate human concerns within management. Originating in the Hawthorne studies conducted during 1920–1930s, the human relations movement focused on issues such as employee motivation and satisfaction, interpersonal dynamics and norms of groups, and the influence of the social context of the workplace on workers. Abraham Maslow and Douglas McGregor were two key proponents of the human relation movement. The third key rupture was observed in the 1980s as part of wider neoliberal reforms that resulted in managerialist practices being adopted in universities. At that time and to the current day, performance indicators, output targets, benchmarking exercises, research and quality reviews, and performance management systems (including performance appraisal and performance-based pay) have been among the tools used by managers within university contexts (Kenny, 2017; Kimber & Ehrlich, 2015; Shore, 2008; Waring, 2017).

### **Critical Assumptions**

Under a neoliberal/managerial agenda, there has been an intensification of academic work, with increasingly heavy workloads impacting on academics' performance. Some writers argue that the assumptions underpinning this agenda run counter to the traditional values of universities (including collegiality and

autonomy). They contend that these values have been compromised or marginalized, perhaps even undermined. When considering the implementation of performance appraisals and performance-based pay in universities research indicates that it is rife with challenges and thus highly problematic. As performance appraisal is part of the landscape of universities and unlikely to disappear in the immediate future, it is argued in this chapter that academic managers should approach it “more sceptically and reflexively” (Grint, 2007, p. 61). They need to be mindful that, while a scientific management approach to performance appraisal is based on control and surveillance of academics, much depends on which perspective is informing it and how universities, academic managers, and managed academics approach it. Academic managers, therefore, have some agency in the way in which performance management schemes are implemented. They have some power to be supportive, collegial, and responsive to the context in which academics work.

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## Introduction

Public sector organizations have been experiencing considerable change over the past three decades. Such unprecedented change has been particularly evident in Australian public service organizations and universities since the 1980s. Much of this change in Australia and internationally has been shaped by managerial thinking – derived from neoliberal economic theories and New Public Management – that using private sector management practices in the public sector will increase efficiency, improve accountability, and result in citizens being served better (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015; Kimber & Maddox, 2003).

Advocates of such thinking believe in individual freedom from government and the free market. Focusing on universities, those borrowing these practices from the private sector argue they will strengthen accountability, improve efficiency, and ensure citizens (in their role of students) are being served better. Others, however, argue that use of these practices can have the opposite effect. They have the potential to “weaken accountability,” “deny the roles and values of public sector employees,” and “hollow” out public sector institutions (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 84; Kimber & Maddox, 2003, pp. 62, 67). The focus in this chapter is whether “inappropriate use of private sector performance practices” – a “performance focus” – denies the traditional roles and values of public employees (Kimber & Maddox, 2003, p. 62), in this case academics and universities. While a “performance focus” includes performance indicators, performance measurement, and the management of staff performance, this chapter concentrates on the management of staff through performance appraisal and performance pay, arguing that inappropriate use of performance appraisal, particularly when it is linked to pay, can “erode” trust among academics and managers. This “erosion” (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 83) might be attributed to: an emphasis on the summative rather than developmental elements of performance appraisal; how the performance appraisal interview is conducted; or misunderstanding academic motivation.



By misunderstanding what motivates academics and undermining trust, the misuse of performance appraisal and performance pay has the potential to decrease efficiency and weaken accountability, thereby eroding universities as “a public good *for* the public good” (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 85. Emphasis in original).

This chapter begins by providing a short discussion pertaining to the origins of performance appraisal and its continuing presence in universities. Following this discussion, consideration is given to some of the theoretical insights and debates informing contemporary thinking about performance appraisal. As is demonstrated, while these insights have emerged from a variety of fields and disciplines, the legacy of Taylor’s scientific management can be acutely felt in contemporary universities today. The next part of the chapter focuses on the purpose of performance appraisal and performance-based pay in Australian universities and the ongoing challenges and tensions they have created for the work of academics. The focus in the final part of the chapter lies with academic managers; those actors who have within their power the possibility of mediating the tension between traditional and corporate roles of the university, thus humanizing performance appraisal for staff. It is suggested that they use a range of micropolitical strategies to ensure that performance management schemes are not only supportive and collegial but also cognizant of the context in which academics work.

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## Origins of Performance Appraisal

Throughout different periods of history and across different countries, there have been references to different forms of performance appraisal of staff. For example, there are references to performance appraisal in the Han Dynasty in China (206 BCE–220 AD) (Wright, 2002) and, in the 1800s, Robert Owen used daily performance reviews to rate the performance of workers in his textile mills in New Lanark, Scotland. In the 1840s, the US Federal Government passed laws so that department clerks would undergo yearly performance reviews (Nankervis, Baird, Coffey, & Shields, 2016). By the early twentieth century, the military and private and public organizations used performance appraisals to evaluate the performance of individuals (Weise & Buckley, 1998).

Taylor’s seminal work (1911) on scientific management theory created a system that spelled out the most efficient way workers should work. His focus was on increasing worker efficiency and he advocated financial incentives to workers who could increase their output. Performance was conceived in terms of volume and cost. Taylor’s ideas were greatly influential in the way that performance management and appraisal were viewed (Radnor & Barnes, 2007). While scientific management was lauded as a system that increased productivity for organizations producing simple products, its critics were quick to point out its inadequacies including an inattention to the human factor and human relations (Bechner, 2006).

The human relations movement, commencing with the Hawthorne studies and then influencing the field of organizational behavior (following McGregor, 1972),

proposed a more worker-centered approach to performance appraisal. In universities in Australia, performance appraisal was placed under the spotlight in the 1980s with the advent of managerialism. Prior to the 1980s, universities were described as “loosely coupled” – which meant that academics operated within them as independent professionals not impacted by bureaucratic structures (Mintzberg, 1994 in Kenny, 2017, p. 367). Moreover, they were based on collaborative and collegial models of governance where academic work was discretionary; academics set their own standards and regulated those standards themselves. The climate was one of participation; academics had “the responsibility for assessing the work and making judgements about its worthwhileness” (Morris, 2005, p. 391). It has been argued that notions of sharing, trust, and collegiality have since been replaced by control, distrust, and compliance.

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## Definitions and Theoretical Insights Informing Performance Appraisal

Performance management has been defined as, “the systematic, regular and comprehensive capturing, measurement, monitoring and assessment of crucial aspects of organizational and individual performance through explicit targets, standards, performance indicators, measurement and control systems” (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 894). It is a strategy that aims to increase productivity by making staff more accountable (Field, 2015). Unlike public accountability which is broad in nature, managerial accountability is narrow and focused on “market signals” (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 84). Proponents of the managerial perspective view people as self-interested and therefore motivated by higher pay, which is one form of extrinsic motivation (Kimber, 2020, p. 5; Park & Word, 2012, pp. 708, 711).

Performance appraisal is often described as a human resource concept and activity that sits within the broader purview of performance management. Its purpose, then, is to “encourage job performance, to flag areas that need attention, to inform both parties [the appraisee and the appraiser] as to expectations” (Jefferson, 2010, p. 111). Another purpose of performance appraisals is to “provide systematic judgements to back up salary increases, promotions, transfers, and sometimes demotions or terminations” (McGregor, 1972, p. 28).

For academics, performance appraisal can be described as a single annual interview or meeting that focuses on staff members’ achievements and goals for the following year (Field, 2015). It enables progress to be reviewed, plans to be altered, feedback provided, and decisions about probation and promotion to be made. Drawing attention to power and control, the formal performance appraisal interview can be experienced differently, depending on a range of factors and the particular context. These include “organisational philosophies and attitudes and skills of those responsible for its administration, together with the acceptance, commitment and ownership of those being reviewed along with those performing the review” (Nankervis et al., 2016, p. 335).

## Influence of Human Relations Theory

There are formative (growth and development) and summative (pay, promotion, salary increments) elements to performance appraisal (Delahaye, 2000, p. 139). This duality can present conflicting roles for the appraiser; on the one hand, they are judge and on the other hand they are helper (McGregor, 1972). McGregor, one of the proponents of the human relations movement, questioned the role and value of traditional performance appraisals for staff which he saw as fraught with danger. He referred to the resistance that evaluators can feel when they are required to conduct performance appraisals. McGregor (1972) said:

supervisors are uncomfortable when they are put in a position of “playing God”. The respect we hold for the inherent value of the individual leaves us distressed when we must take responsibility for judging the personal worth of a fellow human being . . . The modern emphasis upon the supervisor as a leader who strives to *help* staff members achieve both their own and the agency’s objectives is hardly consistent with the judicial role demanded by most appraisal plans. (p. 28)

McGregor (in Newton & Findlay, 1996) argued that appraisal should be participative so that the appraisee is actively involved in making judgments about themselves, and identifying needs for change and development. The appraiser should be helpful, encouraging, and supportive. This understanding lies in stark contrast to a neo-scientific approach that is top down and promotes close monitoring and regular evaluation of staff. The debate regarding the purpose of performance appraisal could be construed as one between development (promoted by a human relations perspective focusing on the importance of human factors) and control (inherent within a scientific management perspective focusing on technical matters).

Newton and Findlay (1996) argue that writing in the field of performance appraisal continues to be influenced by human relations theory. Pointing to McGregor’s seminal work, they give many examples of how performance appraisal is described as serving both the individual and the organization; how it enables staff to be active participants in setting their own goals; and helps them to identify their needs for development. Current texts (Casio, 1991 in Newton & Findlay, 1996; Nankervis et al., 2016) reinforce these messages about what performance appraisal should look like. Later in the chapter we explore some of the research that points to how performance appraisal has been implemented and we look for the vestiges of the influence of human relations theory and scientific management theory.

## Sociological Insights: Power as a Central Concept

Just as McGregor critiqued performance appraisal schemes influenced by scientific management approaches, some contemporary theorists have critiqued performance appraisal shaped by human relations theory. For example, Newton and Findlay (1996) raise questions about the assumptions underpinning human relations theory which they see as problematic. To support their argument they use some of the

concepts from labor process perspectives and some selected concepts from Foucault to interrogate the human relations movement and what it is saying about performance appraisal. Their arguments provide a critical perspective of performance appraisal and contribute to the debate about its conceptualization. Some of these ideas are presented here.

According to Newton and Findlay (1996), labor process perspectives (influenced by Marxism) are concerned with the nature of work and how people's work is controlled. These perspectives maintain that performance appraisal is one mechanism through which management controls the labor process by rewarding or punishing employees who do not comply. It is management that establishes the "rules of the game" since it can use its power to sanction non-participation. Moreover, appraisal "is a direct intervention in the labour process which makes performance more visible and the employee more accountable" (Newton & Findlay, 1996, p. 14).

Sociological insights from Foucault's work have been applied to understand performance appraisal. For example, a term Foucault developed in his seminal text, *Discipline and Punish* (1981), "the panopticon," has been used as a metaphor to explain the close supervision, observation, and control inherent in performance appraisal. The panopticon was a prison designed in the eighteenth century by Jeremy Bentham where a guard could view prisoners at all times without them being aware if and when the surveillance was taking place. Newton and Findlay (1996) refer to the plethora of appraisal scales and measures that some organizations use to judge the performance of staff that provide illustrations of panoptic power. Within this perspective, the appraiser is described as the observer who must "measure, appraise, hierarchize" (Foucault, 1981, in Newton & Findlay, 1996, p. 16).

Another insight from Foucault applied to performance appraisal is the notion of power; and the way power is construed and can be used both positively and negatively (Kenny, 2017; Newton & Findlay, 1996). Newton and Findlay (1996) make the point that the human relations perspective highlights the positive/creative aspects of power inherent in performance appraisal, since key concepts such as "learning," "self-awareness," and "solving problems together" can be the result of productive relationships. Yet because of the power imbalance between appraisers and appraisees and that "appraisal remains inextricably linked to the contested terrain of control" (Newton & Findlay, 1996, p. 32), Newton and Findlay remain skeptical of its potential for positive or creative outcomes for appraisees. The field of micropolitics (Hoyle, 1982) has also been used to explore a range of power-based strategies adopted by individuals, such as academic managers, to achieve their goals (Ehrich, Kimber, & Ehrich, 2016). Such strategies can range from conflict and control to cooperation and collaboration, and the consequences of these strategies can be either positive or negative or somewhere in between depending on the situation and persons involved.

Kenny (2017) uses Foucault's concept of power relations as an entrance point into understanding the impact of neoliberal reforms on academics' work. Some of these impacts include the intensification of academic work, the deterioration in working conditions, and the increasing levels of stress all pointing to disempowerment and

“reduced self-determination” (p. 365). He argues that to remedy this situation there needs to be a restoring of power. He cites an earlier study he and his colleagues undertook that demonstrated the productive use of power where there was equal representation of academics and managers on a committee that designed and implemented a workload model for the faculty. This process was viewed by the academics as fair, transparent, and credible in that it allowed them opportunities to contribute to discussions about the workload impacting on them. This productive example of power lies in contrast to Kenny’s (2017) case study of a university that investigated academics’ experiences of a new performance management system. While academics were reported to be open to improving their performance, they remained skeptical about a system that was top down and mandated minimum expectations pertaining to research targets yet did not consider other competing demands on their time. Kenny (2017) concluded “academic voice” is critical to ensure institutional policies are developed that promote productive relations of power. His perspective, then, is one that is not arguing for the dismantlement of performance appraisal in universities, but the need to make the design of such systems more reflective of the values inherent in academic work. It has been argued by a variety of writers (Field, 2015; Grint, 2007; Newton & Findlay, 1996) that the outcomes of performance appraisal schemes are likely to depend on the way in which managers approach them. This is a point with which we concur and one explored later in the chapter.

## Insights from Cognitive Science and Neuroleadership

Kairuz et al. (2016) provide a further critique of performance management. Similar to Kenny (2017), they raise concerns about the detrimental impact of performance management on the well-being of academics, citing increased stress due to unrealistic demands of academic work. Their critique draws on insights from cognitive science and neuroscience. For example, Kairuz et al. (2016) argue excessive pressure on academics via Key Performance Indicators and other demands on their work impairs their cognitive ability and cognitive thought processes; it is these cognitive processes that are identified as essential for learning, creative and critical thinking, and the creation of new knowledge. Given that universities are places of higher learning and knowledge creation, the implications of Kairuz et al.’s (2016) argument are dire for their future livelihood and role of universities. Although coming from a different perspective, Hall (2018, p. 98) argues that academics are being “alienated” from their “labour.”

Citing research from the business sector, Kairuz et al. (2016) refer to “neuroleadership” – an “approach that encourages co-operation and fairness” – with evidence to suggest that this approach “leads to increased activity in areas of the brain associated with reward and motivation” (p. 888). Coaching and mentoring are identified as being relevant developmental processes that fit within a neuroleadership approach that enhances performance (Kairuz et al., 2016). For this reason, models that support learning, facilitation, and collegiality that are fairly

implemented are recommended as alternatives to the current metrics-driven approach of performance appraisals. Hall (2018, p. 98) too proposes “mass intellectuality” as the antidote, which seems to entail more collaborative ways of working, identifying and teaching hopelessness, and using these to work toward social transformation. The aforementioned discussion has referred to some of the current theoretical debates and insights drawn from a variety of fields and disciplines that have been used by researchers in their quest to understand the nature and function of performance appraisal in universities. The next part of the discussion considers performance appraisal and performance-based pay in higher education in Australia.

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## Performance Appraisal in Australian Universities

The purpose and effectiveness of performance appraisal schemes in universities is a heated topic (Harkness & Schier, 2011). In Australia, the move to “performance management for academic staff” commenced in “the mid-1980s,” becoming “focused with . . . 1991 [academic] award restructuring” (James, 1995, p. 185). There was a “trial period” in 1992 and 1993 (which was extended), with schemes to have a “developmental intent” during this time (p. 185). One of these early schemes was at The University of Melbourne (James, 1995). In a 1993 review of this scheme, attitudinal “differences” were found between appraisees and appraisers and between “continuing” and “limited”-term academics (p. 193). Less than 35% of academics felt they had experienced “developmental” (p. 194) benefits from the scheme, but “the main strength of the scheme [was] the opportunity it provide[d] to clarify goals, roles, and responsibilities, and to acknowledge achievement” (James, 1995, p. 192). Some academics felt that, “‘If you are an active, responsible academic, the process is irrelevant’ . . . Some appraisees questioned the value of the appraisal scheme in the light of the effort involved” (pp. 192–193). For James (1995, p. 196), “tensions” between the formative elements and summative elements of performance appraisal risk “processes” becoming “shallow formalities . . . The clashes between summative and formative purposes which are evident in the understandings and attitudes of academic staff toward The University of Melbourne’s appraisal scheme probably limit its effectiveness” (p. 196).

As this review of The University of Melbourne scheme suggests, while the introduction of performance appraisal partly has been driven by the perception that it will “provide” “predictability” and “accountability” (Morris, 2005, p. 390), many criticisms have been made. Appraisal has been seen “as evidence of new corporate management approaches which are a threat to collegiality and inappropriate for educational institutions (Smyth, 1989)” (James, 1995, p. 186). In the late 1980s, some writers viewed “performance appraisals inappropriate for academics, . . . an attack on academic freedom . . . [and] a potential tool to monitor and control staff, preventing unpopular research or discussion not popular with the university” (Stone, 1998, p. 265 in Morris, 2005, p. 390).

Cannizzo (2016) makes the accountability focus of performance appraisal in Australian universities clear, describing it as “(o)ne clear strategy through which

accountability to the institution's identity and mission is ensured is through the management and evaluation of staff performance against institutional goals" (p. 886). Drawing on statements from several Australian universities over 2011–2013, performance appraisal has been seen as a management tool for aligning the performance of individual staff members with the university's strategies. Cannizzo (2016) notes the implications of performance appraisal for not only salary increments and promotion but also for "an academic's sense of self" (p. 886).

The approach Cannizzo is describing seems a top-down one. A top-down approach to implementing performance appraisal is "linked to the contested terrain of control and thus lies at the heart of the management of the employment relationships" (Newton & Findlay, 1996, p. 56). Echoing this concern, Harkness and Schier (2011, p. 55) say academic freedom is eroded when universities:

become beholden to the economic imperatives of a managerial framework . . . Where an academic environment based on collegiality, peer evaluation and review has in the past served well to uphold academic quality and standards, the shift to a hierarchical framework threatens to undermine this process by imposing top-down managerial control.

If there is movement away from academic freedom and economic imperatives are privileged, then the traditional roles and values of academics can be "denied" (Kimber & Maddox, 2003).

## Accountability Versus Development

When performance appraisal schemes are used for monitoring and control purposes rather than for development purposes, some writers suggest appraisees can perceive these schemes negatively (Simmons in Harkness & Schier, 2011). If appraisal is seen as a threat (Townsend, 1998), trust is eroded. Trust can also be eroded where appraisees view the process to be neither transparent nor fair; nor the rewards proportional to the work carried out (Harkness & Schier, 2011). Trust between appraiser and appraisee, therefore, is an important element of a successful performance appraisal scheme.

Use of managerial practices can erode trust between "managed academics" and "academic managers" (Deem & Brehony, 2005), suggesting use of such practices might illustrate what Menzel (in Samier, 2008, p. 3) refers to as "morally mute managers." Such managers "are seduced by a sense of duty as competent purveyors of neutral information" (Samier, 2008, p. 3). Consequently, academic managers' actions in implementing managerial reforms influence how academics perceive these practices. How performance management systems are being implemented in Australian universities, combined with possible insufficient consideration of "the traditional values of teaching and research," has been increasing "the levels of stress and anxiety among academics . . . [and] diminish[ing] the significance of corporate performance management systems" (Christopher & Leung, 2015, p. 181). Performance management in universities, therefore, can be counterproductive.



One response, advocated by writers such as Morris (in Harkness & Schier, 2011, pp. 55–56), is universities returning to an earlier “highly participatory” “model which . . . was no less rigorous in its intent . . .” Given the dominance of managerial-inspired thinking in universities, it seems unlikely there will be a full return to such a governance model. Academic managers, however, have the power to make performance appraisals better. They “have agency and can use their power in ways that can empower or disempower themselves and others” (Ehrich et al., 2016, p. 195). This point is illustrated in Field’s (2015) interviews with 40 academics from an Australian university regarding their performance appraisal experience. Field found the appraiser’s stance had much impact on the way performance appraisal was perceived and experienced. Field notes “six stances” held by managers and, in many cases, managers held a combination of stances. These stances are “nurturing, hard-driving, self-serving, coddling, disengaged, and hostile” (Field, 2015, p. 172).

Appraisers who took a “nurturing” stance showed genuine “interest” in the appraisee and provided “positive feedback” (p. 177). While it was the stance most appreciated by staff, it is “out of step with the sought-after emphasis on results-based management and accountability” within managerialism (Field, 2015, p. 185). A “hard-driving” appraiser had very high expectations for appraisees to excel in all aspects of work. They held appraisees responsible for output shortfalls. Appraisers who were “self-serving” viewed “the appraisee as a resource” to be used (p. 177). These appraisers “reward[ed] those who complied” (p. 177). “Coddling” appraisers were seen to be those who coddled the appraisee and treated them in an “over-protective way” (p. 177). “Disengaged” appraisers were described most frequently by the academics in the study. These appraisers viewed appraisal as a routinized tick the box exercise, focusing on quantity not quality of outputs. “Hostile” appraisers were those who showed “contempt towards the appraisee,” focusing on their shortcomings (Field, 2015, p. 177). Field notes that, of the stances, the “hard driving” stance and “self-serving” stance resonate most closely with managerialism, since both are concerned with academics pursuing either the university’s interests (as in the case of hard driving) or the appraisers’ interests (self-interest). For some staff, their appraisal was found to be a mix of “nurturing” and goal setting, yet a considerable number of academics felt threatened and hurt by managerial-inspired practices (Field, 2015). It could also be argued that the stance of “nurturing” resonates with human relations theory, as this stance has genuine regard for the well-being of staff and meeting their developmental needs. Later in the chapter, when the implications for managers are considered, this idea is returned to.

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## Performance Pay in Universities

While performance pay is common in some parts of the public sector and the private sector, it does not seem widespread in Australian universities. An exception has been Swinburne University, which established a Performance-related Pay (PRP) scheme in 2007 (Harkness & Schier, 2011). Staff could obtain:



a bonus equal to a maximum of ten per cent of their current substantive salary, as a reward for meeting a number of performance measures. Management advised that there would be sufficient funds for 30% of staff to win such a bonus. (Harkness & Schier, 2011, p. 51)

From their review of literature, Harkness and Schier (2011, p. 56) argue there has been much variety in the way PRP schemes have been implemented and their effectiveness depends on variables including the type of work, the level of organizational commitment, presence of participatory practices, staff attitudes and motivation, and proportion of staff rewarded. They conclude there is insufficient data to suggest PRP increases staff motivation or productivity (Harkness & Schier, 2011). One reason might be, “The motivation to engage in creative, knowledge-intensive work, such as the work carried out at universities, is typically intrinsic” (Kallio & Kallio, 2014, p. 574). It can be “difficult to evaluate the value” of “non-profit expert work. . . one top-level study could easily be more valuable than a hundred mediocre research papers. In the case of basic research in particular, when the value of the work may only be appreciated after several years . . .” (Kallio & Kallio, 2014, pp. 574–575).

Consequently, use of PRP in universities “implies a belief that academic behaviours are modified by money” (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011, p. 399). Yet academics’ motivations can be a complex intersection of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. There is a relationship between intellectual interest, allegiances to disciplines or fields, and university-specific factors (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011). When managers “ignore the complexity of academic motivation, [their “actions”] are likely to be ineffective . . .” (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011, p. 408). Indeed, since the early 1990s, evidence has indicated performance pay can demotivate and demoralize, lower quality, and increase costs. Where greater motivation exists, it has come from organizational changes and performance review enabling the goals of public employees and the “goals of the organization” being better aligned (Marsden, 2010, pp. 197–198). Much discussion about performance pay hinges on motivation.

While a performance focus may increase efficiency and improve accountability, it is argued that this is likely to happen only when performance-based pay is used appropriately. It is possible that in some cases performance-based pay might have the opposite effect such as ignoring the intrinsic motivation of some academics or ignoring the complexity of academic work and the university environment. As a performance focus might impact on all academics, it is academic managers who are perhaps in a position where they can harness the appropriate uses and minimize the inappropriate uses of this focus.

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## **What Can Be Done About Performance Appraisal? Academic Managers Hold the Key**

Prior to the use of managerial-inspired practices in universities, administrators were respected academics who upheld traditional values of the institution (Morris, 2005). Today, administrators are “professional managers” who are required to work and operate in a system based on a “business” model characterized by measurement and

assessment (Morris, 2005, p. 390). It is these administrators who are often responsible for overseeing the performance appraisal system. This section begins with an exploration of ways academics and academic managers have responded to managerialism. It then considers ways forward for academic managers to navigate their role within a managerialist framework. We adhere to the call (e.g., Kairuz et al., 2016; Kenny, 2017) for an appraisal system that restores the balance of power and gives academic a voice.

Three ways academics and academic managers have been seen to respond to managerial-inspired reforms are now discussed (Teelken, 2012, 2015). First is via “formal instrumentality,” which refers to accepting uncritically the performance agenda. Academics are willingly compliant. Second is via “symbolic compliance.” Academics accept managerial changes at a superficial level. There is “acquiescence and avoidance” (p. 278) such as “engaging in performance appraisal in [a] nominal way” (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 92). Third is “professional pragmatism.” Here academics respond to managerial imperatives in a critical manner. Similarly, “Resilient compliers” “apply the rules, but try to avoid becoming known as vassals of the system . . . Resilient compliers reinterpret and assimilate the sources of ambivalence in potentially productive ways as a survival strategy” (Sousa, de Nijs, & Hendriks, 2010, p. 1454). It could be said academic managers who are “professional pragmatists” or “resilient compliers” are attempting to mediate between the demands of the system and the academic staff for whom they are responsible (Sousa et al., 2010).

The managerial context has given academic managers the opportunity to exert considerable power over academics’ work (Ehrich et al., 2016). Managers are expected to meet a variety of performance targets and ensure staff compliance with the performance agenda (O’Brien & Down, 2002). Of interest is *how* managers use power to try to humanize a dehumanized work environment. It is argued that “professional pragmatism” and “resilient compliance” hold the greatest promise for achieving this end, as the managerial agenda is neither denied nor accepted uncritically. What those who hold either of these perspectives recognize is there is space for mediation and negotiation. Managers’ location within the system may enable them to exercise their agency in proactive ways to maximize the appropriate uses and minimize the impact of the inappropriate uses of performance appraisal and pay. We have suggested elsewhere that the pervasiveness of managerial-inspired reforms means that there is likely to be no return to the collegial governance of the past (also see Graham, 2016). Indeed, previous research indicates performance appraisal can assist academics to undertake their roles better (Field, 2015; Halligan, 2008; Hawke, 2012; Morris, 2011; Taylor, 2015; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Such a finding provokes consideration of managers’ agency in relation to performance management in universities (Sousa et al., 2010).

## **Micropolitical Strategies and Suggestions**

Considering managers’ agency draws attention to the micropolitical strategies they might use if they wish to work as savvy actors in the current context. These strategies relate to how managers use their power (i.e., their resources, decisions) to achieve their goals (Ehrich et al., 2016). Understanding these strategies can assist managers to

influence the quality and type of relationships they have with colleagues (Ehrich et al., 2016). Cooperative micropolitical strategies academic managers might use entail facilitation, support, and negotiation. Professionalism and collegial relations describe the interactions among people. This use contrasts with academic managers who “practice excessive monitoring, misuse performance reviews, and distribute resources inequitably . . . [and] coerce others into passivity” (Samier, 2008, p. 15). Any power-based strategy needs to be exercised in an ethical and professional manner (Ehrich et al., 2016). Examples of ethical use might be: filtering or prioritizing policies and creatively interpreting policies; collaborating with colleagues; keeping colleagues well informed of system practices and patterns; using power to model expectations of fairness and equity; and strategizing that involves a sophisticated understanding of institutions and actors (Ryan & Armstrong, 2016). These sorts of practices involve managers as negotiators, mediators, and managers of meaning operating in a highly political arena.

Field (2015) refers to managers who “buffer . . . academics from external threat, allowing them to get on with meaningful work” (p. 185). Buffering has been used by managers in university research organizations to protect staff from unwanted managerial demands (Sousa et al., 2010). For Sousa et al. (2010), “Research performance management is nothing short of meaningless unless the agency of research managers – their capacity to make their own judgements and decisions – and the activities via which performance management is put into practice are drawn into the picture” (p. 1453). Buffering, then, can be considered to entail collegiality that is based on “sharing, trust and participation . . . ” (Smyth, 1989, p. 153, cited in Morris, 2005, p. 391). Management practices used in Australian universities, therefore, must reflect the complex roles of academics and the multiple values public institutions must seek to represent. For example, research managers in Sousa et al.’s (2010) study used “mediation and boundary management” (p. 1149) to ensure compliance with the performance agenda, yet “negotiate [d] exceptions” (p. 1449) to rules whenever possible.

As university managers have agency, their management approach is likely to affect the experience and outcomes of performance appraisals of staff (Newton & Findlay, 1996). This conclusion was based on the strength of two research studies. First, Morris (2011) has investigated performance appraisal across four universities in Australia. From a survey of 103 academic staff, Morris found academics accepted performance appraisal schemes to meet both university and individual goals, but were dissatisfied with the way performance appraisal had been implemented. These academics noted that the process was more bureaucratic than developmental and the institutional goals took priority over their individual goals. They noted managers lacked adequate training in conducting performance appraisals and resources were often inadequate to support outcomes that emerged. This need for those conducting appraisals to be trained has been noted in the Australian literature for some time (James, 1995, p. 186).

Second, there was evidence of poorly conducted performance appraisal interviews by many managers in Field’s (2015) study. As highlighted earlier in the chapter, Field is critical of stances he associates with a managerial agenda such as a “hard driving” and “self-serving” stance. Of the “six stances” he puts forward, a nurturing stance was particularly appreciated by staff and seems more in line with

what might be considered the traditional roles and values of academics. “Nurturing” academic managers focus on “the appraisee as a whole person” and as “a colleague” (Field, 2015, p. 177). A “nurturing” stance fits with Newton and Findlay’s (1996) neo-human relations approach to performance appraisal, as it is about the appraisee’s development and the support the appraiser provides to assist this growth.

Effective performance appraisal schemes, therefore, are built on trust between the appraiser and the appraisee (Townsend, 1998). Townsend offers several suggestions for building trust between both parties. One is having an overt policy that both parties understand. This policy needs to be implemented in an open, fair, and transparent manner. Morris (2011) refers to this transparency and fairness as “credibility,” which involves gaining staff support through a fair and transparent process of performance appraisal.

Another suggestion is training so appraisees and appraisers are familiar with the program’s purpose (e.g., formative or summative), expectations, and processes. Performance appraisal poses a dilemma: on the one hand, independence and autonomy for appraisees, and on the other hand, monitoring their work. Although this paradox may not be resolved, managers need to acknowledge it, and ensure clarity surrounding the purpose and expectations of the program (Morris, 2011). Astute managers would be aware of this dilemma and would be playing an active role in mediating between the two foci of performance appraisal.

Training helps managers develop or strengthen their skills. One such skill set is good interpersonal skills, which are necessary for conducting effective performance appraisal interviews (Townsend, 1998). In universities, effective performance appraisal requires managers to have an understanding of research and teaching (Harkness & Schier, 2011). Such knowledges indicate the importance of the traditional roles and values of academics. Turning to appraisees, training allows them to understand their role in performance appraisal, the importance of identifying their needs and areas of improvement, and being open to feedback and learning opportunities.

A third suggestion for developing trust is seeing performance appraisal as a moral activity (Townsend, 1998) because it is not only based on power but also involves judgments that can have implications for an appraisee’s ongoing work and practice. The manager who appraises and makes judgments holds the power. Favoritism, secrecy, withholding of information, and personal biases and prejudices against the appraisee (Townsend, 1998) are examples of issues likely to impact negatively on the judgments made by the appraiser/manager regarding an appraisee’s performance. Developing a climate of trust where there is not only openness and transparency but also a focus on developing and nurturing staff growth is a step in the right direction for ensuring that appraisal is a moral activity.

## **Limitations of Performance-Based Pay**

While some academics see well-conducted performance appraisal as helpful to their work (Morris, 2011), it would seem there are limited merits of performance pay. The experience in the public service illustrates that it can entail subjective judgments,

there is often insufficient money, and it can demotivate people (Taylor, 2015). As much as it can be argued that performance pay is antithetical to the roles and values of public servants, it can be argued that it is inimical to the roles and values of academics, and the employment conditions needed to enable academics to fulfill their roles effectively. While drawing attention to the intrinsic motivation of serving the public good or of interest in a particular topic, the sole focus on pay or service, ignores the complexities of motivation in the public sector, including universities. Clearly some academics are motivated by higher pay, but many are interested in their chosen field, are loyal to that discipline or field, and desire recognition by their peers. As much as tenure in the public service facilitates advice that is expert and what ministers ought (rather than want) to hear, tenure enables academics to conduct research, engage in teaching, and speak out when policies and procedures are detrimental to the public good. That PRP does not appear widespread in Australian universities suggests that it might be some level of commitment to the traditional roles and values of academics that has prevented the extension of PRP. It can be argued, therefore, an inappropriate use of performance management has been moderated by an adherence to the traditional roles and values of academics.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

We have considered performance management of academics in terms of the performance focus within managerialism and have drawn out implications for university managers. It might be suggested that should Australian universities continue to experience neoliberal/managerial reforms in terms of “even more external and internal measurement, surveillance and control” (Kenny, 2017, p. 367), there is a likelihood academic conditions will continue to deteriorate. If this current trend continues, higher education could become “a high threat working environment” (Kairuz et al., 2016, p. 889). Performance appraisal can assist academics undertake their roles more effectively. This finding, however, comes with a caveat. The micropolitical strategies university managers use can influence how academics experience performance appraisal. Some of the micropolitical strategies Field identifies appear aligned with the managerial framework. Other strategies entail managers making “the most of their roles as mediators” (Ryan & Armstrong, 2016, p. xvi) and using strategies, such as nurturing, that are more aligned with the traditional academic values. Managers might comply with the letter of managerial processes, but interpret or apply these processes in creative ways that buffer academics from elements of the performance focus that are detrimental to the ethos of universities as a public good. In this sense, the performance focus can be “moderated” by an “adherence to” (Kimber & Maddox, 2003, p. 61) what the traditional roles and values of academics.

Such moderation might be seen with performance pay. While some form of PRP exists in some Australian universities, the type of scheme described by Harkness and Schier does not appear widespread. It could be speculated that this limiting comes from both the values and roles of academics and understanding of practical difficulties such as those evident in the public service. Recognition of the roles of

academics, the complexities of public management, and the complex motivations that drive academics to undertake their roles are essential to successful management in universities. As several writers point out, it is not that performance management is without a place in public sector organizations, but rather the tools and micropolitical strategies used must accord with the functions and complexities of public universities, and the roles of academics and the values that motivate them. Without such recognition, it is likely any performance management scheme, and a performance focus more generally, will be counterproductive. This moderation might also be linked with what some recent research suggests as the emergence of a hybrid model of governance in some Australian universities. Here management accommodates some collegial values and academics who hold collegial values accommodate some managerial values (Parker, 2012).

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Mentoring for Women Academics: What works](#)

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# Dilemmas of Educational Financing in an Age of Privatization

# 36

Michael B. Shaffer

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## Abstract

The manner in which traditional public education is funded has long been a source of great diversity of discussion and a variety of approaches. In preparation for pushing education more toward the private sector, while still being funded by the state, many states have made significant cuts in traditional public education funding under the guise of moving away from the dependence on property taxes, which has long been an area of contention. As a number of governmental units assumed greater control of the reduced amount of funding available, it forced school districts to cut programs, services, and personnel to the bare bones. As if that were not enough to keep school boards and administrators busy, many federal or state challenges to traditional public school funding have become *en vogue*. Following a neo-liberal approach, a number

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of states in the United States have decided that funding for education should follow an approach loosely known as “the money follows the child” or the “backpack full of cash” concept. The foundation for the neo-liberal approach to funding is built upon the idea that “the market will determine” what is best for everyone, even at the risk of de-funding institutions that depend on public taxation for survival. Known by many different labels, the commonality is that public money for education is being given to non-public educational institutions, with very few regulations on how that public money should be spent. Fed by the unwillingness of government sources to subject those who receive public funds to be accountable for those funds, inequities and discrimination have become commonplace.

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**Keywords**

School choice · Neo-liberalism · Vouchers · Charter schools · Taxation · Privatization · Property tax · Federal funding · Adequacy · Equity · School finance · Funding formulas

**The Field of Memory**

For many years, according to Odden and Picus (2014), the major philosophy in the field of public school funding was based on the concept that those who owned property in the area of the schools should fund schools as a public good – an institution as it were. Based on the ideas of free public education espoused by the likes of Thomas Jefferson and later Horace Mann, the United States had embraced the concept that those who benefit from public education, i.e., the general public, should pay for a system of public schools, and students should be able to attend for free. This dependence on property taxes, which still exists in some areas of the country, has been litigated against in several significant lawsuits which argued that the funding for a child’s school should not be based on a zip code or locality and its ability to support a system of common schools. While it was true that there were differences in how this was organized in each state, most states allowed a similar funding approach to continue through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century and only began to change as states added terms to their state constitutions “such as *general and uniform, thorough and efficient, basic, or adequate*” (Odden and Picus, 2014, p. 12). These terms started the development of the concepts that individual students might have greater needs if they were to achieve at a higher level of performance academically and to meet state-established academic standards.

**The Field of Presence**

As lawsuits against various states developed, often based on the specific words describing the provision of public education in state constitutions, states had to create approaches to funding that moved away from a robust dependence on property taxes to other forms of funding which utilized foundation or equalization approaches to balance revenue streams and attempt to meet the needs of all students. It was in the

1980s, however, that largely due to impact of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), another school of thought began to exercise considerable influence on the philosophical basis of school funding. No matter what one thinks about that report, its original *raison d'être*, or even the qualifications of those who wrote it, *A Nation at Risk*, popularized in writing for the first time that traditional public schools were, in fact, failing and that there was not likely to be a change in this failing institution. As the idea of failing schools was propagated, neo-liberal advocates of the free market and privatization philosophy seized the opportunity to strike out against teachers' unions as the major cause of the failure and promoted the idea of choice schools which would be free of teacher union influence. Depending on the state, and often in violation of an individual state's constitution, legislatures opened the door widely to a great variety of "choice options" that would offer education to students – paid for by the state and yet not subject to oversight, accountability, or even adherence to anti-discrimination statutes at both the state and federal levels.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

One of the most prominent ideas that has made the transition from business to public education is that of establishing standards, measuring all schools by those standards, applying tests that were purported to measure success on those standards, and penalizing any school or district that does not meet the standards. The impact of this approach on the field of school finance is the dramatic curtailing of state funding to traditional public schools because the tests demonstrated a pattern of failure. The natural outgrowth has been to support and encourage alternatives to traditional public schools by providing parental choice models that use the same income stream as that from which public schools were funded. Another idea that has risen to prominence is that of demonstrating that states are business-friendly by dramatically decreasing the percentages of property taxes imposed on businesses. It has become trendy to pronounce that more than half of nearly every state's budget is spent on education. The problem with this argument is multi-faceted: first, when stating that this amount is spent on education, legislators tend to ignore the fact that education, in their terms, is not just traditional public education but also includes all other "choice" alternatives. The second problem is one of volume. If an individual who makes \$50,000.00 per year states that they spend half of their income on housing, that amount is \$25,000.00. If, however, an individual who has an annual income of \$500,000.00 spends half of their income on housing, the housing expenditure is a much larger \$250,000.00. This argument of what percentage is spent on education will always be a matter of contention, when the issue at hand is actually related to the eagerness of the state to serve business by lowering taxes and cutting funding to schools. The final idea under consideration that has grown significantly in regard to school funding is that anything that can be done by a state-regulated entity can be done more efficiently by a free market or privatized approach. The biggest argument in opposition to the privatization or free market approach is that it does not require private entities to meet accountability standards in regard to the use of state funding, thereby creating a situation in which state and federal funds can be spent in any manner that private or choice schools deem fit.

## Discontinuities and Ruptures

There are several major issues in regard to school funding in the era of privatization that must be considered.

1. A major discontinuity that has begun to be exposed to the light of day is the hidden influence long exerted by organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), long a cheerleader for the privatization of education. The State of Indiana is a poster child for ALEC and has received awards from them for being one of the most privatization friendly states in the United States. This chapter will reference a number of examples from the State of Indiana which apply to many other privatized states (Shaffer, Ellis, & Swensson, 2018). When the global pandemic of 2020–2021 literally took over the world stage, including that of education, ALEC quickly took advantage of the examples of e-Learning and virtual classrooms as further evidence that the traditional public school, fully funded by individual states, was a thing of the past. ALEC stated
  - (a) Citizens, legislators, and regulators should separate the concept of public education from the monopolistic delivery system and embrace twenty-first-century methods of connecting students with learning experiences.
  - (b) Legislators should improve or pass charter school laws, striking a balance between innovation, autonomy, and accountability.
  - (c) Legislators should create or expand the type(s) of school choice program that best suits their state: vouchers, tax credit scholarships, homeschooling, and education savings accounts. Legislators and regulatory agencies should be wary of attempts to re-regulate innovative and/or private educational options, which could expose them to the death of the thousand bureaucratic cuts and sacrifice the freedoms that allow them to succeed.
  - (d) Institutions of higher education should be transparent about what outcomes students can expect and how much money they will have to spend or borrow. (ALEC, 2021, *Key Points*).
2. Traditional public schools are held fiscally responsible in many ways. State Boards of Accounts provide strict oversight. School district budgets must be published and open to the public. Each state requires school boards that must approve expenditures in an open format meeting. Various federal grant funds must be administered in strict accordance to the regulations that guide those grants or suffer the loss of that grant funding. Choice schools are not subject to most of the aforementioned safeguards. Some private schools voluntarily exercise fiscal accountability; however, it is rarely regulated by the states in which they exist. Another major issue is that many state constitutions prohibit the use of state monies for religious organizations.
3. In some cases, like the case of *Meredith v Pence* (2013), technicalities were employed by the Indiana Supreme Court to allow for the use of state funds for religious purposes by stating that “Section 6 [of the Indiana Constitution] prohibits government expenditures that directly benefit any religious or theological institution. Ancillary indirect benefits to such institutions do not render improper those government expenditures that are otherwise permissible” (p. 16). The payment of state monies to private,

religious schools in this case was permitted because initially the payments were made directly to parents who then signed the payment over to the school, thus making such a payment an ancillary benefit to the school, not a direct one.

4. Another significant disruption is that many current voucher programs siphon off tax dollars from an already limited revenue stream for education. In areas wherein there are no income restrictions for families who will be receiving the voucher, vouchers will continue to go to families whose children have never attended a traditional public school. In this situation, state dollars will now be funding choice alternatives for people who were never receiving public school dollars.
5. Another reality that has become a significant discontinuity is that of virtual schools. Fairly early in the charter school market was the advent of virtual schools like K-12 and the Connections Academy in the United States. Questions arose quickly about which school or district was permitted to consider the students for the purpose of attendance and funding. This issue came to the forefront after the demise of the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow, ECOT, the largest online charter school in the country (Ravitch, 2020). After collecting over one billion dollars over the 18 years of its existence, and having the lowest graduation rate of any high school, the school collapsed after an investigation by the *New York Times*. The State of Ohio attempted to retrieve nearly 60 million dollars from ECOT. ECOT declared bankruptcy and closed rather than repay the owed public funds. But virtual schools go significantly beyond the early participants. As the Pandemic of 2020–2021 made regular, full attendance at traditional public schools worldwide a near impossibility, schools everywhere were forced to go “virtual.” Tracking attendance, participation, teacher evaluations and pay, and enrollment became extremely difficult.
6. When traditional public schools were the only game in town, they had a virtual and near actual monopoly of sorts on where students went to school based almost entirely on where students resided. As privatization has surged across the United States, primarily in the form of charters and vouchers, another trend has emerged: the need for traditional public schools to advertise special programs, unique approaches, and the willingness to accept out-of-district students and even make special provisions to get them to school. The reason is pretty simple: to maintain student enrollment numbers.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Traditional public schools are institutions that exist for the public good; funding that is provided by any state must be for secular, non-religious purposes; monies provided by any state should be subject to oversight and accountability measures; an institution that receives public funding should be open and accessible to all; governments should have the education of children as one of the highest priorities and not give away that responsibility to for-profit and non-regulated organizations; unless states are willing to increase taxation expectations for businesses and individuals, they should not split the income stream for education between traditional public schools and schools that are neither public nor open to all students; the

adequate funding of a child's education must not be dependent on where that child lives; the provision of adequate funding for traditional public schools must be as free from economic downfalls as possible.

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## Introduction

Public school finance is almost never anyone's favorite topic. It is the bane of superintendents, the dread of principals who have to do the reporting, the agony of school boards who are trying to stretch every single dime, the responsibility of state legislatures, and the love of a few people in each school district who are either the Chief Financial Officer or the Director of Finance. For students going through a public school administrative licensing program, it is often the class reserved for last out of dread and a grand sense of ennui. Some students, however, find within the pages of classics like Odden and Picus (2014) *School Finance: A Policy Perspective* a philosophy and approach that can guide their professional practice as they become administrators.

In this chapter, however, the reader *will not* find a primer on public school finance. What the reader *will* find is how public school finance is different due to the current world of education, a world in which traditional public schools, wherever they exist, are not the only game in town. Instead, not only in the United States but also in various countries around the world, privatization and choice have not crept quietly into the arena, but have instead come in like a lion, heavily bankrolled by private interests and deep pockets. Again, the State of Indiana is a great case study (Shaffer, Ellis, & Swensson, 2018). It is simple to find the foundations of what has come to be known as school choice, and this chapter will examine that genesis briefly. But beyond the foundation, the chapter will examine the impact of the neo-liberal philosophy that has created the current world of traditional public school finance as it is impacted by privatization and school choice.

The chapter will provide more detail on the issues of how privatization and choice divide the revenue stream that most states have for the education of all children, what some states have chosen to do to bypass what have been known as Blaine Amendments which restrict the use of public funds for religious organizations, and how choice programs impact all traditional public schools even for those districts that do not have choice schools within their boundaries. Further, the chapter will examine the need for strict oversight by the states which have elected to permit the use of public funds for choice schools, the impact of virtual or e-Learning on traditional public schools, and how an organization known as the American Legislative Exchange Council has written policies for states to use to get around constitutional and legislative issues.

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## Foundations of Choice and Privatization

Until fairly recently, most traditional public school educators were unaware of an organization known as the American Legislative Exchange Council. Their philosophies and influence peddling have had widespread impact on governmental issues in

general, but particularly traditional public education. William Cronon (as cited in MacLean, 2017), a historian at the University of Wisconsin, detailed the impact that ALEC exerted by creating model laws that states could pass, in some cases, almost verbatim. “Alongside laws to devastate labor unions were others that would rewrite tax codes, undo environmental protections, privatize many public resources, and require police to take action against undocumented immigrants” (Maclean, 2017, p. xix). One of the public resources that ALEC began to target then and has consistently targeted since that time has been that of traditional public schools for the very reasons quoted above, nearly all of which fit the ALEC agenda for opposition: public schools are represented by teachers’ unions. Public schools collect taxes and the revenue from those taxes is often the largest single area of public expenditure. Public schools serve undocumented as well as documented students, and public schools are in fact most often forbidden by law from knowing or seeking to know the status of undocumented students. Thus, while there are a host of reasons why groups and individuals favor and promote privatization, ALEC appears to be the lead among them.

Many have suggested that Milton Friedman is the father of the current privatization approach to education when in reality, his ideas came nearly at the same time as James McGill Buchanan, an economist from the University of Virginia, who had spent a great deal more time and effort into fleshing out a path toward privatization in specifically the areas mentioned by ALEC in both their early and current literature (MacLean, 2017). In addition to Buchanan, Friedman relied very heavily on the writings of F.A. Hayek (2011) who was actually much more persuasive and articulate regarding neo-liberal goals than Friedman himself. The American Legislative Exchange Council depends heavily even today on the writings and philosophies of Hayek, Buchanan, and Friedman.

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## **Impact of Privatization on Traditional Public School Finance**

### **Lack of Regard for State Constitutions and Blaine Amendments**

Shaffer, Ellis, and Swensson (2018) relate that 37 states have Blaine Amendments to their state constitutions which are supposed to stop the state government from providing funds to religious organizations. The State of Indiana is a great example of the work, directed in the background by ALEC, of state legislatures to completely ignore the wording and the spirit of the amendment. In the Indiana Constitution, Article I Section 6, it states, “No money shall be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of any religious or theological institution” (Indiana Constitution, 1851). In *Meredith v Pence* (2013), the Indiana Supreme Court got around the Blaine Amendment by making the determination that the state was not really providing a tangible benefit to the religious schools because the benefit was to the student (and parents) in the form of a voucher check, which then would be delivered to the school by the parent and applied to tuition costs. What is most interesting about this is that now, 8 years later, the checks are no longer in the mail to parents, but are made as direct

payments to schools. In short, the State of Indiana is making direct payments to religious organizations that have schools, and that money is actually drawn from the state treasury.

The Choice Scholarship award is designated by the parent/guardian to be paid directly to the participating Choice school on the student's behalf. At the time of application, the Choice school will download and print a Choice Scholarship Endorsement Form. The Endorsement Form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian. Without the completed Endorsement Form, the State will not make a payment for that student (IDOE, 2021a, p. 8).

Note that the words employed by the Indiana Department of Education are that the parents designate to which school the money goes, and it is paid *directly to the school*, which appears at the least to be a violation of the ruling of *Meredith v Pence*. Politically speaking, since the political party that wants vouchers to exist has a supermajority in Indiana, they can do as they wish, in this case fully supported by a state supreme court that is fully appointed by the same party. That issue notwithstanding, the real question, which has remained unanswered in many states that subsidize schools that are religious or attached to religious organizations is

If religious schools are going to be the dominant form of private education to receive the benefits of public funding, this raises serious issues about whether in a secularized state we intend to directly subsidize religious training. For there is little doubt that religious schools provide a substantial amount of religious education. (Carnoy, 2000, pp. 16–17)

## Laws which Contain Little or no Accountability in Fund Usage

Anyone who has ever been involved in the business office of a traditional public school knows that the level of accountability that exists for the use of various kinds of federal and state funds is extremely high. Funds from the Department of Agriculture for the federal breakfast and lunch programs must be followed very closely. Title funds (to include Title I, Title II, and all of the others) have significantly stringent rules that must be followed or funds will be discontinued. Funds from the state cannot just be spent without board approval, they have to be planned through the budgeting process, approved by a school board (comprised of elected public officials responsible to the public), appropriated through a structured approach, tracked through the use of purchase orders, and expended according to very minute detail. That is in traditional public schools.

The use of funds provided to voucher schools is by design much simpler. For example, in the use of special education services for students and the accompanying funds,

The only restriction is that the parent can choose to have them provided by the private school only if the private school offers those services. However, there are no minimum qualifications or oversight regarding the private school's ability to provide the necessary services. The option for parents of students with a disability requiring special education services to



have a private school provide those services differs significantly from other voucher programs in our report which either administer separate special education voucher programs (e.g., Ohio) or require the given private school to show evidence of their ability to provide the needed services (e.g., Louisiana). In Indiana, the private school makes the decision regarding whether or not it can provide the needed services. (Moon & Stewart, 2016, p. 8)

If there are no restrictions or oversight on how services are provided, then it follows by necessity that there is no oversight of the funds involved. What is true for special education funds is also true for the rest of the funds provided by the state to private schools which receive vouchers. Moon and Stewart (2016) found that “There are no provisions in the Indiana Code addressing fiscal accountability or audits for the program, though there are some provisions involving minimum requirements for private school participation that could be interpreted as being related to fiscal matters”(p. 8.). So, one could ask, “if there are no direct fiscal accountability requirements, what ARE the provisions that ‘could be interpreted as being related to fiscal matters’?” The answer is staggering. Schools must be accredited. Period. What needs to be understood for those who do not reside in Indiana, most voucher-receiving schools utilize the wholly legal but practically useless “freeway accreditation” approach. According to the Indiana Department of Education, the only requirements for schools that are freeway accredited is that they must show a “steady pattern of increases in performance” (p. 1) in attendance, graduation rate, state assessment performance, and a handful of statutes, none of which mention anything remotely related to finances. No mention whatsoever is included about financial accountability.

### **Promise of Savings but Escalating Costs Instead**

One of the oft-repeated threads of propaganda in regard to the privatization of schools is that the private sector can do the education process much more cheaply than can a state or federal agency. The facts, however, do not support this promise. Shaffer, Ellis, and Swensson (2018) found that “A Friedman Foundation commissioned report prior to Indiana’s passage of its tax credit voucher program promised *savings* of \$17.6 million for the state by year five of the program” (p. 9). What happened instead should be a cautionary tale to any state considering a voucher program. In the school years 2011–2012 to 2019–2020, which were the first 9 years of the program (which still continues today), the State of Indiana *spent* just over one BILLION dollars on the voucher program that was promised to save the state money in its first 5 years. Whether it was anticipated or unanticipated, of the more than 36 thousand students enrolled in the voucher program by 2019–2020, 60.7% had never attended a public school (IDOE, 2021b, p. 17). Herein lies the problem. Prior to the advent of the voucher program, these students attended private schools at expense of their families. As if that were not enough, the 2021 legislature of Indiana announced in its legislative agenda the intent to remove income limits on vouchers, which will most certainly INCREASE the cost of the program.

## Removal of Visible Dependence on Property Taxes

According to Brimley, Verstegen, and Knoepfel (2020), property taxes have been the go-to funding source for municipal entities for many years. However, because of the increase of property taxes, especially in urban areas, many states have worked to remove property taxes from the main flow of revenue for school districts, at least to a point. While the impact initially has been presented positively, what has occurred in Indiana, for example, has created the same old problem that had existed before the change – a child’s zip code determines the ability of the area or municipality to adequately fund schools. The reason Indiana is such a cogent example is that taxpayers were told that moving the General Fund to being under state control in 2008 would equalize the funding and provide an adequate education for students. However, tax rate limits, circuit breakers, and homestead exemptions significantly cut into revenue generated by the new approach to taxation. As a result, the state continued its pattern of cutting school budgets year after year. After changes in how funding was allocated in 2019, the only revenues controlled by property taxes were the transportation fund, debt service fund, and the capital projects fund. These were largely incorporated into what was called “The Operations Fund.” But, as schools began to feel the combined impact of the tax rate limits, circuit breakers, and homestead exemptions, the ability to do much needed things, to include teacher salary increases, was severely curtailed. Many school districts were forced to conduct referendums (special elections to generate revenue outside tax rate and circuit breaker limits) for operating expenses. Suburban districts in which there was strong support for traditional public schools had little difficulty passing referenda for operating expenses. Rural school districts were a different story. Populated largely by farmers, who paid a higher rate of property taxes, many rural districts were unable to pass referenda for operating expenses, leaving the districts with few options left to generate much-needed funds. So, while it appears on the surface that moving away from a total dependence on property taxes is a good thing, in reality, it often comes right back to a revenue system in which property taxes once again come into play even though it is through the referendum approach (Chu, 2019).

## Volatile Revenue Stream

As mentioned above, many states came under fire to decrease the dependence on property taxes because of the inherent inequality generated by the area in which one lived. Knoepfel, Pitts, and Lindle (2013) described what happened when, following the 30-year trend seen in other states, South Carolina cut off the dependence on property taxes as revenue for schools and added instead a one-cent sales tax. Act 388 changed the focus from property taxes to “ad valorem taxes, revenue transfers from the state in lieu of taxes, and revenues from fees. Localities were given the legislative authority to determine fees as necessary” (p. 12). What happened as a result of Act 388 is that homeowners of the very expensive

properties in Charleston benefitted greatly, much as homeowners of the expensive properties in Indianapolis did with the property tax changes in Indiana in 2008. So, what was the impact of Act 388?

The biggest losers were public schools and students along with the local municipalities whose abilities to raise revenues was curtailed by Act 388. More alarming was the total disregard for the impact that the removal of revenues would have on the system of public education in the state. Indeed, the proponents of the Act did not even consider the systemic ramifications of the removal of the most stable source of revenue for public education. (Knoepfel et al., 2013, p. 19)

Act 388 in South Carolina is a very similar approach to what many states have enacted in an attempt to lessen dependence on property taxes. The biggest problem with the approach is that by attaching the big area of expenditure (education) to a very volatile revenue stream, they have set themselves up for major problems in the event of a significant economic downturn like that experienced by the entire country in 2008. “The responses from the politically elites in this study revealed that the enactment of the law was not merely shortsighted economically, but also in terms of taxpayer equity” (Knoepfel et al., p. 18).

### **Split Revenue Stream and Cuts to Traditional Public Education**

The issue is really a pretty simple one: politics has been defined as competition for scarce resources. When all tax-receiving entities in a state depend on the very same revenue stream, if one entity receives more, and that causes a shortfall for the others, there are really only two choices: cut the funding either across the board or to the entity receiving more funds or increase the incoming revenue by increasing or diversifying taxes. A conversation with a retired traditional public school superintendent revealed an interesting perspective. He discussed the fact that in Indiana (where he had been a superintendent for many years), the expenditure for education was more than 50% of the state budget (Caddell, personal communication, Nov. 2020). As the discussion continued, however, he acknowledged that it was also true that “education” included not only P-12 traditional public schools but also higher education, charter schools, and voucher schools – all taking from the same pot of money. When Indiana started its Choice Scholarship Program in 2011, there were no additional revenue streams created to provide funding, as the original promise was that the voucher program would be saving the state money within five years. Now, in the tenth year of the voucher program in Indiana, the State of Indiana has spent over \$1.1 billion on a program that was promised to save money. This split in the revenue stream has caused continuing cuts to traditional public schools all across the state, causing most to operate on an austere budget, relying on either significant cuts to the budget or the need to secure additional funding through referenda. Perhaps the focus should move from being able to say that a state spends “more than 50% of its revenue on education” to increasing the size of the pot itself. This was mentioned briefly earlier in the chapter. When the discussion about education spending arises, one must look at the total

revenue from the designated tax sources. In the years from 2002 to 2004, a significant number of businesses for one reason or another had decided to leave the state of Indiana, causing many localities and municipalities to increase property taxes to attempt to make up the lost revenue. The push for tax reform was driven by the desire of the state under then Gov. Mitch Daniels, when he became governor in 2005, to make sure Indiana appeared more business-friendly (Chu, 2019). One way the governor and legislature decided to do this was to create a totally different take on taxes, which would result in the reduction of taxes not only to wealthier homeowners but also to businesses. To make the situation even worse, the recession of 2008–2009 cut deeply into state revenues. School districts and other municipal entities that depended on tax revenue were hurting, but they could not afford to have their budgets cut even further, so they cut essential services and had to depend more on outside grants to fund new programs. It is always good to remember when talking about the percentage of any given state's budget being spent on education, or that education spending is increasing, that many times the increases that occur are often given to other privatized recipients such as charter and voucher schools and never end up in the coffers of traditional public education districts. "More generally, privatization siphons tax dollars away from traditional public education under the guise of greater efficiency while it shortchanges families. . ." (Swensson, Ellis, & Shaffer, 2019, p. 65).

### **Virtual School Programs which Are Nearly Completely Unregulated**

While the concept of virtual schools is not a new one, it is still largely the "Wild West" when it comes to regulation and oversight. One only has to look at the supporters of virtual schools to begin to question the effectiveness of these endeavors. One of the biggest backers of virtual school is none other than the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which has been both verbally and legislatively supportive of schools like the national chain Connections Academy. Wording provided to states by ALEC for legislative action declared that virtual schools be "recognized as public schools, treated equitably, and allocated the same resources as other 'public schools'" (Ravitch, 2014, p. 185). Although the Pandemic of 2020–2021 has by necessity created virtual learning or e-Learning situations to the extent never seen before in the United States, prior to the Pandemic, there were numerous examples of the mismanagement of virtual schools and the lack of ability of local school districts or even State Departments of Education to provide more structure to virtual schools. In January 2018, the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), which for 18 years had been receiving enormous amounts of funding from the State of Ohio, fell apart, and when it did, it left the state holding the bag on \$80 million that ECOT owed back to the state. One could ask how it happened, and the answer is simple: "the Ohio Department of Education failed to audit ECOT's records to force the company to be honest. . ." (The Blade, 2021, paragraph 7). The problem with virtual schools has not been limited to lack of state oversight, however. In the Dalesville Community School District in Indiana, the State Board of Accounts found that the district had failed to verify enrollment counts it had been given by two virtual schools that the district oversaw.

Daleville's lack of meaningful oversight and monitoring may have contributed to ineligible students being included in enrollment data that allowed the two schools to report inflated student counts to the state, according to the report. This allowed the schools to receive \$68.7 million from inflated enrollment and make improper payments of those public funds to multiple companies linked to school officials and their family members. (Indiana Public Media, 2020, paragraph 8)

As noted earlier, nearly all traditional public schools have had to experience the use of virtual learning or e-Learning due to the Pandemic of 2020–2021. While the results are still to be determined about the efficacy of virtual instruction during the Pandemic, even solid, traditional public school districts have dipped into the water of virtual instruction and opened their “classroom doors” virtually to students outside the district. It may take years to determine the gain or losses students made during the Pandemic when it was often true that it was virtual or nothing.

### **Acceptance of Federal and State Funds While Actively Discriminating**

For many people, this is a sticky subject. Should privatized schools, in most cases religious private schools, have the right to accept the students they want to accept with no restriction? All one has to do is to look at the storied and shameful history of private schools in the United States to clear up a great deal of the issues that appear to be important. A very brief history lesson tells the story. In 1954, a historic US Supreme Court decision in *Brown v Board of Education* overturned an earlier US Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* by stating unequivocally that separate facilities, all public facilities, were not equal. For public schools, this meant that all public schools should be fully integrated, NOT segregated. In a shameful part of the history of the United States, in response to the *Brown* decision, all across the south, private schools started up quickly, for the very simple reason that there were a number of White families that did not want their children to be in school with students of color (Shaffer & Dincher, 2020). These private schools went by two distinct, descriptive names – *Segregationist Academies* and *Freedom of Choice Schools*. Nevin and Bills (1976) tell the story so well in their book, *The Schools That Fear Built: Segregationist Academies in the South*. Nevin and Bills stated:

The early segregationist academies were usually secular schools that sprang up on a county-wide basis in rural areas, standing ready to serve any and all white children who applied. The more recent schools and those appearing in the larger cities are almost entirely “Christian” schools, sponsored by an evangelical Protestant church and heavily influenced by the fundamental theology which the more conservative evangelical churches follow. (p. 2)

Just in case the reader is asking the question, “Why does this matter when we are talking about school finance in the age of privatization?” The answer to this question is best illustrated by reviewing admissions practices in voucher schools in the State of Indiana. Shaffer and Dincher (2020) found that while the segregationist practices seen in private schools in the 1960s and 1970s were more visible and out in the open, private schools in Indiana, 99.6% of which were religious in the 2019–2020 school

year, are actively practicing discriminatory admissions and not just in the area of race. While no study has proved this fact as of the writing of this chapter, a simple handbook review of a number of private, religious, voucher schools in IN shows that there is an active pattern of discrimination also against students and staff who are LGBTQ+, students who are English Learners (EL), and students who should or do receive special education services.

These private schools, which operate under the full support and encouragement of the Indiana Legislature and the Indiana Department of Education, practice active discrimination so that they can offer parents “choice.” The legislation that prescribes how the voucher program was started and continues to function was written by none other than the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and in many cases the Indiana legislation comes with wording nearly identical to ALEC’s proposed legislation. Make no mistake, these are schools for White students, created by legislation and “religious organizations” so that White students do not have to attend school with students who are “different.” In case this message is not clear, the issues should be. While actively practicing discrimination on many levels, Choice Scholarship Schools (voucher schools) in Indiana receive the maximum amount of funding provided by the State of Indiana and also receive many Federal grants which amount to a large amount of money – and there is no censure from the Indiana Department of Education or the Legislature. This is, and should be, an alarming fact. Federal grants like Titles I, II, and III, monies go to private voucher schools which practice and teach a significant amount of religious instruction and practice discrimination. Special Education money flows into these schools in large amounts, and there is almost no oversight on how the money is spent. Most Federal grants have required “set asides” for students from traditional public school districts that go to voucher schools within their boundaries, and unless that particular public school district exercises great due diligence, voucher schools are allowed to spend those Federal monies with no restriction. The issue of segregationist practices at all levels should be one of the greatest concerns in regard to school funding and privatization.

## **Privatization Within Traditional School Districts**

Colleges and universities have done it for years. Businesses of every size and description do it. The question which may take some time to answer is pretty simple: Is the internal privatization of things like transportation, custodial services, and food services the way to go to save precious and hotly contested school dollars? While this is a burgeoning area for many traditional public schools, it has been done quite successfully in some school districts, especially larger ones. Another question that begs to be answered is whether the cost savings achieved by privatizing within a school actually save enough money to be worth the time and investment it takes to make the switch from district staffed and run to a situation in which these areas are run by private companies. Sometimes economies of scale are involved. A district with one campus K-12 and 800 students will not likely see the same level of savings that a district with 75 buildings and 32,000 students.

## Conclusions and Reflections

The question of privatization is no longer just a philosophical conversation in back rooms sponsored by neo-liberal organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council. Privatization is knocking at the door and in many cases will keep knocking until given an answer. One of the questions that must be addressed in this process is how to keep traditional public education – which has the track record, the organization, the support structure, and the students to be viable – public. Public education is a function of the states in the United States, and in spite of many wishful dialogues and diatribes to the contrary, traditional public schools are getting the job done of educating mass numbers of students and doing it better than anyone else. As Diane Ravitch, our great national treasure and education historian stated it,

The free market works well in producing goods and services, but it produces extreme inequality, and it has a high rate of failure. That is not the way we want our schools to work. The core principle of American public education is supposed to be the equality of educational opportunity, not a race to the top or a free market with winners and losers. (Ravitch, 2014, p. 304)

The current most pressing issue is that while privatized schools have always existed, it is now *en vogue* all across the United States and in many other countries to provide to these schools a level of fiscal support heretofore not considered possible.

This chapter has just tapped into the questions of school finance in a time of privatization. Even with all of the detractors which should be enough in an awakening society to force a change in the legislation which encourages and mandates the fiscal and governmental support from State and Federal sources, these schools and practices are flourishing. In order for this to happen, the states must take money from traditional public schools, which are open to all students and prepared to educate all students, and give those monies to unregulated, discriminatory schools which have very few expectations or regulations about how that money is spent.

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# Emotions and Leading Schools in Troubled Times

# 37

Christa Boske

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## Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extant literature on emotions in providing a framework for deepening understanding regarding the role emotions play when leading schools in the twenty-first century. The chapter begins with an overlook of contemporary issues facing society at a macrolevel and the possible influence of these social justice-oriented issues on the school communities k-12 leaders serve. In conclusion, the author provides a conceptual model to move school culture from one of emotional silence to authentic emotional engagement.

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**Keywords**

Educational leadership · Emotions · US school leadership preparation · Social justice

**The Field of Memory**

The field of psychology has witnessed three major thoughts. As early as the Greeks, scholars questioned whether or not psychology should be considered a science. In the early seventeenth century, philosophers introduced the first concept suggesting a connection between the mind and body as a means to understand the human experience. Sigmund Freud's clinical work led him to believe that early childhood experiences and unconscious impulses influenced adult development, behaviors, and personality. In the early twentieth century, the second force came to light. Behaviorism dominated the field and rejected the influence of the unconscious or conscious mind. And finally, the third school of thought emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, humanistic psychology, which emphasizes the influence of conscious experiences. In the 1950s–1960s, psychology took hold of a movement known as the cognitive revolution. There was an interest in studying the human brain to better understand people's behaviors.

**The Field of Presence**

The study of human emotions began with exploring basic neurological processes. The psychology field transformed from philosophical traditions dating back to the Greeks and Romans to contemporary explorations centered on the science of the mind. Over time, the study of emotions focused on the experience of emotions to understanding how emotions influence lived experiences, beliefs, and decision-making. Today, which emotions people experience, how they experience emotions, and how emotions influence people depending on context play an important role in understanding the role of emotions in leading schools. This examination led to the development of emotional intelligence (EI) and social intelligence (SI).

**The Field of Concomitance**

Emotions emerge from more than basic processes and may be constituted by neurobiological processes when understanding how emotions arise. In 1890, William James and, again in 1897, Wilhelm Wundt transformed psychology into a science of the mind. The focus shifted to the science of behavior as a scientific view regarding the experience of emotion with John B. Watson in 1919 and Skinner in 1953. Studying emotions emerged again in the 1980s and 2000s with a focus on the experience of emotions with researchers such as Lisa Feldman Barrett (2006) and Nico Frijda (1986). Understanding the causes and experiences of emotions is an important aspect of reality; however, deepening ways of knowing of what people experience when facing emotions (i.e., what is felt) also plays a significant role in the science of emotion (see Barrett, 2006). Which emotions people experience, how they experience emotions, and how conceptual knowledge about emotions influences

socially situated actions are at the core of emotional intelligence (see Barrett & Gross, 2001). Therefore, the notion of school leaders' emotional labor when navigating their emotions plays a significant role in managing and regulating emotions.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers suggested gender distinctions exist with emotions. The social construction of what it means to be a woman encourages women to place a high value on interpersonal relations, connectedness, continuity, collaboration, and integration. These values play an important role in a school leader's social interactions within the school community. The classical feminine role of caring, nurturing, presence, and responsiveness was examined. Researchers explored school leaders' feelings of caring and examined associated moral and ethical issues.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Work by Arlie Hochschild, Jill Gilligan, Charol Shakeshaft, Nel Noddings, Jill Blackmore, and others suggest distinctions in emotions and gender. Arlie Hochschild (1983) introduced the notion of emotional labor. She suggested emotional labor is required when working and emphasizes feeling one thing but expecting to feel something else. School leaders tap engage in emotional labor when they are asked to abandon their professional collaboration and embrace new expectations, behaviors, practices, or policies. Jill Gilligan (1982) views women's sense of morality as being social constructed, contending women place a high value on integration, connectedness, and continuity. In 1987, Charol Shakeshaft contended women school leaders' understanding of power and control was related to gender identification and considered gender as highly relevant to school leadership and emotions. Leadership codes, which suggest cognitive and emotional dissonance, may emerge, and women may be encouraged to undergo extensive changes to reshaping oneself. Nel Noddings (1984) introduced the role of caring as central to people's lives and work with the feminine role of nurturing, caring, responsiveness, and relatedness as the heart of women's work. In 1996, Jill Blackmore argues the emotional labor involved in teaching and leading is relational and contextual.

Arlie Russell Hochschild's 1983 interactional model of emotion provides insight to what school leaders experience regarding the emotional management of self and others. In 1997, David Loader paved the way for leaders and understanding the emotional realities of school leadership with the "Inner Principal." The conceptual model affords school leaders to contribute their voices and experiences and reveals a myriad of emotional intricacies they experience in their profession. Norman Denzin's "Emotional Understanding" (1984) provides insights regarding the human experience of emotions such as love, hate, anger, joy, pain, and despair and the role emotion plays in developing ways of understanding personal and social interactions. Brenda Beaty (2000) reminds us that understanding the emotional experiences of school leaders may potentially provide ways to examine how they navigate their emotions and how emotions influence decision-making.

## Introduction

*I am angry.*  
*I am enraged.*  
*My patience grows thin.*  
*I am heart broken.*  
*At times, hallow.*  
*The needless killing of Black and Brown people.*  
*A whirlwind of emotions.*  
*A disdain for Black and Brown lives.*  
*How do I prepare school leaders to address these injustices?*  
*To empower our school communities?*  
 -Christa Boske

How are school leaders understanding the influence of stressors on national issues, such as reading about a Black man shot in Kenosha, Wisconsin (see Peiser & Berma, 2020); another Black man killed in Louisiana in one weekend (The Guardian, 2020); the murder of George Floyd (New York Times, 2020); and the grand jury's decision regarding the death of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky (Williams, 2020)? How are principals and superintendents addressing the impact of these national issues on local issues, such as a football player allegedly using racial slurs against teammates (see WKYC Staff, 2020); the promotion of anti-racial curriculum (see Young & McMahon, 2020); racial issues across the country and influence on children in schools (see Pierre, 2020); a high school student running on the field with a thin blue-line flag creating racial controversy (see Kennedy, 2020); or students in Baltimore promoting justice as a movement versus a moment (see Lumpkin, 2020). A former school leader of 18 years and a professor preparing school leaders to empower school community members, especially those who live on the margins, journaled the poem above. People who engage in social justice work often inspire and motivate others by utilizing emotion in stories, which contribute to their understanding of social justice work (see Steinke & Belair-Gagnon, 2020). Those who lead k-12 schools, especially those who promote justice-oriented work, experience a wide-range of emotions. Engaging in this significant work with children and families and leading school communities can be exhausting. After learning about the most recent police brutality in Wisconsin, Louisiana, and Kentucky, to what extent are school leaders exploring the power of Black Lives Matter Movement and emotions aligned with addressing historical discrimination in schools? Black lives matter every minute, every hour, and every day. And in preparing school leaders to address historical inequities across the United States, how do preparation programs support school leaders in learning how to navigate their emotions when facing a myriad of injustices impacting the lives of children and families?

If we look at the data available on intellectual, spiritual, cognitive, and philosophical views on leadership, the power of emotions is evident. And when we think about emotions shaping understanding, we can imagine the power emotions play when we consider the myriad of challenges facing the United States and those who lead k-12 schools. Facing the daily challenges of leading school communities encourages school leaders to look within and reflect on the power of their emotional responses, personal accomplishments, and capacity to believe in oneself, which can

fade or grow. At the heart of this work is the understanding of emotions, whether positive or negative; leaders who report increased levels of emotional exhaustion also report more anger, frustration, or anxiety, often experiencing burnout or leaving the profession versus school leaders who experience more positive emotions, such as joy or hope (see Brackett, Floman, & Bradley, 2018). When considering the myriad of societal conflicts facing the United States, how are educational leaders navigating their emotions as they lead schools? What is the emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, voter suppression, police brutality, homelessness, and the continued marginalization of underserved populations on their capacity to lead school communities in culturally responsive ways?

Human emotions play a significant role throughout social phenomena. People may know what emotions are and understand the importance they play in their experiences and understanding of the world. As human beings, we experience life emotionally. We feel emotions and respond to those emotions. The essential nature of emotions was discussed by Edward Lawler (1999) as well as challenges in defining what emotions, which was examined by George Marcus (2000). The complexity of emotion, which characterizes human life, is often reflected in a myriad of emotions. Norman Denzin (1983) defines emotions as “a lived, believed-in, situated, temporally embodied experience that radiate through a person’s stream of consciousness, is felt in and runs through his body, and, in the process of being lived, plunges the person and his associates into a wholly new and transformed reality- the reality of a world that is being constituted by the emotional experience” (p. 267). Seymour Epstein (1967) examined emotions. He suggested emotions were complex and organized responses that offered specific feelings or affect as well as a patten or expressive reactions. Furthermore, Edward Lawler (1999) contends emotions as brief, negative or positive evaluative states, in which people experience cognitive, neurological, and physiological elements. School leaders, however, often lack the support, guidance, skills, and resources essential to developing their own emotional and social competencies (see Beisser, Peters, & Thacker, 2014; Gallup, 2017).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extant literature on emotions in providing a framework for deepening understanding regarding the role emotions may play when leading schools in the twenty-first century. The chapter begins with an overlook of contemporary issues facing society at a macrolevel and the possible influence of these social justice-oriented issues on the school communities k-12 leaders serve. I conclude the chapter with a conceptual model to move school culture from one of emotional silence to authentic emotional engagement.

## **COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a major challenge around the world that, perhaps, has not been seen since the Spanish flu in 1918. The virus continues to disproportionately claim the lives of the poor and Black and Brown people, who have been hit the hardest (see Finch & Hernandez Finch, 2020). Schools across the country are reopening and, in many cases, engaging in virtual learning.

The 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years ended and started in chaos as some parts of the country opened despite spikes in the infection. School leaders are in a position in which the virus may infect their children, teachers, staff, and communities at large, triggering quarantines, delaying school openings, and creating temporary school shutdowns when school community members test positive for the deadly virus. Furthermore, according to the 2018 US Census Bureau, 27.5 million people and 4.3 million children did not have any health insurance in 2018, which, for children, was an increase of 425,000 from the previous year.

## **Systemic Racism**

Systemic racism runs deep. After more than 60 years after Jim Crow laws were repealed, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Education* in 1954 attempted to do away with the doctrine of separate but equal. However, US school systems remain racially segregated and chronically underfunded, and, in many instances, even suggest segregation has worsened, and are anything but equal (Bell, 2004; Garcia, 2018, 2020). This disturbing trend, wherein Black and Brown children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice system, is called the school-to-prison pipeline. School leaders are responsible for addressing these inequities facing these children with many of them identified as having learning differences, living in poverty, and victims of abuse and/or neglect. And instead, these children are often isolated, disciplined at higher rates with more severe punitive consequences, and pushed out of the educational system.

## **Voter Suppression**

When the US voting system is working, people have the opportunity to express their views at the polls. This is a fundamental right for US citizens in order to promote policies that uphold human rights. However, when the system is broken, repressive voter ID laws, racial gerrymandering, the elimination of polling places, removing mailboxes, and precinct closures disturb the system and disproportionately target impoverished, urban, Brown and Black communities (see Litvinov & Means, 2020). These, and other voter suppression practices (e.g., the elimination of early voting or absentee ballots and requiring specific student IDs to vote), promote injustice and systemic racism. The United States desperately needs a citizen movement to address attacks on the nation's democracy that ensures every voice is protected, welcomed, and heard.

## **Police Brutality**

Sadly, the trend of fatal police shootings and police brutality in the United States seems to be increasing (see Statista, 2020). In recent years, fatal shootings include, but are not limited to, Michael Brown, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Aura

Rosser, Stephon Clark, Botham Jean, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Michelle Cusseaux, Freddie Gray, Janisha Fonville, Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Gabriella Nevarez, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, and Tanisha Anderson.

## Homelessness

The pandemic has exposed the depth and disparities within school communities and across the United States. As economic disruptions continue to spike due to loss of employment and the closing of businesses, the virus also triggers a spike in housing stability. Stay-at-home orders from governors and mayors influenced millions of Americans, and for those who were homeless, they had nowhere to go. The plight of those who lived on the streets, living paycheck to paycheck, and loss of wages/employment created long lines at food pantries across the country. Some populations are more likely to experience homelessness in comparison with other groups: American Indians, Black Americans, multiracial Americans, Latinxs, and Pacific Islanders are more likely to be homeless than the national average or White Americans (see National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). And according to the School Nutrition Association (2020), nearly 100,000 US k-12 schools serve 29.6 million students every day, including 20.1 million free lunches, which is correlated with households living in poverty.

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## Studying Emotions

Emotions emerge from more than basic processes and may be constituted by neurobiological processes when understanding how emotions arise. In 1890, William James and, again in 1897, Wilhelm Wundt transformed psychology into a science of the mind. The focus shifted to the science of behavior as a scientific view regarding the experience of emotion with John B. Watson in 1919 and Skinner in 1953. Studying emotions emerged again in the 1980s and 2000s with a focus on the experience of emotions with researchers such as Lisa Feldman Barrett (2006) and Nico Frijda (1986). Understanding the causes and experiences of emotions is an important aspect of reality; however, deepening ways of knowing of what people experience when facing emotions (i.e., what is felt) also plays a significant role in the science of emotion (see Barrett, 2006). Which emotions people experience, how they experience emotions, and how conceptual knowledge about emotions influences socially situated actions are at the core of emotional intelligence (see Barrett & Gross, 2001).

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## Emotions and School Leaders

Most school leadership preparation programs do not provide candidates with opportunities or skills to support their efforts to regulate their emotions effectively in schools. However, leaders who have the capacity to accurately identify their

emotions and the emotions of others often exhibit skills to transform school communities (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018). Leading schools has its highs and lows, successes and failures, and a myriad of emotions that accompany these experiences including, but not limited to, courage, anger, sadness, rage, frustration, and disappointment (see Loader, 1997). Works by scholars such as Arlie Hochschild, Jill Gilligan, Charol Shakeshaft, Nel Noddings, Jill Blackmore, and others suggest distinctions in emotions and gender. Arlie Hochschild (1983) introduced the notion of emotional labor. She suggested emotional labor is required when working and emphasizes feeling one thing but expecting to feel something else. School leaders engage in emotional labor when they are asked to abandon their professional collaborations and embrace new expectations, behaviors, practices, or policies. Jill Gilligan (1982) views women's sense of morality as being socially constructed, contending women place a high value on integration, connectedness, and continuity. In 1987, Charol Shakeshaft contended women school leaders' understanding of power and control was related to gender identification and considered gender as highly relevant to school leadership and emotions. Leadership codes, which suggest cognitive and emotional dissonance, may emerge, and women may be encouraged to undergo extensive changes to reshaping oneself. Nel Noddings (1984) introduced the role of caring as central to people's lives and work with the feminine role of nurturing, caring, responsiveness, and relatedness as the heart of women's work. In 1996, Jill Blackmore argues the emotional labor involved in teaching and leading is relational and contextual.

Arlie Russell Hochschild's 1983 interactional model of emotion provides insight to what school leaders experience regarding the emotional management of self and others. She introduces the concept of school leaders and emotional labor. Hochschild suggests school leaders may feel one way, however, these leaders contend they may be expected to feel another way. In 1997, David Loader paved the way for leaders and understanding the emotional realities of school leadership with the "Inner Principal." The conceptual model affords school leaders to contribute their voices and experiences and reveals a myriad of emotional intricacies they experience in their profession. In 1984, Norman Denzin's "Emotional Understanding" provides insights regarding the human experience of emotions such as love, hate, anger, joy, pain, and despair and the role emotion plays in developing ways of understanding personal and social interactions. Brenda Beaty (2000) reminds us that understanding the emotional experiences of school leaders may potentially provide ways to examine how they navigate their emotions and how emotions influence decision-making. She uncovered school leaders who engaged in authentic distributed leadership and experienced less stress and the joy of success. If school leaders thrived on their own empowerment, Beaty discovered leaders needed emotional support as well as community affirmations for their work. If, however, leaders felt disempowered, the experience often led to increased anxiety, feeling threatened, or emotional turmoil, because these school leaders were left feeling out of control. If these school leaders felt detached and out of control, they often engaged in more rigid management interactions, which may lend itself to additional efforts to regulate their emotions.



## The Emergence of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Although the definition of intelligence may vary from theorists or conceptualizations, intelligence often involves the capacity to learn, retain knowledge, solve problems, and apply solutions to challenges encountered (see Cherry, 2018). As early as the 1930s, Edward Thorndike (1901, 1933), a psychologist who conceptualized social intelligence (SI), suggested SI identified an individual's capacity to collaborate with others. Next, in the 1940s, David Wechsler, a psychologist, proposed a myriad of effective components within the realm of intelligence, which could play a significant role in the level of success people could achieve (see Wechsler, 1974). During the 1950s, humanistic theory thinkers, such as Abraham Maslow (1954, 1962), focused on the fundamental physiological people's needs (e.g., love, safety, food). And in the 1970s, Howard Gardner introduced the development of multiple intelligences, which was a precursor to the emergence of emotional intelligence (see Gardner, 1999). In the 1980s and 1990s, a myriad of emotional intelligence models and assessments emerged.

In 1986, emotional intelligence was identified in a dissertation by Wayne Leon Payne. He studied emotion and conceptualized emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) didn't come into our vernacular until around 1990. In 1990, Peter Salovey and John Mayer published the first landmark article on EI in a scholarly psychological journal. They examined ways to measure differences in emotion and concluded that some people were better at identifying their own feelings, expressing empathy for others, solving problems related to emotional issues, and regulating their emotions than others. Despite being a relatively new term, interest in the concept grew tremendously. Emotional intelligence is linked to an individual's emotional expressiveness, which, for the purpose of this chapter, reflects a school leader's capacity to acquire skills in expressing emotions, regulating emotions, and emotional sensitivity. Neurobiological data provides firsthand information regarding how the human brain works, especially when examining emotions, such as love, happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, disappointment, and other emotions (see Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Without emotional intelligence skills and strategies, school leaders may have a difficult time effectively leading, inspiring, collaborating, and managing the complexities of leading the twenty-first-century school communities. Salovey and Mayer (1990) identified emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's emotions and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's own thinking and actions. When leaders increase their emotional intelligence, they learn to authentically listen, facilitate efforts that demonstrate their leadership efforts, and support their school community members.

In 1997, Mayer and Salovey noted the following about EI: (1) the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; (2) the ability to access and generate feelings when they facilitate thought; (3) the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and (4) the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997a, p. 10).

The brain's center of emotion plays a crucial part in understanding how people recognize, process, and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. Emotions are organized brain responses that often cross cognitive, motivational, experiential, and physiological subsystems of the brain (see Salovey, Brackett, & Mayer, 2007). Although emotions were once viewed as disorganized mental activity interruptions, now, emotions are perceived as "motivating forces which are processes which arouse, sustain, and direct activity" (p. 2).

Salovey and Mayer created a four-branch model for emotional intelligence. These four branches included (1) emotional perception and expression; (2) emotional facilitation of thought; (3) emotional understanding; and (4) emotional management. First, emotional perception and expression examines an individual's capacity to identify personal emotions within someone's physical and psychological states; the ability to understand emotion in other people; the extent someone can express emotions accurately and needs aligned with their emotions; and the ability to demonstrate how to discriminate between honesty and dishonest feelings (see Salovey et al., 2007). These competencies play a vital role in the first or the four-branch model, because without them, Salovey, Brackett, and Mayer contend emotional intelligence cannot be achieved.

The process of developing one's emotional intelligence includes attending to, understanding, and deciphering emotional messages. This interpretation may be expressed by an individual's facial expressions, cultural artifacts, or tone of voice. For example, if someone witnesses and interprets fear on another person's face, that someone would better understand that other person's current emotional state and thoughts versus someone who dismisses, ignores, or misses that signal.

The second branch within the model centers on the emotional facilitation of cognitive activities. In other words, what emotions emerge when thinking and problem-solving (see Salovey & Grewal, 2005)? If we respond to something emotionally, then something captured our attention. If people developed a strong emotional input, then that understanding will help direct their thinking to situations that play an important role to them (Mayer & Salovey, 1997b).

The third branch regarding understanding and analyzing emotions focuses on an individual's capacity to understand emotions and utilize that understanding as emotional knowledge. Leaders have the ability to identify relationships between emotions and words; the capacity to understand what meanings are derived from emotions and what causes emotions to emerge and deepen understanding of complex feelings; and the ability to identify emotional transitions such as from anger to hurt or from fear to anger or from anger to sadness (see Salovey et al., 2007).

The fourth and final branch is emotional management. This branch focuses on an individual's ability to reflect and self-regulate emotions that promote emotional and intellectual growth. The capacity of someone to manage emotions is considered the most advanced skill in emotional intelligence. At the heart of this branch is an individual's capacity to be present for oneself and others. The person is open to a myriad of emotions whether pleasant or unpleasant in addition to recognizing and balancing emotions to cope with feelings.

## The Next Development in Emotional Intelligence

Although Salovey and Mayer published the first landmark article on emotional intelligence, in 1995, Daniel Goleman published the book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Goleman suggested that EI played a more significant role in understanding people and personal success than someone's intelligent quotient (IQ). He also proposed that EI was a type of emotional literacy that aligned with one's moral development and character. Goleman's revised definition of emotional intelligence included the following qualities: (1) self-control; (2) optimism; and (3) moral character. Furthermore, he applied four EI competencies. These competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

### Self-Awareness

First, self-awareness involves people understanding what they are feeling at any moment and understanding the influence these emotions have on one's mood and the extent the mood impacts others. In 2013, Peter Northouse suggested self-awareness as a process in which people look within to understand themselves, including, but not limited to, one's strengths and challenges, as well as the influence these strengths and challenges have on others. This deep understanding suggests people become more aware of their limitations, values, and motives (see Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Furthermore, he concluded that being self-aware also included a person's ability to critically reflect on one's identity, values, motives, and goals to better understand oneself. In the process of recognizing an inner purpose for engaging in specific behaviors, Raelin (2003) reminds us to be self-aware suggesting people to find their inner purpose and examine gaps between one's behavior and intentions.

Leaders with a strong sense of self-awareness are often realistic. According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-aware leaders are honest with themselves and others. They often understand the influence their values, goals, and dreams have on their emotions. Oftentimes, these leaders are aware of their destiny, recognize why they set these specific goals, and recognize what feels right. Self-aware people reflect and think over before impulsively responding to a situation, which provides a leader with opportunities for thoughtful reflection, which resonates with others as authentic responses. These leaders often have a clear sense of who they are, what they believe, what they value, how they make decisions, and the influence of their decisions on others (Northouse, 2013). A self-aware leader recognizes the power of thinking rationally and applying technical skills and has a strong sense of self; therefore, these leaders are often perceived as authentic (Northouse, 2013).

### Self-Management

Second, self-management is aligned with how people regulate their emotions internally (Goleman, 2015). This quality of emotional intelligence includes emotional

self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism. In 2002, Roger Volckmann suggested self-management involves the developmental (or anomic, when poorly executed) process of relating internal/individual (intention) to external/individual (behavior). He contends humans evolved “as a species about learning, growing and developing as human beings, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually—education, training, therapy, counseling and consulting, human potential activities, physical development and coaching” (Volckmann, 2002, p. 3).

Self-management and school leadership resemble an ongoing internal dialogue, which affords people with opportunities to concentrate and mental clarity in order to meet the demands often involved in leading communities (Goleman et al., 2002). The process of self-management keeps disruptive emotions that may steer people off track and allows leaders to handle their own emotions. Self-management plays a vital role in helping leaders understand the power of emotions and public consequences (see Goleman et al., 2002). Learning how to self-manage emotions also enables leaders to be transparent, which is considered a strength in any organization (see Goleman et al., 2002). This transparency creates an authentic openness regarding feelings, beliefs, and actions taken, which builds a foundation of trust. According to Goleman et al. (2002), leaders who take responsibility and self-manage their emotions have the capacity to control their own state of mind.

## Social Awareness

According to Karl Albrecht (2004), social intelligence (SI) is the ability of people to get along with one another and to collaborate with the leader. Some people may refer to the term *people skills* or *soft skills*. SI is the capacity of a leader to understand social dynamics, interaction styles, strategies to build relationships, and ways to support others in achieving their goals. Furthermore, SI involves a certain amount of personal insight and consciousness of self-perceptions and responses.

When developing interpersonal skills, Albrecht (2004) classifies leaders' behaviors on a spectrum ranging from toxic to nourishing effects. For those who engage in toxic behaviors, leaders can create a culture in which people feel frustrated, angry, inadequate, and undervalued. When leaders engage in nourishing behaviors, people may feel respected, validated, encouraged, and competent. If leaders continue to engage in toxic behaviors, this indicates a low level of social intelligence due to the leader's inability to authentically connect with those served. If leaders engage in nourishing behaviors, they are more effective in working with others, which indicates a high social intelligence.

For those with a high level of SI, Daniel Goleman (2016) suggests empathy plays a significant role in having the capacity to perceive the feelings of others and attempt to view the world through their eyes. The ability to read the emotions of others entails sensing and responding in authentic ways to unspoken concerns that often lie behind someone's feelings. Another important aspect to developing empathy is understanding the significance of diversity and inclusion. People come from

a myriad of backgrounds and lived experiences. A lack of exposure to diversity may influence a leader's capacity to view the world in narrowly defined ways. These narrowly defined understandings may trigger a leader's implicit bias (see El-Attrash, 2017). Therefore, knowing oneself creates a strong foundation for understanding others and deepening empathic responses.

## Relationship Management

People developing relationship management skills focus their efforts in formulating meaningful relationships and teamwork. School leaders who are skilled in relationship management spend most of their time building trust and bridges among community members beyond their work obligations (see Goleman et al., 2002). These leaders work to achieve cohesiveness and authentic collaborations to build meaningful relationships and support group activities aligned with creating close relations. School leaders who excel at self-awareness and self-management are often socially competent and employ strategies to strengthen their relationship management.

An imbalance in a school leader's emotional skills is often linked to poor psychosocial adjustment in teams, leading to poor leadership. In summary, a leader's capacity to develop emotional intelligence may increase organizational effectiveness. Effective leaders make considerable efforts to identify, analyze, and understand the feelings of others and their capacity to express their own emotions to those served. Therefore, thoughtful leaders take time to listen, speak with care, and lead with conviction.

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## The Influence of Stress

Stress and leadership go hand-in-hand and with the inevitable daily demands of new challenges, problem-solving, and accountability, often leading to a myriad of emotions. According to Kelly McGonigal (2016), moderate amounts of stress may encourage a leader to achieve meaningful goals that improve engagement, sense of self, and work performance. When school leaders develop the skills to manage their emotionally charged situations, they can navigate and learn how to prevent workplace stress. However, stress may become a concern when leaders become overwhelmed, feel paralyzed, or lose their passion or sense of accomplishment, which can lead to burnout (see Friedman, 2002; Le Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Not only can burnout impact a school leader's capacity to effectively work with school communities, stressors also influence a leader's mental and physical health. Leaders experiencing burnout often experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion, exercise less, miss work, lose sleep, and may develop mental health challenges. The influence of stressors, like social-emotional demands or dilemmas that challenge a school leader's perspective, may lead to fatigue, chronic or physical exhaustion (see Grissom & Andersen, 2012). However,

researchers Roger Federici and Einar Skaalvik (2012) suggest stress can be effectively navigated when school leaders display higher levels of self-efficacy, which is the leader's belief to execute behaviors essential to producing specific performance goals and higher job satisfaction.

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## The Power of Emotional Leaders

James D. Barber, a former Duke University political scientist and scholar on American presidential character, described the power of emotion and leadership:

...the degree of a president's emotional involvement are powerful influences on how they define the issue itself, how much attention he pays to it, which facts and persons he sees as relevant to its resolution, and finally, what principles and purposes he associates with the issues. Every story of Presidential decision-making is really two stories: an outer one in which a rational man calculates and an inner one in which an emotional man feels. (p. 4, Barber, 2009)

Leadership is stressful, being responsible for the welfare of hundreds and sometimes thousands of other people. A school leader's capacity to decode emotions within their school settings involves an acute awareness of nonverbal cues (i.e., body language), tone of voice, word choice, and indicators to understand underlying feelings. Leaders with a low emotional intelligence may unravel during stressful situations because they may not have the skillset to regulate their own emotions. This lack of understanding may manifest itself as verbal attacks or passive aggressive behaviors toward those served. School leaders engage in emotional decoding, which is the ability to read emotions, especially in the workplace during crises. Those who seem particularly good at controlling and masking their emotions may be perceived as emotionally distant, aloof, or indifferent toward their school communities. This lack of skills may create a more stressful environment, influence team productivity, and negatively impact collaboration. A school leader who lacks emotional intelligence may be unable to address situations fraught with emotion, such as conflict, problem-solving, and controversial issues.

Practiced emotional expressiveness is essential to effective expression and requires a skillset of emotional control, sensitivity, and expression. Lyashevsky, Cesarano, and Black (2020) created a blueprint for developing content aligned with social emotional learning and concluded that as learners develop the capacity to apply social-emotional knowledge across diverse contexts, they deepen their emotional system to navigate challenges, relationships, and understandings of self. School leaders who develop the capacity for positive emotions often engage in thoughtful choices and unselfishness in those they serve. These leaders are often able to identify and manage their emotions, develop empathy in others, and create helpfulness among those they serve. Expressing emotions seems to play a vital component in a school leader's capacity to inspire and motivate their school communities, which often encourages authentic cooperation.

Emotional leaders may also bring a full range of emotions to a school community. Expressing positive emotions often has a positive influence on groups. However, there is limited extant literature regarding the influence of negative emotions, such as disappointment, frustration, and anger, and how these emotions influence school communities.

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## The Development of a Conceptual Model

The intellectual, cognitive, and philosophical perspectives of leadership afford opportunities to understand the power of emotion. Engaging in emotions provides school leaders with the capacity to acquire knowledge and ways of knowing and, therefore, understanding emotions. As school leaders deepen their understanding of self and others, the capacity for shifting school culture from silence to empowerment to voice is supported through emotional engagement. This shift or transformation has the capacity to influence a school leader's focus, well-being, esteem, and capacity to overcome challenges.

Emotions matter in schools, especially when considering the myriad of demands placed on leaders including, but not limited to, decision-making, problem-solving, relationships, social-emotional health, learning, and daily performance. If school leaders can utilize authentic opportunities to engage in positive communication, conflict management, empathic responses, systems thinking, reflection, and feedback, they may increase their emotional intelligence capacity. Below is a conceptual model (see Fig. 1) based on the extant literature to reinforce a school leader's emotional intelligence. This process affords school leaders opportunities to explore individual emotional challenges as well as personal successes. The critical reflective process provides leaders with spaces to inquire, listen, analyze, and navigate possible resources to further develop their emotional intelligence skills, such as emotional regulation.

Leading schools is a profound emotional activity (Fried, 1995). For those interested in leading schools and making meaningful change, leaders cannot ignore the emotional dimensions of addressing and promoting educational change (see Hargreaves, 1997). The process begins with school leaders examining their personal values and school leadership vision as well as goals for their own emotional development. School leaders interested in promoting this work may recognize the process begins from within. Thoughtful discussions and reflections on difference, oppression, and justice are crucial to doing their own work and recognizing the role privilege that shapes their worldviews and what may need to be unlearned in order to better advocate for those who live on the margins. School leaders may ask themselves: How do school leaders conceptualize systemic social problems facing their k-12 school communities? Next, leaders identify blind spots and challenges associated with increasing their emotional intelligence by asking themselves: How do children, families, and community members identify their own social justice issues and articulate their understandings of social justice? For example, school leaders should be provided opportunities to listen to others, engage in collaborate problem-solving, demonstrate empathy, self-regulate emotions, and be more aware of the emotions of those served within their

**Fig. 1** Conceptual model for understanding the influence of emotions when leading school communities





school communities. Next, school leaders may ask themselves: What emotions arise when contemplating the influence of systemic social challenges?

School leaders may recognize the role difficult conversations play in validating personal feelings as well as validating others' emotions and experiences. There may be an implied or actual emotional silence within the school community, thus suggesting emotions do not play a significant role or are simply denied. Furthermore, deepening ways of knowing and feeling provide a myriad of perspectives, suggesting emotions are not right or wrong, but are deeply connected to people's experiences with themselves and others. Deepening one's emotional knowledge and ways of understanding encourages school leaders to use this knowledge within daily activities. These activities may include, but are not limited to, overcoming challenges, problem-solving, relationship-building, and strengthening one's sense of self. School leaders develop the capacity to interpret their own emotions and the feelings of others and learn how to respond empathically with self and others. The leader has the capacity to nurture emotions aligned with further developing culturally responsive pedagogy, caring, and skills aligned with supporting a school culture of learning.

What are the goals of the conversation? What does it feel like to be heard? To be validated? To be understood? Whether school leaders are sad, enraged, shocked, depressed, confused, uncomfortable, or insecure or experience other feelings, school leaders should be curious about their feelings and ask themselves, as well as others, about diverse perspectives. Compassion and empathy play a significant role in respecting others and learning how to speak without fear of judgment, ridicule, and possible ostracization. School leaders should be mindful of how they engage in dialogue, language used, and the myriad of ways in which people may interpret emotionally stressful experiences.

As school leaders progress throughout this process and attain their goals, they have opportunities to learn how to engage in hope, gain self-confidence, and recognize imaginative possibilities for those they serve. Difficult conversations are critical to learning how to facilitate thoughtful dialogue about civil unrest. Violence and discrimination are inherently traumatic, especially for marginalized populations who experience hostile environments at disproportionately higher rates. Layers of difference, as school community members share their experiences and understandings, may bring even more tension to the dialogue. Thoughtful interactions welcome difference and embrace empathy. The dialogue may not resolve systemic social challenges, but, perhaps, the process validates the concerns of those who are historically unheard or silenced.

School leaders who may feel emotionally distant, misunderstood, or disconnected to the community may not have the capacity to engage in empathic responses, suggesting these leaders may only have the capacity to theorize about the community's motivations, values, and experiences (see Denzin, 1984). Leaders who engage in this authentic emotional process may benefit from looking within and gaining access to the emotional realities of self and others, especially those from their school communities. Developing a culture of open, authentic, and collaborative communication, as opposed

to a culture of silence and oppression, has the capacity to support sharing, empowerment, and voice (see Edge, Descours, & Frayman, 2016; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Murphy & Louis, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

The emotions of school community members may influence the feelings of leaders engaging in meaningful change. As school leaders reflect on their knowledge, bias, and assumptions, they have the capacity to deepen their awareness of inequities and lived experiences of disenfranchised populations. School leaders who engage with school community members in vulnerable and meaningful ways, in other words, participating in emotional vulnerability, create spaces in which school community members and leaders work together to navigate social challenges together. As school leaders navigate their emotions, they reflect on the power of their critical action(s) to address social, political, and/or economic contexts influencing the lives of their school community members (see Yamamoto, Gardiner, & Tenuto, 2014). As school leaders engage in reflecting and regulating their emotions, they may be better equipped to navigate challenges. These skills and increased knowledge of emotional intelligence have the capacity to influence a school leader's self-efficacy and outreach to the community at large.

School leaders, in turn, engage in emotional activities that encourage the development of a strong sense of self. This recognition of self refers to a leader's regulation of self and emotions, which is often defined as an individual's self-cohesion. This process affords leaders opportunities to affirm oneself, increase emotional empowerment, deepen support, and engage in authentic collaboration.

At times, leaders' emotions may be coupled with those served. This coupling of emotions may lend itself to scholars' understandings of emotional labor (see Hochschild, 1983), empathic and caring responses (see Boske, Osanloo, & Sherman-Newcomb, 2017; Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016), emotional understanding (see Denzin, 1984), and new understandings of self (see Elson, 1986; Mead, 1934).

Within this process, school leaders become proactive with their emotions, which may impact their capacity to address workplace stressors. These stressors have the ability to trigger burnout; however, increasing conscious interactions, developing meaningful relationships, and authentically supporting others may provide emerge, which helps school leaders work through difficult issues versus avoiding them.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The role school leaders play in US schools has become more stressful over the last 20 years (see Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2012; Fullan, 2001). School leaders have the capacity to influence student and teacher outcomes as well as the overall climate of the school community. Recognizing the role emotions play in the lives of school leaders plays a central role in supporting social and emotional learning.

The quality of a leader's relationships matters. These relationships influence the emotional school climate. As leaders create school communities that build a sense of belonging, validation, empathy, appreciation, and authenticity, those served have opportunities to be immersed in genuine dialogue with the hope of improving

the lived experiences of all school community members. As leaders begin to deepen their understanding of self and others, the school climate will depend upon the leader's capacity to sustain their willingness to engage in imaginative possibilities. School leaders engage in a process in which they keep in mind their emotions and the emotions of those they serve. Emotions can take a toll on their work; however, emotions also can provide school leaders with diverse perspectives, experiences, self-discovery, and a stronger sense of self. As school leaders continue to share their feelings, they also have the capacity to build meaningful connections with others (Patti, Senge, Madrazo, & Stern, 2015). They may listen more intently. Leaders may shift their focus from self to others. When they listen to those they serve, hope and possibility may shift the climate of the community, increasing positive perceptions and actively engaging community members to authentically collaborate.

School leaders who engage in this process may be equipped to address systemic-wide approaches to promoting EI. They have the capacity to create an expectation for community members: emotions matter and play a significant role in how individuals and communities navigate relationships, conflict, challenges, stressors, and emotions. This conceptual model may lead to the creation of a culture that supports authentic collaborations as well as help members socially and emotionally. The incorporation of reflective practices provides school leaders with ways to examine their thinking about emotions as well as emotional skill levels. Within this reflective process, school leaders may examine school community norms and how members feel about their school climate, practices, and policies; thus, teachers, families, students, and community members may develop a greater sense of belonging to the school.

Recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to advance their emotional development and their leadership to create caring schools consist of the following: (1) extend research by examining social emotional outcomes of leaders in understanding how emotions, culture, and context influence effectiveness; (2) create professional development programs and leadership courses for school leaders as part of their preparation; and (3) propose policies at the local, state, and national levels to support school leaders and social emotional learning.

When school leaders are provided spaces to develop their EI, they are more likely to respond to stressors through the development of self-efficacy and personal achievement (see Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). Understanding personal emotions is critical to effectively leading school communities (see Wang, Pollock, & Hauseman, 2018). With the further development of self-awareness, school leaders will better manage stressors and may have the capacity to build support, reconnect with others, cultivate flourishing school communities, and promote hope and possibilities.

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# Deconstructing Strategic Planning

# 38

## Time to Retain, Revise, or Retire?

Thomas R. Hughes and Frank Davidson

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**Abstract**

Strategic planning is a broad topic which references a process, a product, and a paradigm. With historical ties to Frederick Taylor and John Dewey, its range of influence within education has been both widely heralded and deprecated by practitioners and scholars. Purposed to examine its utility, this practitioner-positioned chapter spans strategic planning's rise to prominence, as well as its arguable resurgence as an accountability tool following No Child Left Behind legislation. The chapter includes a comparison between this *rational-structural* approach, which has changed minimally over essentially 100 years, and the *strategic-systemic* method known as professional learning communities, which has been in place in education for the past 30–40 years. Finally, this review concludes by engaging in open-ended conjecture concerning strategic planning's future role in public education.

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**Keywords**

Strategic planning · Accountability · Compliance · Buy in · Capacity building · Inspiration · Investment · Social justice · Cultural conflict

**The field of memory**

Frederick Taylor's accomplishments with scientific management revolutionized industry while helping to build a nation. Packaged to offer an innovative trajectory, strategic planning afforded a *rational-structural* offshoot (Evans, 1996) that some claimed more commonly advanced the status quo and replication of existing programs in pursuit of certainty. Strategic planning, perhaps the standout example of the rational-structural paradigm, continues to have strong advocates. However, during the past 30–40 years, its much-heralded dominance of market share within the school improvement conversation has been regularly challenged by competition from more socially oriented *strategic-systemic* improvement paradigms (Evans, 1996) such as professional learning communities (PLCs).

**The field of presence**

Schools are complex social organizations that exist in response to even more complex societal and political realities and pressures. While there are plenty of mandates which schools are obliged to satisfy through prescribed practices, the fact is that social justice and related conflicts pose unique and monumental unmet challenges. Perhaps in part because of its early success and long-held favor, strategic planning has been loath to deviate from its underlying structural origins in order to embrace an ever-expanding and challenging social context. Effective schools' approaches have increasingly addressed underlying motivations, established capacity, and inspired investment into a shared cause – instead of targeting passive acceptance and *buy in* for what are often merely *dressed up* mandates that are often overhyped as evidence of collaborative planning. In this uncertain world, it would be difficult to contend that the champion from either the rational-structural or



the strategic-systemic approach has cornered the market in creating one complete and self-contained approach to pursuing future school improvement.

### **The field of concomitance**

Education has borrowed heavily from psychology and scientific method; over the past 40 years, it has been influenced more consistently by business, and, in recent years, increasingly by technology. Each of these disciplines has contributed to school improvement efforts. The resulting strategies from this crossover have been fruitful contributors for decades. That said, the overreliance, if not outright dependence on outside planning resources has diminished staff investment in change. The effects of excessive regulation have also contributed to educators' deteriorated sense of self-efficacy. Contemporary theorists (Goldsmith, 2012; Harnack & Seebaum, 2017) contended it is only by asserting professional conviction through the practice of genuine investment that educators can stand up to government domination and the undeserved scorn from the business and political sectors and elements of society they dominate. Though outside sources such as those described above have gifted schools with strategic planning, the approach may struggle to find continued favor even among external theorists.

### **Discontinuities and ruptures which form the different viewpoints of this area or field**

Strategic planning, both as a theoretical approach and a form of practice, have changed comparably little as the field of education and the world itself have experienced steady growth and shifts in thinking during the past 30 years. New and varied planning approaches have taken root across multiple professions, including education. While these advances challenge the head start and historical advantages of strategic planning, forces including state and federal mandates, standards, and research-based interventions significantly narrow the scope of what planning of any variety is even allowed to address.

With the compliance expectations schools face already firmly entrenched (Popham, 2005), educators have increasingly become implementers – not planners. As compliance, accountability, and strategic planning have moved forward in time, it could be argued that what was once heralded as an organization's vision might better be considered *code* signaling that the organization's leadership has bought into one or more assorted government mandates. That said, even if there is implementing to do, the structures and data sets long associated with strategic planning appear to fit favorably with accountability practices.

With changing times, and the emergence of more socially oriented improvement approaches such as professional learning communities, one might wonder how much longer schools would continue to choose one option ahead of the other. Perhaps it is time to set out to utilize the best of both approaches in charting their long-term operational priorities while relying solely on neither.

### **Critical assumptions or presupposition**

There are multiple reasons why strategic planning processes have been popular across education for decades. The potential spectacle of employing a proven business practice

in any interested hometown setting is only one of the draws. This approach has enjoyed well-deserved success; however, historically speaking, it cannot be assumed that the foundation it relies upon has proven to be particularly adaptable when implemented. Modification could diminish the curb appeal of the proven product, and would likely also add significant complications to efforts to replicate it.

Consumers interested in a more current version of planning are likely to be limited to searching for subtle differences among facilitators to carry out their event. The inevitable questions that will be asked at the end of this chapter need to be: Is it time for a change; Is change even likely; and finally, if change is not forthcoming is strategic planning potentially heading toward retirement?

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## Introduction

This chapter examines and critiques strategic planning's ongoing position in education. Instead of primarily cataloging the planning process itself, it is viewed according to the history, contexts, contributions, and struggles that have defined its life of service to public schools. Strategic planning's origins will be addressed first and will include a brief overview of its core components.

The changing social and organizational contexts that have impacted planning and their interactions with competitive approaches are considered next. This effort will include an examination of strategic planning's strengths in comparison to those of a chief competitor, professional learning communities. After examining developments ahead of No Child Left Behind, including changing conditions, and how they helped shape the school improvement area, Post-NCLB realities will be reviewed.

After examining possible gaps in the planning approach, the final segment addresses options to retain, revise, or retire strategic planning, along with perspectives on why there may be a need for changes of some sort. Each segment has an orientation, supporting facts, and a discussion of critical perspectives.

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## The Early Years

Planning has always played an essential role in the educational process. While a limited history of the approach is offered here, it needs to be noted first that initial planning efforts may not have been formally labeled nor necessarily envisioned as *strategic planning*, according to the University of Wisconsin Emeritus Professor of Educational Planning Jacob Stampen. Therein, there is no distinct historical event, design step, or date that denotes the start of its use (J. Stampen, personal communication, July 9, 2020). While considerable attention has regularly been devoted to the formalization of the process, many important underlying assumptions predate the celebrated work that took place in the early twentieth century (Mintzberg, 1994). The following section introduces pertinent facts, including features of the approach, and considers insights common to the early years of strategic planning in public schools.

## Facts

It is essential first to acknowledge the work of Frederick Taylor, who popularized scientific management well over 100 years ago (Evans, 1996; Mintzberg, 1994; Traver, 2006). Taylor's work had profound implications, and it is impossible to acknowledge the work of his successors without witnessing Taylor's influence. Within education, John Dewey's work with laboratory schools marked a significant venture into expanding the science of education. He may not have been employing strategic planning as it would end up being operationally defined; however, Dewey had education moving more toward that direction and was doing so "reasonably well" (J. Stampen, personal communication July 9, 2020).

At the very least, it could be said that "Dewey recognised that to make changes in schools required curriculum planning and pedagogical adjustments allied to a transformation in the way schools were organised and managed" (Thorburn, 2017, p. 151). Contributing further to the organizational mindset of school systems was the work of Phillip Selznick, regarded by some to be the father of institutionalism (Traver, 2006). Even ahead of the famed Sputnik crisis, American schools were consolidating boundaries and subsequently formalizing organizational practices as well. The rational-structural oriented strategic planning approach to organizational operations was the prevailing approach and well underway by the 1970s and 1980s (Evans, 1996).

According to Reeves, Levin, and Uedua (2016) biological sciences and business studies share a penchant for examining larger complex settings and systems, then drawing from the inherent stability they afford to plot courses of action. Understandably, biology has been viewed as a point of origin for strategic planning. However, the approach has been so widely adopted that its beginnings have popularly been linked to other endeavors as well. Some have held that the strategic planning approach grew from computer engineering (Ndaruhutse, Jones, & Riggall 2019) and emerged in the corporate world toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s (Ocasio & Joseph, 2008). Others, including Bryson (2018), traced strategic planning's origins to government operations during the twentieth century. Though its roots trace back decades earlier, the application of strategic planning gained favor within public education as early as the 1980s (B. Miles, personal communication, July 15, 2020). Coincidentally, this was roughly the same period during which the approach began to experience increasing rebuke from the corporate world (Ocasio & Joseph, 2008) as did institutionalism (Traver, 2006).

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## Strategic Planning

For purposes of this discussion of strategic planning's utility and alignment with education, it is essential to define it by first acknowledging some *general underlying assumptions*, the existence of multiple *planning formats*, and then the *unique relationship* it has with schools. According to Mintzberg (1994) many of the general underlying assumptions that are shared across strategic planning can be traced back

hundreds of years, if not longer. In fact, Mintzberg (1994) referenced Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* as an example of the many underlying preconceptions. Among the most significant assumptions common to strategic planning initiatives have been the *assumption of formalization*, the *assumption of detachment*, the *assumption of quantification*, and the *assumption of predetermination* (Mintzberg, 1994).

Recognizing that people are unpredictable, imprecise, and subject to carrying out their whims as much as employing reason, Mintzberg (1994) indicated the *assumption of formalization* holds that *systems* create the strategies, not people. Thus, "the system does the thinking" (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 222). Building on this, the *assumption of detachment* stresses the importance of managers who are removed from direct participation in operations, and able to thus oversee the efforts from afar and "think the big thoughts" (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 223). The *assumption of quantification* values data enables the managers to remain removed from actual planned actions, while, finally, the *assumption of predetermination* holds that good design and good practice make it possible for the system to accurately predict needs and effective courses of action (Mintzberg, 1994).

The variation or format most commonly associated with schools, and therein referenced here, is the classic "Design School Model" complete with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Mintzberg, 1994). In a more general sense, while still focusing on work with nonprofits, Bryson (2018, p. 8) defined strategic planning as "a deliberative disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why." Though they may use different terms with different incarnations, Harnack and Seebaum (2017) indicated it is common for most models to have a leadership framework, explicitly detailed action, and delivery steps, as well as steps for monitoring implementation and progress. The process that leads up to establishing these elements may also vary but typically includes data collection and deliberative steps among stakeholders directed toward establishing organizational priorities and procedures.

Finally, Bryson (2018) focused more specifically on nonprofits including schools when he espoused multiple benefits for strategic planning. These benefits, as understood across education, essentially establish a series of assumptions for educational practitioners of strategic planning. The first benefit, *strategic thinking*, is viewed as being central to the second benefit of improved *decision making*, which both contribute directly to the third benefit of enhancing *organization effectiveness* (Bryson, 2018, p. 14). Combined, each of these qualities contribute to *organizational legitimacy*, which helps nonprofits and schools succeed with their broader mission of *impacting* the societal and economic systems that they serve (Bryson, 2018). Advances like these are understood to be advantageous in increasingly competitive markets since the emergence of open enrollment practices and charter schools.

## Critical Perspectives

According to a veteran strategic planning resource, the vast majority of public schools in the United States would be considered small organizations. They could

commonly lack sufficient resources to adapt or expand planning efforts beyond the same traditional or *generic* approach that most employ (B. Miles, personal communication, July 15, 2020). In those settings, the process has mostly been adopted as a complete model – with tremendous emphasis placed on following the process with strict fidelity. A very common criteria or *qualification* for facilitating a planning event is to have participated in one facilitated by someone else ahead of time.

The process could aptly be described as an *event* because of the brief but intensely focused activities. Hallmarks of the undertaking have typically included completing a nominal group process with a collection of stakeholders, often including community members. These efforts typically resulted in the articulation of goals, objectives, and some type of action steps with oversight and promotion responsibilities eventually assigned to designated committee members (Snyder, 2015).

Some have contended that strategic planning is a vital determinant of any organization's outcomes and that poor outcomes are the result of ineffective execution and not the process itself (Chukwumah, 2015). While application of the process to the educational setting has traditionally been viewed favorably, there is legitimate cause to reflect on its continuing effectiveness nonetheless. Education differs from other institutions in many ways, including how it accesses internal stakeholders and community *stockholders*. Further, the rules for managing public schools have changed drastically since strategic planning was incorporated. The starkest evidence of this would be how schools once set their budgets according to their priorities, but have subsequently been operating under funding restrictions that dictate their actions for decades.

This abbreviated introductory glance back to the origins and early years of strategic planning was intended to set the historical stage for further examination of its implementation both ahead of and following No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The distinct and diverse dynamics leading up to the landmark legislation, as compared to expectations resulting from its inception, make it a natural point of comparison (Traver, 2006).

The critical perspectives discussed within these segments will examine strategic planning's place in light of changing conditions and increased competition. After addressing realities from the 1980s forward to today, the final focus will be tasked with considering whether strategic planning's future in education is likely headed for retention, revision, or retirement.

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## Run Up to No Child Left Behind

The years between the early 1980s and the inception of No Child Left Behind in 2001 marked a period of changing times across American society and institutions, including public education. Digital technology was making its presence known. Many would come to link strategic planning to the flow charts and thought processes associated with computer programming. However, critical thinking was also *en vogue* at the time (Hughes et al., 2019). Further, educational stewardship was increasingly seen passing the torch from traditional *titled* forms of guidance to

more distributed forms of leadership (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). This section considers the changing norms during this period and weighs how they interacted with strategic planning and a contemporary competitor – namely professional learning communities. This section also includes an examination of the strengths and benefits attributed to both approaches.

## Facts

The rational-structural approach stemming from Taylor's original work continued to flourish within a favorable educational setting despite losing influence in business and other settings (Evans, 1996). Running more consistently under the mantle of *strategic planning*, there was little designed change to the widely accepted approach, especially concerning its application in smaller organizations that relied extensively on the readily available *stock version*.

While acknowledging the overall value of the approach, Mintzberg (1994) found it to be too generic in design, too controlling in approach, and too inflexible to change. Mintzberg (1994) further decried the overreliance on scientific management and echoed criticisms that the process often amounted to little more than a formal *run-through* with stakeholders to record and publicize ideas that had already been decided.

Just as strategic planning was becoming a fixture within growing segments of public schools, alternative options were being introduced. By the 1990s, public education was able to avail itself of its own pipeline of organizational theorists. Michael Fullan, Phillip Schlechty, Thomas Sergiovanni, among others, spoke to the strengths of a new *strategic-systemic* paradigm that embraced irregularities and human inconsistencies instead of attempting to plan them away and further *teacher-proof* education (Evans, 1996).

Strengths of the emerging paradigm largely encompassed weaknesses left unaddressed by strategic planning. Bolman and Deal (1991) noted that the rational-structural approach emphasized by strategic planning does a splendid job of mapping out how organizations should run but typically fails even to identify, let alone address reasons why plans do not work out as intended. Schlechty (1990) and Evans (1996) both advised that education is very much a social setting. Progress is both complicated and fueled by people and their interests, behaviors, and issues, especially within what Schlechty (2009, p. 24) would come to call “bureaucracies which are by and large change-inept organizations.”

While proponents of strategic planning held firm, opting to advertise its strengths, the strategic-systemic paradigm stressed adaptability and fluidity, focusing on people and culture, while also developing capacity within the organization (Evans, 1996; Schlechty, 1990). In this regard, Senge (2006, p. 283) contributed, “there are no magic bullets for building learning organizations: no formulas no three steps, no seven ways.” Capitalizing on a more humanistic mindset instead of buttressing structural-functional roles and rules, professional learning communities (DuFour, 1997) emerged as a formidable alternative to strategic planning.

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## Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities were originated to counter a reality where school structures and approaches minimized staff contribution, including “collaboration, reflection, and innovation” (Martin-Kneip, 2008, p. 3). To that end, “professional learning communities are forums in which participants embrace the privilege and responsibility of learning individually and collectively” in support of their organization’s growth (Martin-Kneip, 2008, p. 4). Working in “cross-sections,” the communities embark on “collegial inquiry” where members analyze needs and articulate solutions all while they “search for the big picture without losing sight of particulars” (Martin-Kneip, 2008, p. 6).

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## Perceived Benefits of Strategic Planning

While detailing positive aspects of strategic planning, Bryson (2018, p. 14) advocated “the most obvious potential benefit is the promotion of strategic thinking, acting and learning,” and the second is “improved decision making.” The third benefit is enhanced effectiveness and sustainability as “organizations engaging in strategic planning are encouraged to clarify and address major organizational issues, respond wisely to them and deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances” (Bryson, 2018, p. 14). These abilities and outcomes are critical in what he described as an increasingly interconnected and complicated world where organizations are often eliminated due to their failure to adapt (Reeves et al., 2016).

From a less scholarly and more practiced accounting of strengths and benefits, strategic planning puts analysis ahead of relationship building. Therein it appears to put the decision-making upfront – often during a defined time-limited window for completing the process. Identifying stakeholders willing to champion elements of the plan, promoting collaboration, and taking steps to secure buy in and promote sustainability are often addressed within the planning – but are typically of a secondary nature. As a result, it could be said that strategic planning is more capable of *quickly creating a plan* than other approaches might be.

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## Perceived Benefits of Professional Learning Communities

According to Martin-Kneip (2008, p. 9), instead of planning ways to make schools *teacher-proof*, a chief strength of PLCs is their ability to draw from the talents and expertise of professionals on hand. Instead of directly establishing a goal for improved student learning, advocates for PLCs would offer that “learning communities increase teachers’ learning, and that in turn translates into increased student learning.” Beyond this, Martin-Kneip (2008) cited ownership and continuity as primary strengths and positive outcomes from this approach. She did so while noting that consultants and external service providers common to other



approaches do not stay to ensure the outcomes of their work and that in addition to this, frequently, school administrators do not make extended stays either.

## Critical Perspectives

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are defined by the composition of their groups or “communities.” PLCs also tend to be established within the school setting and tend not to link well with other outside stakeholders. This common gap can limit the reach of PLC influences outside the immediate work setting. In contrast, strategic planning has long seemed to possess a proven advantage in its ability to tap representative stakeholders from various settings and achieve crossover into the greater community and the business sector.

While this appears to be a clear strength, the advantage it holds is often as fleeting as the time it takes to develop the strategic plan. Many planning events ultimately seek champions to advance the elements of the team’s work. However, experience has demonstrated that there can be severe limitations to the excitement and investment this approach is able to generate outside of the “inner circle” that would likely volunteer to produce a cadre of champions.

A significant limitation of strategic planning – perhaps the greatest – is its reliance on *buy in* to bring the plan to fruition. Per Hughes and Davidson (2020), *buy in* as it applies to strategic planning and other managerial activities describes both a method and a form of motivation for involving others in attempted change. “All too often ‘securing buy in’ is really only at best the act of achieving weak, perhaps passive and quite possibly temporary acceptance of a proposal or initiative – or yet another mandate” (Hughes & Davidson, 2020, p. 23). Instead of involving people in a way that enables them to invest their insights and talents up front and over time, the work has mostly already been decided and completed. Hence the request being made from staff is really only for *buy in*.

In the immediate comparison between popular approaches, strategic planning suffers significantly because the process is more like an event where a select group of people designs the end product for everyone else. In contrast, PLCs are not about *buy in*, but rather about involvement and shared investment in a challenge or project from the very start – and over time. When, as a matter of practice, we involve people only for their approval, *buy in* does not result in sustainable solutions the way it does with investment (Hughes & Davidson, 2020).

According to Fullan (2014), efforts to promote transformative leadership styles have been hampered by limited staff capacity and investment. That capacity development is the *something extra* that is lacking, and harnessing it starts with ensuring involvement and investment (Hughes & Davidson, 2020) in ways that strategic planning does not begin to allow for. While PLCs might appear to have the upper hand in overcoming *buy in*, there are limitations to this approach as well; and the years following No Child Left Behind seemed to expose several of them.



## Following No Child Left Behind

The implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its punitive approach to school improvement fortified structuralism, compliance, and accountability (Hughes & Davidson, 2020; Popham, 2005). As will be discussed, these developments arguably benefitted strategic planning approaches. Strategic planning's competitors did not disappear during this time, though the value placed on critical thinking through research carried out across the professional literature and within the work setting did diminish (Hughes et al., 2019).

Similar to the preceding segment and the time frame it represents, there was little in the way of organized modification to the strategic planning model – which stayed true to what was working. Professional Learning Communities, by comparison, benefitted from a bit more formal and unified approach to the dissemination of the approach. With neither process experiencing much change, this segment is again primarily a reflection of the times and a reflection of educational environments they spurred. When they were initially coming into their own, pre- NCLB, the approaches' strengths were compared. Having both weathered the NCLB storm, an examination of the approaches comparable weaknesses is shared in this section.

## Facts

Neither strategic planning nor professional learning communities have changed much over time, perhaps because they both have marketed strengths. Those who advance the professional learning communities approach expanded their efforts to promote the model as well as train within it and offer continuing professional development along with public relations support. Strategic planning is certainly not without its advocates, sponsors, and vendors. They, too, work actively to tie the approach to the leading theorists mentioned in an earlier section.

Arguably, PLCs have improved their standing through a more united promotional effort organized by one major vendor that conducts regional and annual meetings primarily for educators. One motivational question that emerges from the challenging times following NCLB is whether a changing society would be more responsive to advertising and self-promotion or would be more interested in going with more robust results when selecting an improvement vehicle.

It can be argued that the years leading up to the NCLB legislation likely favored the rational-structural PLC paradigm in many ways. The technology was new. Society and wealth were expanding and following a more entrepreneurial path. Following NCLB, however, the need for formally documented school improvement plans and accountability likely favored strategic planning in as much as *school improvement plans* widely employed from state to state during the past 20 years or more tend to mirror the structure and appearance of strategic planning tools and summaries (Doss et al., 2020).

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## Criticisms for Implementing Strategic Planning

Over 25 years ago, Mintzberg (1994) leveled multiple criticisms toward strategic planning as it was carried out at that time. The first fundamental flaw he identified was tied to Frederick Taylor's contention that there is one best way to do something and that proper planning will always realize that for the organization. Continued evidence of flawed thinking was the common assumption that commitment at the top of an organization will be sufficient to deliver commitment across the entire organization. Finally, and stemming from the last limitation, it is a centralized process where communication efforts are consistently directed from the top toward the bottom of the organization, instead of through collaborative participation and decision-making (Mintzberg, 1994).

Though chiefly an advocate for the approach, McREL International has acknowledged the behaviorist leanings being imposed on schools and educators (Doss et al., 2020). Instead of focusing on future learning strategies, they contended that schools focus on addressing existing behaviors. Further, they indicated that too often, strategic plans have little meaning and serve primarily as a means to record and broadcast decisions that were already made (Doss et al., 2020). Offering that strategic planning done poorly probably creates more complexity than it eliminates, they acknowledged that educators are so intent on *what* they are supposed to address that they overlook *how* to best go about change (Doss et al., 2020).

According to one veteran and progressive planning facilitator, many schools are largely lacking the resources to do planning well (B. Miles, personal communication, July 15, 2020). For his part, Miles offers organizations the option to have him facilitate plan development, or he can train them to do so themselves. There is even the option to combine the two approaches. Though the structuring of costs and service options make improved facilitation possible, schools are often closed to changes in approach. Often, they opt to stick with the same outside facilitator whose only claim to expertise is having been a participant in another district where someone else facilitated the process the very same way. With conventional approaches like this being employed, no wonder one plan often looks like a *photocopy* of any other.

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## Criticisms for Implementing Professional Learning Communities

The literature on professional learning committees is replete with favorable reviews, but there are also inherent challenges that the approach needs to overcome. According to Marin-Kneip (2008), it is not realistic to just assume an organization is ready to successfully implement a PLC just because that is leadership's preferred direction. Success is dependent on the dispositions of staff and the organization's capacity to work within the PLC paradigm. Hughes (2000, 2014) advocated on behalf of strategically hiring change-friendly staff with PLCs in mind, but remained critical of the haphazard hiring approach in place within education (Hughes, 2018). Successful collaboration is not as easy as assigning a team. As noted by Stewart (2014, p. 28), "if members of a learning group do not feel comfortable together, they

may not be able to offer or receive feedback in a constructive manner.” Further, if they lack insight into their roles or collaboration in general, it only limits the cohesion of the group.

These considerations speak to the need for organizational capacity. There is no PLC that will work effectively if there is insufficient time and support for collaboration. Further, especially considering the perceived freedom of the PLC process and the time involved, staff needs ongoing support with direction, access to assessments, and even planning tools in order to maintain their focus (Martin-Kneip, 2008, Stewart, 2014). Professional learning communities are often sought out and implemented in educational settings because of their heralded accomplishments in other locations – but it takes more than a powerful idea to garner the success being sought after.

## Critical Perspectives

Strategic planning is the focus of this chapter. Professional learning communities have been included in the analysis to offer a contrast through which to view strategic planning’s approach and standing in education. This comparison extends to include dissemination efforts. Ironically Hughes (2020) has suggested that more recent training for PLCs has come to resemble strategic planning more and more as result of the increased emphasis being placed upon terminology and methodology. Dissemination has been an active area for PLCs as will be detailed next.

Websites of the likes of ALLTHINGSPLC sponsored by Solution Tree do more than inform; they market the approach and include evidence of success as well as provide testimonial content. In creating an online community, they are drawing on strengths inherent within the PLC approach, and appear to have a better coordinated national promotional campaign in place than the more loosely defined collection of strategic planning resources which are less likely to specialize in education.

The PLC dissemination practices and promotional strategy may offer particular advantages, but strategic planning has very likely benefitted more from the prevailing national education mentality following NCLB. As documented by Hughes and Davidson (2020) and expressed by Popham (2005), education has been living through the *age of compliance* ever since 2001. Comparatively speaking, PLCs stress the appreciation and application of local teacher insights and abilities (Martin-Kneip, 2008). In contrast, strategic planning practices draw from a more removed set of sources, often including mandates that have been handed down to schools. Doss et al. (2020) recently spoke to the 20-year period during which school improvement plans have been in place. As they celebrated the approach, the time frame they referenced was clearly post-NCLB. The plans were mainly outputs from strategic planning – or at the very least remarkably close to the same thing.

Whereas PLCs can take time for the community to arrive at the agreed-upon objective, there is an individual beauty to behold in the simplicity of completing a strategic plan. This feature is especially apparent when the purported local *vision* centers around implementing a mandate or researched program that the district is

already expected to adopt. Hughes (2020) identified just such an outcome and indicated that the local governing board subsequently allowed these mandates to be elevated to a position of *district-wide preeminence*. Employees never accepted the plan as being authentic or legitimate, but it was completed and on record. It was also difficult to amend or revise because the upper administration served as champions and realized an increase in prestige and personal power as a result. The plan allowed them to manage the district without question, and they were not willing, individually or collectively, to let go of the advantage they derived from it.

To be fair to the bigger picture – ahead of focusing on the future of strategic planning – the following needs to be said. PLCs are being implemented across the United States, but as is normally the case are only as good as the people responsible for leading them. Sometimes they are being leveraged in name only. Teachers have often shared the perspective that PLCs might be little more than the new term for something they were doing right along (E. Frey, personal conversation, July 22, 2020).

An especially concerning lapse in leadership is evidenced through the example of a talented young teacher who left their dream position and elected to drive over an hour each way – each day – to their new employer. When asked why a person would leave one of the most acclaimed PLC school districts in the state the response was that appearances can be deceiving. Administrators in said location had regularly told this teacher and others to keep their thoughts to themselves – once the doors were closed.

PLCs are designed and described to be dependent on their people and their talents for success. Some (Doss et al., 2020) would continue to emphasize process over people. Practice has demonstrated, however, regardless of the approach to school improvement, success is always dependent on its people (Hughes & Davidson, 2020). Recognizing this underlying truth is critical to engaging people in supporting success rather than weakly accepting the latest ten-minute fix that will disappear by the time the next school year starts. Embracing the human side of leadership (Evans, 1996), developing trust (Davidson & Hughes, 2019; Davidson & Hughes, 2020), and establishing credibility (Hughes & Davidson, 2020) are the necessary underlying ingredients for sustainable school success. Failing to develop people and their capacity is the reason transformational approaches to leadership do not succeed, according to Fullan (2014). The outcomes are not dependent on whether a school went with strategic planning or PLC.

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## **Retain, Revise, or Retire?**

This section considers multiple potentialities for strategic planning in education, and details multiple reasons for possible change. Earlier sections drew PLCs more directly into comparisons with strategic planning for analytical purposes. In this section, strategic planning and its future are exclusively considered within a broader range of existing and alternative options.

## Facts

To reorient the critical perspectives discussion that follows, a summary of the facts presented in this chapter reveal:

- Strategic Planning and PLCs can both be successful if carried out effectively.
- PLCs start with working relationships and eventually lead to the development of a direction, a plan, and specifics such as evaluation parameters.
- Strategic plans start with planning elements and components, and are eventually shared across the organization over time – typically in a top-down manner.
- Schools are complex social organizations that strategic planning may not always engage effectively.
- Schools are also dominated by state and federal government, meaning their choices tend to be more about how to implement a mandate than they are about charting their unique direction.
- The world is changing, and every year schools are facing additional challenges along with increased complexity (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2019; Miller, 2018).
- By all accounts, it appears that the main strengths of one approach represent the primary weakness of the other.

## Critical Perspectives

What does the future hold for strategic planning? Does it continue as it has for the past 50–100 years? Does it somehow adapt either in some large-scale sense or perhaps even at more local levels? Or, does it go away and enjoy a well-deserved retirement? These three futures will be the focus of speculation that completes this section.

## Too Soon to Retire

Strategic planning should not retire – and there is little chance it will go away. The approach continues to be emphasized in administrator training and aligns well with standards and mandates. Those are not going to disappear either. Further, its quick turnaround time for developing a *plan* is often viewed as being advantageous. Strategic planning suggests precision and goes well with *data*. Happily, it is also usually possible for smaller schools (of which there are many) to find a retired administrator who went through the process and is willing to attempt to duplicate the process for them at a reasonable cost. This type of facilitation could very likely result in the creation of a near duplicate or *photocopy* of plans from surrounding communities. Whereas Rick DuFour would lead participants from PLC training in reciting the near-identical language in every plan, having a predictable outcome and something the *boss wants* may actually be desirable, according to Brazer, Rich, and Ross (2010).

## Retain as Is

This option represents the most likely reality for the foreseeable future. Many of the considerations that justify the *status quo* were just described and do not need to be repeated. Added to this, a modification could diminish the proven appeal. It would likely make it more difficult to find a low-cost facilitator who can replicate the experience precisely the way they were locally lead through theirs. Past attempts to locate facilitators willing to embrace change have also not met with success.

Still, there is an opportunity to improve practice without losing the proven process, if schools would move beyond the photocopy approach of utilizing a nearby administrator to reproduce their process and likely their product as well. Reaching out to trained and more highly qualified professionals may increase the cost of the process, and that in turn could violate the budget constraints of many smaller districts (B. Miles, personal conversation, July 15, 2020), but is not a multi-year plan for a multi-million-dollar operation worth the type of investment that could lead to better results? There are multiple reasons that improvement and updating should be considered.

## Rationale for Revision

In *Leading Beautifully*, English and Ehrich (2016) described standardization efforts as often being overly managerial in approach and potentially champions of stagnation. Standards fit that pattern (English, 2012) as can strategic planning (Brazer et al., 2010; Mintzberg, 1994). Educators work in a changing world and regularly face increasing challenges and expanding complexity (Hughes, 2014; Hughes & Davidson, 2020; Miller, 2018). Added to this, the deterioration of our societal fabric is introducing cultural conflict into our lives and in our schools (Hughes, 2019). Schools need to move beyond a status quo planning reality where *vision* is often actually code for an existing *mandate*. Instead of stagnation, education needs innovation, inspiration, and investment to result from our planning – whatever form or shape that may take.

During the challenging times schools have experienced, standardization is contributing to failures to effectively communicate with families (Berklan & Hughes, 2020). The assumed *standard* financial limitations linked with teacher attrition limit our ability even to consider the glaring impacts of classroom behavior disruptions (Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Schools hire according to position and paper because that *standard* approach is all administrators know (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2018). Building-level administrative ownership for special education remains almost nonexistent in places because of the *standard* emphasis placed on compliance rather than collaboration and investment (Hughes et al. (2020). Finally, legal determinants of social equity are challenged and worked around daily (Hughes, 2019). As these issues continue and expand, is it realistic to contend strategic planning is keeping up with these issues?

Schlechty (1990) said there were those leaders who were music conductors. They stood in front and demanded order and precision from the moment the music started. Symphonies are beautiful, timeless *practiced* performances that require such a conductor to maximize their presentation. Schools are unrehearsed social settings that are always works in progress (Evans, 1996). In these settings, leaders and their teams may be better suited, at times, to function more like jazz musicians (Schlechty, 1990), where everyone knows their part and builds off the rest of the musicians they are collaborating with.

Oftentimes the innovation and improvisation on display in our schools is nothing short of inspiring. Sometimes it threatens the status quo and can be threatening to administrators as well (Hughes, 2020). There are also times when success would have been more certain had *someone* stood up and contributed their zest amid organized school improvement efforts. Dueppen and Hughes (2018) documented just such a need, recalling how a school district with a state mandate for improvement and national school improvement resources at their disposal struggled to sustain improvement because of minimal investment from upper-level leadership or building-level staff.

The process employed and the resulting plan put into place were organized, detailed, and robust. There was just no real clear ownership or investment to go along with it. Building administrators signed off on ownership, as did much of upper-level administration. This may have been done in order to foster a collaborative tone. No one knows because it just *happened*. However, teachers rarely knew who was leading the endeavor, and stakeholders at all levels regularly perceived the external consultants to be the leaders (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). When the planning was finished and rolled out, and the consultants left – momentum started to decline.

Goldsmith (2012) spoke to the need to create a *culture of innovation*. That does not always happen. Shortcomings like these are standard features of strategic planning. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was less reason for concern about this deficit. For the past 20 years, NCLB and the resulting compliance mentality (Popham, 2005) have dominated schools, their approaches to planning, and their strategic outcomes. In the face of escalating challenges, Mintrop and Zumpe (2019) have stressed the need for a return of framing school improvement efforts in a more adaptive problem-solving style. Bellei, Vanni, Valenzuela, and Contreras (2015) stressed that the practice of planning needs to evolve to better address the complexities schools face and the extent to which teachers are genuinely involved. Whether revision ever takes place, there is an evident need for proponents of strategic planning to consider it strongly.

Chukwumah (2015), Mintrop and Zumpe (2019), as well as Supovitz, D’Auria, and Spillane (2019), each suggest that there are possible opportunities to unite parts of existing paradigms. Strategic thinking or scenario planning (Kahane, 2012) seem to be natural extensions of the traditional planning approach. While modifications might help advance a revival for strategic planning, Bellei et al. (2015) strongly endorsed that complete and lasting success could not be expected without forming effective and invested professional teaching teams in the equation. That approach is not the top-down dissemination of ideas and practices that result from strategic planning efforts. It is more indicative of a commitment to building capacity that is more commonly found with PLCs (Martin-Kneip, 2008).



## Conclusion and Reflections

Strategic planning is a proven and valued approach and paradigm that could be enhanced to become better able to address intensifying future concerns; and American schools face an abundance of vital challenges including equity issues, social justice, and escalating cultural conflict. At a formal academic or even scholarly level, it is unlikely that its many advocates would attempt to alter an approach that has won such acclaim. At the level of a *corporate-level provider*, there is continued emphasis on promoting strategic planning's core principles, and little apparent interest in addressing challenges known to exist in socially oriented organizations.

At a somewhat lower level, there are already private consultants who attempt to bridge the gaps that result from applying this highly structured practice in a social context. One example called a *chainsaw approach* seeks to engage a broader segment of stakeholders than would typically only be accessed during a traditional school-driven event (B. Miles, personal conversation, July 15, 2020). This adaptation emphasizes ongoing outreach that broadens input and allows stakeholders to be engaged beyond the initial steps when a plan is articulated. The approach keeps people involved, and has had success when implemented as introduced.

Though innovation is possible, developments like the *chainsaw approach* may be overlooked in favor of a more predictable *photocopy* approach. This style of planning can be very effective at maintaining the status quo while promoting the appearance of innovation. In an institution that faces government domination and has a culture of compliance, a quick and agreeable planning approach that aligns well with government forms and reporting requirements may not be such a bad thing to follow.

Strategic planning can be criticized for overreaching beyond its intended purpose, and just as frequently for underperforming when results are compiled. Strategic planning can also be as good as anyone wants it to be. For organizations that want to accomplish something more, added emphasis on investment vs buy in would go a long way to introduce the benefits of a strategic-systemic approach like a professional learning community offers. Schools are often lacking answers for emerging equity and social justice challenges that administrators are typically not trained to contend with (Hughes, 2019). Done the right way – with adaptation to include advantages strategic planning has never pursued, an updated and revised version of this popular approach stands to provide a path, a process, and a product that can work.

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## **Part VI**

# **Leadership, Teaching, and Learning**



# LGBTQ+ Leaders in Thought and Practice: Portraits of Courage and Change

# 39

Durell M. Callier

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## Abstract

LGBTQ+ leadership and issues within education contexts recall a history of progress, struggle, and sites of possibility. On the coattails of historic yet precarious gains in rights for LGBTQ people and communities, educational practices, policies, and leadership are ripe spaces for advancing change. By offering a brief history of LGBTQ+ issues in educational research and leadership, this chapter specifically illuminates dynamic shifts in the vocabulary and praxis, alongside the underrecognized contributions of LGBTQ+ scholars and knowledges in shaping pedagogy and leadership. Brief biographical sketches and descriptions of the major contributions to the fields of education studies and education leadership are offered as a way to highlight some of the specific ways in which LGBTQ+ knowledge has innovated education and point toward future areas of growth in theory and practice.

## Keywords

Queer studies in education · LGBTQ studies · Leadership · Sexuality · Intersectionality · Queer of color critique · Queer theory · Black queer theory · Gender non-conforming

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### **The Field of Memory**

For much of the twentieth century, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) scholarship and research consisted of psychological studies of disorder. Even the acronym and nomenclature of LGBTQ+ is a more contemporary understanding of the spectrum of identities related to sexuality and gender within society broadly, and the field of education leadership more specifically. Earlier iterations of the acronym included LGB (i.e., Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual), which broadened the complexity of the catch-all phrase, *gay*. Often signaling privileged identities, *gay* referenced white, cisgender, non-heterosexual identities usually linked to men. Within academic research, terms such as sexual deviants, sexual minority families, sexual minority youth, and sexual orientation disturbance characterized much of this work (Szalacha, 2003).

### **The Field of Presence**

Recent trends in the field, although still marked by studies of disorder and deviancy, have expanded beyond the documentation of LGBTQ+ victimization and death by suicide (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1994) and normative LGBTQ youth development (Savin-Williams, 2001), to thinking about the ways in which sexuality is a part of the overt and hidden curricula of schools (Lipkin, 1999). Further strides have been made to decenter white, hegemonic gender and sexuality to consider how issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality impact the experiences of youth in general and LGBTQ+ youth specifically (Kumashiro, 1999, 2003; McCreedy, 2010; Woolley, 2019). In this way, the field has broadened to think about an ecosystem and the interconnectivity of LGBTQ+ experiences within various schooling sites, and the educational contexts for administrators, teachers, staff, students, and their respective communities.

A variety of communities across the gender and sexualities field now recognize LGBTQ+ as an umbrella term in which the LGBTQ references Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, 2/Two Spirit, Transsexual, and Queer/Questioning, and the + encompasses Asexual, Allies, Agender, Gender Queer, Bigender, Gender Variant, Intersex, Pansexual, Pangender, and other groups. Similarly, the term *queer* is sometimes used as an interchangeable term for gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (Somerville, 2007). Within political and theoretical contexts and analyses, *queer* has also become a way to denaturalize categories and reveal them as “socially and historically constructed identities that have often worked to establish and police the line between the ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’” (Somerville, 2007, p. 187).

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Queer studies in education has flourished as queer theory and queer studies have grown, borrowing terms and concepts such as epistemology of the closet (Sedgwick, 1990), heteronormativity (Warner, 1991), and homonormativity (Duggan, 2002) from the study of sexuality beyond education to apply to schools (DesRoches & Sweet, 2007; Riggs & Due, 2013). Adapting Halperin (1989), scholars in education have sought to uncover the ways in which heterosexuality and homosexuality are not biologically structured but are rather historically and culturally produced. Further,

education researchers have helped to illuminate the ways that sexuality and gender are produced and reproduced through educative practices and spaces.

Other concepts, theories, and big ideas that began outside the field but have taken root within the larger field of education, and in educational leadership specifically, include queer of color critique (Brockenbrough, 2013; Ferguson, 2004; Hong & Ferguson, 2011; Muñoz, 1999), queer theory (Halperin, 1989; Jagose, 1996; Somerville, 2007), Black queer theory (Cohen, 1997; Johnson & Henderson, 2005), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), women of color feminisms (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983), and Black feminist thought (Collins, 1995, 2004; hooks, 2000, 2004). Each of these concepts have broadened analyses within the field in their own way, providing multifocal and layered approaches to illuminate how race, gender, sexuality, class, and citizenship impact the lives of youth, faculty, and staff, and inform policy and curriculum. Moreover, they provide important pathways into working toward the eradication of LGBTQ+ bullying and violence while offering a more nuanced understanding of the lives of understudied groups such as LGBTQ+ youth of color, trans youth, and bisexual youth. These ideas have helped to unsettle the normative logics of sexuality, gender, and identity in order to understand the ways that power and sexuality operationalize within educational settings, policy, and practice, and how scholars might move toward salient queertiques of educational leadership and policy (Diem & Young, 2015) while also queer(y)ing work (Duarte, 2020a; Leonardi, 2017; Lugg & Murphy, 2014; O'Malley & Long, 2017; Martino, Airtón, Kuhl, & Cumming-Potvin, 2019).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Delinking sexual acts from sexual identities, the field now wrestles with the ways that sexuality orders lives. Bourgeoning concentrations in the field of queer studies in education have attempted to understand how social institutions such as schools reify hegemonic performances of binary gender (i.e., femininity, masculinity) and privilege, and normalize heteronormativity within the day-to-day functions of schooling and within educational policy and research (Woolley, 2020). To that end, studies and policies within the field take up the ideas of safe school climate, victimization of LGBTQ students, intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, queer pedagogy, challenging heterosexism, cisgenderism, and heteronormativity, sexual identity, coming out/inviting in, homonormativity, non-normativity, and herstories.

Each of the aforementioned ideas and issues have changed the landscape of education, leadership development, teacher preparation, and policy. For example, educators and educational leaders now believe they have a social responsibility to provide an environment that supports all students, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex. This has meant shifting ideas about identity, representation, and inclusion from thinking about how LGBTQ+ people should declare their sexuality and gender identity as an act of fostering inclusion within educational spaces. Confronting this idea is the notion of *inviting in* rather than *coming out*. *Inviting in* works against the once-used terminology of “the closet” or “coming out,” creating a tension with current field realities, as

both are held simultaneously. As Duarte (2020b) illustrated, within an increasingly homophobic educational landscape and society that also holds newer rights and protections for some LGBTQ+ people, educators and educational leaders such as principals find “being out” on the job to be challenging and might require concealing, denying, or selectively choosing (inviting in) who is aware of their sexuality. This shift in how sexuality, gender, and inclusion are understood within the field is also reflected in Alston and McClellan’s (2011) work to think about *herstories*, changing how the field thinks about women and LGBTQ+ leadership and contributions to education and educational leadership more specifically.

### Critical Assumptions

Intersectional analyses. Sexuality orders the life chances and life experiences of all, regardless of one’s (hetero)sexual identity or performance. Heteronormativity. Hegemonic gender. Hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic femininity. Racialized sexuality and gender. Radical potential of queer. Schools as sites that reproduce power. State and capitalist power are mediated through educative practices. Need to expand queer subject in education. Need to centralize people of color and specifically youth in queer politics and theory. Collectivity and the awareness of shared position of marginality not rooted in individual rights or an affiliation with homogenous identities.

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## Introduction

For much of the twentieth century, LGBTQ research and scholarship classified homosexuality and gender nonconformity as disorders (Szalacha, 2003). In 1973, homosexuality was removed from the DSM-IV as a mental disorder, but was replaced by the term, “sexual orientation disturbance” (Drescher, 2015). Although a distinct field of study, educational leadership is impacted and informed by other sociocultural institutions, forces, and practices. As the guiding handbook for school social workers, psychologists, and other mental health and social welfare practitioners, the discourse of homosexuality as a disorder has had far-reaching impacts in education. Although the language has changed and terms such as “sexual deviants” are outdated, the ideologies that undergirded such terminology still linger in society and educational practices. We can see these impacts within the field; as Szalacha (2003) illustrated, LGBTQ research and scholarship within education prior to the 1970s was “dominated by psychological studies of disorder” (p. 80). Since then, there have been a proliferation of studies to examine the hidden and explicit curricular influences in schools with regards to sexuality (Lipkin, 1999; McCreedy, 2010; Sears, 1999), the experiences of LGBTQ+ educators (Glasgow & Murphy, 1999), and how race, class, gender, and sexuality impact students and educational praxis (Kumashiro, 1999).

In practice, theory, epistemology, and research, the field has shifted to recognize the hostilities that LGBTQ+ youth and communities experience in educational settings, and scholars examine what can be done to enhance learning environments and experiences by updating policy and preparing educators and educational leaders at all levels. For example, in 2016, AERA Division A: Administration, Organization,

and Leadership hosted a conversation called, “Connect Series: Queer Leadership.” Panelists highlighted the complex evolution of language, queer theory, and praxis across education and within educational leadership. One of the evolutions noted is the reality that the language used to talk about sexuality and gender has evolved. Language can be a contested landscape, as some find the evolution of language within academic literature to be overly complex and devoid of practical application and knowledge, while others see a utility in queer theory in education as a means to unsettle the ways that educational institutions and leaders reify hegemonic ideologies and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality.

It is within this rich landscape of language and contestation that the field is currently situated. The evolution of language is one which encourages social justice leadership (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; O’Malley & Capper, 2015) as a means to fully embrace LGBTQ+ identities and themes into teacher and principal preparation programs, school policies and praxis, and the cultural fabric of schools and larger US society. Perhaps surprisingly, LGBTQ+ experience has still been noted as absent from leadership preparation literature and programs (O’Malley & Capper, 2015). Other absences abound, inclusive of thinking about women’s leadership and the role that gender plays in educational leadership, theory, and practices, as well as thinking about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality simultaneously and explicitly in regard to practice, preparation programs, theory, and policy. This chapter takes up some of these absences by examining the work and scholarship of LGBTQ+ leaders in education.

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## **Portraits of Change and Possibility: Honoring Queeroes of Praxis and Scholarship**

Below are three brief portraits of LGBTQ+ leaders in education. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of leaders and their substantive contributions, but rather an opportunity to highlight the ways in which Educational Leadership can grow in the future. In the tradition of *them*, a news outlet and commentary resource from the perspective of LGBTQ+ people, this entry names these leaders, these queer heroes, “Queeroes.” The name is fitting because each of the queeroes inhabit a “both/and” stance for deploying queer politics and analyses that highlight a shifting of power for LGBTQ+-identified people, while also pushing against identity as the coalescing mechanism for social change. In their own ways, each of these leaders embody the radical potential of queer politics, hinting to ways educators and educational leaders can transform their practices and the field. As Cathy Cohen highlighted, the radical potential of queer illuminates how,

individuals like Michael Brown and Rekia Boyd are important queer subjects not because of their sexual practice, identity, or performance but because they, as well as other young and poor folks of color, operate in the world as queer subjects: the targets of racial normalizing projects intent on pathologizing them across the dimensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, simultaneously making them into deviants while normalizing their degradation and marginalization until it becomes what we expect – the norm – until it becomes something that we no longer pay attention to. (Cohen, 2019, p. 142).



It is precisely the shifting of queer subjects and queer issues in education that becomes necessary as scholars continue to grapple with how to curb and reframe school bullying and safety (Payne & Smith, 2013), and broaden the life chances and life opportunities of minoritized students across race, sexuality, gender, class, and ethnicity as mediated by educational practices and spaces. In order to actualize the highest ideals of a democratic, accessible, and liberatory education system, educators must analyze the ways that normalizing ideologies across race, sexuality, class, and gender order people's lives. The portraits below identify ways the field can begin to probe at an educational future that resists normalizing premature death and violence in all of its forms – epistemic, material, discursive, economic, and physical.



Hailing from the northwestern United States, Dennis Lynn Carlson was born on January 10, 1946 to a working-class family in Washington State. A full professor of Curriculum, Cultural Studies of Education, and the Social Foundations of Education at Miami University, Carlson was a colleague, pedagogue, and engaged citizen on his campus and in his community. Survived by a community of family, friends, and his partner of 37 years, Kent Peterson, Carlson's scholarly contributions crosscut the geographic and academic landscapes he encountered and actively built. His enduring sense of place, to make community where he was and work within the cultural contours, histories, and knowledge where he was situated remained a central lens throughout his career and life (Knight Abowitz, 2015). Described as an "idealist and firmly committed to grounding educational work in the highest principles of justice, democracy, and respect for students," Dennis Carlson's pedagogy and scholarship created indelible impacts on his students and the field of educational leadership broadly (Knight Abowitz, 2015, p. 408).

In the wake of his absence, Carlson's legacy lives on through his scholarship, which made significant contributions to the fields of educational leadership and curriculum, cultural, and sexuality studies. This chapter will illuminate his work within sexuality studies. Of note is his text, *Gender and Sexualities in Education* (2013), co-edited with Elizabeth J. Meyer. In the reader, they demonstrated the ways that gender, sexuality, and difference are constructed through educative processes inclusive of schooling. Further, the collection argued that educators and educational

institutions, whether intentionally or not, actively shape gender and sexuality by normalizing hegemonic identities (e.g., masculinity, femininity, cisgender identities) and disciplining difference. These logics are imbedded within the hidden and overt curriculum (Meyers & Carlson, 2013), manifest within teacher and leadership preparation programs (Szalacha, 2003), and demonstrate areas of growth for the field to actualize educational practices and spaces that are liberatory for all and do not replicate structures of domination. In his chapter within the reader, Carlson (2013) argued for expanding discourses related to anti-bullying and contemporary understandings of the dynamics of sexuality, gender, and (homophobic) violence.

Continuing to think about the ways sexuality and violence live within curricular practices and are ingrained in the landscape of education, Carlson (2014) offered a historic tracing of these issues alongside contemporary manifestations in his chapter within the *Critical Youth Studies Reader* entitled, “‘It Gets Better’: Queer Youth and the History of the ‘Problem of the Homosexual’ in Public Education.” By offering a critique of the 2010 “It Gets Better” campaign organized by LGBTQ activist Dan Savage in the aftermath of a series of publicized LGBTQ+ deaths by suicide and a historicization of adolescent (homo)sexuality within education, Carlson illuminated how heteronormativity and homophobia as embodied in school culture and curricula actively produce bullying. Additionally, he outlined the current failures of anti-bullying and anti-homophobia discourses to adequately address these issues (Carlson, 2014).

As highlighted previously within this chapter, what is salient about Carlson’s scholarship in the twenty-first century enterprise of American education and educational leadership is his attention to the ways that the heteronormative habitus of schooling impacts all students and staff regardless of their sexuality and needs to be transformed in order for schools to “get better” for LGBTQ+ youth and youth of color, and for all youth generally. This demarcates a charge for current and future educators and educational leaders to consider the ways that they might actively help “young people reflect on the heteronormative rituals and beliefs of their everyday lives in schools and other sites in the community, to reconstruct the habitus of schooling through diverse forms of self-reflection, dialogue, resistance, and collective action” (Carlson, 2014, p. 142).



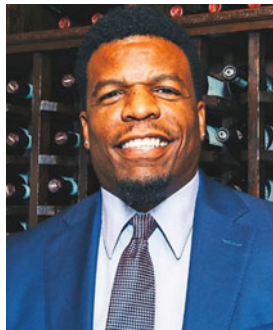
Judy A. Alston is a reverend, professor, author, and educational leader. A proud southerner by birth, Alston was born in Charleston, South Carolina. Describing her work as a “Love Supreme,” riffing off John Coltrane’s musical masterpiece and “spiritual declaration,” Alston integrates the epistemic knowledge of Black musicality, culture, and leadership to apply to and ultimately challenge the anti-Black, heteronormative, and patriarchal impulses of the fields of educational leadership and administration (Westervelt, 2012). A pathfinder and barrier breaker, Alston became the first Black woman to hold the title of full professor at Ashland University in the history of the institution in 2010 (UCEA, 2018). To date, she continues to be the only Black woman to hold this title at the university.

In 2018, Alston was awarded the University Council for Educational Administration’s (UCEA) Hidden Figures Award, which recognizes foundational scholars and trailblazers within education who have disrupted the status quo, broken glass ceilings, and opened doors for others (UCEA, 2018). During her acceptance speech, Alston summarized her work as a scholar and person by saying, “For me, my preaching, my teaching, research, and service in the field of educational leadership is the spiritual expression of who and what I am, my faith, my knowledge, and my being”. Her ability to bring together and highlight the whole person within educational leadership is one of the reasons she is listed here as a Queero. Within her scholarship, she illuminates the ways that leadership, pedagogy, educational research, policy, and practice can and should be informed by spirituality and the historic and contemporary contributions of Black women and Black LGBTQ+ individuals’ knowledge and leadership styles (Alston, 2005, 2012, 2015; Alston & McClellan, 2011; Capper et al., 2006). Of note are the ways that her scholarship highlights the need for educational leaders to develop a profound sense of personhood in order to enact systemic change. As Alston noted, leadership is “soul work,” which means that becoming an effective leader requires that an individual knows who they are (Division A Connect Series, 2016). Further, Alston’s work transforms the field by attuning it toward the cataclysmic transformation of oppressive systems of violence, rooted in the individual as they develop a profound sense of self and how that connects to the wellbeing of others and our society in general.

Alston’s work embodies the feminist adage that the personal is political, and subsequently, that the spiritual is political (Alexander, 2006). This is most exemplified within the germinal text, *Herstories: Leading with the Lessons of Black Women Activists* (2011), co-authored with Patrice McClellan. In *Herstories*, Alston and McClellan (2011) argued for Black women’s leadership and knowledge to be centered within the field of educational leadership. In highlighting the unique contributions of Black women to the field, *Herstories* provided a corrective to the erasure of marginalized voices, particularly Black women in the fields of leadership preparation and leadership studies. Often constructed through masculinists and heteronormative lenses, leadership preparation, practice, and research are devoid of the contributions and innovations of Black women and Black LGBTQ+ women.

In examining the leadership of Black women, particularly Black lesbian women such as Barbara Jordan and Audre Lorde, *Herstories* reframed leadership through the subject position and knowledge of Black lesbian women, expanding narrowly held concepts about leadership as well as who and what makes a leader. Shifting

the landscape of leadership, *Herstories* provided values, theories, and methodologies pertinent to leadership rooted in Black women and Black lesbian women, rather than their white, heterosexual, male counterparts. In doing so, her work offers ways to think about the particular contributions of Black women and Black lesbian women, inclusive of their effective leadership strategies, innovation, and the particular leadership models they develop and champion (i.e., transformational leadership, servant leadership, and social justice leadership). Alston's radical vision of the substance of leadership rooted in spirituality, personhood, and holistic individual development, coupled with her attention to undertheorized and understudied contributions of Black women, Black lesbian women, and LGBTQ+ people broadly, expands the fields of Educational Leadership, Educational Administration, and Education, providing fertile ground for our praxis and research to be relevant to and improve the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ people and their communities.



Tim'm T. West was born in Cincinnati, Ohio but raised in Little Rock and Taylor, Arkansas. Tim'm is a queer hip hop artist, educator, and social justice advocate. Throughout his life, he has shown a consistent dedication to youth of color, specifically LGBTQ+ youth. Utilizing multiple art forms, West has employed his art to explore the contours of Black life, Black history, and Black LGBTQ+ history in particular. This is evident in his career as an educator, queer hip-hop artist, and spoken word poet. A founding member of DeepDickollective (D/DC), established in 1999, West, Juba Kalmaka, and Phillip Attiba Goff used hip hop to complicate conversations related to Blackness, sexuality, and identity, and to respond to HIV/AIDS among Black men (Hix, 2006). Within a context of effective antiviral drugs, the ravaging of the disease within Black and people of color communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities, and a rise in scapegoating language directed toward the “down low” and stoking fears about (Black) men who sleep with men (Cheng, Juhasz, & Shahani, 2020; Snorton, 2014), D/DC's content offered a needed alternative and critique (Wilson, 2007). Queer hip hop pioneers, D/DC intervened into the loss of Black gay men and men who sleep with men to the disease, while also interjecting a very Black and queer voice – actualizing a queer feminist pedagogy – in a genre of music often characterized for its homophobic and misogynistic culture (Pabón & Smalls, 2014).

West's commitment to LGBTQ+ youth and education is not limited to his enactment of queer feminist pedagogy through hip hop and spoken word poetry (Pabón & Smalls, 2014). As the former Director of Youth Programs at Chicago's Center on Halsted – the Midwest's most comprehensive community center for LGBTQ+ people – West continued his educational work around HIV/AIDS, queering Black masculinity, and carving out educultural spaces for LGBTQ people. Covering his work within the gentrified and racially tensed gayborhood where the Halsted Center is located, West is described as someone who uses hip hop as an “unlikely tool to ease the tension between” race and sexuality, creating opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth to turn “vulnerability into something that makes them stronger” (Zarley, 2013). Documented across his discography, his inclusion in numerous LGBTQ anthologies, and through his own body of published poems and activism is a commitment to enhancing the lives of LGBTQ youth, documenting queer histories, and advancing education for LGBTQ+ communities. West's contributions in these areas were acknowledged in 2015 when he was recognized as an LGBTQ Icon (SDGLN Staff, 2015); in 2017 through the Ubuntu Biography Project, a project dedicated to telling “the largely untold stories of LGBTQ men and women of African descent, and to celebrate their remarkable contributions to our world” (Ubuntu Biography Project, 2017); and in 2019 as a Vizazi “Flame” Honoree by the Cincinnati Black Pride organization (Cincinnati Black Pride, 2020).

Drawing upon his teaching experience in K-12 classrooms, higher education, and in community centers, West currently works to advance “safer and braver classrooms” for LGBTQ+ students within pre-K-12 environments and their educators (West, 2021). Championing the idea of Brave Education, West has organized annual conferences for LGBTQ+ educators and their allies to establish what Wargo (2016) called “[q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy” within their classrooms and schools. Held across the United States, these Brave Education Summits foster an environment to engage in deep learning about current LGBTQ+ issues within schools, receive resources to navigate these lived realities, inclusive of but not limited to adapting and expanding curricula to be representative of LGBTQ+ experiences and knowledge, navigating employment issues and discrimination, providing support for parents of LGBTQ+ youth, and being aware of (discriminatory) policies that are unique to particular states and school districts. A #BraveEducator, West is a Queero whose leadership and work inside the classroom and beyond has made an important contribution to the lives of LGBTQ+ youth, educators, educational leaders, and communities.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The landscape of LGBT studies within and beyond education has shifted dramatically in the past 30 years. Whether that shift is demarcated in the nomenclature, the field has moved from an emphasis on sexuality and gay men in particular (e.g., LGB

Studies) to include gender and the radical politics borne of (racialized) gender and sexuality oppression (e.g., LGBTQ Studies), to more inclusive names of the fields pushing scholars to think beyond binary gender while incorporating decolonized approaches to the study of sexuality and gender (e.g., LGBTQ+ Studies) and contemporary foci on the ways that racialized sexuality and gender systematically impact all people regardless of their sexuality (e.g., Queer Studies). One of the current ruptures and discontinuities that will continue to unfold is how scholars will grapple with the enduring legacy of racism in the United States, particularly in educational settings. Scholars of sexuality have long traced how processes of racialization were integral to understanding gender and sexuality (Cohen, 1997; Ferguson, 2004; Hong & Ferguson, 2011) and how these processes are regulated through ideological state apparatuses, such as schools (Callier, 2018; Duarte, 2020b; Kumashiro, 2003; McCready, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Accordingly, further growth would require contending with more intersectional analyses that understand how these systems of domination not only inform one another and an individual's life experience and access to opportunities, but how these systems are constitutive. That is to say, that understanding sexuality and gender particularly within a US context are predicated upon discourses of race. As the United States struggles with the culmination of a long history of exclusion, denigration, and theft of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, most notably punctuated by the contemporary crises of COVID-19 and the legal and extralegal murder of Black people by police and vigilantes, so too must educational scholars and leaders. Scholars and educational leaders must not only reckon with how educational outcomes are impacted by racialized gender and sexuality, but how educational processes (re)produce and discipline racialized gender and sexuality. Similarly, the areas of queer of color critique, Black queer theory, Black feminism, woman of color feminisms and lesbian women of color feminisms provide theories and methodologies to broaden scholars and educational leaders' toolkits and help in understanding and combating the impacts of these forms of oppression.

Drawing upon the rich legacy of this work and recent (re)turns in the field would ask scholars and educational leaders to decenter U.S.-centric viewpoints. This marks yet another possible rupture. Entangling how the local is also global demonstrates another springboard for future considerations in the field. Strands of this are mirrored within the virtual symposium, "Re-imagining and Redefining Education in Times of COVID and Anti-Blackness," hosted by the Queer of Color Analysis in Education Research Institute (QOCAERI). A convening of prominent education scholars, panelists explored issues of trauma, stigma, violence, and mourning within formal (i.e., schools), nonformal (i.e., community centers), and informal (i.e., everyday practices, social media) educative spaces as they intersect with race, citizenship, sexuality, and the state. Although the overall gathering highlighted fertile ground for educational leaders and the field to further explore, two particular panelists are worth mentioning for the purposes of thinking about the direction of the field. Putting queer of color critique (QOCC) and analysis to work, Ed Brockenbrough offered a way to think about the knowledge circulated within queer of color communities for

knowledge, safety, and culture through digital, counterpublic spaces, prodding education scholars toward justice in globally minded ways. Roland Sintos Coloma analyzed the intersections of racism, xenophobic profiling, and violence in relationship to COVID-19, and urged the dislodgement of the (U.S.) nation-state as the sole unit of investigation within QOCC analyses in order to mobilize a transnational approach to QOCC. Although centered on a particular application of theory – queer of color critique – both Brockenbrough and Coloma demonstrate other directions for the field of educational leadership to explore with regards to educative processes, types of knowledge, forms of leadership, and sites of analysis, as well as a greater adoption and application of queer of color critique.

To forecast a future is to delve further into excavating the complexities of queer life and leadership for all sexual identities across formal and informal educative spaces. For example, how might drag performers be seen as educational leaders through the public performances of drag pedagogy they enact (see Keenan & Mess, 2020)? In what ways are their performances and cultivation of knowledge applicable to the performativity of educational leaders within schooling contexts? Similarly, the field must continue to expand its understanding of anti-queer violence in terms of how homo/transphobic bullying manifests, not just for those who identify or who have yet to identify as LGBTQ+, but also how bullying casts a wider net to discipline and punish nonhegemonic performances of gender and sexuality. Each of the Queeroes discussed in this chapter represent possibilities for the future direction of the field, for educational leadership to embrace expansive notions of LGBTQ+ identities, and for queer analyses that provide intersectional frames to consider processes of queering, the impacts of racialized gender and sexuality within educational structures, cultures, and policies, and global and decolonial possibilities.

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# Towards Ubiquitous Learning in a Transnational Educational System

# 40

James E. Berry

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## Abstract

Learning is fundamental to our existence. Learning helps to explain the very essence of each individual on this planet – past or present – no matter the race, religion, gender, color, genetic makeup, culture, or country of origin. The ability to learn is the single most important biological feature that explains how and why *H. sapiens* evolved over two million years and, then, came to dominate planet earth. Learning is fundamental to every person's existence every single day, day in, day out, from birth to death. Educators have only recently begun to utilize and apply what science knows about the brain to what we know about using the brain as an instrument of learning. Significantly, the rise of the internet has challenged

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the supremacy of brick and mortar institutions as the primary purveyors of knowledge. Ubiquitous learning within a transnational learning system is emerging.

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### Keywords

Transnational learning system · Ubiquitous learning · Social learning · Individualized and personalized learning · Old Deluder Satan Act · Bureaucracy · Cognitive revolution · Transnational marketplace · Global knowledge society

### The Field of Memory

Perelman (1992) described the late twentieth century school as an outdated model for carrying out the expectations and requirements of a twenty-first century society. The opening of Perelman's book, *School's Out* (1992), points out the gap between schooling and learning:

Maybe the folks who have been haranguing us to "save our schools" just don't understand that the classroom and teacher have as much place in tomorrow's learning enterprise as the horse and buggy have in modern transportation. Maybe they don't see that for the twenty-first century and beyond, learning is in and school is out. (p. 19)

It is only in the last 100 years that governments have attempted to manage learning as a governmental function for all of the world's children. Make no mistake, organized education accomplished a great deal in the last 100 years. However, there is no illusion that today's bureaucratic on-the-ground and face-to-face schooling is the best society – or the world – can do. Consider that in the last 100 years of bureaucratic education "minimal levels of achievement for all" is an unfulfilled, unmet . . . and, so far, an out of reach goal for every nation on the planet.

### The Field of Presence

The third decade of the twenty-first century is reshaping not just American education, but education across the world. Lynton (1991) wrote that a modern society must look beyond the basic premise of teaching, learning, and socialization as the twenty-first century reason for schooling. He believed schooling was the hub around which economies were built, social reforms were realized, and how communities endured. Lynton, quoting Peter Drucker (1978), claimed "knowledge has become the crucial economic resource. The systematic acquisition of knowledge, that is, organized formal education, has replaced experience-acquired traditionally through apprenticeship—as the foundation for productive capacity and performance" (p. 40).

### The Field of Concomitance

Wenger (2010) described social learning as an environment that one seeks in order to determine an identity. He described a kind of learning that compelled a person to acquire knowledge in order to contribute to one's community.

This meaning-making person is not just a cognitive entity. It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning. The experience of the person in all these aspects is actively constituted, shaped, and interpreted through learning. Learning is not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person—a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community. (p. 2)

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, the physical boundaries of education are being erased by technology, software, and the internet. A stronger emphasis upon personal and individualized levels of learning will lift education from a transactional to a transformational institution. The forces bearing down on education are no longer national but international. These international forces will reshape education as we know into a transnational system of learning that better serves the broader global community.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

In the twentieth century, educational organizations approached the transmission of knowledge as an industrial task applied to the education of children. Barnard's (1938) description of the business organization's goal of making production efficient and effective was applied to American education. Teaching was an extension of industry's assembly line process for manufacturing. Students were taught to conform to educational expectations that were applied to everyone in the same way. Much as manufacturing organizations produced a product, education created a system of teaching and learning based upon mass production and factory assembly. Children were placed in classes of 30 students and taught within a system that sorted and selected them into tracks according to an ability to perform on exams that focused learning around simple recitation and recall of knowledge. It was, and is, a bureaucratic system of learning taken right out of the manual for twentieth century factory mass production. Bureaucratic learning was, and is, the anomaly. It is only in the last 200 years that learning has been transformed from personal into a mass didactic, bureaucratic, impersonalized learning experience that favored cost over quality. Only in the last 100 years has *H. sapiens* attempted to educate entire countries as productive and educated citizens of a society. Mass education as an extension of a nation state's social commitment to educating its citizens is a recent societal occurrence in human history. A mass on-the-ground bureaucratic learning system will be challenged by a mass in-the-cloud customized learning system that is more personalized.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Students across the world are adapting to a technology rich and internet-driven system that is furthering the evolutionary reworking of the human mind. Demand and need are building, and evolving, within a nascent transnational learning system that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, by anyone . . . if governments invest in a networked system of learning that spans national borders to serve *all* children. And, most significantly, this is a learning system that could reach beyond

formal education and impact lives beyond traditional K-12 and higher education. This is a system that supports learning from the cradle to the grave. It is a robust system that adjusts to meet the learning needs of the learner at any level and at any age. The virtual transnational education system has emerged as a shadow system of the face-to-face brick and mortar education system that has defined formal education for the last 200 years. A critical assumption is that the allied forces of technology, economic efficiency, software capabilities, politics, and a demand for high-quality learning will reshape learning on a global scale.

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## Introduction

Henrich (2020) describes how the *H. sapiens* brain, through natural selection, has “learned the ideas, beliefs, values, motivations, and practices” that were needed to survive and thrive “in whatever ecological or social environments we end up in” (p. 62). This brain adaptation occurred over two million years of *H. sapiens* evolutionary change and, cumulatively, created a “body of complex cultural knowledge to acquire the skills, practices, and preferences that were crucial for finding food, making tools, and navigating the social world” (p. 67). Education is poised – as a *networked system* – to advance learning as an extension of *H. sapiens*’ cumulative knowledge about how to learn in a connected world.

Consider the impact of an educational system – formal and informal – that is customized and personalized for *all* learners. This educational system is, then, an adaptation to the way in which we will learn in the future and how education – as a global institution – will accommodate this adaptation.

The twentieth century was defined by the rise of bureaucratically efficient schooling across the world. Factory schooling became a model of efficiency for discharging graduates with limited employment skills and marginal citizenship competence all over the world. America became the wealthiest nation on earth by providing exactly the kind of worker needed for the labor market during the twentieth century. The United States not only moved forward, it meshed the mass bureaucratic education system with the work of an industrial society. American education was the foundation for the emergence of the United States as a world power in the twentieth century. Virtually every nation in the world followed the same bureaucratic pattern in developing national systems of mass industrially designed education.

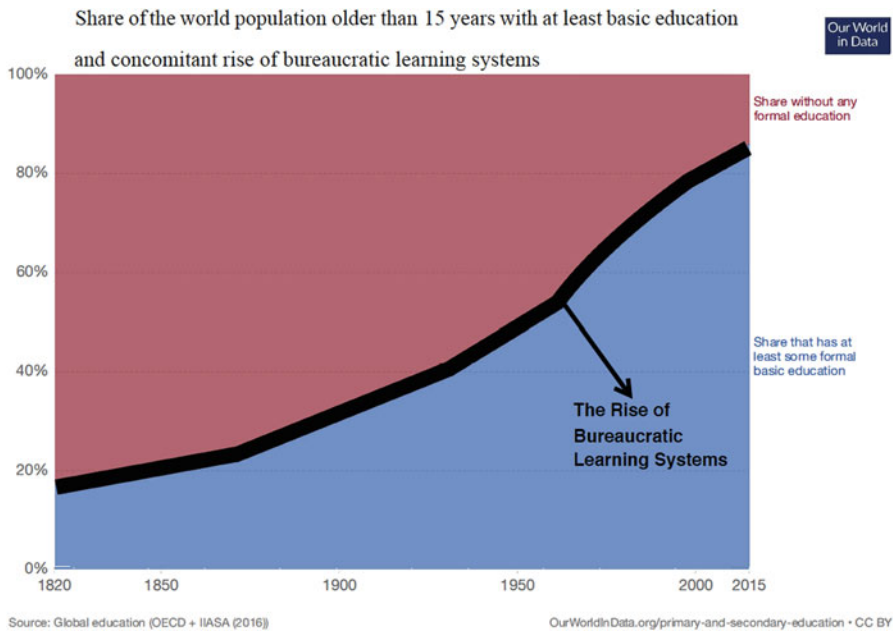
A model of institutionalized learning sorted, selected, tracked, and finally graduated marginally skilled workers after 12 years of schooling to work in factories doing manual labor. What the school was designed to do was graduate the vast majority of students for “blue collar” jobs requiring vocational levels of training or knowledge. This was the factory model borrowed from industry and adapted to education in the twentieth century. Dispense the knowledge to children during 12 years of mandatory education through an efficient system of industrially designed schools. It was a straightforward system that worked for some.

## Current Bureaucratic Education Cannot Deliver the Results We Need

Bureaucracy in education was a socially constructed reality that became institutionalized around the world through its structures, symbols, artifacts, and practices. Yet, industrial education – in its current form – has not been able to deliver on the promise:

Bureaucracy inhibits reform. Its potent informal organizations mobilize resistance and frequently sabotage innovations. Bureaucrats counter reformist arguments by changing their own goals, replacing earlier extravagant claims with much more limited objectives, and asserting that critics misunderstand their purposes. The changes, or goal displacements, are sincerely believed in by the bureaucrats; they provide a sense of success and a buffer against tremors of self-doubt. (Katz, 1977, p. 57)

It is instructive to note that formal education (the curriculum), required by government and supported by government, has also been limited by expectations and outcomes. Yet, Fig. 1 is illustrative of the rising expectations of countries and parents for educating children. Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2013) outlined the worldwide explosion of students – older than 15 years with at least a basic education – attending school from 1820 to the present. The bureaucratization of education across the world from 1820 to the present was a significant achievement for civilization.



**Fig. 1** Share of the world population older than 15 years with at least basic education and concomitant rise of bureaucratic learning system

The rise of bureaucratic governmental schooling traces, as well, the mass education of children (Fig. 1).

On the face of it, nation states have only been marginally successful as sources of governmentally legislated education. The UNESCO report GEM indicates that at the present time, “Globally, 88% of the children complete primary school, 72% of adolescents complete lower secondary and 53% of youth complete upper secondary school” (GEM, 2020).

The ability to learn has been, and is, how we have advanced the understanding of ourselves and, collectively, for how we cooperate as a species on planet earth. We do not know why *H. sapiens* gained a special brain adaptation to learn, but it is certainly a remarkable variation that allowed for thinking beyond the moment and advanced an ability to bend the natural world to an imagined, and then, an existing, reality that reinforced the *H. sapiens* capacity to shape the twenty-first century. “(T)he brain’s structure and function are not fixed. They change in response to use. It is possible to shape the brain—your brain, my brain, anybody’s brain—in ways that we desire through conscious deliberate training” (Ericson & Pool, 2017, pp. 35–36). Harari (2015) more explicitly writes of the importance of the *H. sapiens*’ ability in separating what could be imagined in the future from what existed in the past:

(E)ver since the Cognitive Revolution, Sapiens have been able to change their behavior quickly, transmitting new behaviors to future generations without any need of genetic or environmental change. (p. 33)

This species-unique *H. sapiens* brain neuroplasticity gave man/woman the adaptability to *learn*. It was an ability that, in an evolutionary sense, was astoundingly successful. For the 60,000 years of hunter-gatherer existence, until the agricultural revolution, *H. sapiens* adapted to the planet by using its accumulated knowledge and skills to gain an advantage over the natural world. Only in the last 12,000 years of the agricultural revolution has the brain’s adaptation for learning been amplified and accelerated to further *H. sapiens*’ ability to master and manipulate the natural world . . . and now, the man-made world of technology.

Table 1 is illustrative of how *H. sapiens* transformed learning into formalized and organized knowledge that was captured over a short span of time to advance civilization.

In the twentieth century, education attained prominence as a socializing, civilizing, and humanizing extension of government. What was a national interest of modest proportions in the twentieth century, has become a global imperative that determines national and international success in an increasingly interconnected world.

In the last 150 years, learning became bureaucratic, institutionalized, and nationalized for educating as many children as possible for the lowest cost per student. The *anomaly in learning is the last 150 years*. Learning that was always personalized and individualized during the last 60,000 years of human evolution was turned into bureaucratic, didactic, and decontextualized in the last 150 years as an extension of the industrial revolution.



**Table 1** Milestones in the evolution of learning

60,000 BCE	<i>H. sapiens</i> began using language to communicate
17,000 BCE	Lascaux cave paintings
11,000 BCE	First evidence of social cooperation of <i>H. sapiens</i> at Gobekli Tepe in present day Turkey.
4,000 BCE	Hinduism founded as first formal religion
2,500 BCE	Evidence of archeoastronomy at Stonehenge
2,400 BCE	First evidence of writing in Egypt
470 BCE	The writing, teaching, and philosophy of Socrates
800 CE	The English Chronicles
1300 CE	The beginning of the Renaissance in Europe
1440 CE	Johannes Gutenberg printed the bible in Latin
1543 CE	Nicolaus Copernicus and the beginning of the Scientific Revolution (publication of <i>On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres</i> )
1820 CE	Beginning of the Industrial Revolution
1947 CE	Invention of the transistor at Bell Labs
1991 CE	The World Wide Web became a functional network for the dissemination, communication, and retrieval of information.

It is only in the last 15 years, the age of technology has ushered in an alternative opportunity for a return to the individualized and personalized learning that worked so well for *H. sapiens* before mass bureaucratic education. Over the next 50 years, learning – across the world – will return to its evolutionary roots of individualized and personalized to better utilize the brain’s ability to adapt to its environment.

Although the curve has been trending in the direction of a technology infused global learning system, there is not a recognition within education – or across nations – that the elements for a different educational system are coalescing around the internet. The sheer magnitude of formal learning delivered over the internet in 2021 further reinforces the expansion and diffusion of an entire *learning system that is transnational*.

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## A Global Twenty-First Century Educational System Adaptation

In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey (1922) questioned whether it would be possible to develop an educational system by a nation state to meet “the full social ends of the educative process [and] not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted. .. irrespective of national political boundaries” (p. 102). Cremin (1965) elaborated and claimed, “How we set in motion the dialogue essential to the development of an international culture remains to be seen” (p. 73). Neither Dewey nor Cremin could see far enough into the future to conceive of an independent learner in a transnational learning system.

As Dewey (1922) stated, to “form the citizen, not the ‘man’ became the aim of education” (p. 109). He further described the rise of nations with a vested interest in

education as systems with the “means of recovering and maintaining their political integrity and power” which, then, brought about a diminution of the individual. He further asks, “Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?” (Dewey, 1922, p. 113).

Cremin (1961) also was wary of the national purpose of education and invested his faith in learning at the individual level. “I have become increasingly aware of the mediating power of individual agency as people have participated in educational institutions designed for them by others” (p. 710). He believed the individual should prevail against the prescribed social, economic, moral, and mainstream requirements of the state. The concern of Cremin and Dewey was that the government had created, as Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) claimed, a “cage of norms” in framing the broad goals of society and the “individualistic theory receded into the background” (p. 109).

Dewey and Cremin, conjecturing that schooling in the United States (or any country), as a brick and mortar on-the-ground and real-time learning system, were constricted by an inability to see into a twenty-first century system of education. As well, they recognized the limitations of a system constrained by politics, social conditions, educational practice, cultural beliefs, and the financial limitations shaping the formative education of children. Yet, it is that foundation upon which we are building the future of twenty-first century education. It was in the twentieth century that governments not only recognized, but began acting upon, formal education – in the arc of man’s ability to learn – as a foundational system for advancing economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability.

Countries around the world were on the cusp of building an educational system that would attain higher levels of success for students, information seekers, knowledge purveyors, and institutions of learning. Large K-12 school systems and universities emerged to become the pillars of a kindergarten-through-university system of formal education around the world. Yet, today that system is too limiting.

The next advancement of the nation/state learning system is a high-quality learner-centered system that succeeds through multilevel cooperation on a global scale. This is a learning system that will *enhance learning for all children worldwide*.

A learning system that operates within a framework of freedom of expression, gritty individualism, hard work, and persistence reflects the personal learning *H. sapiens* have refined over the last 70,000 years. The next iteration of formal learning will be an evolutionary extension of an already advanced capability that was acquired by *H. sapiens* as an adaptation to the natural world. This advancement, however, will complement man’s ability to learn. The education journey *H. sapiens* is on, at this moment, is incorporating an adaptation that will complement the brain’s ability to learn. The twenty-first century educational delivery system is expanding not only across local and state boundaries, but across national boundaries and becoming a platform for those seeking an individualized and personalized learning in a transnational education system.

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## A Transnational Learning System

The transnational educational system is an evolving virtual organization with levels and layers for individualized and personalized learning delivered at the local level but scaled globally through a deployment of technology and software. Dewey made clear the belief that learning should be a sustained personal lifelong growth and developmental journey. He wrote that nothing should be subordinate to one's learning and "that education should not cease when one leaves school. .. that the purpose of school education is to insure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that insure growth" (p. 56). Cremin (1965) further explained a person's growth as a learner:

When he [Dewey] argues that education is a continuous process of growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity for growth, he is merely saying that the aim of education is to make, not citizens or workers or soldiers or even scientists, but human beings who will live life to the fullest, who will never stop expanding their horizons, reformulating their purposes, and modifying their actions in light of these purposes. (p. 206)

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## The Individual Marketplace in a Transnational Educational System

The internet has become a destination for formal and informal knowledge acquisition during the third decade of the twenty-first century by appealing to the *individual*. Transnational learning marks a shift not only in the way individuals learn, but in how each individual is compelled to attend school as a social, governmental, economic, civic requirement, and expectation as a person and as a citizen. In a transnational educational system, the design of the system is focused on the individual and not the direct needs of the nation or state. The marketplace of learning is controlled by the parent at a young age and by the student as he/she ages.

During the twentieth century, the overwhelming impact of education as a source of social cohesion was too great to ignore. More recently, a full understanding of knowledge as a governmental, economic, moral, and global foundation for advanced civilization emerged as political wisdom transformed into political policy that turned into educational legislation. Political and societal wisdom became mainstream educational policy to support schooling because the effect on a nation's economy could not be ignored. Politicians came to realize that industrial education was a relatively inexpensive investment in developing a robust and stable economy:

In sum, both the quality of the institutional environment and the quality of education seem important for economic development. Furthermore, the effect of educational quality on growth seems significantly larger in countries with a productive institutional framework, so that good institutional quality and good educational quality effect of education depends on other complementary growth-enhancing policies and institutions. However, cognitive skills have a significant positive growth effect even in countries with a poor institutional environment. (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2010, p. 250)

The trappings of modern society (the rise of cities, global trade, mass production, instant communication) increasingly depended upon a knowledge economy. The industrial revolution of the mid-nineteenth century became a complete global knowledge revolution that required adaptability, thinking, and an ability to process information to think into the future and make products that corporations could sell across the world. National education systems powered that growth. There are any number of national examples: The United States, China, Japan, Great Britain, India, and any of the emerging nations of the world in 2021 reinforce the importance of national economies benefiting from, operating within, and powering the global society.

Although Dewey and Cremin understood the need for a system of learning that fulfilled the aspirations of each individual student, neither could conceive of a system that offered learning beyond what was possible, for most children, within the neighborhood school or the regional university as a brick and mortar face-to-face system. However, the virtual K-12 school and university were rapidly expanding and becoming stand-alone extensions of the place-bound school and university during the last decade of the twentieth century.

Brick and mortar schooling have been evolving toward a virtual/brick and mortar organization. Education across the globe is at a tipping point where change, fueled by growth within the marketplace of learning, is continually developing structures that support virtual organization in a steady march toward mainstream delivery. “Only when educators have to earn their income in the marketplace by competing to serve consumers who are free to choose where to take their business (and money) will schools, teachers, and other vendors have the incentive to adopt productive technology” (Perelman, 1992, p. 186). Whether one is a proponent or skeptic, the market driven world of learning is becoming mainstream, not only across America, but across the globe.

The challenge for education – in all its emerging hybrid and digital forms – is to meet the needs of a diverse array of individual learners seeking knowledge through a system of continuous learning, anytime, anywhere, and any way. Children, adolescents, teens, tertiary students in higher education, working professionals, blue collar workers, people of color, people of many cultures, genders, races, ethnicities, and nationalities will approach education as lifelong-learners in search of knowledge from a system that satisfies a multitude of needs for the individual because of professional, economic, civic, personal, national, and social reasons.

The issue of educational change in the twenty-first century is not just how to improve education, but how to change education to wring higher quality learning out of the system that exists . . . and is emerging as a transnational system for learning. The forces of social change such as urbanization, economic growth, immigration, social unrest, political polarization, regional conflict, and global pandemics have drawn the world closer together. An educational system that makes high-quality learning complementary to economic and social progress draws upon Lynton’s (1991) belief that education can transform society. According to Lynton (1991),

Modern society must place great emphasis not only on the ongoing creation of knowledge through basic research, but also on the complex task of ensuring the utilization of that knowledge in a highly interactive mode. That task has three overlapping dimensions:

- Initial education which prepares individuals to utilize what they learn in their future occupation, as citizens, and as private individuals;
- Continuing education in all of its forms, especially that which is intended to maintain the knowledge of individuals in the face of rapid change;
- Modern modes of extension through technical assistance, technology transfer, policy analysis, etc. (p. 8)

Lynton's objective was to turn knowledge into a resource, as well as a lever, for civic and economic advancement by making education a strategic endeavor for economic, social, governmental, and personal gain. The educational excellence that society demands, at the present, is focused on test scores and measurable outcomes when, in fact, it is utilization of knowledge for the greater good that should drive educational reform. Education, from Lynton's (1983, 1990) perspective, would see student learning as the result of well-designed educational system that is integral to a healthy and vibrant society. Education is the one indomitable resource upon which society derives benefit.

It is the end of an era and the beginning of another. It is not a paradigm shift but an evolution of the brain's ability to maximize learning. The transnational learning system erases the virtual wall between face-to-face schooling and remote learning. The pace and acceleration of change will require adaptation by the human brain to stay informed and engaged in a global knowledge society. The internet educational system, among its many incarnations, is a formal and informal system for learning. Yet, the most profound change will be not in the way learning is delivered, but in how it is perceived and received by the user as an *immersive learning platform*.

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## The Development of an Independent Learner

The decentralization of education is an historical precedent that has contemporary implications for learning. The decentralization of learning is not just an American version of education. The locus of learning at the individual level represents the innate *sovereignty of the individual* to learn if given the right set of educational tools and support within the educational system.

American education has baked in "grass roots" involvement reinforced by parents and codified by law that ensures learning begins at home. Citizen responsibility for learning became an embedded feature woven within the fabric of America's approach to decentralized education of, by, and for the people. As Cubberley (1929) wrote:

It is primarily the function of the State to set standards, rather than to give directions; to fix by law the general minimum educational requirements that every school system should meet, leaving minor details to school boards and executive officers to determine by local regulations; to open the way by authorization and stimulation to communities to exceed the minimum requirements of the State, and to undertake new and desirable forms of educational effort; to avoid rigidity in requirements, so as to leave opportunities for progressive communities to do differently; and to desire, above all things, results, rather than to force the following of any prescribed method or plan of procedure. (pp. 86–87)

What the Massachusetts legislators did to operationalize a need for reading the Bible by creating local control of education is, today, a system of learning that reinforces, and fuels, an emerging *decentralized internet educational system*. An organizing feature of colonial education to legislate “local control” is an idea that is functionally relevant in 2021 and serves as an organizing characteristic of the transnational learning system. The structural responsibility for controlling one’s education closer to the student served as foundational template and serves, as well, for organizing individualized and personalized learning in the twenty-first century.

Without knowing they were doing so, a structure for learning in the twenty-first century was made “the law of the land” by the Massachusetts colonial legislature in 1642 and 1647. The Old Deluder Satan Acts of 1642 and 1647 (Eberling, 1999) were significant because of the precedent these laws set in establishing parents and the local citizens of a community as the locus of learning for the organization and control of education. The laws that were enacted not only determined the organization of American education as a decentralized system but also established the *primacy of the student as a learner within that system*. By so doing, it set up and framed learning as a learner-centered responsibility in the twenty-first century.

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## A Transnational Learning Archetype

As remote instruction became more accepted as high-quality learning during the first and second decades of the twenty-first century, a gradual transformation of teaching and learning began. In 2021, the teacher and learner were being drawn into, and at the same time, adapting to an electronic system of worldwide education. Although technology-infused education has been accelerating, the rate of adoption has slowed as technology met the real world of analog infrastructure and analog instructional pedagogy. The original barrier to e-learning was the belief that face-to-face instruction was the ideal form of knowledge transmission and there could be no other alternative that rivaled it in quality.

In fact, there will continue to be solid reasons for continued face-to-face instruction between teachers and children in a brick and mortar school. The skills required for maintaining social contact in a high touch world are as important to learning as the content. However, as much as in-person learning met a need for socializing children *and* transmitting knowledge, conditions for formal education and learning changed in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Ubiquitous (u-learning) opened the door to a form of learning that did not exist before the age of technology.

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## Ubiquitous Learning in a Transnational Educational System

E-learning was the very early adoption of internet-based learning. Serious e-learning did not become an accepted form of delivery until the late 1990s and early 2000s. M-learning (mobile) can be traced to the introduction and adoption of laptop computers, tablets, and cell phones. Mobile meant learning was no longer anchored

to a desk or connected to the cables, ports, and electrical outlets that defined computing in the hard-wired era. Mobile freed the user to connect anytime and anywhere as long as there was Wi-Fi or cellular connectivity. It is, however, u-learning that opens the door for anytime, anywhere, and any way learning. Ubiquitous learning helps to understand the transcendent approach of a transnational educational system that challenges the superiority of time and place-bound learning.

In 20 years, internet learning has gone through its own evolution from e-learning to u-learning. It is an evolution of pedagogy, technology, and learning aggregated to show and explain how educational delivery, teaching pedagogy, and student learning were adapting to an emerging virtual educational system. Peng, Chou, and Chang (2008) stated, “Computing devices and applications are now used beyond the desktop, in diverse environments, and this trend toward ubiquitous computing is evolving” (p. 54). It is evolving to such a degree that it is difficult to keep up with the amalgamated, interconnected, and intertwined parts of the emerging virtual learning system. It is in the virtual delivery of teaching and the acquisition of information – transformed into learning – that upends what instruction means in context to a technology and software environment of ubiquitous learning.

Walkington and Bernacki (2020) identified the more personalized learning environment as coalescing around the characteristics of meaningful, relevant, interest-driven, and self-initiated (p. 238). Yet, personalized learning does not encompass, or account for, the expanding possibilities of ubiquitous learning. Ubiquitous is an evolving, yet amorphous, “anytime and anywhere” learning that accelerates the technology, software, and learner/system nexus. Kinshuk (2008) wrote that u-learning supported “learners through embedded and invisible computers in everyday life. Such environments allow students to learn at any time and any place, encouraging them to more experiential learning such as learning by doing, interacting and sharing, and facilitates on-demand learning, hands-on or minds-on learning and authentic learning” (p. 333). Hwang, Tsai, and Yang (2008) described ubiquitous as a context-aware feature of a computing environment that allowed the learning system to better understand the learner’s behavior by using technology to monitor and adjust to the learner as he/she is learning.

To develop context-aware and seamlessly integrated Internet environments, a variety of new techniques and products concerning ubiquitous computing have been developed in recent years, such as sensors and actuators, RFID tags and cards, wireless communication, mobile phones, PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) and wearable computers. (p. 82)

The student who emerged from the socially constructed structures, philosophies, beliefs, economic conditions, and daily challenges of living in an interconnected world is poised in the twenty-first century to launch a new period of pedagogical practice and acquisition of knowledge through a much more dynamic approach to learning. As educators look at designing education for the future, mass education for many students is being displaced by an emerging *archetypal template for individualized and personalized learning for all students*. Significantly, this means learning for each student is a return to how *H. sapiens* has learned across its species-specific



evolution as thinking individuals. It is a return to personalized learning as we have practiced it for thousands of years. It is immersive learning within an updated virtual learning system shaped by bureaucracy but customized to the learner.

Ubiquitous learning adapts to the learner. Zurainee, Haryani, and Jasber (2018) outline the way in which this more robust form of learning is emerging. Ubiquitous learning is “(l)earning that happens in anytime and anywhere in the right way with the right content using ubiquitous computing technology” and incorporates the following qualities:

1. Accessibility: Learners can access the system in various ways.
2. Adaptability: Learners learn at the right way with a right content in a right place.
3. Context Awareness: By accessing the database, the system can sense the learner location, personal and situation using ubiquitous computing technology.
4. Immediacy: Learners can get the information immediately when they want it.
5. Interactivity: Learners can interact with educators in virtual and physical environment settings.
6. Permanency: Learners can never lose their work unless it is being deleted. (Zurainee, 2018, p. 32).

Software and hardware are being adapted for learning much as *H. sapiens* altered the world by learning to use fire, knives, books, and automobiles as tools for advancing civilization. Ubiquitous learning is dynamic in that it senses one’s context and learning motivation and adjusts to the learner to support learning. Unlike learning in the twentieth century, twenty-first century students will look upon the way they learn as a first step in developing a responsibility-based form of learning. The system will adapt to the learner in ways the present system of bureaucratic learning cannot.

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## **Adaptation and Innovation: Slow Adoption**

In *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (2003) elaborated upon the anthropological approach of participant observation as a basis for understanding how *H. sapiens* have adapted to modern innovation. In the context of learning since the advent of the information age, it is clear technology and the internet are innovations that have shaped, and will continue to shape, how we learn. It is evident a structural change to education and learning are underway in a global interconnected system. Events like the pandemic of 2020–2021 accelerated these changes.

According to the UNICEF study *COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?* (2020), there was an urgency for shifting resources to a new structure for education. The once-in-a-generation pandemic was one of those transitional moments in history because of the abrupt changes it brought to education across the world.



- More than 90% of countries implemented some form of remote learning policy.
- At the global and regional levels, most students (about 70%) had assets at home that would allow them to learn remotely via digital or broadcast classes.

In its call to action, the report indicated that nations around the world “sought to reach more than 1 billion students globally” (p. 14). It is notable that reports on learning prior to 2020 often qualified and questioned the importance, quality, and need for building the structural support system required for remote learning. In this, and other reports, that discussion has become moot. The diffusion of educational innovation has become a priority on a global scale.

Policies must focus on modernizing both the infrastructure and delivery methods used by education systems and producing accessible, safe and secure remote learning resources based on the national curriculum. (UNICEF, 2020, p. 14)

Learning is the one quality of the human brain that makes us who we are. “(N)atural selection has shaped our primate brains to allow us to most effectively learn the ideas, beliefs, values, motivations, and practices that we’ll need to survive and thrive in whatever ecological or social environments we end up in” (Henrich, 2020, p. 62). It is in exploring these elements, qualities, and characteristics through the educational lens that we gain insight into the literate mind, or more importantly, the qualities to motivate the adaptive mind. Learning is being changed in the twenty-first century by the expansion of knowledge that reshapes how we govern, communicate, socialize, participate, live, and learn.

Henrich (2020) explains that culture “can and does alter our brains, hormones, and anatomy, along with our perceptions, motivations, personalities, emotions, and many other aspects of our minds” (p. 5). As he elaborates, there are psychological adjustments that the brain makes as the individual is raised within a culture. The adjustment of learners at all levels to a personalized learning system compels nations around the world to adapt their outdated bureaucratic brick and mortar educational system. The quest for more information, improved learning, and better access to knowledge has only accelerated in the last 5 years and will continue to accelerate. Learning is personal and derivative of an innate desire to support and sustain the *H. sapiens* need to learn.

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## **A Transnational Marketplace or Government-Structured Educational System**

The transnational educational system is in its infancy and will be shaped by the assimilation of the marketplace for education in a remote environment. Will this market be controlled by schools? By corporations? By governments? By some neutral international body? As the hegemony of a transnational education system emerges, do the countries of the world relinquish governmental control to educational, for profit, and independent organizations located beyond their national boundaries and beyond

their political control? Does the right of the individual allow citizens from any nation the freedom to participate in formal and informal schooling beyond, within, or in concert with national educational goals? The issue of national hegemony and the student's right to choose a customized education in the global educational marketplace will soon become an economic, political, educational, and personal question.

Milton Friedman and Friedman (1990) was a free-market economist who believed education would benefit from a system that sought the "freedom of individuals to pursue their own objectives with extensive cooperation and collaboration needed in the economic field" to produce their own basic needs (p. 21). The key argument of Friedman was first explained by Adam Smith (2003), in the *Wealth of Nations*, as a symbiotic relationship between the individual in pursuit of economic and personal freedom and a nation's goals to provide a stable and prosperous society. The key insight in the pursuit of a person's goals, according to Friedman, was that society and the individual had to have a voluntary agreement to share and mutually benefit from their relationship or a fair exchange of goods and services "will not take place" (p. 45). In the context of transnational learning, pursuing one's personal goals invokes a fundamental change in who and where this "negotiation" between the individual and the system takes place. It is the challenge that countries face in dealing with global corporations such as Facebook, Amazon, Google, and Apple that rival the power and wealth of entire nations.

Technology and the internet have generated economic and multimedia behemoths that rival nations as influencers of wealth, power, and social convention. Consider that Apple computer has a market capitalization that equals or exceeds the gross domestic product (GDP) of large nations. There are 14 countries that have GDPs that surpass the "worth" of Apple which places it below Australia and Spain and just ahead of Mexico, Indonesia, and The Netherlands (Silver, 2020). Will the transnational reach of knowledge become a national form of political and economic influence that opens or closes doors?

Can a transnational educational system be developed that guarantees all children anywhere in the world the right to an education? Is Horace Mann's vision for Massachusetts in the 1830s a vision for a transnational learning system in the 2030s? Can the common school of Massachusetts be an open school for all children across the world? The United States educational system is linked to an emerging networked system of decentralized schooling. Each nation's goal to educate its children challenges the current bureaucratic time and place-bound system to be something it was not designed to do. In the evolutionary history of *H. sapiens*, forces are in play that will reshape learning as we know it through transnational ubiquitous learning.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The twenty-first century educational system is in the throes of historical change. The hegemony of the capitalist economic model is being woven into education as – and not just an American or Western imperative – an economic priority for all countries across the globe. Just as *All children can learn*, it is becoming clear in the twenty-first century that the more important international mantra should be: *All countries must learn to learn*.

Anderson (2006) claimed that the “convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (p. 327). Global learning is in its infancy as an imagined community. It will remain embryonic for the foreseeable future, or until the educational marketplace is supported by the governance and policy making functions of nations seeking to reimagine education as a transnational learning system. In the twenty-first century, nation states will be compelled to explore convergence around digital technology and digital capitalism that make learning accessible to a global community. This sets the stage for a global education system that transcends the hegemony of the nation state. It also sets the stage for a more individualized and personalized form of learning.

Transnational learning is an internet-based educational system that conveys formal and informal individualized and personalized learning delivered anytime and anywhere. Ubiquitous learning is an emerging technology and software enhanced approach to information and knowledge acquisition that will adapt to, complement, and engage the learner that accomplishes (1) a higher degree of meaningful learning for the individual and (2) stability as a contributing member of a national and international global society.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, we know more, and understand more, about the delivery of learning as a societal function. The science of learning “has met the enemy and it is us.” In the applied day-to-day world of “boots on the ground” teaching and “meet them where they’re at” schooling, *H. sapiens* is on the frontier of artificial and machine learning. Advances in individualized and personalized learning will alter education and knowledge acquisition if education is advanced as a transnational system for *all* children and *all* nations.

The fundamental nature of learning is not changing in the abstract, it is changing at the rate of internet speed, artificial intelligence integration, technological advances, machine learning expansion, and software utility, utilization, and function. If education is, as Whitehead wrote, “the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge,” education will look very different in a few short years. The transnational learning system will be as meaningful to governments, educators, and learners (not just K-12 and postsecondary students) if ubiquitous learning can be developed as a driver of educational quality for social and economic good.

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# Integrative STEM Education and Leadership for Student Success **41**

Rachel Louise Geesa, Krista M. Stith, and Ginger M. Teague

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## Abstract

To prepare for success in a global, technologically-driven economy, PK-12 students need real-world opportunities and authentic experiences throughout their educational programs. Educational leaders – administrators, curriculum specialists/coaches, and other school and district level leaders – must create a learning environment that facilitates problem-solving and critical thinking for all students to be ready for futures in the workplace and in higher education. Elementary and secondary education curricula in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields have evolved to be taught in interdisciplinary,

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transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary forms. Although much information about developing and implementing STEM education curricula is available to teachers, educational leaders need more guidance regarding how to effectively lead, facilitate, and support integrative STEM education methods and practices for life-long learning and career exploration. This chapter presents information and methods to be shared between educational leadership and integrative STEM education leaders for use with educators, community partners, and school stakeholders to improve students' access to meaningful preparations for future work and education opportunities. While individual subjects include specific knowledge and skills, leaders must work with stakeholders in their educational organizations to develop innovative and diverse approaches to integrating STEM subjects in curricula and teaching and learning methods for student success.

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**Keywords**

Integrative STEM education · Multidisciplinary education · Educational leadership · Professional learning · Leader development · STEM disciplines · Transformative education · Career and college readiness · School leadership · Collaboration

**The field of memory**

Historically, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are regarded as separate subjects not to be combined in PK-12 courses with humanities subjects (e.g., art, reading, and music). Because traditional educators often do not relate technical or science-related subjects with non-stem subjects, only certain groups of PK-12 students are availed opportunities in STEM-related careers and higher education programs. The one-room schoolhouse ideology (e.g., one teacher with many students and teacher-centric instruction) is expanded to serve an exponentially growing student population. STEM disciplines are encased within content silos, and students are responsible for transferring content, skills, and attitudes among the disciplines to make sense of the scientific and technological world. Systemic inequity in school programming segments the student population into groups who are prepared to succeed in institutions of higher education from students who are not prepared. Those students then must find alternative means for providing for themselves and their families. Teaching and instruction, as related to the opportunities for student success, are often underestimated and underappreciated within communities.

**The field of presence**

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects can be integrated in PK-12 courses. Integrative humanities and science curricula can lead to metacognitive experiences. Leaders can facilitate integrative STEM experiences to prepare all students for personal and professional decision-making. Content silos are deconstructed. Integrative STEM supports the process of collaboration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as foundational disciplines of

interdisciplinary content toward curricular study. This reform movement seeks to depart from the “silo” mindsets of separate fields and maintain a common content standard in the PK-12 educational system. Several elements of each disciplines are usable to assist integration.

### **The field of concomitance**

Educational leadership in integrative STEM should, by definition, be collaborative. STEM leaders should build connections with professionals in other subjects, and refer to social constructs to provide equitable integrative STEM opportunities for all students. Educational systems are innovated to prepare students for work and to be well-informed in decisions affecting self, family, and the community. In a scientifically and technologically driven society, student knowledge and skills must be transferrable to real-world applications. A pragmatic approach is reflected in the developing cultural patterns of schools and districts to develop the “modern” child. A modern classroom is idealized as a platform that positions students to engage in innovation that preceding platforms could not. This blossoming of opportunity can be looked as a modern “Age of Enlightenment.” Integrative STEM advocates challenge traditional dogma. Educational leaders, stakeholders, teachers, and students are encouraged to take risks as problem-solvers do in the real-world.

### **Discontinuities and ruptures**

Leadership in integrative STEM education is collaborative in nature, and cannot solely be a top-down approach. In PK-12 school systems, the teachers, students, families, and community members have voices that are valued and their messages are integrated into program planning and implementation. Changes to the organizational system are the responsibility of all, and all stakeholders are accountable for students’ success. As leadership is not a top-down approach at the school level, the top-down approach is also disrupted at the classroom level. The educational experiences of teachers 10, 15, 30, or 50 years ago should not be the same experiences of students today. Teachers must diverge from how they were taught as ethnocentric values inhibit the open-mindedness needed for integrative STEM. Unless collectively strategized by all voices, organizational culture may be disrupted as integrative STEM educational practices shift learning from teacher-centric to student-centric classes and educational options support quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics experiences for all students.

### **Critical assumptions**

Leaders of integrative STEM schools and programs must be STEM-literate to lead and guide others in integrating STEM curricula and facilitating STEM learning. Though educational leaders do not take the role of formal STEM instructors in a majority of programs, they must be capable of clear communication to disseminate the mission and vision for integrative STEM programming and be well-informed to evaluate outcomes. Students will continue to live in a scientific and technological world that requires them to be STEM-capable citizens. Adults will continue to challenge youth to solve pervasive global problems, such as the planet remediation,

freedom from harmful human conditions, curing of diseases, public health crises, and transcendence of human rights and justice. Global connections of STEM experts will continue to fabricate innovation yet widen the competency gap in stem fields of average citizens unless robust STEM curricula that is motivating and engaging to all students are introduced into PK-12 curricula. Programs that are pioneering integrative STEM will continue to expand career, education, and training opportunities for youth to prepare them for global citizenry.

Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated. (Dewey, 1910, p. 32)

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## Introduction

In 1986, the National Science Board in the United States recognized “the deterioration of collegiate science, mathematics, and engineering education is a grave long-term threat to the Nation’s scientific and technical capacity, its industrial and economic competitiveness, and the strength of its national defense” (National Science Board, 1986, p. 1). This report is often credited as a catalyst for national policy changes to reform science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at the PK-12 and undergraduate levels, thus increasing the number of students to pursue careers and higher education in STEM fields, broadening participation of underserved groups of students, and building a STEM-capable citizenry throughout the United States.

In *Charting a Course for Success: America’s Strategy for STEM Education*, the Committee on STEM Education of the National Science and Technology Council (2018) in the United States noted:

Now more than ever the innovation capacity of the United States – and its prosperity and security – depends on an effective and inclusive STEM education ecosystem. Individual success in the twenty-first century economy is also increasingly dependent on STEM literacy; simply to function as an informed consumer and citizen in a world of increasingly sophisticated technology requires the ability to use digital devices and STEM skills such as evidence-based reasoning. (p. v)

Becoming STEM-capable is now a critical skill in a world where fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics continue to contribute significantly to the local, national, and global economic landscape, and employment opportunities in STEM fields are bountiful in this everchanging and technologically-focused society.

Educators, leaders, and policymakers are shifting paradigms to support instructional strategies that ensure PK-12 students are college and career ready throughout the world. Integrative STEM education is one approach to this multi-tiered issue, as the pedagogical method addresses vocational and higher education preparedness for students to experience success in a STEM-driven world. Integrative STEM education differs from STEM education, which will further be deconstructed in this chapter. While other definitions of integrative STEM exist, the authors define



integrative STEM education for PK-12 students as the combination of at least two STEM areas (i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) with other content areas (e.g., language arts, social studies, and visual arts) in teaching and learning experiences.

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## Reverse Engineering Integrative STEM Education

Often utilized in the engineering fields, reverse engineering is the deconstruction of the larger components of a structure or system to better understand how it works. With reverse engineering, one can gain new knowledge of each component, better understand the role of each component within the larger structure or system, and consider innovations that may not have been initially visible when looking at the structure as a whole. In this chapter, integrative STEM education programming will be reverse engineered into domains. The innerworkings of this convention will be separated, analyzed, and critically considered as contributing or inhibiting factors toward learner-driven education. This chapter will first provide a contextualization of integrative STEM education and then address the domains of educational leadership for integrative STEM education.

Integrative STEM education is not a new manifestation of pedagogy, skills, or mindsets; the wheel is hardly reinvented, but refurbished to fit a more desirable look and performance for current educators and learners. Integrative STEM is an ethos and continuous pursuit of best practices for collaborative learning to prepare students to work and make informed choices in a technologically and scientifically-driven society. “Integrative science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (I-STEM) education provides direction for teaching, leading, and learning practices related to students’ abilities to identify, think critically about, and propose solutions to real-world problems” (Rose, Geesa, & Stith, 2019, p. 42). The following are characteristics of integrative STEM student experiences:

- Students are no longer passive recipients of content. Integrative STEM students are active scientists, technologists, engineers, artists, and mathematicians.
- Students no longer move from class to class or lesson to lesson to engage in content within one discipline. Integrative STEM students move fluidly through multiple disciplines, similar to cars changing lanes on a highway.
- Students no longer solely sit at a desk and take notes. Integrative STEM students use tools and instruments, read and analyze data, make scientific and mathematical inquiries, and design and innovate solutions.
- Students no longer work alone. Integrative STEM students work collaboratively among themselves, their school community, and their community-at-large.

These characteristics emphasize a shift to more inclusive and engaging learning environments to prepare learners to be productive contributors in a future where STEM literacy is needed to reach individuals’ self-actualization.

## Tracing Philosophical Contexts

Although the term and concept of “integrative STEM” is recent, philosophies of the need for real-world and authentic teaching and learning experiences were present in earlier periods of history. John Dewey (1859–1952) was an educational reformer, philosopher, and psychologist in the United States. Influences on integrative STEM education’s inception into modern educational systems can be seen in Dewey’s progressive educational philosophies steeped in pragmatism – lessons focused on real-world applications and learning through experiences (Glancy & Moore, 2013; Johnston, 2013; Sharma, Devi, & Kumari, 2018).

Dewey, in turn, was influenced by William James (1842–1910) who was a trained medical doctor but more well-known as a psychologist and philosopher (Seel, 2012). James, known as the “Father of American Psychology,” taught courses in psychology and established the first psychology laboratory in the United States (Seel, 2012). In James’ 1899 publication, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals*, he expressed “psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application, by using its originality” (James, 1962, p. 3).

James’ perspectives were influenced by Aristotelian naturalistic thought – the existence of a dynamic relationship between nature and man (Buxton, 1984; Reck, 1984; Snarey & Coleman, 2011). Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) was a Greek scientist and philosopher who studied for 20 years in the school of Greek philosopher Plato. Aristotle’s work has guided philosophy for centuries “from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance, and even today,” as it is seen as current and relevant (Shields, 2020, para. 1). To Aristotle, “human beings live well only if they live a life of reason, which involves both excellence in intellectual pursuits and excellence of character and judgement, shaping an entire life” in his view of naturalism (Brandhorst, 2020, p. 92).

In a recent study, Pavlis and Gkiosos (2017) connected Aristotelian naturalistic thought and Dewey’s view of educational pragmatism:

On a simple biological level, humans as rational beings respond to problems arising from their relationship to nature by implementing analogous instinctual behaviors. Nevertheless, on a mental level there lies a moment of rational thought and deliberation between a problem posed by an objective situation and the response directly dictated by instinct. This results in the individual suspecting and predicting a variety of possible solutions, eventually selecting the one that feels more satisfying and correct. (p. 25)

Arguably, integrative STEM is the most recent iteration of Aristotelian naturalistic thought. However, Dewey’s work in curriculum and instruction serves as the theoretical underpinnings and guiding ethos for educational leaders to provide constructivist-centric learning environments (Corlu, Capraro, & Capraro, 2014), and those who share related paradigms realize the potential and the need to prepare students for society.

In 1916, Dewey published *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. He expressed, “It is the office of the school environment to

balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment” (Dewey, 1916/2015, p. 16). Even before the explosive growth of science and technology that is observed today, the philosophy of pragmatism was simmering within United States democratic education. Predominately, the branching of education into the fields of study observed in contemporary schools (e.g., humanities, sciences, mathematics) was initially introduced in the 1800s in the American educational system (Tobin et al., 2016). Disciplinary perspectives on STEM and humanities subjects are often addressed separately with their own individualized pedagogies, and integrative approaches to teaching and learning multiple disciplines within a lesson or unit are not common.

In addition to studying philosophy of pragmatism, the formal discipline approach to education should be reviewed when considering the historical path to integrative STEM education. In a formal discipline perspective, one should study specific subjects (e.g., world languages and mathematics) to exercise and advance the brain (American Psychological Association, 2020, para. 1). John Locke (1632–1704), an English philosopher and political theorist, was a well-known supporter of the doctrine of formal discipline. In *John Locke and Formal Discipline*, Frederick Arthur Hodge (1911) explained the doctrine emerged “in the effort to readjust classical training to the demands of the renaissance” (p. 3). It was believed that the brain’s performance could be augmented through mental exercises (Leberman, McDonald, & Doyle, 2006, p. 9). Training that strengthened a particular faculty (e.g., memory, imagination, judgment, and reasoning) was thought to benefit performance on any task that relied on that faculty.

Thorndike denounced formal discipline and indicated that school curricula should “include tasks similar to those that students will perform when they leave school. Thus the study of mathematics should not be included because it strengthens the minds but because students will actually use mathematics when they leave school” (Olsen & Hergenahn, 2016, p. 61). While the doctrine of formal discipline has been discredited, many educational systems continue to perpetuate the separation of academic disciplines (e.g., humanities, sciences, and mathematics) and, thus, lack of content integration.

## Shifting to Learning by Doing

Integrative STEM education emphasizes the importance of students having authentic experiences to create, experiment, and take risks to solve real-world problems through combining knowledge and skills from various disciplines. Charles W. Eliot (1834–1926), president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1895, was a supporter of science teaching in schools. In 1869, he expressed the need for science education to be hands-on and not solely lecture-based in schools to:

develop and discipline those powers of the mind by which science has been created and is daily nourished – the powers of observation, the inductive faculty, the sober imagination, the sincere and proportionate judgment. A student in the elements gets no such training by studying even a good textbook, though he really master it, nor yet by sitting at the feet of the most admirable lecturer. (Massachusetts Teachers' Association, 1869, p. 443)

The transition from teacher-centered lectures to a shared focus of laboratory practices was first documented in the 1880s in Harvard University's departments of chemistry (Tamir, 1976). This hand-on approach to learning led to the incorporation of laboratory practices in other disciplines for students to have opportunities to observe, test hypotheses, and stimulate learning. As other universities adopted this approach, high school programs closely followed suit. By 1892, the National Education Association mandated laboratory science in high school science curriculum (National Education Association of the United States, 1893; Vázquez, 2006). Results from a national longitudinal study of participating high school students in the United States over a century after the National Education Association mandate for laboratories indicate that laboratory instruction positively correlates with higher student performance levels (Von Secker & Lissitz, 1999). Additionally, laboratory learning minimizes gaps of achievement among students of different socioeconomic status (Von Secker & Lissitz, 1999).

While laboratory instruction is meaningful for science fields, other hands-on opportunities have been introduced in a wide range of disciplines. For example, active learning experiences may take place with manipulatives in mathematics (Gutiérrez, 2013), enzyme implementation in biotechnology (Ketpichainarong, Panijpan, & Ruenwongsa, 2010), school gardening (Waliczek & Zajicek, 1999), and adventure learning (Veletsianos & Kleanthous, 2009). When students have opportunities to explore in learning by doing activities and using materials, they are able to make more authentic connections within and across disciplines.

A catalyst for change in the direction of intentionally integrated subjects, as opposed to confinement of content to silos, was the former Soviet Union's launch of the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik, in 1957 (Powell, 2007). Cold War tensions propelled a boost in attention to combined knowledge and competencies in STEM fields in the United States. Significant national resources were made available to advancing in technology and education at this time. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) team of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and other employees became a model for educational leaders and policymakers to refer to as they strove to enhance science education in the United States (Dick, 2015). The spirit of innovation that was necessary to succeed in the international competition to advance in space travel and reach the moon continues to echo in a broad spectrum of industrial and educational entities.

Since the 1960s, inquiry learning, or learning through discovery, has become a popular approach in STEM disciplines. Haury (1993) states "inquiry involves activity and skills, but the focus is on the active search for knowledge or understanding to satisfy a curiosity" (p. 8). Rather than students completing worksheets with subject matter they cannot relate to, students have opportunities to explore, create, and ponder about relevant topics within their school and community while gaining or building upon knowledge and skills from a variety of disciplines.

## Exploring the Ambiguity of STEM Education

STEM instruction is actualized in different structures in formal and informal learning environments. Judith A. Ramaley, former director of the United States National Science Foundation's Education and Human Resources Division, has been credited with giving the abbreviation "STEM" in 2001 (Koonce, Zhou, Anderson, Hening, & Conley, 2011); the National Science Foundation conventionally utilizes the acronym as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields and the inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary interconnections of those fields.

The United States Congressional Research Service defines STEM education as "teaching and learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. It typically includes educational activities across all grade levels – from pre-school to post-doctorate – in both formal (e.g., classrooms) and informal (e.g., afterschool programs) settings" (Gonzalez & Kuenzi, 2012, p. 2). However, Sanders (2009) argues that the *STEM education*, as an educational practice, is reflective of a century's worth of practices where the disciplines are taught separately within "sovereign territories" (p. 21).

With the futility of redefining STEM education after the acronym was popularized in mainstream education, Wells and Ernst (2012/2015) shifted conversation to integrative STEM as technology and engineering design-based instruction serving to bridge science and mathematics and is "...equally applicable at the natural intersections of learning within the continuum of content areas, educational environments, and academic levels" (para 4). However, their definition is designed to guide classroom teachers and does not take into account the need for integration of other content areas, such as social studies, visual arts, and world languages.

Integrative STEM education, instead of a practice for STEM teachers, should be practice for all stakeholders within a school ecosystem. Educational leaders, as guiders of programs, are well-positioned to bring a community of practice among the stakeholders for the ecosystem to evolve. Connections between integrative STEM teaching and learning within the school, and throughout the community, are needed for leaders to foster positive integrative STEM culture.

## Shifting Leaders to Integrative STEM Education

Current PK-12 students are entering a fundamentally different post education environment compared to previous generations. To prepare educators and leaders for needed modifications in curricular models to incorporate twenty-first century skills, context for the current state of integrative STEM education reform is necessitated. As student interest in science and mathematics typically dwindles as they move from elementary to secondary levels, leaders, educators, and school stakeholders need to deploy resources to develop and sustain student interests in these disciplines (Sanders, 2009). Integrative STEM education combines knowledge and explorations of at least two STEM areas and other content areas as a more wholistic approach to

learning and teaching in an effort to retain more student interest in STEM-focused future occupations and higher education programs.

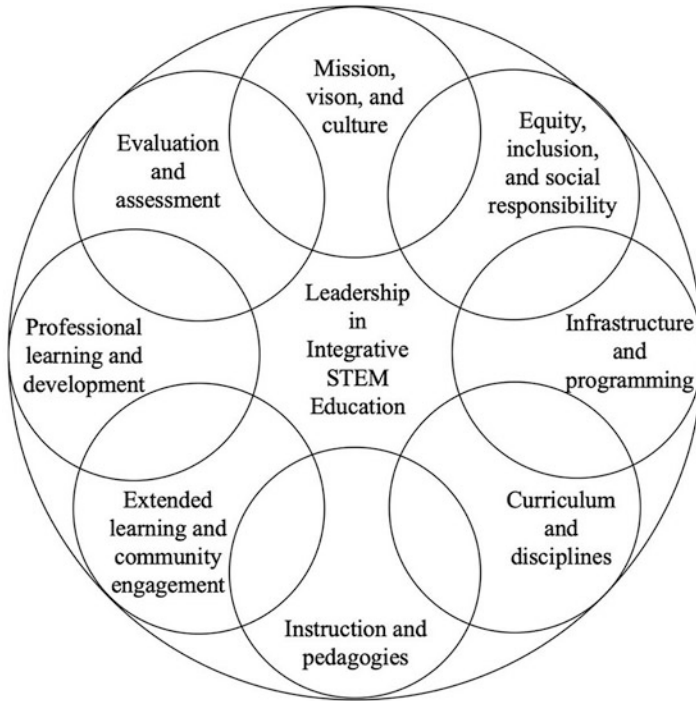
Effective educators must gain deeper understanding of how students learn and especially how they learn STEM concepts (Kelley & Knowles, 2016). Additionally, educators and leaders must understand students need a supportive and safe learning environment in order to thrive, and recognize that each student brings unique learning and developmental differences to the learning process (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013; National Research Council, 2000). As disciplines are integrated, educators are confronted with needing a greater “toolbox” of strategies that can meet the needs of these diverse learners as they build key understandings in multiple disciplines.

In contrast to a teacher-centered classroom, interdisciplinary approaches require learner-centered environments which focus and build upon students’ needs, strengths, and interests (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). When students are engaged in integrative STEM education, collaboration is essential. While group work is often included in classrooms, the traditional approach to group work falls short of the need for students to collaborate in ways that bring about both individual and collective learning accountability. It is common to hear students proclaim “I hate group work” because working in a group often means one or two students doing most of the work while others sit back or are relegated to the roles of notetakers or timekeepers. Building the necessary skills to incorporate effective collaborative learning strategies brings yet another area of learning for educators and leaders who seek to bring about a rich, integrative STEM learning environment.

## **Embedding Integrative STEM Education in Schools**

Integrative STEM education calls for leaders and educators to implement new skills and diverse approaches to curriculum and instruction while also requiring school stakeholders to develop deeper conceptual understanding within the STEM disciplines (Shernoff, Sinha, Bressler, & Ginsburg, 2017). Considering how students learn leads to culturally responsive and relevant teaching that respects the impact of students’ language, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and other identities in their learning. It is critical for educational leaders, teachers, and staff to understand students – how they learn and what they bring to the learning – to effectively integrative STEM education.

Successful family-school-community partnerships in schools provide students meaningful integrative STEM learning opportunities, generate stakeholder support, and promote connections between PK-12 education and future careers. Leaders should include school stakeholders in shared decision-making processes to ensure all students can engage in integrative STEM programs. Though interrelated, the following domains build a significant foundation for leaders, educators, and school stakeholders to cultivate a comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable integrative STEM education program for students: (1) Mission, vision, and culture;



**Fig. 1** Integrative STEM Education Leadership Domains

(2) Equity, inclusion, and social responsibility; (3) Infrastructure and programming; (4) Curriculum and disciplines; (5) Instruction and pedagogies; (6) Extended learning and community engagement; (7) Professional learning and development; and (8) Evaluation and assessment (see Fig. 1). These domains are refined from Rose et al.'s (2019) study of skills, competencies, and qualities needed in integrative STEM leadership.

**Mission, vision, and culture.** To develop contributing STEM-citizens, the school vision, mission, and culture should drive the need for integrative STEM programs and culture. Within an integrative STEM culture, teachers, students, families, community members, and other stakeholders have opportunities to explore and prepare PK-12 students for future local and global STEM careers through workforce development and higher education readiness. The needs of students and the community are the focus of promising shifts in teaching and learning in schools to support integrative STEM education.

School stakeholders, including integrative STEM leadership team members, can build trust among one another through collaborative decision-making and sharing a vision of STEM education (Geesa et al., 2020; Owen, 2018; Rose et al., 2019). Educational leaders foster an integrative STEM mission and guide a school to work towards collectively determined integrative and inclusive STEM goals. As part of the culture, leaders, teachers, and students create environments and structures to



integrate STEM and other disciplines while also building transportable skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication, ethical behavior, critical thinking, and STEM literacy, to follow the vision of the school.

**Equity, inclusion, and social responsibility.** As shared earlier in the chapter, traditional STEM education practices can lead to equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges through a siloed approach to teaching and learning in schools. Students' identities are unique to individual students, and may include gender, age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religious or spiritual affectation, sexual orientation, dis/ability, language, and other forms of how students identify themselves. Integrative STEM school and programming decisions must be socially responsible and entail inclusive practices that welcome and celebrate PK-12 students' diverse identities (Geesa et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2019).

School stakeholders need to develop family-school-community partnerships and participate in STEM education data sharing meetings, discussions, and decisions to best support the needs for the students and community. Integrative STEM offers equitable opportunities and increases all students' participation in career and higher education pathways (Huston, Cranfield, Forbes, & Leigh, 2019). Students will bring unique individual strengths to the program, and educational leaders systematically and collaboratively work with teachers, families, and community members to develop, implement, adapt, and enhance integrative STEM programming to address the cognitive, creative, affective, and concomitant needs.

**Infrastructure and programming.** Educational environments provide space for collaboration, teamwork, and critical thinking in integrative STEM education. Classrooms and school buildings are designed for students to invent, create, engineer, and explore in their learning. Makerspaces, innovation labs, and outdoor spaces are available to students, teachers, and school stakeholders during the school day and support extended learning activities outside of school hours for further student engagement in STEM. In addition to the educational space, teachers and students should have input regarding resources and materials they need to solve real-world problems and gain practical skills with tools, technology, and building supplies.

School schedules in an integrative STEM culture allow for teachers of various disciplines to meet, plan, and co-teach during the school day. Leaders work with teachers and staff to ensure schedules are designed to provide all students equitable accesses to learning and engagement in STEM disciplines. School and classroom designs must include learning spaces for collaboration and group project work, and laboratory spaces with the proper technologies for students to work as scientists, inventors, and engineers (Geesa et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2019). Modern materials, tools, and technologies facilitate multidisciplinary learning which allow students to experiment, test, and build items to prepare for their futures.

**Curriculum and disciplines.** A teacher's development and implementation of content and practices can shape students' academic and affective development (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013), therefore the quality of curriculum and integration of STEM disciplines in learning are paramount to developing STEM-capable citizens. Grade-level state and national standards should be referenced, and teachers need to think creatively as they develop curricular lessons and units



which incorporate STEM and non-STEM disciplines. In integrative STEM education, students have a voice to drive the curriculum forward in authentic and meaningful ways. While students need opportunities to act as scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians, it is also necessary for them to experience knowledge and skill-building as artists, historians, writers, and other roles that prepare them for their futures.

As a goal for positive integrative STEM educational outcomes, educational leaders set expectations with teachers and stakeholders that curricular units allow students to “engage in designing, engineering, making, testing, and reflecting, and documenting” (Rose et al., 2019, p. 52). Inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary experiences in all disciplines (e.g., mathematics, performing arts, social studies, and technology) in school are needed. Additionally, lessons and units should focus on real-world problems and allow students to explore solutions and needs to support and enhance the local and global community (e.g., Stith & Geesa, 2020). All stakeholders can engage in providing interactive and challenging integrative STEM curricular opportunities to promote lifelong learning for all students as they prepare for adulthood.

**Instruction and pedagogies.** Integrative STEM instructional approaches should address the diverse needs of students. The preferred learning modes of students may vary as they develop interests and passions in different fields. Teaching and learning strategies to allow students to explore, create, discover, and work as a team can be nearly inexecutable when a teacher stands at the front of the classroom and lectures to all students as a homogenous group. Instead, attention to the instructional approaches should augment student engagement in curricular contents and skills. Students have ownership in their learning, and teachers and leaders are facilitators in educational practices to support students’ goals through student-centric pedagogical approaches.

To a student who has only known the traditional curriculum approach, as discussed with the doctrine of formal discipline earlier in the chapter, the knowledge becomes the final product and not a tool to solve problems (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Many students are also graduating without appreciating the interdisciplinarity of fields and how to integrate knowledge and skills in the workforce. Integrative STEM instruction may address these issues, when part or all of instruction is positioned as design-based, problem-based, and project-based. Additionally, teachers from different or similar disciplines need opportunities to collaborative, co-plan and co-teach lessons, develop and implement communication plans, and assess their instructional goals and outcomes.

Educational leaders can support teachers with time and resources to pursue these instructional approaches to support integrative STEM education access for all students. According to Combs and Silverman (2016), “the value of co-construction is that each participant contributes his or her own experience and thinking in a way that can lead to synergistic insight” (p. 22). Developing and sustaining integrative STEM activities and programs should be collaborative with leaders and teachers from a variety of disciplines sharing knowledge, planning events, fostering stakeholder relationships, and reaching out to community partners to cultivate the interdisciplinarity of real-world STEM problems.

**Extended learning and community engagement.** Learning and the pursuit of knowledge should not solely take place during the school day. Educational leaders should provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in STEM education. Through activities, programs, and clubs outside of regular school hours and/or during days when school is not in session, students have opportunities to expand their skills and understanding in critical thinking, teamwork, collaboration, and communication with fellow students, mentors, educators, and school and community stakeholders. Additionally, students focus on refining leadership and teamwork abilities, working with and serving their community, and reflecting upon and solving real-world problems through the use of STEM mindsets in inquiry-, problem-, and project-based teaching and learning approaches.

As discussed previously in the chapter, community engagement and stakeholder involvement are critical components of effective integrative STEM education programs and schools. Educational leaders, STEM leadership team members, and family-school-community partners cultivate an integrative STEM culture with shared a vision, mission, and goals. According to Afterschool Alliance (2020):

Nationwide, states and schools are engaging diverse partners like afterschool programs, libraries, museums, universities, and businesses to ensure that students have access to high-quality STEM education. By fully utilizing the hours outside of school, and taking an all hands on deck approach to maximize collective impact, we can ensure that our students are prepared for the future. (para. 2)

School and district leaders can foster partnerships with local community organizations and businesses to support the connection between learning in schools and students' homes, communities, and workplaces during and outside of typical school times.

**Professional learning and development.** Integration of STEM content areas requires knowledge and pedagogical skills that teachers and leaders may lack. In schools, professional development is often tailored in the theories of andragogical learning (Kalogirou, Theophanous, Theodosiou, Karagiorgi, & Kendeou, 2008); however, these theories are to disseminate content to students in teacher-centric contexts. For secondary teachers trained in one academic discipline, the challenge to integrate subject areas and build understanding of concepts outside their areas of expertise arise. Elementary teachers often lack confidence or experience in one or more of the STEM disciplines. Ongoing professional learning opportunities, such as longitudinal coaching and mentoring, can enhance teachers' and leaders' knowledge, skills, and experiences in a variety of disciplines.

Through integrative STEM education professional learning, teachers must experience learning in the way they expect their students to learn (e.g., solving ill-defined problems). Educational leaders facilitate opportunities for teachers to experience professional learning through providing time during the school day or during the summer for teachers to meet and observe others. Additionally, leaders can identify methods to fund supplies, resources, and professional courses for teachers to implement integrative STEM education. Integrative STEM

professional learning experiences should challenge teachers to innovate curricula based on student responses to learning. When teachers experience student-centric STEM-based learning approaches, they are more likely to implement integrative STEM teaching and learning models within their own lesson plans (Shively, Stith, & Rubenstein, 2018). Learning collaboratively through professional learning can open mindsets of teachers for sharing practice, planning together, observing one another, and collectively solving problems (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019; Huffman & Hipp, 2003).

**Evaluation and assessment.** “To assess is to make judgments about students’ work, inferring from this what they have the capacity to do in the assessed domain, and thus what they know, value, or are capable of doing” (Joughin, 2009, p. 16). Through assessment and evaluation of integrative STEM learning and programs, a variety of sources, materials, and tools are utilized. Student capabilities are traditionally measured in disciplines, in classrooms, in schools, and by states. However, integrative STEM education assessments support students to create their own responses to learning through platforms beyond traditional testing methods, while aligning with grade-level state standards.

Educational leaders encourage teachers to develop and implement authentic assessments for STEM learning activities (e.g., design-based, problem-based, and project-based) and evaluate students’ engineering design process knowledge and skills in a various ways (Rose et al., 2019). Teacher evaluation processes in STEM education are transparent, and school and district leaders need to provide “actionable feedback to teachers that enhances STEM instruction” and model “how to provide actionable feedback to students that enhances their STEM learning outcomes” (Rose et al., 2019, p. 56). Through shared knowledge and learning in schools, more individualized forms of student, teacher, and program assessment and evaluation can be utilized.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Although the doctrine of formal discipline has been long discredited, the artifacts of this doctrine remain as disciplines often are taught in content silos. Educational leaders can position school programs to prepare students for a scientifically and technologically-driven society with innovative and collaborative instructional approaches. Much like Dewey, who argued for the value of situated learning to advocate for student successes in society, educational leaders can bolster relevant and engaging problem-solving and instruction into schools and districts through integrative STEM education. As educational domains are interrelated, educational leaders must consider shifting several aspects of programming to build integrative STEM education praxis and practices into a school, district, or educational organization.

Integrative STEM requires spanning across multiple disciplines for real-world learning and transitioning from teacher-centric to student-centric learning, a pedagogical approach that many educators lack. Educational leaders are faced with needs for

professional learning experiences that differ greatly from traditional approaches. Traditional professional development for teachers, leaders, and school stakeholders does not provide the elements of effective professional learning that call for greater duration of learning experiences, the need for collective learning through professional learning communities, and supportive conditions that include time and resources.

A fresh look is needed to consider impactful ways to bring about the professional growth necessary for educational leaders and educators to make changes to their current practices. Creating a culture of learning within the classroom also means building a culture of learning for all educators to meet the demands of this ever-changing global society. Future professional learning should encourage collaboration among teachers and school stakeholders to integrate STEM contents in instructional practices that support student ownership of their learning, in addition to implementing meaningful lessons and units to solve authentic problems within the local and global community.

By referring to the domains of integrative STEM education, educational leaders have a guide to better meet the needs of the students and community to prepare all students for success in a global society. Mission and culture indicate the importance of leadership teams, stakeholder involvement, and collaborative decisions related to the direction and desirable outcomes of learning for all students through integrative STEM programming in a shared vision. Inclusive practices by leaders and teachers ensure students engage in equitable and socially responsible integrative STEM education programs, and teachers adapt curricula to build on the unique strengths and needs of diverse student populations. Integrative STEM curriculum and instruction supports students solving real-world problems by students thinking and doing as scientists, technologists, engineers, artists, and mathematicians in their lessons and units. Extended learning further enriches student experiences in integrative STEM content and practices beyond the classroom. Lastly, evaluation and assessment approaches support students to provide their own responses to real-world problems that provision evidence of content and practice mastery.

In this chapter, the reverse engineering of integrative STEM education revealed that leaders, teachers, and school stakeholders must be intentional and collaborative in their decisions to build strong foundations for students' engagement and learning that include increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM education and preparing students for success in a STEM-driven society. In order to meet these expectations, impactful ways to build the capacities of the STEM education leadership domains should continue to be explored.

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# A Foucauldian Analysis of Teacher Standards

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## Abstract

Teacher professional standards such as those developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) have emerged out of a neoliberal ecology that promotes a technical rationality at odds with the ontological concerns of teacher professionalism. This neoliberal ecology anchors teacher quality to epistemologically focussed teacher standards on contested ground between the desire for quality improvement and the desire for quality assurance. A Foucauldian analysis of professional standards illustrates how powerfully rationalizing they are, the degree to which the discourse of quality assurance and its concomitant

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depowering effects dominate, and how this works against the betterment of teachers and their teaching. This leads to an argument for the development of an audacious reflexivity in teachers and their approach to their profession, an approach which liberate teachers to *believe in* and *act on* their capacity to make fine-grained professional judgements that best serve the needs of their students in ways that go beyond the limiting contingencies of technically organized professional standards. If teachers are deeply conscientized in an understanding of the things that bind them, they will be better placed to orchestrate a power over their work, to reconfigure the norms of professional standards in ethical terms that guide, not bind.

### Keywords

Foucault · Teacher professional standards · Neoliberalism · Technical rationality · Normalization · Pastoral power · Ethics · Care of the self · Desire · Seduction · Audacious reflexivity · Teacher professionalism

### The Field of Memory

A whole generation of teachers have known nothing but regulatory and compliance regimes dictated by teacher professional standards. Yet teachers know that while standards identify what a teacher must know and be able to do, those standards have little or nothing to say about the personal dispositions that are quintessential to the making of an exemplary teacher. The portrait of a teacher revealed in professional standards focuses on the epistemological domain of knowing and doing but is silent on the ontological domain of the human person that the teacher is always in the process of becoming as a professional. Without attention to the ontological domain, teacher professional standards fail to resonate with teachers' experience of what makes the exemplary teacher and may diminish rather than contribute to professional identity and agency.

### The Field of Presence

There is a consensus that teachers and the quality of their work are the in-school factors that make the most difference to the education of school-aged children. This consensus has led to a strong public discourse tightly coupling teacher quality to the notion of continuous school improvement (Mockler, 2018). OECD studies of the 2010s encouraged governments around the world to see teacher standards as the means to improve teacher quality and thus improve nations' standings on international league tables such as the ones constructed in response to PISA testing (Call, 2018). Contemporary teacher professional standards privilege the epistemological domain – what teachers know and are able to do – to the exclusion of other domains that complete the portrait of the exemplary teacher.

### The Field of Concomitance

School education is replete with examples of systems, structures, and processes borrowed from large, high-risk fields such as financial institutions, health services,

and high-stakes public infrastructure projects. Strategic planning, auditing, and quality assurance have been borrowed from the corporate sector in efforts to improve schools. Neoliberal governance has taken education in the direction of the technical rationalization of teaching, starkly illustrated in teacher standards. Technical rationality was first applied, appropriately, to industrial production, and thereafter applied, inappropriately, to human relations such that it has “standardized the world” (Marcuse, 1941, p. 419). Technical rationality, however, denies and diminishes the messy complexity of human relationships that inhere teaching and demands that phenomena be understood in simplistic, readily definable, repeatable, and measurable ways.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

A demand for excellence and equity in education comes from all quarters. Teacher standards in their current form measured against improved excellence (better student outcomes) or improved equity (a closing of the educational opportunity gap for all young people) have not realized the kinds of improvement promised. The ongoing stagnation of improvement in student outcomes is, in and of itself, a challenge to the technical rationality of teacher standards. The transformation of teacher practice and improvement in teacher quality cannot be achieved through teacher standards that lack teacher voice and which are not deeply embedded in an ethical narrative borne of teachers’ ontological concerns.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Teachers remain unconvinced of the efficacy of teacher professional standards that are constructed around only the epistemological concerns of teaching (Day & Gu, 2010). Teachers understand that exemplary practice is inextricably bound to the exercise of a set of ontological dispositions, like passion, love of learning, and care for young people, which are elemental to the personhood of the teacher. When teacher standards exclude the ontology of teaching, they miss the heart of the story. Problematizing and analyzing teacher professional standards using Foucauldian tools can help to give clarity and direction to this lacuna.

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## **Introduction**

From the rise in the 1990s of the moderate left – Tony Blair in the UK, Bill Clinton in the USA, and Paul Keating in Australia – widespread adoption of neoliberal policies created a world where other ways of organizing society became unthinkable and undoable. While these neoliberal governments believed in small government on a tight budget, they nonetheless wanted to maintain power, control, and influence, thus the rise of an audit culture (Power, 1997) and the risk management of everything (Power, 2004). Tools in the service of control for “small government” are regulation and standardization, not least of all in education (Reid, 2020). Standards serve governments’ and organizations’ need for quality assurance but are imperfect. As Power (2004) notes, “such systems have been criticised for being excessively

bureaucratic and for concentrating on auditable process rather than on substantive outputs and performances. Worse still, they distract professionals from core tasks and create incentives for gaming” (p. 26).

Teachers have not been missed in the standardization industry. Teacher professional standards such as those promulgated by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership are now commonplace. While these standards serve the quality assurance purposes of governments and educational governors, how do they serve teachers? This chapter seeks to explicate the public discourses that gave rise to the AITSL teacher professional standards (the AITSL Standards) as a case study example. These discourses will then be situated in the neoliberal ecology within which they exist. Situating teacher standards thus will enable problematization and analysis through a Foucauldian lens.

The Foucauldian archive provides a set of intellectual tools to revisit practice, ask questions about power, knowledge and freedom, and the formation of the subject. Foucauldian tools unsettle taken-for-granted realities. They can help to generate new insights and discomfiting perspectives for those experiencing an unease about standards and the way in which they have been imposed on professional lives. In particular, the tools of problematization (Foucault, 1988), normalization (Foucault, 1995), pastoral power (Foucault, 2009), care of the self (Foucault, 1986, 1987), and the relationship between desire and pleasure/power (1985, 1996b, 1996d) will be employed in an attempt to resignify teacher standards as the possession of an audaciously reflexive profession which should work towards the control of their own ethical narrative. Some of the Foucauldian analytical tools to be utilized such as pastoral power, care of the self, and desire are rarely employed in discussions about education, and thus offer the promise of fresh insights.

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## **Dominant Discourses About Quality, Teachers, and Standards**

That quality matters is an article of faith in education. The rhetoric of quality translates to the raising of the quality of teachers. In a country in which the dominant educational discourse is standardization (Reid, 2020), raising teacher quality takes the form of professional standards for teachers (Petty, Good, & Heafner, 2019), with Australia following the emerging orthodoxy on teacher standards (OECD, 2005) and the trend in other Western countries (CEPPE, 2013).

### **Teacher Quality**

In the Australian context as elsewhere, there is an unchallenged assumption that teacher standards “describe what teachers should know and be able to do” (Productivity Commission, 2012, p. 174) and that teacher quality is synonymous with teacher standards. Within the discourse on the pursuit of quality in education, teachers are seen as central, irrespective of the perspective or context. While not the greatest effects, nonetheless, teacher effects have been recognized as powerful

ones (Hattie, 2012), and are infinitely more appealing as a target for government policy than socioeconomic reform (Parr, 2010). It is in this context that professional standards for teachers emerged in many jurisdictions. Among other purposes, professional standards have been used as a strategy of neoliberal governance intended to raise the quality of teachers and teaching (Mockler, 2018). The rhetoric of a drive for the greater supervision of teacher quality through quality assurance mechanisms on the one hand, and an empowerment of teachers through greater access and exhortation to attend to their own ongoing professional learning on the other, has been a feature of the broad discourse on teacher professional standards (Thomas & Watson, 2011).

## Teacher Standards

The proposition that teacher professional standards would contribute to improvements in teacher quality has a genesis in Australian political life that originated in the 1980s (Mowbray, 2005). Contesting discourses about the purpose of professional standards for teachers arose from the outset and have persisted. The tension had already been noted by the Australian College of Educators (ACE) at their 2002 national meeting on teacher standards (ACE, 2002). On the one hand, standards were seen as providing the guiding principles to assist teachers in better understanding their work and how they might deepen their professionalism. On the other hand, professional standards were seen to hold the promise of operating as the measure against which teacher credentialing could be established – essentially a teacher accountability system. The tension had not been resolved on the eve of the release of a set of national professional standards for teachers by AITSL in 2010.

The establishment of AITSL was a significant change in education policy direction in Australia. AITSL replaced Teaching Australia, which had been represented by members of various professional teacher and school leader peak bodies. AITSL had a very different membership to Teaching Australia. AITSL Board comprised of employed representatives of government educational authorities in the eight states and territories, as well as Catholic and Independent school employer representatives, and union and professional organizations representatives. Established by government as an independent company, nonetheless its sole member is the Federal Minister for Education. The company is under the control of the Minister, as the constitution of the company makes clear. This is a prime example of an institution presenting itself as independent of political power but in reality, being deeply contingent upon it.

The lack of direct teacher voice in AITSL's makeup was starkly illustrated through the National Forum meetings and workshops that it held over the course of June–August 2013, in which 174 stakeholders were consulted about the AITSL Standards; not a single person was a classroom teacher. The shift of power in the national conversation about standards from teachers' professional organizations to government and employers saw the rhetoric of teacher standards being about quality improvement continue, but the reality of teacher standards being about quality assurance ramp up.

## The Neoliberal Ecology of Teacher Standards

Professional teaching standards are situated within the framework of a pervasive neoliberalism that dominates the global metropole, an approach to modern life that has spawned an audit culture which uses standards as a key tool within its regimes of accountability. Understood within this context, policy documents are ideological artifacts. The neoliberal ecology in which professional standards around the world have proliferated is essential to an understanding of the standards themselves.

Neoliberalism emphasizes market competencies and a style of managerial accountability that has given rise to an audit culture (Taubman, 2009). The ubiquity of neoliberal ideology in the Australian context has been successfully argued by Pusey (Pusey, 2010) and its ubiquity in all levels of education and across all political imaginaries is well documented (Reid, 2020). It hegemonically finds its way into educational discourses, threatening to silence debate as if there was no alternative view of the world available (Denniss, 2018). The COVID school closures crisis of 2020 did little to shift neoliberal educational thinking, typified by the newspaper-reported remark from a Sydney University educational don: “We need to ask really big questions about why we haven’t had any economies of scale and quality assurance [during remote learning]. The teachers are killing themselves doing lesson planning, why they should be given materials that’s quality assured” (Baker, 2020).

Some of the phenomena of neoliberalism that are recognizable in education are outsourcing; accountability regimes; efficiency drives based on an argument of scarcity of resources; emphasis on lifelong learning; reductionism; privileging of quantitative “evidence”; and an individualism that inheres the teacher quality discourse. The neoliberal paradigm follows a recognizable pattern of loosening direct control and replacing it with onerous audit and accountability mechanisms that bind institutions to the policy intentions of government. An aspect of neoliberal discourse is constant reference to the scarcity of resources and the need to introduce efficiencies (Denniss, 2018). Of course resources are scarce – precisely because the audit society invests so many resources in surveillance. Lifelong learning is strongly emphasized in neoliberal policy discourses, which construct the learner as a unit of production in the knowledge economy, a unit which must retrain frequently to maintain the requisite agility to move into different work as the needs of the economy change (Biesta, 2008). Neoliberalism eschews complexity, seeking simple, reductive answers and solutions to problems. An example of oversimplification is the proliferation of “what works” research (Auld & Morris, 2014) and “evidence-based practice” (Webster-Wright, 2010, p. 39), de-emphasizing the contextual complexity of teaching. Contemporary research approaches in education reflect neoliberal sensibilities, where randomized controlled trials are considered to be the research “gold standard” and are privileged in the evidence base, even in arenas where qualitative research may be more instructive (Smyth, Down, McInerney, & Hattam, 2014). International metrics like PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS have become the basis for measuring a competency-based approach to professionalism which stands as a synonym for teacher quality. Finally, individualism is evident within the teacher quality discourse. The capacity of the individual teacher

to make a heroic difference to the life of students is emphasized, while the unequal distribution of education resources and support that exacerbates disadvantage and which can be shown to have a significant impact on educational outcomes is downplayed or even ignored.

Neoliberal ecology pervades contemporary educational settings and teacher professional standards can be understood as one element of this prevailing neoliberal audit culture. Teacher professional standards, as a regime of accountability, are a part of the contemporary landscape which teachers need to negotiate as they become teachers. Professional standards understood in neoliberal terms construct the teacher as compliant officer (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), bound to the epistemological fields of knowing and doing. They beg the ontological question of the human person that the teacher is constantly *becoming* in pursuit of their professionalism.

## Teacher Standards and Technical Rationality

Technical rationality is a taken-for-granted term connected to the direction in which neoliberalism has taken education. Technical rationality was first applied, appropriately, to efficiencies within industrial production, and thereafter applied, inappropriately, to human relations such that it has “standardized the world” (Marcuse, 1941, p. 419). The price of technical rationality is the rights of the individual and the discounting of ethics (Giroux, 2001). Schön (2005) argues that technical rationality is the mental frame which has most heavily influenced the development of the professions. He takes technical rationality here to mean “instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique” (p. 21). From outside the educational field, Lanier (2010) offers scything insights into why technical rationality matters. Technical rationality denies the messy complexity of human problems and demands that phenomena be understood in simplistic, readily definable, repeatable, and measurable ways; but “can you tell how far you’ve let your sense of personhood degrade in order to make the illusion work for you” (p. 32)? It is a concern for this *diminishing* nature of technical rationality, a key strategy of neoliberalism which in turn gives birth to technologies such as professional standards, which makes reflection on technical rationality important for any critique of teacher professional standards.

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## Problematizing Teacher Standards

The evolution of the standards movement has carried with it an ongoing and unresolved tension; on the one hand, standards are seen as providing the guiding principles to assist teachers in better understanding their work and how they might deepen their professionalism. On the other hand, professional standards are seen to hold the promise of operating as the measure against which teacher credentialing should be established – essentially a teacher accountability system.

As accountability measures, standards can hamper rather than drive school improvement (Mockler, 2020). When standards are used by governments and their regulators as regimes of accountability in education, they form a kind of panopticism that has constricting effects on the work of teachers. The dominance of one or another of these conceptions of teacher professional standards – as tools for quality improvement or as tools for quality assurance – will determine the success of professional standards in contributing to an improvement in teacher quality.

Santoro and Kennedy (2016) speak of “the globally accepted premise that teacher quality can be enhanced through professional standards” (p. 11). It is precisely such an assertion that is challenged by problematization. Teachers face pressure from increased levels of accountability to maintain their professional status. The strong accountability context of teacher standards places one of their stated aims – the quality improvement of teachers – at risk. While “power over” dominates the professional standards, their power to have an impact is ironically nullified. An element of responding to power asserted over us, Foucault believed, was to resist its immobilizing force by “the refusal to accept as self-evident the things that are proposed to us” (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). Problematization is the questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions about the world. The Foucauldian approach seeks to make the familiar strange. It is the gut feeling that the present is not quite right. In education policy research, problematization challenges “a pervasive logic that maintains educational *problems* can be *solved* in, with, or through policy” (Webb, 2014, p. 364, emphasis in original).

While research on education has made wide use of the critical Foucauldian tool of governmentality, the lesser utilized Foucauldian tools of pastoral power and care of the self have the potential to cast new light onto the problem which is here under consideration; namely, that the strong normalizing accountability context of the AITSL Standards places one of their stated aims – the quality improvement of teachers – at risk. In addition, a consideration of the curious nature of desire and seduction that systems of accountability like standards engender in teachers will be considered from a Foucauldian perspective. An analysis of the teacher standards, using the AITSL Standards as a case study, and utilizing these Foucauldian tools may help to shed light on an ethic for teachers as they deal with the contemporary dissonance that they now face: between the accountability that others want of them and the professional improvement agenda that they want for themselves.

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## A Foucauldian Analysis of Teacher Standards

### Normalization

Professional standards can be understood as a technology of surveillance in the process of normalization in education. Within the Foucauldian paradigm, normalization is the chief means of the exercise of power. Normalization is a process of categorization according to the dictates of a dominant discourse that determines acceptability on a continuum. Normalization is coercive in as much as deviation



from the norm provides the necessary rationale within a discourse for intervention to correct the “abnormal.” There is a pernicious dimension to this: Whereas the binary distinction of permitted and forbidden provides a clear demarcation point for intervention, normativity conceptualizes deviancy as merely matters of degrees from what is considered normal – thus intervention and the exercise of power can be justified at virtually any point and is enacted through technologies of surveillance (Foucault, 1995). Normality conceived this way is, of its nature, limiting of human potential. The neutering of educational politics by a neoliberal discourse that emphasizes standardized technical competence and transforms education into merely an entity of the knowledge economy is a prime example of the limiting and normalizing action of discourse.

Discourses are the means by which normalization is actualized and technologies of surveillance are justified. They are sufficiently powerful to determine what is sayable and unsayable, doable, and undoable. Neoliberalism is a discourse that fits into this Foucauldian paradigm, whereby its dominance is such that many of the people responsible for the construction of policy and strategy cannot conceive of an alternative way to imagine the world. Consistent with Foucault, Ball (2012) contends that the State, too, is under the control of various discourses – not least of all the neoliberal discourse.

Teachers as much as any other group, perhaps more so, unconsciously foreclose on the application of a critical lens to policy and in so doing become captive participants in the imaginary that neoliberal policies perpetuate. Stickney (2012) illustrates well, in his own educational jurisdiction of Ontario, how word games like “brain-based learning” and “authentic assessment-for-success” are dealt with as authoritative texts that are not questioned. The AITSL Standards are replete with these word games. Stickney argues that teachers do not often seek to *know* about the “evidentiary bases” for these phrases, but “perform the rhetoric superficially” (p. 655) that satisfies their auditors that they *know how*. In so doing, teachers contribute to the construction of monolithic, normalizing discourses.

Normalizing discourses are seductive, because “good” teachers can be convinced that working hard at getting things “right” within the limiting parameters that discourses construct provides its own taste of power and the pleasures that this brings (Foucault, 1996a, 1996b). More will be said about this below in the discussion on desire and power.

Deviation from the norm is a matter of degrees along a continuum; normative disciplinary structures typically assign grades, divisions, awards, and honors and dishonors which allow for discrimination, surveillance, reward, and punishment, to ensure conformity (Foucault, 1995). Professional standards, with their accreditation processes leading to levels of attainment, promises of higher status, and threats of deregistration, neatly fit this profile of normativity. Teachers have been, in general terms, highly subject to normalizing disciplinary structures over the entire course of modern mass education. Professional standards for teachers are but a recent innovation in a deep archaeology of normalizing technologies in education (Foucault, 1995). Despite their increasing pervasiveness, however, experienced Australian teachers have not yet been persuaded of the necessity or importance of professional



standards (Taylor, 2016). The situation is little different elsewhere. In the USA, where the National Professional Board of Professional Teacher Standards provides voluntary certification, only 3% of US teachers have been certified in over 30 years. A hermeneutic of suspicion persists in the face of normalizing pressures.

## Power Through Discourse

Paraphrasing Fischer (2009), power relations are always produced in connection with discourse. A discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, can be said to exist when a set of rules can be discerned that cover all the objects, operations, concepts, and options of a field (Foucault, 1991). Discourses involve “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002, p. 54). In addition, every discourse “contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings” (Foucault, 2002, p. 134). A constant refrain in Foucault’s work is seeking to understand the ways in which power operates within the discourses that direct the institutions of society and the actions of citizens (Rouse, 2005). The privileging of one discourse suppresses others. The Foucauldian concept of power operating discursively, however, should not be understood crudely as an attempt at domination by the government or its agencies or anyone else specifically – it has its “own specificity or independent standing” (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2008, p. 332). Discourses have a life of their own that run in parallel with a shifting matrix of ideologies within the wider society.

## Pastoral Power

In his 1978 Collège de France lecture series, Foucault notes a particular form of power over the individual which he calls “pastoral power,” with its roots in the self-conduct and influence over conduct in Christian and pre-Christian history (Foucault, 2009, p. 123). In these lectures as well as at Stanford the following year, Foucault outlines the way in which pastoral power focuses on the individual through the power of personal confession to impose a self-sustaining discipline (Foucault, 2014), as well as through the utilization of “self-examination and the guidance of conscience” (Foucault, 2000a). Governmentality, Foucault reasons, emerged from pastoral power, utilizing “apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (Foucault, 2009, p. 108). In a later piece written in 1982, Foucault provides a corrective that does not place pastoral power as prior to and superseded by governmentality, but rather situates pastoral power as the form of power that is oriented to the subjugation of the individual, rather than a particular group, class, or the population in general (Foucault, 2000b). It is contended here that the strong sense of personal commitment that imbues teachers and teaching and writing about it (Day, 2004) makes pastoral power a more useful lens, gadget, or tool for the analysis of teacher standards than the more typical appeal to the concept of governmentality, the latter concept nonetheless having been much more widely utilized

in studies on education. Pastoral power finds ready root in teaching, with teachers who, as carers of children, resonate with pastoral power's appeal to "zeal, devotion and endless application" (Foucault, 2009, p. 127). The analytical tool of pastoral power prompts reflection on the possible ways in which professional standards self-discipline teachers through the power of confession, revealing the conscience of the teacher; provide "continuous vigilance over oneself" (Foucault, 2014, p. 324); and employ discourses that are constructed as caring for teachers, for their own good.

## The Relationship of Power to Ethics

As teachers' professional identity is so bound to who they are as a human person, it is deeply ontological and must shoulder a robust ethical dimension. The ethical dimension of teacher professional identity centers on what is distinctive about teaching and why it matters. It follows that as the formation of the teacher is deeply ontological, and professional standards are seen to be axiomatic to professional identity, then the ontology of professional standards is of critical importance. Despite these connections, however, the ontology of professional standards is largely ignored in the literature (Webster-Wright, 2010).

The importance of the ontology of teaching was elucidated in the Australian context very early in the debate about professional standards. The *Australian Standards of Professional Practice Discussion Paper* which pre-dated the AITSL Standards noted that "teachers teach according to their 'being': who teachers are is absolutely the foundation of how they teach" (Mackay, ACE, ACSA, & AARE, 2000, p. 10). Somewhere along the way to the construction of the AITSL Standards, this point was lost.

In Foucauldian terms, ontological formation – the process of becoming – is a process of liberating self-formation that is neverending. Close to the end of his life, when his own thinking was most formed, Foucault commented: "Liberty is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty" (Foucault, 1987, p. 115). Foucault made the following comments about the relationship of freedom (liberty) to power:

In the relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance—of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation—there would be no relations of power. This being the general form, I refuse to answer the question that I am often asked: "But if power is everywhere, then there is no liberty." I answer: If there are relations of power throughout every social field it is because there is freedom everywhere. Now there are effectively states of domination. In many cases the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical [sic] and the margin of liberty is extremely limited. (Foucault, 1987, p. 123)

If "ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty" (Foucault, 1987, p. 115), then care of the other (before care of the self) is the deliberate form assumed by pastoral power – "pastoral power is a power of care" (Foucault, 2009, p. 127). It is the nature of teachers' work that they are attuned to the politics of care in relation to students,

but perhaps less so in relation to the way *they* are “cared for” by strategies, like the implementation of professional standards, ostensibly put in place to advance the profession. Care of the self is the Foucauldian tool to which we now turn.

## Care of the Self

It is perhaps an unremarkable piece of teacher wisdom that self-knowledge precedes knowledge of one’s students. As Palmer (2007) reflects:

Knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life – and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. (p. 3)

Foucault terms the process of liberating self-formation “care of the self,” the title of his last major volume (Foucault, 1986). In his late reflections, he affirms that one must take care of the self first in order to be able to care for others in a way which is not dominating but liberating (Foucault, 1987). Pastoral power uses care of the other as a technique of control and subjugation; care of the self, on the other hand, makes mastery over the self the *prior* responsibility. Consequently, a teacher who cares for the self correctly will “by that very fact, in a measure... behave correctly in relationship to others and for others” (Foucault, 1987, p. 118).

Care of the self involves the development of a self-referential “critical ontology,” which Foucault (1997) describes as “an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life” in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us” (p. 319). The ethical self, then, is the antidote to subjugating pastoral power, an antidote whereby the limiting portrayal of teacher which inheres professional standards is recognized and teachers experiment in moving beyond it. The free ethical self is able to question the rationality of professional standards and critique their threat. In the process, the creative, transformative ontological shift is made from knowing “what we do” to knowing “who we are.”

Foucault describes the transformative ontological shift through the exemplar of Socrates (Foucault, 1986, 2006, 2011), who exercises an “art of existence” (Foucault, 1986, p. 238) and is authentically ethical “because what he says accords exactly with what he thinks, and what he thinks accords exactly with what he does” (Foucault, 2006, p. 42). Care of the self adopts a critical outlook on the world and asks the question, not only of professional standards, but of all policy instruments in operation in education, “In whose interest is this?” Where a dissonance between word and deed exists, Foucault notes the historical precedence of “pastoral counter-conducts” (Foucault, 2009, p. 204), especially effective in organized groups. As a community of subjects, a depowered teaching profession often lacks a collective care of the self sufficient to mount counter-conducts, leaving the direction and promotion of their profession to others. A shared ethics narrative of teachers and teaching, created by teachers, is one possible way in which to nurture

care of the self. A shared ethics *narrative* matters because it is through the faculty of narrative that one is able to give “an account of oneself” and, as such, narrative is “the prerequisite condition for any account of moral agency we might give” (Butler, 2005, p. 12). It needs to be a *shared* ethics narrative because “we are constituted in relationality” (Butler, 2005, p. 64). A shared ethics narrative is the care of the self that teachers require to resist the distorting effects of pastoral power and to create the dialogic relation with the neverending process of becoming.

Awareness of the formation of our own subjectivity in relation to power and freedom was, Foucault came to resolve, at the heart of all his philosophical endeavors (Foucault, 1996c, 2000b). The subject has a history; it is constituted by its context (Butler, 2005). Therefore, professional standards matter to teachers’ professional identity. They are a part of a teacher’s history of the self and, where they are mandated, contribute to constituting a part of what a teacher becomes. Professional standards such as the AITSL Standards encourage reflexivity, but not innocently. Self-assessment is constructed as a technology, not an instrument of self-care. Surely, an act of authentic self-assessment engages the teacher in the ongoing process of the formation of the self. But self-assessment undertaken within the limiting contingencies of the construction of professional identity inhering professional standards begins its work on reconstituting the professional identity of the teacher. Care of the self is identity-creating in a more critical and constructive way (Foucault, 2011), involving a more artful and activist awareness of the strategies, techniques, politics, mechanisms, and apparatus governing teachers’ conduct (Ball & Olmedo, 2013).

Foucault’s framing of the concepts of pastoral power and the care of the self offers tools with which to analyze teachers’ relationship to professional standards. Firstly, the potential effects of pastoral power upon teachers through the mechanism of professional standards “caring” for them, seeking to raise the standard of the profession, seeking to develop their teacher quality, offers a lens through which to analyze how professional standards work on teachers. Secondly, care of the self offers a lens through which to imagine how teachers might work with professional standards in ways which do not diminish them.

## Concerning Desire and Power

Power, constructed as positive feedback loops within normalizing discourses, produces a desire to continue to participate in the acts which perpetuate a normalizing discourse, reifying it and strengthening it (Foucault, 1996d). The check on this closed loop is the derivation of pleasure and power from within the teacher, rather than from external sources, through a care of the self. Teachers face pressure from increased levels of accountability to maintain their professional status. There is an apparent dissonance between the accountability that others want of teachers and the improvement agenda that teachers want for themselves. The reluctance of teachers to take up voluntary professional standards accreditation suggests that classroom teachers may not find, within standards regimes, all that they need to guide and drive them professionally.

Despite the reticence of teachers to run with professional standards, they have proved to be remarkably seductive, revealing the phenomena of power and desire at play. In Australia as elsewhere, we now have a generation of teachers that have known nothing other than professional standards governing their profession. The proposition is that many teachers come to desire the model of teacher that inheres the AITSL Standards and the compliance actions that necessarily follow, even though those actions may be limiting to their conception of the exemplary teacher.

A consideration is made of the relationship between desire and pleasure/power in various formulations by Foucault (1985, 1996b, 1996d). In normalizing professional standards, teachers undermine the importance of the ontological dimension of their work and thus do violence to the aspirations of the teaching profession. While a degree of resistance from teachers to the limiting effects of professional standards is apparent, teachers themselves, in accepting the AITSL Standards in their current form, contribute to a hollowed-out portrait of what the exemplary teacher might be, with commensurate threats of negative impacts on teacher professional identity, and a more aspirational and agentic teacher ethical narrative. There is a need for teachers to become more reflexively aware of these dynamics at play in professional standards. The reflexivity encouraged by the AITSL Standards apparatus is not enough, as it is reflexivity only to the standards themselves.

## Seduction

The seduction of professional standards discourses is that the teacher stands to gain the power and the pleasure of the expert, high-status teacher and this produces its own desire, conviction in the truth of the standards, and so on. Many teachers view the AITSL Standards as unproblematic and normative (Taylor, 2016). These teachers reflect a desire to act in accordance with the dictates of the AITSL Standards, thus valorizing the epistemological dimension of teaching that the AITSL Standards highlight. From a Foucauldian perspective, the ethical experience of teachers in this instance is not led by the teaching acts which they prioritize, nor their desire to do the “right thing” as determined by others and codified in the AITSL Standards, nor the pleasure which conformity to the AITSL Standards brings but is rather the expression of all three – desire, pleasure, and acts – working as part of a positive feedback loop that is self-sustaining. As Foucault writes, it is a dynamic circle, evincing “the desire that leads to the act, the act that is linked to pleasure, and the pleasure that occasions desire” (Foucault, 1985, p. 43). Elsewhere, Foucault, in a 1972 conversation with Gilles Deleuze, notes the complex relationship between “desire, power, and interest” (Foucault, 1996b, p. 80). In Foucault’s first conference appearance in the USA three years later, again in the company of Deleuze, he stated that “power induces and produces desire” (Foucault, 1996d, p. 158). The pleasure/power that is derived from compliance to professional standards is the sense of the kudos and professional rewards that will issue from adherence to them – the knowledge that one is an expert teacher as defined in the standards. The pleasure/power of compliance feeds the desire which is perceived to be bound up in one’s interests (Foucault, 1996b) and so on.

The relationship between pleasure/power and desire/interest suggests the seductiveness of mechanisms such as professional standards for teachers, with their promises of expertise, quality, and status. When the “soul” becomes seduced, it goes “beyond what the body demands and what its needs dictate” (Foucault, 1986, p. 135). Perhaps teachers being seduced by a professional standards discourse has led to the conduct of intensified actions implicit in professional standards that have exposed the “body of the teacher,” such that “education has increasingly become the ‘battered profession’” (Dinham, 2013, p. 98).

The notion of teachers and other agents engaged with the AITSL Standards being seduced by them highlights that we are, or at least might be, the architects of our own domination. These insights lend some prescience to Sachs’ (2003b) warning: “There is a danger that, with teachers accepting the challenge of using a standards framework as a source of professional learning, they become complicit in their own exploitation and the intensification of their work” (p. 184).

In teachers’ normalized responses to the AITSL Standards they succumb to the technical rationality of professional standards which dictate to them what a teacher looks like – what a teacher must know and be able to do. When the ontological dimension of being a teacher is ignored, a violence is done which may well be masked by the seductiveness of professional standards and the neoliberal ecology into which they neatly fit. In this instance of seduction, teachers have developed a desire to adhere to a set of professional standards that determine and narrow the definition of what it is to be a teacher and ultimately impact on their professional identity and their concomitant agency.

The neoliberal ecology of professional standards has created such a dominant normative environment that teachers find it difficult to imagine that the world could be structured otherwise. The concept of desire suggests that teachers are not simply allowing the technical rationality of professional standards to be imposed on them but face the threat of becoming active participants in the perpetration of a technical rationalization of their work. Through their compliance with regulation and their acquiescence to self-controlling mechanisms like maintenance of accreditation regimes, they become the surveilled docile body that cedes power. “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 136).

A reflexive awareness of these dynamics at play in professional standards is key to teachers’ exercise of greater power and thus greater agency in relation to them. Foucault notes that docile bodies emerged from the development of the “Disciplines” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which relied on a shift from the physical disciplinary power over the body to a subtle pastoral power over the soul (Foucault, 1982, 2000a). Utilizing self-examination and confession, pastoral power commands control over the individual, creating a self-regulation far beyond what disciplinary power was ever able to achieve (Foucault, 1978). In the workplace, the confession of pastoral power occurs through the sophisticated practice of the “self-appraisal.” Self-assessment in performance appraisal, accreditation, and re-accreditation processes is entrenched in the modern workplace and no less with respect to the performance and development cycle apparatus supporting the AITSL Standards, which specifically notes the importance of teacher self-assessment as evidence of

adequate performance. AITSL's *Performance and Development Framework* does not specifically mention Likert-scale-type self-assessment, but such instrumentalist tools can be found in AITSL's promotion of the *Self-Assessment Tool* for teachers and the *360° Reflection Tool* for school leaders. Contrasting with AITSL's development of appraisal instruments is research that has called into question the efficacy of business practices around performance appraisal (O'Neill, McLarnon, & Carswell, 2015) leading some multinational performance management companies to drop them (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). There is more than a small irony that a global trend away from the use of instrumentalist performance management technologies emerged just at the time that AITSL was introducing them.

AITSL documents supporting teacher professional standards encourage teacher reflexivity. There is no objection to teacher reflexivity per se in any quarter; the issue is that teachers are encouraged to normalize their reflective gaze inwards to the professional standards document. Given the arguments that have been presented to this point, namely that the AITSL Standards almost entirely lack an ontological dimension that addresses the teacher dispositions that teachers know to be important, reflection on the present form of the AITSL Standards is more likely than not to foster the reproduction of the teacher as a compliant technical officer, contrary to the aspirations of the teaching profession.

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## Teacher Professionalism Driven by an Audacious Reflexivity

Professional standards are not going to go away. Indeed, it is a reasonable proposition that teacher professional standards are necessary, but they are not sufficient. The AITSL Standards do indeed capture a part of teachers' work – the technical competencies of the epistemological domain – what the teacher must know and be able to do. What the AITSL Standards do not capture, however, are the dispositions of the ontological domain – the human person that the teacher becomes – which are critical to the portrait of the exemplary teacher. In other words, the AITSL Standards measure the knowledge and skills of the teacher – things that matter – but they do not measure *everything* that matters. The dominance of the accountability discourse of teacher standards is problematic. That professional standards are seen mostly if not completely as an accountability tool is a problem for at least five reasons.

Firstly, it is a problem because there is a dissonance between professional standards and lived experience, and there is a dissonance between standards-based professional learning and the need for ontological nurturing (Webster-Wright, 2010), but there is no current way of addressing these dissonances which obviously or intentionally enhance teacher quality. Secondly and relatedly, it is a problem because of the association between excessive accountability and low morale. Literature from across the global metropole reports the association between teacher negativity and declining morale (Bourke, Lidstone, & Ryan, 2013). Thirdly, it is a problem because poor morale is antithetical to strong professional identity, considered essential for a high-quality teaching profession (Monteiro, 2015). Fourthly, professional identity is closely bound to teacher autonomy, that is, the ability for the teacher to make fine-



grained professional judgements about their work so that they are best able to promote the needs of individual students (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). Fifthly, professional identity also connects to the ontological dimension of “becoming and being teacher” (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 113). These five connecting points draw one to the conclusion that the greatest promise for actualizing professional standards in the service of improving teacher quality is in an active professionalism (see Sachs, 2003a) which strengthens teacher agency, facilitates a teaching culture where self-identified professional learning and growth is supported, and which challenges excessive, externally imposed accountabilities.

Perhaps the greatest promise for an active professionalism of teachers is its potential to liberate teachers to *believe in* and *act on* their capacity to make fine-grained professional judgements that best serve the needs of their students in ways that go beyond the limiting contingencies of technically organized professional standards. This is a form of agency that allows teachers to speak with *authority* about the various discourses that constitute the overall ecology of education. This leads to a proposition for an audacious critical reflexivity of the kind that Foucault (1984) suggested.

There is an extensive discussion about teacher reflexivity in AITSL’s documentation, but it is a reflexivity that seeks compliance to an imposed notion of what the teacher-as-self should be rather than a deep, transformative reflexivity. Audacious reflexivity is reflected in Foucault’s words when he says: “I don’t say the things I say because they are what I think, I say them as a way to make sure they no longer are what I think” (Foucault, 2013, p. 44). Paulo Freire expressed a similar intention in his lifelong theme of a pedagogy of liberation: “We can struggle to become free precisely because we can know we are not free!” (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13). Giroux (2010) expands on Freire’s ideas in more recent times, referring to a critical pedagogy that proposes “a way of thinking beyond the seemingly natural or inevitable state of things” (online); or again, Freire’s (1970) notion of conscientization as “the process in which men (sic), not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality” (p. 452). Parr (2010) is arguing in this same arena when he argues for “transgression dialogic potential” in teachers which, through critical reflexivity, challenges and destabilizes conventional thinking and acting (2010, p. 161). In being bold and taking risks, in “cultivating dissent” (Smyth et al., 2014, p. 15) and being imaginative and creative in thought, audacious reflexivity can create not just competent teachers but “transformative intellectuals in the classroom” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 502). Audacious reflexivity is more artfulness than technical expertise. It can achieve what Foucault (1985) principally sought to examine in his relational work: the extent to which “the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (p. 9).

An audacious reflexivity would not narrow its gaze to professional standards but look holistically beyond them. Such a reflexivity would allow teachers to orchestrate a power over their work to reconfigure the norms of professional standards. Such a reflexivity is within the means of teachers right now, as noted in the research of



Singh, Heimans, and Glasswell (2014), who recognized in their study of teachers' policy enactments not just "hope or resistance" but teachers who "actively engage with a completely different set of ideas about what schooling might be about" (p. 834). The reflexivity of the authentic and emancipated self stands as an ideal for the teacher-practitioner as active professional (Webster-Wright, 2010).

Audacious reflexivity can be framed as a part of care of the self. Audacious reflexivity provides the insights and the resilience for a teacher to maintain the ethical self, the "work one does on oneself" (Wain, 2007, p. 167), necessary to create a bulwark against the limits to professional identity imposed by the technical rationality of professional standards such as the AITSL Standards. An audacious reflexivity might be bold enough to challenge "selective inattention to practical competence and professional artistry" (Schön, 2005, p. vii) and heighten teachers' sense of professionalism so that teaching becomes a part of their "art of living" (Foucault, 1986, p. 45).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards are typical of technical professional standards for teachers generally (Call, 2018) and are lauded by all Australian State and Federal governments as a "significant national reform" in education (Education Council, 2019, p. 3). The commonality that inheres technical professional standards for teachers is the focus on the epistemological dimensions of teaching – what a teacher must *know* and be able to *do*, to the exclusion of the ontological dimension of teaching – the human person that the teacher *becomes* in order to be an exemplary teacher in a deeply interpersonal profession. Ontological capacities are hard to measure and so, consistent with the preoccupation with technical abilities in the modern neoliberal educational ecology, they are largely if not entirely ignored in professional standards. The non-epistemological nature of tacit ontological phenomena such as teacher dispositions is virtually unrecognized in the literature – only knowledge is privileged. Ignoring that which teachers hold to be central to their work asserts limits to what they can *be*, contributing to their sense of powerlessness. A form of professional standards that fails to resonate with teachers' experience of the exemplary teacher will diminish rather than contribute to professional identity and agency.

The disconnection between the intentions of policymakers and teachers' enactment strategies limits the potential impact of teaching standards on the profession. For teachers, in focusing on what a teacher should know and be able to do, professional standards omit the significant question of who the teacher *becomes* in the course of committing to the community whom they serve, their school leaders, their colleagues, their students, and their parents.

The normalizing tendencies of professional standards are consistent with the power of other normalizing neoliberal technologies. Education currently operates in a noosphere so constricted that teachers cannot imagine another way in which teaching might be constructed. Yet teachers' nagging concern with respect to

professional standards is a yet to be fully articulated sense of the critical importance of the ontology of teaching – the human person that the teacher presents to the world and the associated dispositions which enable exemplary teachers to be distinguished from those around them. That articulation will be unleashed only through an audacious reflexivity which challenges the normalizing effects of teacher standards and boldly asserts the ontological dimension – a set of teacher dispositions if you like – which teachers know, in their heart of hearts, is the essence of great teachers; that is to say, not what they know and can do, but the human person they are constantly in the process of becoming to those whom they teach. Foucault’s work on the ethics of the care of the self addresses these lofty concerns and provides a starting point for the development of an alternative to codification mechanisms for the nourishment of teacher dispositions (Foucault, 1985, 1986, 1987).

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# The Evolution of Response-to-Intervention **43**

## Continuities and Disruptions in the Past, Present, and Future

Vicki Park, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey

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### Abstract

This chapter traces the evolution of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) in the United States, focusing on the discourses that undergird its conceptualization in implementation and scholarship. Discourse on RTI began with concerns about student equity in special education. Its early conceptualization focused on mitigating the problematic nature of the special education designation process and attempted to shift the practice to providing early intervention supports within the general education setting. Current practices and perspectives continue to build on medical models of intervention and implementation approaches rooted in technical-rational methods. Critiques about RTI research and practice reflect broader analyses of policy implementation and large-scale school reforms described as overemphasizing the technical dimensions of change and underestimating the influence of the socio-cultural, cognitive, and political contexts.

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**Keywords**

Response-to-intervention · Equity · Policy implementation · School reform · Deficit thinking

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**Explanations****The Field of Memory**

RTI models were directly developed in contrast to the dominant discrepancy model, sometimes derisively referred to as the “wait to fail” model. A discrepancy model is used to identify students by assessing the difference between a student’s academic performance and standardized achievement and IQ test results. Criticism emerged within a decade, across several fronts, all of them psychometric in nature. The first criticism is that achievement scores are unstable over time, with variance in performance from one grade level to the next. A second area of criticism is in regard to the other part of the formula: the intelligence test, which are found to be culturally bias, especially for racially, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students. In practice the discrepancy model has not been an accurate tool for determining the difference between low-performing students who have been underserved and students with processing difficulties.

**The Field of Presence**

In its current basic iteration, RTI is typically presented as a three-tiered model, outlining processes for diagnosing and supporting student academic progress. The focus in Tier I is overall classroom instruction, ensuring that high-quality evidence-based instruction is accessible to all students. In Tier 2, students who are not benefitting from Tier 1 instruction are targeted for supplemental instruction, usually in small groups. Those students in Tier 2 who continue to make little progress are then considered for Tier 3 interventions which emphasizes personalized and intensive supports. If learning difficulties continued, then evidence of a lack of responsiveness to interventions may be submitted, along with other documentation, that the student may have a specific learning disability. Should it be determined, the student would be eligible for special education services.

**The Field of Concomitance**

RTI borrows from medical terms and models. As with many other educational terms, “response to intervention” emerged from the medical field as a way of describing a patient’s reaction to an emergency treatment. In contrast to previous diagnosing learning disabilities, advocates of RTI models believed that it would lead to reduction in identification bias, and earlier identification and academic supports for students. Scholarship on RTI is dominated by a focus on RTI’s diagnostic and monitoring processes, and research-based interventions within the fields of special education, school psychology, and reading education. Critical scholars observe that there is an overemphasis on technical-approaches to understanding RTI implementation and research and argue for analyses that attends to social, cultural, structural, and political conditions that mediate its enactment and student outcomes.



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### **Discontinuities and Ruptures which Form the Different Viewpoints of this Area or Field**

RTI is both an educational practice and a diagnostic tool for disability. Nowhere else in special education does this dual definition exist – diagnosis and intervention are separate processes that are not comingled. This version of response to intervention offers a newer set of presumptions. RTI was guided by several assumptions representing a paradigm shift from previous determinations of SLD eligibility, born out of dissatisfaction with the discrepancy model. Instead of first assuming that a student’s learning difficulties reside in their individual ability, it focuses on instruction, curriculum, and the classroom environment as influencing student outcomes. These shifts reflect a new and ongoing analysis of learning opportunity gaps as a key influence of student outcomes as opposed to practices that start with individual deficit frameworks.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

RTI models emphasize the use of evidence-based interventions, frequent progress-monitoring of student learning using curriculum-based assessments, and data-based decision-making. The discourse surrounding RTI, because of its history and coupling with special education, remain very much rooted in disability labels and sorting of students as evidenced by the language of tiers. These practices reflect broader reform trends centered on technical-rational approaches to improving schooling and student outcomes in the U.S.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter traces the evolution of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) in the United States, focusing on the discourses that undergird its conceptualization in implementation and scholarship. First, the philosophical roots of RTI and its relationship to discursive practices about special education and learning disabilities are presented. Next, a discussion of the initial emergence of RTI as a new educational innovation, followed by an analysis of its present conceptualization, implementation efforts, and consequences. In the conclusion, implications for future practice and research are discussed.

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## **Philosophical Roots of Response to Intervention and Disability**

As with many other educational terms, “response to intervention” emerged from the medical field as a way of describing a patient’s reaction to an emergency treatment. Notably, it is used in toxicology, where pulmonary and respiratory measurements provide immediate feedback to the technician on “the interaction between a given stimulus and the central nervous system” (1976, p. 5). The term sits adjacent to dose-response curves, which are an illustration of the relationship between the dosage of a drug and a patient’s physiological response.

The use of a medical model in education, especially in disability, has long been viewed as problematic (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980; Finkelstein, 2001; Wolfensberger, 1972). There has been a centuries-old tradition of viewing people



with disabilities as “abnormal, burdened with difficulties resulting from organic dysfunction requiring expert help in order to ameliorate undesirable effects” (Simmons, Blackmore, & Bayliss, 2008, p. 733). In this stance, disability is deviance and the role of special education, a modern form of addressing disability, is one of diagnosis and treatment to reduce the deviance. Disability rights theorists, on the other hand, have argued that disability is largely a social construct that is informed by the organizational structures of society. Foucault’s work has been a consistent influence on disability studies (Anders, 2013) especially as a seminal source for the argument of impairment as a social construction that obfuscates the true work of “diagnosing the forces that produce them” (p. 2). Instead, the focus remains on ameliorating their results.

This tension between a medical and a social model of disability is apparent in the creation of a new category of disability that is unique to schooling: specific learning disabilities. The discursive practices invoked by Foucault (1972) remind us that it is not language and words themselves, but the systems created to match the language, that must be attended to, noting that discourse yields to “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). Learning disabilities are uniquely academic in nature and are manifested within the realm of reading, writing, language, and mathematics. As such, they are defined in educational law as a “disorder” resulting from “perceptual difficulties, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia” (IDEA, 2004, 20 USC 1401(30)). However, they are not otherwise readily apparent when these skills are not being utilized.

Special education is predicated on assumptions of “normal” and the contrastive “abnormal” and therefore relies on a relationship with psychometrics as a means to quantify each (Reid & Valle, 2004). In this discursive practice, difference is pathologized (Skrtic, 1995). This analysis of the philosophical roots of response to intervention and disability should not be misinterpreted as an argument that specific learning disabilities do not exist, or that students with specific learning disabilities should not be served. Rather, they illustrate critical assumptions that undergird policy and practice.

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## Initial Emergence of RTI and Shifts

The application of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) in United States education became widespread as a result of its inclusion in the regulatory notes of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004), which allowed its use as an alternative for special education eligibility. It is notable that it does not appear in the law itself, only in its implementation. Further, RTI is limited to use for identifying students with a specific learning disability. Therein lies a conundrum, because RTI is both an educational practice and a diagnostic tool for disability. Nowhere else in special education does this dual definition exist – diagnosis and intervention are separate processes that are not comingled. Before it was codified into educational policy and evolved into a broader intervention model for students, RTI had its roots in

special education practice, where to this day, a major concern is the process of identifying students with specific learning disabilities. As such, since its inception in special education it has been as a means for identification.

Vaughn and Fuchs (2003) trace the origins of RTI as an alternate means of identification to a 1982 National Research Council report, *Placing Children in Special Education: A Strategy for Equity* (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982) which proposed three criteria for identify students for special education. The criteria included considering the quality of the general education program, whether the special education program in place could actually improve student outcomes, and whether the tests uses to identify students were valid and accurate (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). All three criteria needed to be met for specific learning disabilities (SLD) qualification.

As scholars began to operationalize the criteria laid out in the report, they highlighted the potential benefits of RTI approaches. The dominant discrepancy model, sometimes derisively referred to as the “wait to fail” model, did not serve young students well, as it requires demonstration of a lack of academic progress. Additionally, primary students do not take standardized tests. As a result, a child might be in second or third grade before being identified as having a SLD. In contrast, RTI was viewed as holding promising benefits such as the “(1) identification students using at risk rather than deficit model, (2) early identification and instruction of students with LD, (3) reduction of identification bias, and (4) a strong focus on student outcomes” (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003, p. 140). The argument for response to intervention as a means for identifying students with SLD was that it considered classroom factors in advance of qualification for special education supports and services.

In this early iteration, RTI was guided by several assumptions representing a paradigm shift from previous determinations of SLD eligibility, born out of dissatisfaction with the discrepancy model (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). A discrepancy model is used to identify students by assessing the difference between a student’s academic performance and standardized achievement and IQ test results. As outlined in the early years of federal oversight of special education, regulations for SLD identification required demonstration of “a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability” (U.S. Office of Education, 1977, p. G1082).

Criticism emerged within a decade, across several fronts, all of them psychometric in nature. The first criticism is that achievement scores are unstable over time, with variance in performance from one grade level to the next. Therefore, the use of an unstable metric against a more stable one (general intelligence) yields capricious results (e.g., Braden & Weiss, 1988), and a child’s qualification would be dependent on how he or she performed on a standardized test. A second area of criticism is in regard to the other part of the formula: the intelligence test. Problems of cultural bias abound when it comes to intelligence testing, especially for racially, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students (e.g., Reschly, 1984). In practice the discrepancy model has not been an accurate tool for differentiating between low-performing students who have been underserved and students with processing difficulties. This has led to some researchers arguing that low achievement should be enough to qualify for services and that intelligence testing is not necessary or valid for discerning between poor readers and dyslexic readers (Siegel, 1992; Stanovich, 1991).

The discrepancy model for identification of SLD is still in widespread use, and contemporary research of its shortcomings continue to emerge. Others have noted that the process neglects to consider factors beyond the individual child's performance nor does it question the validity of such tests in determining ability and performance (Artiles, Bal, & Thorius, 2010; Sabnis, Castillo, & Wolgemuth, 2019). In addition, Francis, Fletcher, and Stuebing (2005) demonstrated that 39% students who were identified as having a specific learning disability in third grade did not meet the same qualification in fifth grade.

The discrepancy model's tendency toward variance is amplified further because of the lack of specificity about the nature of the gap, as most any gap will do. If tested, most children would show some gap between performance and potential (McGill, 2018). This weakness appears to have been exploited in the 2019 college admissions scandal, where high school students obtained a diagnosis of a specific learning disability in order to petition the College Board for a testing accommodation (Lovett, 2020). Notably, the private psychologists who gave the diagnoses were not involved in the deception, as the person at the center of the scandal knew that virtually any tested student would show some discrepancy. As an added measure, according the FBI records, parents were advised to tell their child to "act stupid" or "act slow" in order to feign a disability (Lovett, 2020, p. 126).

In 2004, the RTI statute appeared in the IDEA legislation regulations. While it preserved the discrepancy model as a means for identification, it added through "additional authority" the option that a student could be identified through alternate means – response to intervention:

*In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures described in paragraphs (2) and (3). [20 USC 1414(b)(6)]*

In doing so, the shift to RTI as an alternate means of identification introduced new possibilities as well as new challenges. What exactly does "scientific, research-based intervention" mean? With this came the introduction of new discursive practices that "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49).

Overall, the discourse in the early conceptualization of RTI focused on mitigating the problematic nature of the special education designation process and attempted to shift the practice to providing early intervention supports within the general education setting. In addition to focusing on high-quality classroom instruction, RTI approaches emphasized the use of evidence-based interventions, frequent progress-monitoring of student learning using curriculum-based assessments, and data-based decision-making. These practices reflect broader reform trends centered on technical-rational approaches to improving schooling in the USA (Datnow & Park, 2009; Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Fergus, & King Thorius, 2017), paralleling the national policy push in the early 2000s for "gold-standard research" (often narrowly defined as randomized experimental/quasi-experimental designs) in order to establish "what works." At the

same time, scholarly debates about what counted as valid and reliable research evidence to influence educational practice and policy were also at the forefront (Berliner, 2002; Eisenhart & Towne, 2003; Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002). As federal policy privileged narrow definitions of what counted as evidence for teaching and learning, assessments and accountability data became critical tools for decision-making in schools. In the following section, the current discourse on RTI implementation and research is analyzed.

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## **From Emerging Innovation to Established Practice: Continuities and Disruptions in Discourse and Practice**

A decade after its codification into federal policy, all 50 states allowed RTI as an alternate means for identification of a specific learning disability (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). In its current basic iteration, RTI is typically presented as a three-tiered model, outlining processes for diagnosing and supporting student academic progress. The focus in Tier I is overall classroom instruction, ensuring that high-quality evidence-based instruction is accessible to all students. In Tier 2, students who are not benefitting from Tier 1 instruction are targeted for supplemental instruction, usually in small groups. Those students in Tier 2 who continue to make little progress are then considered for Tier 3 interventions which emphasizes personalized and intensive supports. If learning difficulties continued, then evidence of a lack of responsiveness to interventions may be submitted, along with other documentation, that the student may have a specific learning disability. Should it be determined, the student would be eligible for special education services.

This version of response to intervention offers a newer set of presumptions. Instead of first assuming that a student's learning difficulties reside in their individual ability, it focuses on instruction, curriculum, and the classroom environment as influencing student outcomes (Artiles et al., 2010; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). In other words, the target of initial intervention is the classroom rather than an individual student. Furthermore, identification measures are directly linked to instruction. It rests on a key assumption is that "responsiveness to treatment can differentiate between two explanations for low achievement: poor instruction versus disability" (Fuchs, 2002, p. 521). These shifts reflect a new and ongoing analysis of learning opportunity gaps as a key influence of student outcomes as opposed to practices that start with individual deficit frameworks. At the same time, the discourse surrounding RTI, because of its history and coupling with special education, remain very much rooted in disability labels and sorting of students as evidenced by the language of tiers.

Although the unit of intervention has changed from an initial focus on an individual student to instructional practice, both discourse and practice on RTI remains centered on medical models and standardized practices. Ferri (2012) notes that "terms such as standard, universal, protocol, and treatment predominate in the literature on RTI. Envisioning the classroom as a laboratory, under RTI, everyone follows the same standard treatment protocol, which is understood to be universally

applicable and effective” (p. 865). Scholars from a critical tradition have questioned the central assumptions of RTI, especially its exclusive centering of student ability issues (Artiles, 2015; Thorius & Maxcy, 2015), arguing that this narrow analytic focus ignores the socio-cultural nature of learning and the intersectionality of student identity and experiences beyond ability labels (Artiles et al., 2010). For instance, lack of attention is paid to how race, gender, and/or language identities intersect with institutional factors in understanding student outcomes. Thus, RTI follows educational policies and reform efforts that are colorblind and neglects to directly grapple with the needs of diverse student populations (Artiles et al., 2010; Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017; Thorius & Sullivan, 2013).

The critical discourse surrounding RTI reflects broader equity concerns in education, especially the overrepresentation of minoritized students in special education (in both learning disabilities and behavioral disorders programs) and how best to serve diverse students. It also critiques the lack of attention paid to structures, history, politics, and the socio-cultural contexts in which reforms are implemented. Critical scholars continue to raise questions about RTI implementation and the lack of attention paid to social, cultural, structural, and political conditions that mediate how it is enacted in schools (Artiles et al., 2010; Thorius & Maxcy, 2015). These scholars argue that there is an over emphasis on a technical-approach to RTI implementation and research such as concentrating on procedures and categorization. Scholarship on RTI is dominated by a focus on RTI’s “essential components (screening, school monitoring, research-principled general education instruction, and supplemental intervention)” within the fields of special education, school psychology, and reading education (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012, p. 2). RTI research and practice tends to either emphasize its use narrowly for special education identification or a whole school reform approach (Sabnis et al., 2019) with multiple discourses about its description and implementation processes ranging from a focus on services for students with disabilities to more expansive systemic change that reconfigures the relationship between special education and general education (Artiles et al., 2010).

In addition to placing a premium on evidence-based instruction and intervention, RTI also stresses fidelity as a critical element of implementation (Ferri, 2012; Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017; Thorius & Maxcy, 2015). The emphasis on fidelity is another reflection of the technical-rational approach to policy implementation and educational administration. Traditional models of policy implementation and school improvement tend to assume the trajectory of the change process as linear or presume that it occurs in steps (Datnow & Park, 2009; Honig, 2006; Kuipers et al., 2014). In reality, change trajectories may be more spiral or open-ended (Weick & Quinn, 1999), especially if change is expected to be continuous rather than an episodic event (Todnem By, 2005). The technical-rational perspective focuses on the administrative and procedural aspects of reform implementation while downplaying the influence of context, tending to view local variation in implementation as a problem rather than as inevitable or potentially desirable (Datnow & Park, 2009; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992).

Thorius and Maxcy (2015) note that much of the RTI research focuses on implementation efficacy and fidelity which are important to assess but neglects to consider

the complexity of the policy enactment process which influences both implementation and student outcomes. RTI practices suggest major shifts for the role of teachers, who are the main agents of its implementation. They are not only expected to be instructional experts who are well versed in scientifically based evidence for teaching and learning, but are also called to have ability to use data and understanding of curriculum-based assessments to diagnose and support student learning needs. When implementing reforms, individuals and groups engage in sensemaking processes that mediate how they conceptualize and act out policy, constructing understandings within the confines of their current cognitive frameworks and enacting their interpretations in ways that create new ways of thinking, relational patterns, and practices (Coburn, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Because sensemaking occurs in a social context, there can be different interpretations of the same message even within a single organization such as a school (Coburn, 2006; Siskin, 1994). This is also the case for RTI as evidenced by multiple varying definitions and processes enacted by states and schools (Berkeley, Scanlon, Bailey, Sutton, & Sacco, 2020).

Both explicit and implicit notions of teaching and learning is especially relevant to RTI as the model rests on the assumption that the first tier of intervention lies on ensuring high quality instruction. Ferri (2012) observed, “Surprisingly, given the discourse about teacher fidelity, there is much about RTI that is a bit of a moving target at this point. For example, there is little consensus on what constitutes the “R” in RTI—an issue that is largely left to those implementing the model” (p. 866). In general, ongoing questions and challenged remained about progress monitoring, what counts as effective Tier 1 and Tier 2 instructional strategies, and highly quality professional development to support teacher implementation (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). What does high quality instruction look like? What would it look like to seriously consider culturally responsive pedagogy instead of universal, acultural, and colorblind practices? As scholars have noted, research on effective and appropriate instructional practices for culturally and linguistically diverse student populations remain underdeveloped with regards to RTI studies (Ferri, 2012; Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Thorius & Sullivan, 2013). Although some scholars observe that “RTI’s greatest accomplishment to date may be the dramatic increase in school’s routine reliance on screening to identify students at risk for reading and increasing math difficulties” (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012, p. 2), on the whole, evaluation of RTI itself as a means to improve student academic outcomes remains mixed and limited (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Beyond RTI, knowing how to scale up and sustain systemic reform that improves instructional practice and student learning has been rare (Cohen & Mehta, 2017).

Research on school reform, especially those focused on equity issues, have shown that without directly confronting taken-for-granted assumptions about schooling and learning, practices will revert to the status quo. Schooling contexts as well as existing capacities and ideology of reformers and practitioners have consistently shaped the implementation process of new education programs and policy (Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999; Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Honig, 2006; Lipman, 1997; McLaughlin, 1987; Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Educators have been found to implement the surface level aspects of reform by changing the structure of their classes, instructional routines, and materials without understanding the theories and

principles that drive those practices (Coburn, 2006; Cuban, 2013; Oakes, 1995; Spillane et al., 2002). Given the complexities of reform expectations, as well as the lack of attention to capacity building and professional development in policy, this is unsurprising. This is also borne out within RTI implementation and research. Taking a critical qualitative approach, Sabnis and colleagues (2019) studied six white elementary school teachers about serving Black students using RTI. The teachers in their study had a compliance approach to implementing RTI and defined it as a four-step process to help students with reading problems before they qualified for special education services. They note that, “the tiers thus came to be a typology to ability in a way that paralleled the traditional typology of special education student and general education student that RTI proponents meant to eliminate” (Sabnis et al., 2019, p. 18). The researchers found teachers used deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010) to evaluate students and make sense of data. Similarly, Thorius, Maxcy, Macey, and Cox’s (2014) case study of RTI implementation in an urban elementary school found that educators used pre-RTI processes to determine special education eligibility and engaged in deficit discourse about students and families for diagnoses. These findings are in line with the broader research on policy implementation, which underscores how teacher’s beliefs about students’ backgrounds and their ideologies on teaching and learning influence how reforms are enacted in every day practice (Bertrand & Marsh, 2015; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Lipman, 1997; Oakes et al., 1997; Rubin, 2008). Without directly confronting deficit beliefs about students of color, those from low-income backgrounds, or diverse abilities, teachers and schools are likely to recreate existing structures of inequality (Artiles, 2015; Oakes et al., 1997; Valencia, 2010).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The discourse on RTI began with concerns about student equity in special education, with solutions and perspectives building on medical models of intervention and implementation approaches rooted in technical-rational methods. RTI discourse attempted to shift away from an emphasizes on individual student learning deficits to that of classroom instruction and curriculum interventions in the general education setting. Attempting to blur the boundaries between special education and general education, “It offers nothing less than re-framing of responses to struggling learners using a public health logic which prevention, early intervention, and ongoing data-based performance are hallmarks” (Artiles, 2015, p. 12). Critical discourse about RTI research and practice reflect broader and historical analyses of policy implementation and large-scale school reforms described as overemphasizing the technical dimensions of change and underestimating the influence of the sociocultural, cognitive, and political contexts. In its early stages of development, scholars expressed concern that without thoughtful consideration of the needs of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, as well as the implementation and support for quality instruction, RTI models will simply reproduce inequities and deficit frameworks (Ferri, 2012; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). There is evidence that RTI practice and research continues to follow larger trends in school reform and educational change, where new reforms fail



to explicitly deal with implementation in ways that challenge dominant ideologies about student learning and day-to-day schooling practices.

In a more recent analysis of state education agencies RTI guides and policies, Berkeley et al.'s (2020) suggests that conceptualization of RTI continues to evolve with variance across contexts. In contrast to 2007 when RTI was the only tier support model, by 2017, 17 states referred to using RTI while 21 referenced Multiple Systems of Support (MTSS) or a combination of RTI and MTSS ( $n = 5$ ) (Berkeley et al., 2020). The use of these terms, however, does not necessarily reflect accurate differences in models themselves. Berkeley et al. (2020) found that some states explicitly articulate MTSS as distinct from RTI while others use MTSS as an umbrella term for numerous initiatives and programs including RTI. The shift towards MTSS may also be a reflection of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), where it generally references multitier systems of support with regards to K-12 literacy. The evolution of RTI towards MTSS suggests an explicit decoupling of its root from the narrow focus on identification of learning disabilities to broader notions of student supports that are more systemic. MTSS also signals a coupling of student learning support with socioemotional ones, with a move towards a more holistic view of students. It remains to be seen if future research and practice in this area will explicitly pay attention to ideologies and assumptions about equity, student identities, teacher capacity, and implementation processes.

In terms of recommendations, we suggest:

- Moving away from RTI to MTSS, inclusive of the social and emotional learning
- Embrace a more holistic view of students
- Monitor equity issues such as the demographics of students who are referred to RTI or MTSS
- Refrain from labeling students based on the types of support they receive (e.g., do not say that there are “tier 2 students”)
- Design and implement strategies to remove learning barriers such that fewer students need supplemental and intensive interventions

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Accountability and Assessment](#)
- ▶ [Finding and Promoting Effective Leaders](#)
- ▶ [History of the Field of Special Education](#)

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# The Principal and the Student: Uncovering the Power and Potential of Meaningful Interpersonal Connections

# 44

Jamie Kudlats

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## Abstract

The image of the school principal as a distant authority figure, especially in the eyes of students, belies the complex nature of the role and the potential it has to meaningfully impact students. Further complicating efforts to better understand the immensely relational aspects of the principalship is a large body of research on school leadership that is primarily focused on issues of academic press and the various pathways and mechanisms through which leadership’s effects on student outcomes are manifest. The result is a principal who is often viewed by scholars and laypeople alike as an administrator, a manager of resources and adults, and a dispenser of discipline. While student outcomes (primarily academic) have become a top priority over the years, there remains a perceived distance between principals and individual students, with few exceptions.

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The reality, however, is that many principals indeed prioritize individual positive connections with students, as the interactions not only provide a respite from the bureaucratic and adult-centric responsibilities but also offer the principal direct insight into the lives and experiences of the students for whom the principal is ultimately responsible. This perspective aids the principal in forming a deeper understanding of the many complex programs, characteristics, and human elements of the school. The result can be a more informed, student-centered principal.

As the literature on these meaningful interpersonal connections between principals and students, or the *Principal-Student Relationship* (PSR), is extremely thin, this chapter is devoted to establishing some groundwork to begin to understand and study the phenomenon.

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**Keywords**

Principal-student relationship · Principalship · Relationships · Caring school leadership · Positive school leadership

**The Field of Memory**

Due to the lack of scholarly attention paid to the topic of principal-student relationships, the Field of Memory for this particular phenomenon is rather limited – being primarily confined to the principal as the disciplinarian. From its inception in the 1800s, through present times as some would argue, the principal was primarily responsible for maintaining the safe, orderly, and efficient operation of the school. The history of the principalship reveals a role that works through systems and staff in order to impact students.

**The Field of Presence**

A number of theories and ideas support the pursuit of meaningful relationships in schools: Positive School Leadership Theory (Murphy & Louis, 2018) which primarily stems from the field of Positive Psychology; Appreciative Inquiry (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011); and Notions of care in schools and caring school leadership (Bryk, 2010; Noddings, 2013; Smylie, Murphy, & Louis, 2020; Starratt, 1991). Additionally, professional standards of practice for school leaders have begun to reflect these emerging positive and caring approaches to school leadership by including much more relational, asset-based, and human-centric language.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Positive School Leadership Theory (Murphy & Louis, 2018) primarily stems from the field of Positive Psychology. Similarly, Appreciative Inquiry (Watkins et al., 2011) focuses on the positive interpersonal aspects of organizations to promote effective collaboration and participation. Notions of care and caring in schools, which have largely been the focus of the *teacher-student relationship* (TSR), incorporate attachment and social-motivational perspectives of relationship theory (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, a greater attention to social issues and the overall well-being of children resulted in some shifts away from power, authority, and bureaucratic oversight and toward a more supportive and relational view of school leadership. The social justice and students' rights movements that rose to prominence in the latter half of the century further ruptured the field of school leadership and began to reshape the principalship. The standards and accountability movement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries continue to reshape the principalship. All of these ruptures have had small to moderate effects on the relationship between principals and students. The possible rupture that may have the most significant impact on the principal-student relationship may be currently developing. The rise of positive leadership theories and relational leading may hold the most promise to promote healthy and meaningful PSRs. Despite these ruptures, the principalship has remained a context-specific, individualized role, defined differently depending upon the occupant and the setting.

### **Critical Assumptions in Defining the PSR**

The PSR can likely be defined in many ways, as it has yet to be deeply studied. Little is known about the phenomenon. It is, however, important to note that, for the purposes of this chapter, the PSR refers to the human connections between principals and students. It is not to be confused with the many different *comparative relationships* that may or may not exist between principal characteristics, behaviors, actions, etc. and student outcomes. Furthermore, as it is presented throughout this chapter, the PSR is not limited to the type of formal interpersonal relationship that is reciprocal and has been well-established over time. The PSR may also include caring interactions between principals and students that might be too brief and/or one-sided to be called a relationship in and of themselves. These interactions or moments of connection are included in the present definition of the PSR as they are foundational to relational development.

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## **National Perspectives**

This chapter is written primarily through the lens of the American principalship. While historical underpinnings of the role might vary slightly from one Western country to another, as would some cultural norms, traditions, organizational structures, and degrees of autonomy, many of the issues most school leaders face, along with views about what constitutes effective leadership, tend to be rather similar (see Barrett-Baxendale & Burton, 2009, Creissen & Ellison, 1998, Huber, 2009, or Sammons, Gu, Day, & Ko, 2011 for descriptions of school leadership in the UK, for example). Issues of diversity, testing, efficiency, management, and standards and accountability, for example, are not reserved for American schools. The responsibility that school leaders have to improve student outcomes and well-being, while managing the safe and efficient operations of the school, is relatively universal

expectations. As the premise of this chapter centers on meaningful principal-student interactions as a means of better meeting school leaders' goals and responsibilities, the content is likely relevant and important to all those serving in leadership capacities, regardless of nationality.

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## Introduction

*On the first day stepping into the middle school math class, the new teacher, nervous about but quite eager to begin his teaching career, gained his energy for the work not from the algebra or geometry, but from each of the students. Getting to know them as individuals – not just their learning styles or procedural fluencies, but also their hopes and fears, passions and beliefs – gave the work its true meaning and purpose for him. It was fun and exciting. It helped him connect with the students and make the curriculum and pedagogy a little more relevant. The teacher-student relationships were a top priority for him, as they are for so many teachers.*

*When he became a principal, which happened much sooner than he had anticipated, he mourned the inevitable loss of those treasured relationships with students. After all, he was now responsible for all the teachers, the entire curriculum, the physical plant, a large budget, and the safety, well-being, and academic performance of every single student. There just would not be time to build those treasured relationships with students anymore.*

*But the mourning was premature. He found ways to build those relationships. Like so many other principals, he carved out time and space to get to know his students. He ate lunch with them. He roamed the halls, chatting with them during class transitions. He sat in the bleachers watching sports, and he joined them on field trips. Just like in the classroom, these relationships helped him connect to the life of the school community and the individuals within it. He believed that the relationships helped him make better, more informed decisions, as well as contributed to many other positive outcomes.*

Principals, like the one described above, are likely present in countless schools across the United States and around the world. These are principals who gain energy and derive satisfaction from interacting with and getting to know their students. These are principals who make every effort to work time with students into their incredibly busy schedules. These are principals who leverage the knowledge they gain about their students in order to better understand their school and how the hundreds or thousands of decisions principals make each day will impact their students. These are principals who recognize that schools are relational, people-centered organizations, and the student is the top priority. These are not the principals many are likely to recall from their own experiences and, until very recently, the student-centered actions and orientations of these principals have not been prioritized in research or professional practice.

The little that is known about the PSR compels us to establish some epistemological foundations for this understudied phenomenon. To do so, this chapter will begin by exploring the PSR within the historical context of the principalship. Next,

current understandings of the phenomenon are presented, followed by the professional and scholarly contexts in which the PSR may be situated. The chapter concludes with reflections on the present and future of the PSR in practice and scholarship.

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## The Historical Place of the Principal-Student Relationship

Throughout the history of the principalship, school leaders have been pulled further and further away from students by the bureaucratic and managerial demands of the job; the only remotely formal exception to this distance has been with respect to discipline. Over the years, many have called for inspirational, deeply connected, visible, approachable principals who meaningfully know and care about the people in their schools, including the students. But those sentiments, most especially with respect to students, have rarely expanded beyond the bounds of what English and Papa (2015) call *kitsch-like* rhetoric, and into the more practical realms of principal preparation, evaluation, scholarship, and in turn, the overall perception of the principalship. To better understand why this might be, we need to briefly explore the history of the principalship, paying particular attention to the place of the student.

Interestingly, prior to recent years, little understanding on the history of the principalship existed. Historians focused primarily on larger policy history or the history of teachers and students. As Rousmaniere (2013) noted, principals lived in liminal space, “neither players in policy development nor in the day-to-day life of the classroom” (p. 1). However, like Rousmaniere, some historians have now begun to explore the history of the principalship.

The history presented herein begins roughly around the mid-1800s. There is no doubt that schools existed prior to this time period, and no doubt that many of those schools had leaders. The choice was made to begin exploring the principalship at this particular time due to the era’s focus on consolidation and systematizing schools and schooling, and the profound effects it had on establishing the formal role of principal. Prior to this time period, schools were largely independent, sparsely located and attended, widely variable, unstable entities subject to a variety of forces that could quickly and easily change or close schools (Rousmaniere, 2013). In this section, a brief history of the principalship is presented chronologically. As most accounts of the formal responsibilities that would place principals and students in close proximity to one another are largely limited to maintaining order and discipline, a separate section detailing disciplinary context is included following the historical account of the principalship.

### Establishing a Profession and a Growing Divide

The American principal, largely as it is known today, grew to prominence in the mid-1800s. The burgeoning notions of consolidation, bureaucratization, and professionalization taking hold in the urban areas were also beginning to spread



across the country. Populations were growing, and the number of schools increased. Fascinated by new conceptions of order and efficiency – divisions of labor within factories, the hierarchical and coordinated structures of businesses – educators were excited by the opportunities to “systematize” schools and schooling (Tyack, 1974).

As schools grew to house multiple classrooms and multiple teachers, so did the need for someone to “oversee” the day-to-day operations of these increasingly complex entities. Initially, this responsibility fell to a teacher who would attend to the various administrative tasks in addition to performing their teaching duties. Often called the head teacher, principal teacher, or teaching principal, this person worked as both instructor and building administrator, attending to various clerical and janitorial tasks, and implementing specific board policies (Brown, 2011).

Very early on, however, some principals’ teaching duties were being eliminated so that these people could focus on the increasing administrative demands of the job (Pierce, 1935). By the end of the nineteenth century, the typical principal was an administrator, manager, and supervisor and instructor of teachers (Brown, 2011; Cuban, 1985; Kafka, 2009; Pierce, 1935; Rousmaniere, 2007). Until this point, many school leaders still maintained one foot in the classroom, directly connected to students. Unfortunately, however, the growing demands of the role were moving the principal further and further away from the student.

According to Pierce (1935), as teaching responsibilities declined, the principal’s primary duties were to give and enforce orders, to direct, advise, and instruct teachers, to supervise and rate janitors, and to requisition educational and maintenance supplies. With respect to students, the principal “classified pupils, disciplined them, and enforced safeguards designed to protect their health and morals” (p. 39). This more authoritative role was largely reserved for men (Blount, 1998; Brown, 2011).

Within the historical accounts of the principal, what these somewhat vague student-centered job responsibilities actually looked like in practice is even less clear. Schools and districts evolved disparately, as the needs in one school or district would often be vastly different from the needs in another. As a result, there was no overarching plan for the creation and implementation of these new administrative roles. There were few legal parameters, little professional support, and tenuous job descriptions. In many cases, the single prerequisite was that the person holding the position of principal have some teaching experience. Ironically, the job was almost always focused on the efficient operation of the school in the mechanical sense, and not on teaching or learning from a pedagogical perspective.

By the first few decades of the twentieth century, principals had mostly been removed from their teaching duties altogether. Authority and responsibility increased to manage the growing size, scope, and complexity of the schools and school systems. Clerical tasks were offloaded to others, allowing the principal to focus more on supervision and oversight responsibilities (Rousmaniere, 2007). At this time, emerging national preference for “experts” in decision-making positions bolstered the notions of Scientific Management (Taylor, 2011), reinforced the management and bureaucratic underpinnings of the principalship, and helped professionalize the role (Brown, 2011; Cuban, 1985; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Great tensions existed in education at this time. Notions of authority and scientific management were often at odds with the noble and spiritual “calling” of the profession and the Deweyan efforts to democratize schools. Cubberley (1923) described the importance of the principal being a role model to students, commenting: “In all his contacts with teachers, pupils, and parents [the principal] must seem both genuine and human. Pompous dignity will count for nothing” (p. 27). Still, Cubberley argued that the principal’s allegiance should lie with the district: “The principal should feel that he represents the administration before the teachers, before the children, and before the parent, and that he acts largely in the place of and in the name of the superintendent of schools” (p. 23).

These tensions often resulted in attempts to reorient principals by clarifying some of the ambiguous directives and emphasizing the need for principals to prioritize the supervisory or relational aspects of the job over the bureaucratic. Pierce (1935) concluded that as early as 1863, the assistant superintendent of New York City schools was advocating for principals to have more time to mentor struggling teachers. Ten years later, the need was reiterated, with the same assistant superintendent providing suggestions as to how to relieve principals of some of their clerical duties. Rousmaniere (2007) revealed that, in 1924, Chicago’s superintendent pressed principals to get out of their offices and into the hearts of their schools. While these accounts suggest how principals struggled to maintain relationships in the face of their rising administrative responsibilities, most accounts describe the principal’s motives as being almost exclusively teacher-centered. Connecting directly with students did not appear to be a consideration, much less a priority.

Interestingly, though likely not surprisingly, Pierce (1935) reported that “A large number of responsibilities of the principal do not appear in rules and regulations of school boards. . . but result from the creative efforts of principals themselves” (p. 53). These “activities initiated by principals” included pupils clubs, school newspaper, pupil activities for promoting courtesy, supervision of playground activities at recess, and providing clothing and food for the poor. Pierce did not elaborate on any of these programs, and it is unclear as to the degree of principal involvement in these types of activities. However, Beck and Murphy (1993) noted that while little is written about the principal-student relationship during this time, what is written indicates that principals “work[ed] with and through the school hierarchy” to meet their responsibilities to students (p. 30).

### **Baby Steps: Toward a More Student-Centered Principal**

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, the principalship wrestled with the seismic shifts in schools and schooling. Following the First World War, the Great Depression, and the subsequent New Deal, American obsession with cherished capitalist business practices and values waned. Ties between business and school administration were undone (as cited in Brown, 2011). The Great Depression reinforced the progressive ideal of caring for the whole child, and schools became more concerned with social issues and the wellbeing of children. Efforts were made

to provide students with medical examinations, hot lunches, and clothing (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005).

Further reinforced by the patriotism surrounding the Second World War and the threat of Communism and the Cold War, schools were seen as crucial components of a strong democratic society. In addition, the human resources and behavioral sciences movements of the 1940s and 1950s emphasized people over systems and organizational objectives. The principalship reflected this shift in values, and its spiritual motivators and autocratic tendencies were replaced by desires for more inclusive, involved, and relational leadership. More emphasis was placed on constructive and supportive supervision, rather than bureaucratic oversight (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Brown, 2011; Goodwin et al., 2005; Kafka, 2009). Expectations for principal training steadily increased, and programs augmented the managerial and bureaucratic foci with greater attention to the social and human relations facets of organizations (Brown, 2011).

As such, a more direct and meaningful principal-student relationship made a brief appearance in the 1950s. Writers in this period stressed “the importance of principals cultivating personal, friendly relationships with students” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p. 81) based on a belief that a firsthand understanding of individuals and social conditions would help principals manage their schools. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), this may have been more rhetoric than reality. In the middle of the twentieth century, “Educators’ real concern [was] how to efficiently and economically move masses of students through the system” despite the stated values revolving around “democracy, equality, and meeting social needs” (p. 48).

While most educators likely embraced the managerial tendencies of the role, it is important to reinforce that not every educator bought into this bureaucratic administrative mindset. Rousmaniere (2013) noted, “African American principals in segregated schools and progressive white principals saw democratic leadership and community engagement as a central tenet of their work, and they shaped their role as principal into an advocacy position for civic activism, student and teacher leadership, and labor unity” (p. 58). Many of the schools led by these principals became community hubs, focused on meeting the unique needs of the individuals within that community. Some schools fully embraced Deweyan democratic ideals, placing students firmly at the center of school decision-making. One of these principals “gently supervised student activities, providing dialogic questions that encouraged student exploration and offering technical support” (Rousmaniere, 2013, p. 66). Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, African American principals were also much more than building leaders. All-white school boards all but ignored these segregated and resource-deprived schools, which typically resulted in principals having far more authority and freedom than their counterparts in white schools. This often led to African American principals taking on a much broader role as well-respected community leaders and role models to students and adults alike.

But the second half of the twentieth century gave rise to economic and sociopolitical forces that placed schools and schooling center-stage in major legal and cultural battles. Growing global competitiveness and economic concerns ushered in considerable calls for education reform, and the civil rights movement that gained

significant momentum in the 1960s led to substantial legal reforms that directly affected schools. Principals were responsible for upholding legal rulings in schools and protecting students' rights while facing ever increasing pressure to improve academic performance.

In the 1980s, following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), academic achievement and preparing students for the workforce in a climate of high expectations was of primary concern. Tighter standards, stronger certification requirements, and increased accountability became steppingstones toward the increased efficiency and effectiveness of schools. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and supervision were prioritized. The principal became less of a program manager and more of an instructional leader (Beck & Murphy, 1992; Brown, 2011; Goodwin et al., 2005; Hallinger, 1992; Kafka, 2009).

Yet, as Beck and Murphy (1993) indicated, the principal's role at the end of the twentieth century presented a split view regarding relationships between principals and students. On the one hand, the more prescriptive literature points to the principal's role as a setter of high standards and expectations, as well as a role model for those expectations. On the other hand, in the more descriptive accounts, some principals are portrayed "as taking a very personal interest in individual students" (p. 171). In these accounts, principals are described as visiting students who were in the hospital, or taking work home to students who had been suspended in order to show that discipline was not a result of a dislike for students. The authors to which Beck and Murphy referred described principals who "place a high value on sensitive, caring, direct interactions between principals and students" (p. 174). But as Beck and Murphy indicated, these types of interactions "[did] not seem to be a major concern with those who write about the evaluation of educational leaders" (p. 174). Furthermore, these student-centered principals may not have been as common as one might have hoped. As Cuban (1985) pointed out, "While a few principals continue to take over classes when a substitute fails to show up or to teach a demonstration lesson, or even to work with a group of children weekly, such examples are so rare that newspapers will write articles about a principal who teaches students nowadays" (p. 113).

Over the past few decades, improving academic performance has remained one of the principal's primary concerns. In fact, increasing oversight, accountability, and funding mandates from local, state, and federal levels have only increased the pressure principals face. Principals today still wrestle with similar tensions that have plagued the role since its inception, while now also having to contend with the effects of a free-market capitalism mindset that drives a significant amount of school policy decisions. This complicated history of the principalship reveals a long struggle between administratively managing complex bureaucratic entities and guiding an organization that is fundamentally deeply personal, subjective, and relational. Despite numerous reminders attempting to reorient school leaders to focus on the human side of the work, professional expectations rarely heeded the calls. When they did, they were primarily focused on the principal's relationships with teachers. Many principals did indeed interact with students in positive and caring ways, but they did so of their own accord.

## School Discipline: A Brief Overview

The most widely recognized area in which principals are *perceived* to interact directly with students is school discipline. However, the reality is, like many other responsibilities that fall under their purview, principals may choose to rely on the system hierarchy when it comes to discipline. It is widely understood that assistant principals often bear the brunt of managing school discipline (Germes, 2010; Glanz, 1994). Still, one of the principal's primary responsibilities has always been to maintain a safe and orderly environment in which effective and meaningful teaching and learning can take place. While the definitions of good teaching and learning may change over time, as do the methods the principal employs in order to maintain them, his obligation to oversee and maintain them does not.

It is important to note that school discipline is largely shaped by the broad sociological contexts that influence schools and are influenced by schools. Rousmaniere, Dehli, and de Connick-Smith (1997) state that schools are places "where adults [make] competing claims on children's time and space, while attempting to shape the minds and bodies, as well as the 'character' and conduct, of young people" (p. 3). Schools embody a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that define what teaching and learning should be, and thus result in a set of rules and practices that must be enacted when those norms – or the social order of schools – are violated. Discipline, despite its Latin origins related to learning, has largely been associated with punishment, and the hierarchical, systems-and-efficiency model of modern schooling has only perpetuated exclusionary and punitive disciplinary practices.

Again, many of the beliefs, values, and behaviors that have defined good teaching and learning over the years have changed, but the principal's role has not. For example, early texts on school discipline revealed an evolution in thinking about what effective discipline should support or produce. A safe and orderly school – or "well-disciplined" according to Bagley (1914) – in the second half of the nineteenth century would have been marked by "silence, the rigidity of posture, and the precision of movement" (p. 1). In the early twentieth century, coinciding with the emerging pedagogically progressive notions of democratic schooling, that primary regard for the "physical attitude" was eventually replaced by a concern for the "mental attitude." Bagley pointed to student engagement, curricular relevance, sympathy, and a "spirit of cooperation [. . .] between teacher and pupils" as evidence of a "well-disciplined school" (p. 2). It is interesting to note that, even more than a century ago, there was an understanding of what we still see as critical components to ensuring a positive school environment conducive to teaching and learning. How those noble aims should be achieved was far less clear.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, descriptive and prescriptive accounts of the principalship were scarce. As writings about the profession increased, a fuller picture of the role came into view. In these texts, school discipline was largely presented as a "compassionate" exercise prioritizing the "best interests" of the students. In practice, however, the descriptions of how school discipline was enacted would likely not be considered "compassionate" by today's standards. One of the earliest detailed accounts of the principal's role as disciplinarian was outlined by

Robert Chamberlain in 1959. To Chamberlain, the principal should serve as a systematic and logical investigator in order to make fact-based decisions. It would be “imperative” that a disciplined student “be given an opportunity to tell his story to a *seemingly* impartial and sympathetic audience (p. 141, emphasis added). Immediately following, Chamberlain stated that making decisions based upon the student’s version of events “will generally prove [. . .] unwise” (p. 141). Still, Chamberlain’s hope was for students to view their principal “as a friend and confidant to an even greater degree than he is recognized as a distant and evil monster” (p.141). Although Chamberlain’s suggestions involved somewhat logical and theoretically effective efforts to pursue truth and fairness in maintaining order and discipline (e.g., seeking out all sides of a story, keeping detailed records, involving parents), his report invoked questionable tactics (e.g., inducing shame) and revealed an inherent bias against students.

Bias and questionable tactics aside, Chamberlain was not alone with his noble intentions. In 1947, John Milor, a junior high school principal, gave a talk to his student body. In it, he stated that he believed “that the principal of a school should know his students, and that the students should know their principal, and [. . .] they should like one another” (p. 423). To Milor, that mutual knowing and liking would breed harmony and cooperation. It is important to note that the theme of Milor’s talk was *discipline*, indicating that his purpose for pursuing these relationships was to maintain order and cohesion within the school.

In the second half of the twentieth century, discipline in schools remained a top concern for many (Boyd & Bowers, 1974). The behavioral analysis movement yielded a slight shift toward recognizing the importance of a better understanding of student behaviors, needs, and feelings (Bickel, O’Neill, & Robinson, 1979; Boyd & Bowers, 1974). Yet, little was mentioned about how to actually achieve this better understanding in a meaningful and authentic way. In recent years, discipline issues and concerns have only increased, yet little has been written about the skills and dispositions required for effective discipline (Williams, 2012). One way that schools have attempted to address discipline problems is through police presence (or school resource officers). The now widespread practice of often uniformed officers patrolling schools theoretically shifts some of the burden of responsibility away from school administrators. But the fact remains that the hierarchical structure of schools places the principal at the top. Despite ranked structure and the use of school resource officers, the most serious infractions almost always have the undivided attention of the school principal. Recent calls for discipline reforms have been made to reduce suspensions and expulsions and focus more on positive behavior interventions and supports, classroom management, restorative justice, and better discipline tracking and analyses (Wiley et al., 2018). While these calls are encouraging and have resulted in some changes, such reforms have not eliminated exclusionary and punitive disciplinary practices.

## Historical Summary

Of the principal’s ever evolving and increasingly complex duties, maintaining the organization so that it can operate effectively and efficiently has always been

paramount. The maintenance of order has been so important that the principal as head disciplinarian has been the leading prescriptive responsibility that might require direct student interactions. Thus, with respect to students, discipline has dominated the perception of the role. The history reveals that most other responsibilities, especially with respect to students, can be met by working with and through the system.

It is also essential to recognize other historical notions that help us better understand the place of the PSR in the principalship. The principalship has largely existed squarely in the middle of a massive institutional structure, constantly negotiating the competing demands of the bureaucracy and the people it is supposed to serve. The massive and complex systemic demands for which principals are held increasingly responsible have always pulled them toward the bureaucracy. However, the varying needs of schools and districts, combined with broad and often vague and ambiguous expectations, have led to a wide range of actions and behaviors principals would employ to meet the many needs of their schools. Here, it is important to note the principal's teaching origins. From the earliest days as the head teacher up to now, the dominant path to the principalship has been through teaching. Lastly, there have been regular calls throughout the history of the principalship to recognize that cultivating relationships in schools allows us to better understand and build community, create optimal environments for teaching and learning, and mitigate potential problems.

In this light, it is easy to understand why the PSR has largely been absent from the formal history of the principalship. It is also easy to see why the PSR has not been a foreign concept to many principals and the powerful potential of the phenomenon has likely been recognized by countless principals over the years. Fortunately, prioritizing the human side of schools – and the principalship in particular – has recently expanded beyond self-motivated principals into the realm of scholarship and professional standards, paving the way for a more formal understanding of the principal-student relationship to come into view.

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## **The Principal-Student Relationship in Contemporary Contexts**

As the history of the principalship reveals little formal concern for meaningful principal-student interactions, some of the more descriptive accounts of the principalship (e.g., Milor, 1947; Wolcott, 2003) indicate that these interactions or relationships were important to principals and did indeed exist throughout history. So how do we define and describe these interactions and relationships? What are they? What is their significance and purpose? This section begins by engaging these questions. The PSR is then situated within the emerging supportive contexts of current professional standards and scholarship.

### **Defining the Principal-Student Relationship**

Very little literature directly explores the PSR (Cranston, 2012), so the phenomenon has yet to be thoroughly defined. At its most basic level the PSR refers to the



interpersonal connection between a principal and a student. Throughout history, these particular interpersonal connections were rarely a focus, and then, often only limited to disciplinary or authoritative encounters. Despite some hints of noble or caring intentions of many school leaders in literature about the principalship, the predominant focus was on the principal's role as a manager of systems and staff whose ultimate responsibility was the safe and efficient operation of an organization in order to maximize student achievement (as narrowly defined as *achievement* tends to be). There was no room for concern about a principal's interactions with students under this model of the principalship.

However, in recent years, some literature has begun to explore these interactions. These texts suggest that the PSR is akin to the teacher-student relationship (TSR), both in its characteristics and its significance. This is unsurprising since most principals were teachers before becoming administrators (Gates, Ringel, Chung, Santibáñez, & Ross, 2003), and it is known that relational schemas form over time and influence the practice of leadership (Fitzsimons, 2012).

The abundant literature on the TSR suggests that supportive TSRs provide the foundation for a strong classroom community, provide teachers with insights about how students learn, and provide security to students in order to confidently engage with classroom activities (Freiberg, 2014; Murray, 2014). TSRs also have important implications for building trust, motivation, and engagement, and improving both behavior and academic achievement (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Freiberg, 2014; Murray, 2014). Furthermore, Landrum (2014) noted that forming positive relationships with students can build relational capital, which can be leveraged when challenges arise in the classroom.

The small body of emerging literature on the PSR reveals similar power and potential of meaningful direct interactions between principals and students. Direct engagement and dialogue between principals and students regarding academic issues lead to increased motivation and perceptions of achievement in students (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Silva, White, & Yoshida, 2011). Principals who make themselves available to students or are directly involved in student activities are better able to feel the pulse of the school and improve the overall school culture, climate, and identity (Lavery & Hine, 2013; Ryan, 1999). Furthermore, constructive, supportive, and sometimes personally profound and impactful relationships can form as a result of direct principal-student interactions (Cranston, 2012; Hawkes, 2010; Janson, Parikh, Young, & Fudge, 2011). Over the years, many have justly called for principals to get out of their offices and be visible throughout the school. But being visible is not nearly enough. A principal must be directly engaged with students in order to reap benefits. Besides, students can distinguish between principals who are simply visible and those who are "approachable" and engaged with students (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

These outcomes were reinforced in one of the first studies directly exploring the PSR. Kudrats and Brown (2020a, b) conducted a qualitative narrative inquiry of the PSR in order to describe more nuanced implications and deeper understandings of the influence and impact of the phenomenon. The findings (presented in detail in Kudrats and Brown (2020a), and then extended toward a conceptual framework for the PSR in Kudrats and Brown (2020b)) revealed relationally oriented principals



who actively pursue any and every opportunity to engage directly with students in positive, supportive, and caring ways. Despite the complex demands on principals' time and the responsibilities of the job that pull them away from students, principals in the Kudlats and Brown study recognize the importance of connecting directly with students as much as possible, even if only for brief moments. To these principals, the well-being of their students and the culture and climate of their schools largely depended on those interactions. These moments of connection – that occasionally develop into strong, lasting relationships – are not only personally fulfilling for principals but also provide principals with insights into students as individuals and as a collective. This better positions principals to make more informed, effective decisions, with a deeper understanding of how those decisions may ultimately affect students. Furthermore, as evidenced by the student perspectives from the study, the various principals' efforts also appeared to have meaningful and profound effects on the students themselves.

A conceptual framework proposed by Kudlats and Brown (2020b) establishes 16 dimensions of the PSR. The dimensions are grouped into four categories: principal characteristics, building the PSR, meaning and purpose, and challenges. Principal characteristics refer to the relational orientation and capacity of principals as well as their prioritization of students despite the many adult-centric and administrative demands of the job. Building the PSR includes some of the actions principals take to build meaningful connections with students (maximizing their exposure, genuinely interacting with students to get to know them more deeply, attempting to balance authority and friendliness). Meaning and purpose refers to the reasons and significance for pursuing the PSR (principal well-being, deeper understanding of individuals and school community, being an additional resource for students, improving disciplinary effectiveness, setting a relational example for other staff). Challenges signify the factors that often impede principals' ability to meaningfully connect with students (time restraints and other job demands, school size, and the often-asymmetrical nature of adult-child relationships).

While the framework begins to capture elements of the PSR, it is important to note that caring relationships are subjective and filled with personal meaning and therefore cannot be clearly defined or captured completely by a specific set of actions or behaviors (Noddings, 2013). That said, the PSR requires concerted and genuine efforts on the part of the principal to meaningfully get to know students. It must be an inherently caring endeavor. To better understand the necessary caring underpinnings of the PSR, a more detailed look at caring school leadership in scholarship and standards of practice is required.

## **Scholarship and Standards: Supporting and Promoting the PSR**

Healthy, meaningful relationships are essential in schools. Starratt (1991) stated that school administrators committed to an ethic of caring must “be grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred and that the school as an organization should hold the good of human beings within it as sacred”

(p. 195). As Bryk (2010) notes, building relationships is essential for leadership to drive organizational change. Likewise, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), according to Watkins et al. (2011), relies heavily upon leveraging relational capacities within organizations to enhance the positive elements of a system. It has become increasingly clear, based on a considerable amount of evidence, that caring interpersonal relationships in schools are vital.

As critical as school relationships are, most school leadership literature has been focused on other pursuits, ultimately resulting in the PSR only receiving brief mentions, passing comments, or implicit suggestions. For example, Louis, Murphy, and Smylie (2016) reported that research on school leadership has largely focused on academic elements like raising standards, evaluating teaching, and student testing, noting that far less scholarly attention has been centered on issues of student support, of which relationships are a significant part. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) note that while improving instruction is important, it is not the only way to influence student achievement, and Crosnoe (2011) notes that concentrating mostly on academic elements to improve student outcomes is not enough and possibly even detrimental.

Furthermore, while prominent scholars, like Fullan (2001, 2003), have called for increased attention to principals' interpersonal relationships for decades, much of that literature focuses on principals' relationships with teachers and other adults. Still, until only recently, these calls have largely remained unheard in policy circles, and thus, have rarely become a formal focus of the principalship. However, recent turns in the school leadership scholarship and state and national leadership standards are now framing a legitimate structure in which the PSR might be formally established. The timing of the Kudlats and Brown study is significant in light of recent turns in educational leadership scholarship and standards that appear to provide a strong practical and theoretical structure in which the PSR can be situated.

### **Positive and Caring School Leadership**

Most models of leadership center largely on hierarchical and heavily regulated accountability (Neal, 1999) that tends to favor the individual over the collective good (Arjoon, 2000; Mackay, 2001). Positive School Leadership Theory, as defined by Murphy and Louis (2018), draws from many of the "positively grounded models of organizational management that assume that leading organizations well is invariably a value-based calling" (p. 3). It runs counter to the hierarchical and accountability-based models, reinforcing the recent "positive psychological" push in business literature to focus on relational leading (see Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Uhl-Bien, 2006 for Relational Leadership Theory). Focusing on the positive elements of individuals and the organization is also a central tenet of Appreciative Inquiry, which relies on collaboration and participation to seek, identify, and enhance "the 'life-giving forces' that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organizational terms" (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 22). Positive School Leadership highlights this relational orientation to leading. In other words, it is the human connections school leaders must nurture in order to promote trust, organizational justice, and encourage the collaborative efforts necessary to improve the collective good.

Embedded within this relational orientation is the notion of caring, which Smylie et al. (2020) expanded upon, revealing its essentiality in school leadership. Caring is not only about what types of actions one takes but also “involves the matter, manner, and motivation of care” (p. 17). Caring is a “way of being” when in relationship with others. Smylie et al. (2020) state,

Caring involves observing and assessing, identifying with, and responding to the situations, needs, interests, joys, and concerns of others. It involves expressing particular virtues such as compassion, empathy, and respect. Caring does not rest on a contractual obligation, power of authority, coercion, or expectation of return. It is grounded in and driven by motivation toward the betterment of others. (pp. 17–18)

While there is an expectation that relationships cannot be one-sided and the cared-for must choose to acknowledge and receive the care provided by the one-caring (Noddings, 2013), these adult-child school relationships are not completely egalitarian. The PSR is still a professional-client relationship, and “asymmetries exist with regard to cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development and maturity” (p. 47). As such, principals assume the primary ethical responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries. Given the need for meaningful PSRs to have a balance of authority and friendliness, principals must take the utmost care to find that balance in what are often ambiguous and complex interpersonal dynamics. The well-being of the student in every sense – physical, academic, emotional, etc. – must always be the principal’s top priority. This concern relies on a meaningful knowing of the other and an understanding that each member of a relationship – and thus, the relationship itself – is affected differently based on the characteristics (e.g., race, gender, cultural background, age, socioeconomic status, other experiences) of each individual in the relationship (Freiberg, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Pianta, Stuhlman, & Hamre, 2002; Roorda et al., 2011). Understanding the individual and the professional and ethical responsibilities that acknowledge the asymmetries and power differentials inherent in the PSR is critical.

### **Professional Standards and the PSR**

The emerging notions of positive and caring school leadership have recently made their way into standards of professional practice. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), from which many states derive their own standards, emphasizes a variety of relationship-based constructs or goals. “The Standards recognize the central importance of human relationships not only in leadership work but in teaching and student learning. They stress the importance of both academic rigor and press as well as the support and care required for students to excel. The Standards reflect a positive approach to leadership that is optimistic, emphasizes development and strengths, and focuses on human potential” (p. 3). More specifically, the Standards state that effective leaders “Create and sustain a school environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible

member of the school community” (p. 13). Additionally, effective leaders “Promote adult-student, student-peer, and school-community relationships that value and support academic learning and positive social and emotional development” (p. 13).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The new relationally oriented standards and scholarship hold promise for the PSR. However, what *effective school leadership* is remains heavily influenced by the standards and accountability culture that continues to dominate schooling. The principal’s interpersonal interactions rarely appear to be a concern for principal evaluators (Beck & Murphy, 1993), and some principals note that their superiors’ only care is the school’s test scores (Kudlats & Brown, 2020b). Until recently, calls to focus on meaningful principal-student interactions and relationships had largely gone unanswered – and therefore unexplored – in scholarship. Literature focused on issues of academic press and the principal’s various responsibilities that contribute to improving student academic outcomes. The gaze has generally centered on the principal’s effects on the various mechanisms (teachers, school culture, etc.) that, in turn, contribute more directly to *student success* (a term that, unfortunately, is too often narrowly defined as some measure of test scores). Far less study concerning student support and well-being exists in school leadership literature, but we are beginning to better understand and prioritize this understudied and critical dimension of educational leadership.

The principalship may be changing, as evidenced by the recent turns in scholarship and standards of practice toward an asset-based, relationally oriented, and caring approach to school leadership, but this only opens the door for the PSR. While some research on the PSR has surfaced recently, our understanding is still far too limited. The implications for these important adult-child school relationships are many, and much more research is needed.

For example, what does the PSR look like at the elementary, middle, and high school levels? Does race or gender of the principal influence the PSR? What about the size of the school, the socioeconomic status of the students, or the school’s performance data? Does a principal’s longevity or experience impact the PSR? Can “measurable” student outcomes be tied to the PSR somehow? What are the implications for principal preparation programs? These and many other questions must be explored in order to better understand the phenomenon and place it firmly within the larger construct of effective school leadership.

As was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, relationally oriented principals who seek meaningful interactions with students likely exist in great numbers. As scholars and policymakers, we must validate and reinforce those principals who choose to prioritize the PSR by directing our gaze on the power and potential of the phenomenon. But caring school leadership, and thus, the PSR, is still “grounded in and guided by the profession, its expectations for practice, its scope of work, and its norms and values” (Smylie et al., 2020, p. 46).

We must dedicate ourselves to a re-visioning of the principalship in order to favor the type of positive, caring school leadership that has the potential to improve a wide range of school and student outcomes. Tremendous potential arises from principals being in direct caring and supportive contact with students. This type of caring leadership must work its way into principal preparation, professional development, and evaluation for the PSR and its benefits to be realized, celebrated, criticized, and improved upon.

From the earliest days, when principals were primarily charged with maintaining order, their fate was largely sealed. Nearly two centuries later, *going to the principal's office* remains a metaphor for getting in trouble. And for many, the image of the principal conjures negative memories or, at least recalls stories of friends who had unpleasant, likely discipline-related encounters. The often-negative image of the principal that has formed in the collective mind of society is not easily changed. But it is not an insurmountable endeavor. The story of the principalship can change direction. As Rousmaniere et al. (1997) noted, "Often the stories that we remember and tell about our own schooling are not so much about what we learned, but how we learned and with whom" (p. 4). The principal no longer need be the antagonist. The PSR has the potential to redraw the image of the principal into a positive, caring, and supportive central character in our collective story about them.

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## Cross-References

► [Caring School Leadership](#)

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# Theorizing for Equity: Critical Approaches to Curricular Decision-Making

# 45

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## Abstract

A longstanding history of curriculum in the United States verifies ongoing struggles in curricular decision-making, where questions such as “What is knowledge, who gets to decide what counts as knowledge, and how is knowledge assessed?” have been fundamental sources of debate. Instead of being oriented toward a dynamic, evolving sequence of learning experiences, the curriculum is often conceived as a static entity. However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have presented the education field with an opportunity to remedy obsolete perceptions of the curriculum’s purpose and, instead, reimagine and embrace an asset-based view of its future. Framed by Michel Foucault’s (1971) concept of presenting a discipline’s genealogy, this chapter reviews the field of memory, the field of presence, the field of concomitance, discontinuities and ruptures, and critical assumptions as they relate to curriculum leadership and development. While the field of memory consists of statements that are no longer considered true or valid, the field of presence includes concepts and practices which are acknowledged to be truthful and

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resonant, and the field of concomitance represents ideas or theories which have been transferred to other disciplines. In addition, discontinuities and ruptures include shifts in the discourse surrounding particular theories or viewpoints, and critical assumptions refer to theories of objectivity, reality, and truth which require a critical examination to avoid outcomes that result in norms and normalization.

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**Keywords**

Curriculum · Equity · Critical race theory · COVID-19 · 1619 Project · Dialogic approaches · Neoliberalism · Deficit based views

In this chapter, **the field of memory** traces twentieth-century learning objectives, social efficiency ideology and activity analysis, measures of educational achievement, curricular decision-making practices, and the definition of curriculum as a composite of essential and standardized cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills.

**The field of presence** traces twenty-first-century globalization, neoliberalism and the role of government involvement in curricular decision-making, the emerging shift toward less standardized and more holistic forms of assessment, and the influence of COVID-19 and technology-mediated learning as a ubiquitous mode of curriculum dissemination.

**The field of concomitance** traces neoliberalism and globalization, philosophies borrowed from economic policy; critical race theory, a theory with roots in legal studies; and The 1619 Project, an initiative that stems from investigative journalism.

**Discontinuities and ruptures** include reforms such as scripted curriculum, high-stakes standardized testing, scientific management, and efficiency in education, elements of “functional” curricular decision-making which dehumanize the holistic educational experience that is sought after in the modern day.

**Critical assumptions** encompass notions of a universal approach to the design and implementation of curriculum, which excludes thoughtful consideration of the diverse perspectives students bring to the classroom, as well as the wide-ranging personal, academic, and professional goals they aspire toward.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion about the interdisciplinary futurities of curricular decision-making and revisits questions such as: What is the purpose of school? Who decides what counts as knowledge, achievement, or success? Who benefits from the current curriculum and curricular decision-making processes? Perhaps most importantly, who loses? Definitions and theorizing of the curriculum will depend on this conception; they will reflect perspectives about what schools are for and who is ultimately served by them. School is not problem-solving; it is a struggle toward collaborative and individual growth.

## Introduction: A History of Curricular Decision-Making in the United States

In 1971, historian and philosopher Michel Foucault developed a categorical scheme, or *archaeology of knowledge*, for analyzing discourses in a given discipline. To better understand what links certain discourses together and which necessities bind disciplinary discourses, Foucault (1971) posed a series of guiding questions: Who is speaking and who has the qualifications to speak about the subject? What are the institutional sites from where the discourse “derives its legitimate source and point of application”? (p. 51) What are the positions of the subject in relation to other subjects or groups? Although responses to these questions may shed light on current narratives in a given discipline, they limit the comprehensive historical perspectives that can emerge through a genealogical analysis, or recovery of what is lost in the past as a new theoretical position is adopted (English, 2013). Underpinned by genealogical analysis is Foucault’s (1971) notion of a field of memory, a field of presence, a field of concomitance, discontinuities and ruptures, and critical assumptions. While a field of memory consists of statements that are no longer considered true or valid, a field of presence includes statements, concepts, or practices that are acknowledged to be truthful and resonant (Foucault, 1971 as cited in English, 2013). In addition, a field of concomitance represents ideas or theories which have originated in other disciplines and been transferred to other areas; in the case of this chapter, curriculum leadership and development. Finally, discontinuities and ruptures include shifts in the discourse surrounding particular theories or viewpoints, and critical assumptions refer to theories of objectivity, reality, and truth which require a critical examination to avoid outcomes that result in norms and normalization. This chapter begins by tracing the history of curricular decision-making and educational equity in the United States. Subsequently, this chapter presents persistent and problematic aspects of curricular decision-making such as outdated curriculum, neoliberalism and the role of government involvement in curriculum decision-making, absence of teachers’ involvement in curricular decision-making, and the continued use of standardized testing to assess curricular effectiveness. Critical assumptions and contentious crossroads related to curricular decision-making are then discussed, with a focus on changing demographics, globalization, critical race theory, The 1619 Project, emerging technologies, and the notion of educational democracy as a lever for social change.

Throughout history, questions such as “What is knowledge, who gets to decide what counts as knowledge, and how is knowledge assessed?” have been fundamental sources of debate (Apple, 1993; Baker, 1996; Egan, 1978; Schoenfeld, 2016). During the 1910s, the curriculum was developed with a focus on improving the quality of instruction through testing and repetition (Ballou, 1916; Monroe, 1917). The curriculum itself cited the following learning objectives, which were assessed through standardized tests: students should demonstrate accurate copying; students should be able to spell a given list of vocabulary words; students should know facts of geography; students should demonstrate the addition of fractions via accurate

copying (Ballou, 1916 as cited in Schoenfeld, 2016). Schoenfeld (2016) referenced the functionality of the 1916 curriculum, whose purpose was to provide students with knowledge and skills deemed necessary to “lead productive lives as citizens and wage earners” (Schoenfeld, 2016, p. 106). A historical look into curriculum development of the 1910s begs the question, who decides what knowledge fosters the development of a productive citizen? Moreover, who decides the measure of a citizen’s productivity?

In 1921, Harold Rugg issued a criticism of curriculum, citing that it does “more harm than good” when curriculum developers recommend courses of study which have not been proven to be effective through experimental methods (Rugg, 1921, p. 694). In that era, Rugg (1921) argued, the curriculum was developed without a scheme of criteria against which the content could be checked; rather, the curriculum was developed based on what committees of educational associations deemed relevant for the preparation of productive citizens. While presented as a progressive view in its time, Rugg’s (1921) critique suggested exclusivity in and of itself, for even a checklist of criteria must be determined by stakeholders with curricular decision-making power.

In 1918 and 1924, Franklin Bobbitt published *The Curriculum* and *How to Make a Curriculum*, respectively, both of which reflected Social Efficiency ideology and profoundly influenced the field of curriculum development. The intention of the Social Efficiency ideology is to “efficiently and scientifically carry out a task for a client” (Schiro, 2008, p. 176). In other words, social efficiency is “the position in education that calls for the direct teaching of knowledge, attitudes, and skills intended to shape the individual to predetermined social characteristics” (Snedden, 1921 qtd. in Bergen, 1981, p. 91). Relatedly, Bobbitt’s theory of curriculum development centered on the concept of “activity analysis,” which represented an assembly line model of education (Bobbitt, 1924). That is, the curriculum was to be developed procedurally and contain progressive stages for students to advance from incompetence (i.e., raw material) to competence (i.e., finished product). In the first of three stages, activity analysis required a clear explanation of the steps necessary to achieve the learning objective; this necessitated a deconstructed list of tasks tied to the objective which, when completed successfully, would presumably result in competence. In the second stage, the set of tasks would be analyzed to determine the most efficient way to perform each task, and the third stage would specify the timeline to completion and associated requirements for the successful completion of each task. Central to Bobbitt’s philosophy was the notion of curriculum as a mechanism to prepare children as productive and socially responsible adult citizens, which reflected a scripted, one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum development. Recognizing Bobbitt’s scientific approach to curriculum-making as one that would perpetuate a social status quo rather than social improvement, Boyd Bode vigorously challenged Bobbitt’s ideology in his 1927 book, *Modern Educational Theories*.

Bode’s criticism of Bobbitt aligned with John Dewey’s definition of education as “a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Dewey, 1929 as cited in Kliebard, 1975, p. 29). Reflective of the field of memory, discontinuities and

ruptures, and critical assumptions characterized in Foucault's *archaeology of knowledge*, Bode's criticism of Bobbitt illuminated a submerged ideology under the guise of "scientific objectivity" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 30). In other words, Bode accused Bobbitt's promotion of scientific objectivity as a thinly veiled effort to preserve "the tried and true values of the society, as well as [make] explicit the prevailing practical skills of the contemporary world" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 30). From Bode's perspective, a scientifically objective attempt at universal curriculum development threatened democracy; anchored in a constructivist philosophy, he believed the democratic educator must seek "to promote sincere and careful reconstruction in the beliefs and attitudes of pupils, without attempting to predetermine conclusions" (Bode, 1935, p. 43). Although Bobbitt's scientific method of curriculum development continues to pervade contemporary curriculum with its reliance on standardization and high-stakes testing, Bode's call for a broader perspective of what counts as knowledge and who determines what constitutes a meaningful educational experience resonates with today's aspirational postmodern and liberatory paradigms of education. Postmodern approaches seek to deconstruct authoritative sources of power and, instead, teach critical thinking, production of knowledge, development of individual and social identity, and self creation; in postmodern education, teachers facilitate students' discovery of new knowledge (Hossieni & Khalili, 2011). Relatedly, liberatory education is rooted in self-determination, derived from an understanding that all human beings have the right to participate in shaping a world that is constantly shaping them. Collective participation in governance amongst a community of people with shared interests is a mainstay of this concept (Randall, 2018).

Through the mid and late twentieth century, the curriculum was continuously reimaged and redefined, though its basis as a static, transactional, and fundamentally instrumental entity prevailed. Phenix (1962) defined curriculum as *what* is studied and a representation of *what counts* as knowledge; that is, the content or subject matter of teaching and learning. Expanding on this conception, Taba (1962) defined curriculum as content and learning experiences; that is, content as subject matter and learning experiences as mental operations that students employ in learning subject matter (Lunenburg, 2011). This historical period also gave rise to the definition of curriculum as a sequence of objectives classified across three domains: cognitive, which encompasses thinking, knowing, and problem solving (Bloom, 1956); affective, which pertains to attitudes, values, interests, and appreciations (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964); and psychomotor, which includes manual and motor skills (Harrow, 1972).

Contributing to the conception of curriculum as static knowledge defined by the already empowered, in the late 1980s the work of E.D. Hirsch became prevalent. Grounded in the belief that there is a "common core" of knowledge that all Americans need to learn in order to attain "cultural literacy" (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988). This approach to curriculum had, and continues to have, widespread appeal. For those with a conservative approach to education, cultural literacy connected to a common core of knowledge is clearly associated with the preservation of existing social norms, as well as relations of power. The kinds of knowledge and skills that are privileged by Hirsch and his colleagues are created by and primarily accessible to

the upper classes. Consequently, schools that engage in curriculum based on a common core associated with Hirsch's determinations of cultural literacy ultimately act to legitimate existing cultural capital, rather than to identify cultural status markers as arbitrary and socially constructed. Complicating matters, for some progressive educators, it was appealing to consider the idea that cultural literacy could be taught as a set of facts and skills that could facilitate social mobility and increase opportunity. These factors serve to conceal the deficit perspective of core knowledge, silencing critical questions such as "whose knowledge?" and "who decides?" that reveal the narrow social, cultural, and racial aspects of cultural literacy. Although rooted in definitions of knowledge and literacy that perpetuate the status quo, conceptions of core knowledge remain persistent in the field of memory and continue to influence the experiences of learners in schools.

Despite numerous and evolving conceptions and definitions of curriculum over time, as well as substantiated criticisms proffered by scholars such as Apple (2001, 2005), Bode (1935, 1972), Eisner (2006), English (1987, 1988, 1996, 1997, 2013), McLaren (2007), Greene (2008), Gilligan (2010), Banks (2011), Giroux (2011), Pinar (2009, 2012), and Reid (2012), the dominant view of curriculum as content or subject matter that is taught by teachers and learned by students has persisted (Brown, 2006; Lunenburg, 2011). However, as argued by the aforementioned scholars, "the world is much more complex, involving subjective, personal, aesthetic, heuristic, transactional, and intuitive forms of thinking and behavior" (Lunenburg, 2011, p. 5). Therefore, the curriculum is not a static entity that can be precisely planned (Gorlewski & Nuñez, 2021), nor can/should any one governing body unilaterally define *what counts* as knowledge; rather, curriculum evolves like a living organism throughout the course of time (Lunenburg, 2011) and must be modified continuously to meet the needs of a society whose citizens depend on far more than economic productivity to thrive.

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## Persistent and Problematic Tenets of Curricular Decision-Making

As evidenced through review and reflection upon the United States' history of curricular decision-making, competing tenets remain today about what knowledge is, who decides what knowledge counts, and how knowledge is assessed. Examples of problematic issues in curriculum development include, but are not limited to outdated curriculum (Collins, 2017), neoliberalism and the role of government involvement in curriculum decision-making (Savage, 2017), absence of teachers' involvement in curriculum decision-making (Null, 2011), and the continued use of standardized testing to assess curricular effectiveness, despite its role in epistemological erasure (Cunningham, 2019). Moreover, mirroring Rugg's (1921) and Bode's (1927) criticisms with present-day controversies of curriculum exclusivity, the curriculum does more harm than good – particularly among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities – when sociocultural learning perspectives are excluded from curriculum development (Escayg, 2019).

At the crux of challenges related to outdated curriculum, neoliberalism, and teacher and socio-cultural exclusion are the United States' relentless reliance on standardized testing. Individuals and societies have diverse goals and educational needs which necessitate continuous modernization of the curriculum and (re)thinking around the central goals of education. Simultaneously, however, the influence of neoliberalism in education has resulted in increased dependence on standardized testing outcomes that reflect capital enhancement values rather than the capacities of citizens to sustain culture or envision creative futures (Brown, 2015; Savage, 2017). These competing perspectives and priorities prompt questions such as: What is the primary purpose of school? Is it to maintain the status quo as a mechanism of ranking and exclusion, or is it to transform toward educational experiences foregrounded in equity and inclusion? Who benefits from the former? Who stands to benefit from the latter?

Dissimilar to learning objectives of the 1910s (Ballou, 1916) and 1920s (Bobbitt, 1924), the goals of twenty-first-century education have evolved to include the following examples: diagnose root causes and solve complex, real-world problems; deliver persuasive presentations; design systems to accomplish meaningful goals; listen, ask questions, and make sense of different viewpoints; evaluate the credibility of sources; explore timely domains of inquiry such as environmental issues or political history; collaborate and set goals to carry out tasks (Collins, 2017). However, these goals contrast those that are embodied in standardized tests and do not offer easily accessible meaningful measures of progress (Popham, 1999). Moreover, the racist, classist, and sexist roots of standardized tests harm minoritized communities (Ayre, 2012; Stoskopf, 2012; Weissglass, 2001), performance outcomes create unfair metrics for teacher evaluations (Ford, 2018), and there is no evidence to support standardized test scores as predictors of future success in non-disciplinary subjects such as creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Dillon, 2019; Harris, Smith, & Harris, 2011) – that is, common goals of twenty-first-century education that aim to produce active and informed citizens. Therefore, until the landscape of curriculum, policy, and assessment in the United States reflects holistic development and achievement of its students, systemic, socioeconomic, and ethnoracial inequities and barriers will persist, particularly for minoritized communities.

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## Critical Assumptions and Contentious Crossroads

A longstanding history of curriculum in the United States verifies ongoing struggles in curricular decision-making. While some argue for a prescribed curriculum and contend that there is a distinct set of skills in which students must achieve proficiency (Hirsch, 1987; Bleiberg & West, 2014), others assert that curriculum exists in a third space (Wang & Flory, 2021). That is, learning is fluid, interdisciplinary, and necessitates a flexible, extensible curriculum designed to meet the diverse needs of individual students and communities across academic, cultural, and social-emotional domains (Wang & Flory, 2021). Wang and Flory's (2021) notion of curriculum as a

third space reflects a sociological perspective of education which was first introduced by George Counts in his 1932 work, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* As a progressive educator, sociologist, and political activist, Counts viewed education as a moral enterprise and “challenged teachers and teacher educators to use school as a means for critiquing and transforming the social order” (Westheimer, n.d., p. 1). Highly critical of individualism and Social Efficiency ideology championed by educationists like Bobbitt, Counts’ philosophy more closely aligned with Bode’s stance on democracy, which Counts uniquely viewed as a lever for radical social change in the context of a stratified society. Similar to today’s efforts to transform curriculum toward one that is equitable and inclusive of all learners – and not just those students whose identities and experiences reflect individuals with curriculum decision-making power – Counts “wanted teachers to go beyond abstract, philosophical conceptions of democracy and teach explicitly about power and injustice. He wanted teachers and students to count among their primary goals the building of a better social order” (Westheimer, n.d., p. 1).

Common deficit-based perspectives which pervade discussion around today’s curricular challenges include notions of changing demographics, emerging technologies, and globalization (Aydin, Ozfidan, & Carothers, 2017). For example, scholars have linked changing demographics and globalization to a widened experiential gap between the largely homogenous, White, English-speaking teacher force and BIPOC students, especially those whose first language is not English (Aydin et al., 2017). Illuminating a significant cultural shift, The National Center for Education Statistics (Kena et al., 2015) documented 2014–2015 as the first school year where the majority of students in United States public schools were not White; however, between 2017–2018, NCES reported that White teachers continued to comprise 79% of the public teacher workforce (Taie & Goldring, 2019). However, since many teachers are inadequately prepared or experienced in globalization and diversity contexts, the need to integrate culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies in curricular decision-making has become extremely urgent (Aydin et al., 2017; Santoro, 2009). Moreover, these disparities in representation and concerns regarding professional preparation have led to critical questions such as: How effective can a curriculum that was designed by White stakeholders for White students be in supporting BIPOC students’ learning, especially when it is taught by White teachers? Or, how can middle-class White teachers address the social and emotional needs of BIPOC and economically disadvantaged or working-class White students whose experiences and identities may be vastly different from their own, particularly when inclusive social-emotional learning is an afterthought in curricular decision-making? A critical point to note is that social-emotional learning is never truly absent from the curriculum; rather, it is present and supportive of some students and their cultural backgrounds, but omits and harms students whose cultural expectations may not align (Prest, Bowman, & Rose, 2017).

The aforementioned concerns, while valid (Carothers, Aydin, & Houdyshell, 2019; La Salle, Wang, Wu, & Rocha Neves, 2020; Quiocho & Rios, 2000), may reinforce deficit perspectives at the expense of BIPOC students’ experiences and the culturally responsive development of White teachers who have an ethical and



professional responsibility to continuously enhance their intercultural proficiency while implementing curriculum (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012). For example, denoting “changing demographics” as an educational challenge in and of itself insinuates racial/ethnic diversity as a “problem” in public schools (Gutentag, Horenczyk, & Tatar, 2018). Moreover, when the public narrative asserts that White teachers are not well-positioned to attend to the academic, cultural, and social-emotional needs of BIPOC students, it risks sending the message that White teachers need not uphold a responsibility to develop intercultural competence skills, as their inherent positionalities prevent them from being relatable or effective educators for BIPOC communities. Such dual deficit thinking affects both teachers and students. It may result in increased professional responsibilities among BIPOC educators not only to improve the academic, cultural, and social-emotional experiences of BIPOC students, but also to compensate for the inadequate and underdeveloped intercultural skills and competencies of their White colleagues and the longstanding whitewashed curriculum (Bernard & Flint, 2020; Dowling & Flintoff, 2015). As such, while diversifying the teacher workforce to better reflect the cultural identities of today’s students is a priority, equally important is ensuring that White teachers are prepared and willing to strengthen their own intercultural competencies, for improving the academic, cultural, and social-emotional experiences of students is a shared responsibility that must not be solely upheld by any singular community of educators. As noted by Perry (2017), “Focusing on [B]lack recruitment insidiously shields white educators from scrutiny and downplays how important it is to provide teachers an anti-racist education before and after they enter the profession.” Perhaps most importantly, regardless of how interculturally proficient a teacher may be, when constrained by the confines of a prescribed curriculum that is not characterized by Wang and Flory’s (2021) notion of the third space (e.g., the alterity of physical and social difference, the necessity for cultural translation, the creativity of dynamic hybridity), how authentically can they foster learning in diverse classroom contexts of the postmodern era? Such questions echo the progressive words of Count (1934), who stated, “An education that does not strive to promote the fullest and most thorough understanding of society and social institutions is not worthy of the name” (p. 537).

Two timely examples of contentious curricular crossroads involve the implementation of critical race theory (CRT) and The 1619 Project in the public school curriculum in the United States. In the spring of 2021, long-standing controversies over how students should learn history and civics in P12 public schools became centered on CRT, a framework for examining systemic racism with roots in academia. Although CRT provides an academic lens for understanding how racial inequality is woven into legal systems and adversely affects communities of color (Iati, 2021), conservative opponents view CRT as a theory that discriminates against White people as a byproduct of the aim to achieve equity (Sawchuk, 2021). The 1619 Project similarly represents an attempt to transform the public school curriculum. Its title refers to the date when Africans first arrived on American soil. Proponents of The 1619 Project seek to authenticate the national narrative surrounding the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans

throughout history, as well as ensure that a holistic review of United States history is taught in P12 schools (Serwer, 2019). Like CRT, opponents of The 1619 Project view it as an endeavor that aims to rewrite American history and teach students – particularly White students – to feel guilty about the country’s history of slavery. Alternatively, an asset-based view of the value of CRT and The 1619 Project suggests that teaching children the realities of United States history will not teach them to hate the country or themselves; rather, a comprehensive and authentic understanding of history and how it connects to current economic and racial disparities can help students create a better future and serve as a lever for social change (Counts, 1932, 1934). Although some contend that such discussions are too difficult, damaging, or uncomfortable to be appropriate for the P12 context, if the goal is for students to learn about systems and work to change them, then why not help them understand the reality and complexity of systems during their formative years? Moreover, with ever-increasing online access to current events and controversies, might critical classroom discussions around CRT and The 1619 Project be a preferred alternative to learning about the issues through unsubstantiated sources? These questions reinforce critical considerations surrounding the purpose of school, who is served by the current curriculum, and who has a seat at the curricular decision-making table to determine what counts as knowledge.

The contemporary context requires theorizing beyond history-centered racial inequities surfaced by the pandemic. Although the COVID-19 pandemic propelled many educators to enhance their technological proficiency, it simultaneously shed light on the challenges that the public education curriculum faces in keeping up with ever-evolving teaching and learning technologies. For example, schools teach largely the same subject matter they taught in the 1910s (e.g., reading, writing, math, science, and history), yet do not teach students how to critique or create technology in preparation for the automated future (Manyika et al., 2017). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the delivery of education worldwide, and highlighted technology-mediated learning as both “a tool to rectify inequities and a weapon that antagonizes existing divides for vulnerable populations” (Dubois, Bright, & Salimah, 2021, p. 12). Findings from the US Census Bureau (2021) revealed that 4.4 million households with students lack consistent computer access and 3.7 million lack internet access (Dubois et al., 2021). Although education has been described as a powerful lever to bridge socioeconomic divides, the pandemic and associated planning for a future of ubiquitous technology-mediated learning have accentuated the importance of understanding the effects of virtual education on socially vulnerable populations (Dubois et al., 2021). Through reflection on these realities, educators and curriculum decision-makers should consider the following questions posed by Goodson and Schostak (2021):

What else has been learned? How might the COVID-19 pandemic experience stimulate a reimagining of curriculum in the United States? More fundamentally, how might it lead to the development of a knowledgeable, intelligent, effective public, able to engage freely and equally in decision-making at all levels of social, cultural, political, and economic life, as a condition for personal freedom? (p. 1)

## Interdisciplinary Futurities of Curricular Decision-Making

Twenty-first-century changes such as shifting demographics, advanced technologies and technology access, and globalization have presented challenges to theorizing curriculum as transformative. Instead of being oriented toward a dynamic, evolving sequence of learning experiences, the curriculum is often conceived as a static entity. However, the education field currently has an opportunity to remedy obsolete perceptions of the curriculum's purpose and, instead, reimagine and embrace an asset-based view of its future.

With respect to changing demographics, and supported by Gutentag et al. (2018), teachers' perceptions of immigrant students as assets rather than problems were linked to lower diversity-related teacher burnout and higher immigration-related teacher self-efficacy. To ensure asset-based teacher perceptions are developed during teacher education and reinforced throughout the in-service years, it is imperative for all stakeholders to collaborate, share ideas, and create resources and opportunities – which are allocated equally – to serve the needs of all individuals and all communities. Such an approach begins with curriculum making as a sociopolitical process where all organizations and institutions are democratically run (e.g., critical participatory policy analysis). This involves countering narrowly conceived notions of transmission that confine educationalists' voices to a given set of pre-planned guidelines and reimagining a curriculum that can understand and address the uncertainty of the present age (Goodson & Schostak, 2021). Collins (2017) explains,

It is time for educators to rethink what is critical to learn in a complex and changing society. This involves different knowledge from what schools are teaching. In a world where technology is usurping routine work and affecting every aspect of our lives, learning and thinking have become central to leading a productive life. Schools will have to make radical changes if they hope to prepare students for the rapidly changing world they are entering. (p. xv)

As technology-integrated teaching and learning continue to pervade every aspect of education, opportunities for alternative pedagogies simultaneously emerge. For alternative pedagogies – such as critical, technological, relational, antiracist, and liberatory – to be effective, they must center on students' individual interests and learning processes. In other words, the teacher-student role (inherent in pedagogical theorizing) necessitates a change wherein the teacher may make decisions about what to teach, but the student decides what is learned (Goodson & Schostak, 2021). Curricular decisions are thus collaborative, rooted in practice, and dialogic.

Therefore, if an equitable and interdisciplinary future curriculum is the aspiration, curricular decision-making and epistemological considerations cannot be driven by neoliberal policies that govern education and privilege the values of leaders in visible and hidden ways (Gorlewski, Karalis Noel, & Winkelsas, [forthcoming](#)). Through critical participatory policy analysis, teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, policymakers, communities, and other educational stakeholders can continuously revisit the questions such as: What is the purpose of school? Who decides what

counts as knowledge, achievement, or success? Who benefits from the current curriculum and curricular decision-making processes? Perhaps most importantly, who loses? Definitions and theorizing of the curriculum will depend on this conception; they will reflect perspectives about what schools are for and who is ultimately served by them. School is not problem-solving; it is a struggle toward collaborative and individual growth.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

### Practical Implications for Curriculum (Re)Development

Transformation toward equitable approaches to curricular decision-making requires a collective commitment to reforming and restructuring antiquated schooling models and practices. This means that policies must be interrogated to determine what purposes of schools are reflected in their words and in the practices that develop in existing policy contexts. In schools, as in all social institutions, every interaction influences the life chances of learners, and interactions are shaped by the context created by policies. Like curriculum, which can be both a document and a symbol (English, 1987, 2020), the policy is both concrete and emblematic. In each case, focusing on the documents as representations of philosophical tenets can provide a starting point for transformation. This chapter concludes, in the spirit of collaboration, with a call for participatory policy analysis of curriculum documents and the decisions that contribute to their development and implementation.

Goodson and Schostak (2021) argue persuasively for the potential of curriculum as a vehicle for transformation.

Essential to this aim is cooperative and mutual learning, which unlike the prevailing methods, is inclusive of voices on a principle of freedom with equality. It enables each individual – teacher and student – to engage through reflections on experience and through dialog how each deals with “knowledge” and the circumstances of their lives. In this way, the teacher’s knowledge is not something massive and fixed; it can be challenged and reinterpreted in ways that reveal new meaning for both student and teacher. The mutual education through cooperation is a spiral process. In its initial stages, the students kick the ideas around, bring their ideas to the teacher as the one who claims to know. The teacher may admit ignorance or contribute knowledge to the problem or issue, and thus together they reconfigure the problem/issue and identify pathways toward its solution. Those pathways are scalable through education in ways that can change the world, if teachers are up for the challenge. (pp. 14–15)

While it is certainly true that educational improvement involves teacher dedication to dialogic approaches to curriculum, it is also true that school walls are permeable. Educational institutions simultaneously reflect society and are expected to address its inequities, and those who work within it are shaped by these sometimes conflicting expectations. Consequently, efforts to re-imagine and re-theorize curriculum must include educators, of course, but also involve students, parents,

community members, and political leaders – all of whom participate as policy analysts and policymakers. The recommended resources are for readers and prospective and practicing educators to consider how the curriculum is created, implemented, and critiqued – and how it is experienced as a force for maintaining current power structures or as a means to cultivate learners who will construct a better and more just world.

## Resources for Consideration

**Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecards.** New York University’s Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools brings together researchers, data and policy analysts, and community organizers to provide critical research, data, policy, and strategic support for the education justice movement. One of the Center’s resources includes the Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, which is designed to help parents, teachers, students, and community members determine the extent to which their schools’ curricula are (or are not) culturally responsive. Seven key steps for analysis include: Obtain the curriculum; select your curriculum evaluation team; choose the grades, units, and lessons to analyze; pull out keywords that represent each statement that the evaluation team can look for; conduct the evaluation; score the evaluation; and discuss with your team (Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, 2021).

**Designing Equitable Curriculum.** With the aim of embracing and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its activities, the University of Maryland created a checklist for selecting and designing an equitable curriculum. Themes for curricular analysis include representation, stereotyping, disparities and structural inequities, structure, context, feedback, and impact (University of Maryland, n.d.).

**Equity Assessment Data Checklist.** Driven by a commitment to build power through collective cultural and healing strategies for racial justice across Minnesota, Voices for Racial Justice created an Equity Assessment Data Checklist to guide and assess district and school-level equity policies and practices. Themes for policy and practice analysis include access to opportunities, chance to learn, inclusive community, fair discipline, community engagement, academic achievement, resources, and shared accountability (Voices for Racial Justice, n.d.).

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# A Deep Dive into Sustainability Leadership Through Education for Sustainability

# 46

Jo-Anne L. Ferreira, Lisa D. Ryan, and Julie M. Davis

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the fields of memory, presence, and concomitance within education for sustainability (EfS) discourses through an exploration of the

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discontinuities, ruptures, and critical assumptions underpinning theory and practice in these fields. It begins by examining the range of different articulations of “sustainability/sustainable development,” ranging from “weak” to “strong” conceptualizations. It then examines how these ideas have influenced sustainability leadership thinking within the field of EfS.

Additionally, the chapter explores how environment/sustainability disruption transpired and how it has brought the field of EfS to where it is today. It also explores emergent narratives within contemporary education for sustainability discourses. In so doing, the authors call into question several assumptions underpinning conceptualizations of both sustainability and EfS and discuss the implications and possibilities for leadership and management.

The chapter concludes with the implications for educational leaders, arguing for the need to always call into question orthodoxies of the day by recognizing that these have assumptions and histories underpinning them that work to establish their status as truth. Key to this is recognizing the need to constantly ask critically reflexive questions and seek alternatives. Finally, the authors highlight several key considerations for educational leaders working in the field of EfS and leadership.

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### Keywords

Sustainability · Education for sustainability · Critical theory · Anthropocene · Behavior change · Individualism · Communitarianism · Postmodernism · Posthumanism · Resistance · Transformation · Change

### The field of memory

The field of EfS has historically focussed on achieving individual environmental behavioral change through increasing individuals’ scientific knowledge about the environment, such as ecology. This was recognized as being too narrow a focus, which saw a shift to include experiential learning in the natural environment, in order to build connection and empathy with the natural world.

### The field of presence

The field of EfS, following recognition of the limits of only educating *about* or *in* the environment, shifted in the 1980s toward a concern with educating *for* the environment. This form of EfS sought to do more than change an individual’s environmental behavior by focussing on the need to change economic, political, and social systems and practices. Following the World Commission on Environment and Development’s (WCED) Brundtland Report in 1987, this further evolved to a focus on facilitating change and sustainability transitions through collective social and environmental action-taking.

### The field of concomitance

The field of EfS is broadly located within the social sciences and has drawn from this context. In particular, it has drawn on social and personal change theories from

psychology and sociology, concepts from educational theory and eco-philosophy, systems change theory from social ecology, political literacy from political sciences, human/nature relations from posthumanism, indigenous knowledges, and postcolonialism.

### **Discontinuities and ruptures**

There have been two major disruptions. The first was the emergence of the concept of sustainability, which disrupted the field's narrower focus on the environment. The concept of sustainability has allowed the field to consider the ways in which humans and natural systems are interconnected, to consider the tensions between these, and to understand that addressing environmental problems requires a whole of system response. The second major disruption was caused by the strength of arguments posed by social change theorists. This resulted in a disruption to the belief that individual environmental behavioral change would automatically lead to broader social change. Rather, the field now understands that change cannot occur without changes in social systems and structures, including political, governance, and economic structures.

### **Critical assumptions**

The authors' assumptions in this chapter are that strong sustainability is a positive goal for educators and society at large; that EfS offers an effective strategy for achieving sustainable societies; that there is a level of change required beyond that which can be achieved through individual behavioral change; that EfS has a role in educating sustainability leaders who are able to facilitate collective social change; that education systems tend toward conservatism and EfS has a role to play in disrupting these systems; and that systems are interconnected, meaning that change can only occur and hold if it occurs at multiple points in the system, more or less at the same time.

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## **Introduction**

While much has been written on the concepts of leadership, sustainability, and education for sustainability (EfS), in this chapter, the authors take a deep dive into these concepts to make visible the concealed and often contradictory assumptions underpinning, driving and legitimizing influential discourses in the EfS field. They explore established concepts such as “weak” and “strong” sustainability, individual and social change, along with emergent narratives including the “posts,” non-Western knowledges, nature/human rights, and nonlinguistic approaches. A key goal of EfS is disruption, in particular, the disruption of unsustainable systemic discourses and practices, and they argue here that this may be achieved through the formation of leaders who are able to recognize and critically question assumptions about the way the world works and who are able to deploy disruptive change strategies beneficial to future sustainability/ environments.

## Sustainability Discourses

The emergence of contemporary EfS in the West in the 1960s was linked to the idea of a looming “environmental crisis.” Public awareness of this crisis was raised in a number of influential books and reports, highlighting human behavior as the key driver, and advocating for increasing efforts to change this through legislation, social and economic change initiatives, and education. Today, EfS continues to be clearly linked to, and influenced by, the related and underpinning concepts of environment and sustainability, which form part of a “discursive field of presence” for EfS. The concept of sustainability has been increasingly taken up in the field over the last 30 years.

“Sustainability” as a concept – even if this actual word was not used – first appeared in Goldsmith & Allen’s, 1972 text, *Blueprint for survival*. There is also the 1974 US reference to a “no-growth economy” and the first United Nations (UN) reference in 1978 (Kidd, 1992). A number of persuasive authors contributed to the development of the concept of sustainability through the 1960s and 1970s in texts including Barnett and Morse’s *Scarcity and growth: The economics of natural resource availability* (2013), Boulding’s *The economics of the coming spaceship earth* (1966), Ehrlich’s *The population bomb* (1968), Hardin’s *The tragedy of the commons* (1968), Ward and Dubos’ *Only one earth* (1972), Club of Rome’s *The limits to growth* (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972), Schumacher’s *Small is beautiful* (1973), and Lovelock’s *Gaia: A new look at life on earth* (1979). These texts, underpinned by an ecological discourse, maintained that humans are wholly dependent on the natural environment for survival and that human lifestyles have negative impacts on the natural environment. An early voice in this ecological crisis discourse was Rachael Carson, who emotively described the impact of human practices on the natural environment in *Silent spring*:

The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable. . . [and] for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world – the very nature of its life (1962, p. 23).

In the 1970s, environmental models developed for the Club of Rome by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology led to claims that if:

present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next 100 years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity (Meadows et al., 1972, p. 1).

The message from these authors was clear: Humans are using up finite natural resources and damaging the natural environment at a rate impossible to sustain, and in a way that is becoming impossible to reverse. At the same time, there was also clear recognition that environmental problems do not occur in isolation but rather are

intrinsically linked to social and economic imperatives. Resources are exploited and environments harmed to provide economic growth in order to improve people's lives and alleviate poverty. Nearly 50 years later, the same concerns remain.

The most frequently cited definition of sustainability appears in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)'s 1989 *Brundtland Report, Our common future*. Here, sustainable development (SD) is defined as development that is able to “[meet] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (1987, p. 393). Two seminal analyses of environmental/sustainability discourses have been undertaken. The first, by Darier (1999), used a Foucauldian lens to describe the histories and resistances involved in the establishment of environmental discourses. The other, by Dryzak (2013), identified four key discourses related to sustainability – problem-solving, survivalism, sustainability, and green radicalism. Dryzak argues that the sustainability narrative, as articulated in the WCED's *Brundtland Report* (1987), retains its connection to human and societal “progress.”

However, as argued above, SD is a contradictory term as “sustainable” implies a concept of steady state, while “development” implies growth. For this reason, there have been numerous variations on the *Brundtland Report* definition. Common to all, however, is a view that sustainability must address social and economic issues, as well as environmental concerns (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; McCool, Butler, Buckley, Weaver, & Wheeler, 2013). These varied definitions are themselves underpinned by a number of what can be termed “environmental discourses.” These include both biocentric and anthropocentric approaches (Rowe, 2011) found across the spectrum from deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism to environmental history, ecological economics, and business and sustainability (Boxley, 2019; Frank, 2017). In Frank's narrative analysis, she argues that despite what appears to be a recent and uniform narrative about sustainability, there are actually major disparities and conflicts ranging from embracing spirituality (deep ecology) to maximizing efficiency gains (business and sustainability). She asserts, for example, that the sustainability “stories” from each of these lines of contemporary discourse have a longer history that reflects the legacies of romantic and social critiques prominent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These legacies, she highlights, continue to this day, where there exists a critique of modern science and technology and an idealization of ecological and evolutionary science within different articulations of sustainability. Scott and Vare (2020) similarly explored the historical antecedents of contemporary environmental and sustainability *learning* discourses. They argue that ever since humans became conscious, learning has revolved around the surrounding environments. They chart this environmental learning over millennia, highlighting the key people, ideas, events, and discourses: from learning to survive, learning to control, learning to care, and to learning to coexist.

Common to all definitions and conceptualizations, however, is the view that sustainability must address social and economic issues, as well as environmental issues. Some definitions are seen as being “stronger” in addressing environmental and social concerns than others. This is often referred to as “weak” or “strong” sustainability.

## Weak and Strong Sustainability

Weak sustainability (defined as relying on heavy resource dependency) and strong sustainability (strongly ecologically preservationist) lie on a spectrum, with many variations between Cotterell, Ferreira, Hales, and Arcordia (2020); Pearce (1993); Solow (1993); and Springett (2010).

Weak sustainability can be described as tinkering at the edges of current models of human and economic development and is typified by an economic growth orientation, a human/nature binary, stewardship approaches to the environment, human rights as exclusive and prioritized, and unlimited development without realistic ecological boundaries. The moderate “triple bottom line” approach to sustainability espoused by green business champions recognizes environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability but privileges the economy over other aspects (Hunter, 1997; Springett, 2010).

Strong and very strong sustainability encompass an ecocentric worldview and intrinsic valuing of nature, preservation approaches to nature, interdependencies of human and natural capital, and development within ecological boundaries. According to Pearce (1993), sustainability that is strong or very strong ranges from an acknowledgment of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability to highly preservationist conceptualizations that advocate minimal utilization of natural resources. Contemporary discussions of sustainability are critical of its anthropocentric underpinnings, with calls to ensure nonhuman elements and lifeforms are considered alongside and equal to discussions of human development (Cole & Malone, 2019).

The most recent iteration of sustainability conceptualizations can be seen in the UN’s sustainable development goals (SDGs). These aim to address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice, gender equality, health, and well-being through 17 interconnected goals. Unsurprisingly, given their link to SD, the SDGs have also been critiqued for their anthropocentric rather than ecocentric aims, and their continued pursuit of economic growth as the solution while ignoring underlying inequalities in the global economic system. Kopnina (2020), for example, argues that the SDGs focus on solving sustainability through economic growth and that this exacerbates inequalities, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

## The Anthropocene

“The Anthropocene” is a relatively recent concept underpinning contemporary sustainability discourses. The term – coined in the early 1980s by ecologist Eugene Stoermer and popularized by Nobel-Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, Paul Crutzen – is used to describe the period from the post-World War II Great Acceleration (when negative earth system trends began dramatically increasing); it refers to an epoch when the influence of the human species became so significant such that it began to dramatically reshape the earth and its ecological systems.

Catastrophic fires and extreme weather events around the world in 2019–2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic have made visible the anthropogenic effects of human behavior on the planet and people. Whether or not one agrees that a pandemic is an anthropogenic effect, current conditions, particularly around COVID-19, are a test case for global responses to environmental disruptions and could shape future sustainability efforts.

This discourse is underpinned by a problematization of human progress and development (Pierrehumbert, 2006). Cole and Malone (2019, p. 157) argue the Anthropocene is generally utilized as “a heuristic device for gaining a greater understanding of the role of human societies and the part they have played in changing the planet,” and in so doing, acts to disrupt the contemporary “humanist paradigm.” Thus, it is argued that Anthropocene discourses provide a counterbalance to other sustainability discourses in that they highlight the finite nature of the planetary boundaries that enable life on earth, and highlight the existential crisis posed by transgressing these boundaries.

These various conceptions of sustainability along with the SDGs have shaped educational efforts and, therefore, provide part of a discursive field of presence. Much of contemporary EfS draws on these discourses, as is discussed in the following section.

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## Education for Sustainability

The *Brundtland Report* (WCED, 1987), and the strategies put in place to enact its sustainability goals, strongly influenced the emerging field of EfS. EfS, as it is known in Australia, or education for sustainable development (ESD), as it is called by the UN and many European countries, did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it was established on the theories and philosophies of already existing fields of inquiry, policy, and practice, particularly from the field of environmental education (EE). While the language of EE has, in the last 30 or so years, shifted to EfS and ESD – with debate over the meaning and nature of this shift (Ferreira, 2009; Fien, 2000; Jickling & Spork, 1998) – there is some consensus that EfS seeks to empower individuals and communities to take action to address environmental problems and create sustainable futures.

There have been multiple efforts to determine what the most effective approach is, with Sauv , for example, noting 15 “currents of intervention” (2005, p. 11) in environmental education. While each of these approaches “adopt widely differing discourses on environmental education and propose diverse ways of practising educative activity in this field,” there are nonetheless “zones of overlap” (Sauv , 2005, p. 11–12). These overlaps are no doubt why Lucas (1979) was able to develop a simpler and still more commonly used classification. He categorized the array of EE activities into three broad approaches: education *about* the environment, education *in* the environment, and education *for* the environment. These categorizations continue to shape EE/EfS and ESD learning and teaching initiatives and activities.



## Education *About* the Environment

Education *about* the environment focuses on teaching new knowledge (scientific and ecological) and skills for investigating the physical world; this term came to prominence in the 1970s. Early efforts in EE often adopted this approach, believing that the more knowledge that an individual has about environmental problems, the more this would affect their attitudes toward the environment, and that changes in knowledge would, in turn, lead to pro-environmental behaviors (see, for example, Roth, 1970). This approach can be seen in ecological studies-type programs such as Waterwatch (<http://www.waterwatch.org.au>), Saltwatch ([http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/cb\\_pages/saltwatch.php](http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/cb_pages/saltwatch.php)), and Sustainable Futures (<https://www.csiro.au/en/education/Programs/Sustainable-Futures>).

## Education *in* the Environment

Education *in* the environment refers to learning and teaching approaches that seek to build an affective connection with nature through experiences in the environment. This approach teaches fieldwork skills but, importantly, seeks to ensure students' appreciation of the natural environment is "awakened" through experiences in the environment. This pedagogical approach is underpinned by a belief that a connection to/with nature can be established through such activities, and that this, in turn, will result in a change in behavior. Influenced by seventeenth-century Rousseauian theories of children in nature and promoted by advocates such as Froebel (in the eighteenth century) and Montessori (twentieth century), education *in* the environment approaches include nature play and nature education. These approaches are still strong in EfS today (Gruenewald & Smith, 2014; Louv, 2008).

## Education *for* the Environment

Education *for* the environment builds on education *about* and *in* the environment. Central to this approach is empowering learners to take action to transform their own behaviors and importantly to lead social change and transformation. Key strategies include learning to lead, building community, and the use of critical thinking and reflection to examine, critique, and change conventional wisdoms (Fien, 1993). This approach has roots in Marxist and Freirean thinking, with a strong focus on liberation and personal and social change. Common strategies used in education *for* the environment teaching include political literacy, real-world issues and problem-solving, reflective methods, and participation in community-building social and environmental change activities. This form of learning has clearly shaped contemporary approaches to EfS with their focus on individual *and* collective change.

Debate continues on the most effective approaches to learning, with recent research on the matter by Kopnina (2020), Evans and Ferreira (2020), and Evans, Stevenson, Lasen, Ferreira, and Davis (2017).

## EfS and Systems Thinking

While education *about, in, and for* are clearly still very influential in contemporary EfS, the field has also been influenced by ecological systems thinking and, thus, has come to recognize the importance of systems in facilitating personal and social change. In brief, systems theory recognizes that relationships are more important than things when seeking to understand how systems work and change. Drawing on ecological and social systems thinking, systems theory in EfS seeks to understand and operate through interconnections and complexity. According to Sterling, thinking with/through/in systems is important in EfS because it helps clarify the difference between a mechanistic and reductionist approach and a complex, ecological, and interdependent approach to EfS (Sterling, 2004).

In EfS, learning activities tracing connections and links in consumption habits (for example, life cycle analysis that investigates where products come from, how they are transported, how they are used, and how they are recycled/upcycled) demonstrate systems thinking. At the broad organizational level, systems thinking is evident through whole-school approaches to sustainability such as “sustainable schools”; such approaches aim for cohesive and collaborative strategies across all school elements – formal and informal curriculum, leadership, management, and community outreach.

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## A Persistent Problem: Learning for Individual Behavioral Change Versus Learning for Social Change

Despite these shifts toward a systems view, there remains a powerful narrative in the field of EfS about the need for individual behavior change. While a focus on collective and social learning for sustainability is seen as vital by most EfS scholars (Ferreira, 2019; Kopnina, 2014), the field remains wedded to promoting individual behavioral change. There are many more EfS programs about how to consume more environmentally (changing to energy-efficient light bulbs; using renewable energy; and considering food, clothing, and transport choices) than there are EfS programs focussing on transforming school systems and communities. While the limits of individual behavior change in terms of improving environmental outcomes have long been recognized (Jensen, 2002; Kenis & Mathijs, 2012; Uzzell, 1999), it is also known that there are structural impediments (especially by governments and increasingly by corporations) that work to prevent or ameliorate small-scale, individual behavior changes. As argued by many in the field of EfS (e.g., Ferreira, 2019; Fien, 1993; Gough, 1997; Jickling, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1995; Stevenson, 2007), the primary social mechanisms through which EfS is enacted – schools – are themselves focused on the individual and “correcting” the individual (Hunter, 1994).

This focus on changing the behavior of individuals has, of course, morphed and developed over time (Heimlich & Ardoin, 2008; Kollmus & Agyeman, 2002; Monroe, 2003; Stagell, Almers, Askerlund, & Apelqvist, 2014). Currently, the focus is on educating for environmental citizenship through ecologies of learning (Wals, 2019), an approach that marries a focus on the individual with a systems

approach to learning. In addition, there is a range of emergent approaches that seek to disrupt and destabilize some of these established ideas and approaches in EfS, as discussed below.

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## **EfS: Where to from Here? Emerging Discourses to Amplify**

New narratives are seeking out cracks in the field through which to emerge and become contemporary orthodoxies or truths. While the discourses discussed below have not yet fully taken up this position, there is beginning movement in this direction. As EfS does not exist in a vacuum, current social movements such as #Blacklivesmatter and #Schoolstrikeforclimate are influencing the direction and speed at which these discourses are being taken up within the field of EfS.

Two key discourses are discussed here. The first concerns human/nature dichotomies; the second shifts how rights and justice are framed in the Anthropocene.

### **Human/Nature Discourses**

As discussed earlier, the Anthropocene is an idea that represents domination of the human species over other species and elements of the earth's ecosystem. At the core is a belief that the human/nature relationship is one of exploitation and degradation. Posthumanism, a theoretical notion aligned with ideas about the Anthropocene, de-centres humanity and its uniqueness. More a constellation of theories, approaches, concepts, and practices than a distinct paradigm (Taylor, 2016), it invites a relational and ethical focus to "the other" – human, nonhuman, and more-than-human (Elliott & Davis, 2018).

The influence of posthumanism (and anti-Anthropocentrism) has challenged beliefs about the centrality of humans over all other elements. This is evident in discussions about the "rights" of nature. Indeed, so influential is this thinking that the legal rights of personhood have been granted to New Zealand's Whanganui River, the first river in the world to be recognized as a living entity. In Maori understanding, the river is a *tupuna*, an ancestor, a person with its well-being directly linked to that of humans, and thus, it now has its own identity and legal protections within human law. Elsewhere, similar recognition of nature follows constitutional change in Bolivia, where the Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Buxton, 2010) gives nature equal rights with humans. Similar efforts have been made to establish legal rights for India's sacred Ganges River, while in 2019, citizens in Toledo, Ohio, USA, granted legal rights to Lake Erie. Much of the basis of these legal decisions lies in recognizing natural elements and acknowledging Indigenous/First Nations worldviews, where distinctions between humans and nature are less sharp or binary, as is common in Western ways of viewing the world.

Posthumanism has been influential in the field of EfS as it allows for human relationships with the physical and nonhuman worlds to be examined in new ways.

In EfS, this has led to an increase in immersive, place-based approaches (Cutter-MacKenzie-Knowles & Siegel, 2019; Greenwood, 2013; Malone, 2016).

## Rights and Justice Discourses

Overlapping discourses about human/nature relationships are discourses about rights and justice. Ulmer notes that, in approaches where humans are de-centered, “justice involves more than what can be found solely within the realm of human relations. Rather, justice is also material, ecological, geographical, geological, geopolitical, and geophilosophical. Justice is a more-than-human endeavour” (2017, p. 883). As an emerging challenge to discourses of individualism and Western-centrism, the rights of the “unvoiced” – children and young people, First Nations peoples, and non-Western religious traditions – are beginning to materialize.

## Children and Young People

The civil capacities and rights of young citizens in shaping the current world and future possibilities have mostly been ignored and/or diminished. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1987) was the first international effort to bring a specialized human rights treaty for people under the age of 18. The Convention recognizes children and youth as “holders” of human rights and not simply as having rights to “protection” because of their perceived physical and mental immaturity. A feature of the UNCRC is the extension of “participation” rights to children, which prepare children and young people for active social roles.

Concurrently, a focus on eco-citizenship and eco-leadership for children and young people is emerging in EfS. Contemporary EfS views children and young people as next-generation partners and leaders who can help construct global eco-citizenship identities. Emerging EfS initiatives such as Jane Goodall’s global *Roots and Shoots* program and Australia’s *Kids-Teaching-Kids* initiative enable young people to practice participation and leadership. In many instances, however, these programs can be superficial or tokenistic, with children manipulated or viewed as decoration in adult activities, not participants or leaders at all. Emergent approaches see children and young people initiating change, including actions such as protesting or campaigning against adult decisions or inactions within a schooling context or more widely in the community (Riberiro, 2021). *School Strike for Climate* and its broader resistance movement are recent examples of children and youth using their participation rights and leadership capabilities to challenge mainstream adult inertia around climate change; in this movement, children are exercising their global citizenship rights to take part, lead, speak up, and act for people and nature. Such actions could be viewed as the success of certain approaches to EfS, such as systems and action-oriented approaches. Alternatively, these actions could be viewed as EfS not meeting the transformative needs of children and young people as a result of a seeming unwillingness to challenge the education status quo.

## First Nations Peoples

First Nations' worldviews and environmental/sustainability discourses are closely linked. As a result, there is emerging recognition within EfS of the importance of First Nations' worldviews (Shava, 2013). Since the 1980s, UN agencies and international environmental organizations have advocated for the recognition and valuing of First Nations knowledges, particularly in bioconservation management. This is particularly so given that Western science seems unable to answer many of the complex "wicked" problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) of today and First Nations' knowledges are now valued as sources of epistemological diversity (Lotz-Sisikta, 2002; Shava, 2013).

While the UN and other conventions are generally inclusive of and committed to First Nations' knowledges and perspectives, a common critique (O'Bryan, 2004) is that they have a utilitarian view and may lead to appropriation of indigenous knowledges, for the Western good. Nevertheless, these conventions appear to have revitalized languages, epistemologies, and pedagogies that privilege indigenous voices and involve elders in indigenous education while also recognizing the importance of land and connecting with it (Davis, 2019). While there is emerging recognition by EfS theorists and practitioners of the importance of First Nations' perspectives (for example, in South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia), the field of EfS remains Western-oriented, even in non-Western countries (Ryan & Ferreira, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for EfS practitioners to proactively work to embed First Nations peoples and perspectives in their work for ecological and social transformation.

## Non-Western Cultural Traditions

The roots of sustainability and EfS discourses have largely emerged from Western, Christian religious cultures and traditions (White, 1967), and while not overtly "Christian" in its messaging, EfS cannot help but be overlaid with Christian values and assumptions, especially as they relate to dualistic nature-human relationships. Increasingly, however, these discourses are being questioned as the field of EfS spreads across the world. For example, the nature-human dualism, so common in Western thinking, does not appear in many Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism (Dreamson, 2019). This presents an opportunity for the field of EfS, with its emerging discourses of posthumanism and First Nations perspectives, to really transform the current largely Western orientation and underpinnings. As Gruenewald (2004) has noted, EfS needs a greater sociocultural perspective if it is to become culturally inclusive. Perhaps what is needed, as Dreamson (2019) argues, is a meta-cultural education that goes well beyond ideas about cross-cultural, inclusive, and intercultural education. In EfS, a field that has barely scratched the surface of attending to such cultural issues, the idea of meta-cultural education and pedagogies may provide a deeper approach to understandings of sustainability and transformative education.

In summary, the field of EfS has been influenced by discourses of sustainability, as evident in its goals, approaches, and strategies. Like sustainability, EfS ranges from weak to strong approaches. It is the authors' contention, however, that while EfS purports to seek radical social transformation, most efforts remain wedded to mainstream approaches and institutions such as the UN/UNESCO and schooling, not known for seeking such transformation (Ferreira, 2019). However, the emergent discourses discussed above may offer a way for the field to take a stronger approach to its teaching and understanding of sustainability. Key to achieving this is a need to focus on building the capacities of leaders for sustainability.

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## Learning for Leadership

EfS is an education that seeks to challenge the status quo and, given the challenges of the twenty-first century, its time has come in offering a means for creating change and educating change leaders now and into the future. Indeed, as Orr (2017) notes, the Anthropocene provides EfS with an urgency to “educate a generation of students who grow dangerous to the status quo.” While connections between EfS and leadership seem apparent, with both focusing on (transformative) change, the links are not necessarily strongly made within EfS literature; although, some authors have recognized its importance in societal transitions to sustainability (Corcoran, Weakland, & Wals, 2017; Fien, 2014; Souza, Wals, & Jacobi, 2019). The leadership attributes that are important in achieving sustainable futures are those that are inclusive, democratic, empowering of others, and where leaders have the skills and capacities to work in fluid and uncertain environments (Ferreira, Ryan, & Davis, 2015). Many people need to “unlearn” the traditional, usually hierarchical, leadership styles and patterns they have grown up with, have been educated in, and that dominate much of daily life.

There are particular leadership skills and capacities that, the authors argue, will enable leaders to implement strategies for social and environmental change. As Sutoris (2021) notes, a range of twenty-first-century Anthropocene skills are required by learners and, it is argued, by sustainability leaders. These include:

- Reimagining the world through futures education which, for example, facilitates the envisioning of alternative futures and develops strategies for communicating and implementing these
- Systems-based critical thinking that goes beyond thinking about single issues to grappling with the challenges of complexity and the strategies for addressing these
- A political understanding of issues so there is a shift from a depoliticized, individualized response and instead, a focus on collective, systems-based approaches to leading for change

As the authors' backgrounds are in teacher education and EfS, in this section, discussion is framed toward leadership learning through their research and

experiences in teacher education. Teacher education, these authors argue, is central to shaping future sustainability leaders in schools and other educational settings and institutions; these sustainability leaders are then able to educate the next generation of sustainability leaders and community activists. The authors undertook a 12-year action research project designed to implement a systems-based approach to embedding sustainability into teacher education in Australia. The overarching goal of this project was to develop the sustainability leadership capacity of teacher educators (Ferreira, Evans, Davis, & Stevenson, 2019; Ferreira, Ryan, & Tilbury, 2007). The project was unique in taking a systems-based approach to change, and connected teacher educators with a range of other stakeholders in their system, including professional associations, government curriculum bodies, employing authorities, and students. While the project details and outcomes were multiple, here is discussed just one aspect of the research, a smaller study undertaken on sustainability leadership.

In this study-within-a-study (Ferreira et al., 2015), two key issues of importance were identified in building sustainability leadership skills and capacities: (1) participants' knowledge about EfS and systems change, and (2) their personal leadership capacities.

Regarding the first point, in order to be effective sustainability leaders, individuals need to know and deeply understand the topic of sustainability and/or EfS and its transformative goals. They also need to understand not only how complex systems work, but strategies for effecting change within such systems. In-depth knowledge of one's own organization and its relationships with other stakeholders in this system is essential, as organizations are complex and have their own cultures and practices. To succeed at effecting change, then it is essential to understand how specific organizations function.

With regards to the second point – leadership capacity – the authors' study identified that leadership is not innate, rather it can be learned. Successful sustainability projects require individuals who have learnt how to lead, are able to cope with complexity and uncertainty, and feel confident in their knowledge of sustainability. In this change project, several opportunities to lead change were included as a way of enhancing participants' leadership capacities. The overall finding was that having an interest in EfS did not, in and of itself, prepare one to be an effective sustainability leader (Ferreira et al., 2015). Indeed, the authors argue that leadership is not innate but is rather a “becoming” process – a set of skills to be learned and a set of capacities to be enhanced. While this research was with teacher educators, Davis (2005) has also undertaken research with young children as sustainability leaders. This demonstrates that leadership skills and capacities are not simply adult attributes.

Davis' research shows that even very young children can be sustainability leaders when teachers provide the right conditions for them to be bold and disruptive. For example, the Sustainable Planet Project at Campus Kindergarten, Australia (Davis & Pratt, 2005), saw four-year-old children develop a campaign against abandoned shopping trolleys left outside their kindergarten. The children became involved in discussions with a local supermarket about the abandoned shopping carts and wrote letters to the “trolley thieves” via the front page of the local newspaper. A similar



example, from Sweden, involved children at a preschool who overturned the local council practice of purchasing the cheapest eggs (from battery farms) for their lunches. Instead, they argued for, and were successful in obtaining, eggs from free-range farms because of the better lives afforded the chickens (Arlemalm-Hagser & Engdahl, 2015). In these examples, the teachers demonstrated their own sustainability leadership through the leadership opportunities they facilitated for their students.

Recent examples of youth-led sustainability leadership include the School Kids 4 Climate/School Strike for Climate movement initiated by Greta Thunberg. Many young people led and continue to lead in disrupting their school programs, challenging some of their teachers and principals (although many have also supported and enabled their actions despite significant public and, in Australia, political backlash).

The examples discussed above all illustrate the ways in which EfS can be effective at developing sustainability leadership skills and capacities. They also show how even very young children are capable of reimagining their world, thinking about all the component parts of complex problems, and taking what might be seen as political action through engaging with the media, including social media. The authors argue that learning to lead for sustainability needs to become the key priority for EfS if it is to be successful in facilitating the sort of social and environmental change required for a sustainable society.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

There is a famous “anthem” by Leonard Cohen, Canadian-born poet, author, and songwriter, in which he wrote/sang that everything has a crack where the light can get in (Werber, 2021). If ever there was a time for the light to get in, it is now, but radical shifts are needed in these difficult and complex times. This includes a shift from a focus on individual change, a quickening of the pace of change, changes to economic and political systems and structures, and engagement with contemporary social shifts. Every part of society needs to engage in big, bold transformations.

While the field of EfS purports to educate for such big, bold transformations, its on-the-ground activities often end up focussing on small-scale, individual, tree-hugging, compliant-type activities that do little to challenge the status quo. The authors argue that a renewed focus of *EfS* on *learning and leadership for change* may allow for greater social critique, critical reflection, and collective action-taking. Below, four ways are proposed in which the field may be able to be transformed so that a focus on learning for sustainability leadership is prioritized.

First, there must be a turn further toward “strong” EfS as this is missing in much of EfS thinking and practice when education for resistance, transgression, and perhaps even rebellion is necessary, as McLaren (2015) contends. While there has been a strong social change/systems thinking narrative in EfS (Fien, 1993; Sterling, 2004), this has remained, for the most part, a theory that teachers have resisted deploying in practice. To address this, the field needs to grapple with its own preoccupation with individual change-focussed programs, understand and challenge the systemic barriers that teachers face in adopting transformative pedagogies, and



grapple with the stultifying effects of generally conservative and hierarchical education systems. This will require an understanding of education as a system, the role of teachers in maintaining the status quo, and strategies to address the multiple parts of the education system. Without this, EfS will not be successful in educating sustainability leaders capable of transforming society.

Secondly, EfS needs to become more interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary rather than simply espousing this as an EfS virtue. EfS tends to look inside itself for answers; however, the authors argue that learning from others must be prioritized. For example, research from health, philosophy, psychology, leadership, and management can provide novel insights and strategies to ensure that students are being educated to be the leaders for change in the future. One example of where potential new ideas might come from is New Sociology of Capitalism (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derluguan, & Calhoun, 2013), with its critiques of contemporary economic systems which appear to be aligned with the broader EfS goals for social and economic change. Another example is eco-psychology, which can provide new insights into the most effective approaches to address the mental health and well-being impacts of climate change. Such insights will be helpful in the field of EfS as they will broaden sustainability leaders' understandings of what motivates change.

A third way to generate change within the field is to recognize and utilize a wider range of ways of learning and understanding. Using spoken and written language and scientific data in EfS programs is common. However, this focus on traditional communication modes may alienate or marginalize some learners. One example of nonlinguistic learning that is emerging in the field is through the integration of the Arts and EfS. Images, for example, can be powerful and unsettling educative tools, and O'Gorman (2015, 2020) argues that Arts education and EfS have much in common as they can both serve the purpose of stimulating critical thinking, imagination, problem-solving, and transformation. Therefore, use of these kinds of strategies will help broaden the number of people who can learn to be successful sustainability leaders.

A fourth consideration is an expanded focus on *who* is being educated, and the mechanisms for doing this. Despite some forays into community education, the field has remained resolutely focussed on formal education systems, and the education of children and young people. However, witnessing the use of multiple forms of media in educating society at large about environmental issues and the need for social change is a game-changer. For example, there are several highly successful mass media programs such as Craig Ruecassel's TV series *War on Waste* (2018), *Fight for Planet A* (2020b), and *Big Weather and how to survive it* (2020a). Social media is being used effectively by nonformal educator community groups who are successfully engaging and educating others. These include *Australian Parents for Climate Action* (a volunteer-run group of parents, grandparents, and carers of children who advocate "for a safe climate for our children's future"), *Mothers Rise Up* (UK) and *Mothers Out Front* (USA) (networks educating and mobilizing for stronger action on climate change), and *Knitting Nannas* (an international group of knitting grandmothers who "sit, knit and plot" strategies for challenging corporations).

These four considerations, if enacted, could assist with reprioritizing a focus on learning for sustainability leadership. The growing influence of the Anthropocene discourse is likely to continue to highlight the need for strong transformative sustainability approaches and education systems that are up to the task of developing leaders with the capacity to challenge business-as-usual. As discussed in this chapter, although the field of EfS aims for transformative approaches for sustainability, this rhetoric is rarely enacted in practice. Questioning key assumptions and orthodoxies and seeking alternatives are, therefore, important tasks for EfS leaders. A range of emergent discourses, such as those discussed here, may indeed offer spaces and places of rupture within EfS discourses, and provide possibilities for opening a crack for light to find its way in.

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# Examining the Limits of What Schools Can Do to Reduce Peer Cyberbullying

# 47

Marilyn Campbell and Victoria Lister

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## Abstract

Cyberbullying as a behavior among students has emerged in the last 20 years and it seems as difficult to prevent or reduce its occurrence as any other form of bullying. Although policy makers, politicians and researchers now call for a whole of community response, describing cyberbullying as a public health problem, schools seem to be bearing the brunt of the issues and responsibility for its negative consequences. While it is true that schools are best positioned to educate young people, it is also true that it takes a whole village to raise a child. When adults first realized that cyberbullying behaviors were occurring, outside of

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school hours and outside of school grounds, many schools were reluctant to involve themselves in managing these incidents. However, as it was increasingly realized that the consequences of cyberbullying were being manifested by students at school and was affecting students while they were at school, schools took a more active role. Currently many schools now advise parents to bring all cyberbullying incidents to the school for staff to deal with. But have schools actually taken on too much responsibility to raise children in our society?

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**Keywords**

Cyberbullying · Schools · Students · Policies · Programs · Parents

**The Field of Memory**

Bullying among school students has existed since mass schooling was introduced. Bullying was seen as a mostly physical behavior conducted by boys, with an imbalance of power, maintained by strength and physical size to intimidate and belittle younger and weaker boys. Even if the boy who was bullying was not physically strong, he had henchmen to do the work. Examples of this were Flashman in Thomas Hughes' book *Tom Brown's School Days* and Draco Malfoy in JK Rowling's books about *Harry Potter*. Both these boys had power from their fathers' positions as benefactors of the schools they attended (Rugby and Hogwarts) and surrounded themselves with physically powerful boys to do their bidding. The attitude of adults was (and still is in some cases) that bullying at school is a rite of passage; that everyone at school will experience it. This is still sometimes the case with hazing rituals at some university colleges. Adults also believed that being bullied was character building; it made a man out of you; what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. In the 1980s, however, Dan Olweus in Norway, and Peter Smith in England, began researching the consequences of bullying behavior and found that being victimized at school not only led to negative consequences at the time, but also often lasted into later life. It was also realized that girls were involved in bullying behavior, although less physical bullying and more verbal and social exclusion bullying, which produced similar negative consequences in those that they bullied. These realizations gradually changed adults' perceptions to consider bullying behavior among school students to be unacceptable.

**The Field of Presence**

In the last 20 years a new form of bullying emerged called cyberbullying. This form of bullying was enabled by the growth in personal technological devices and the Internet. A controversy arose about this new form of aggression, whether the behavior was a form of bullying or a different stand-alone phenomenon. The debate was centered on whether this behavior met the three characteristics of bullying – that is the intention to hurt, was usually repeated, and there was an imbalance of power. Some researchers argued that the intention to hurt could not be determined as any text or visual could be misinterpreted, while others maintained that as there is such a significant overlap between other forms of offline bullying and cyberbullying, an



intent to hurt could be established. The characteristic of repetition was argued that online repetition was not repetition unless it was from the same person, whereas others argued that sending the hurtful messages to others met the criteria of repetition, whoever sent them. The most important characteristic of bullying, the imbalance of power, was argued by some not to be present in cyberbullying as a stronger physical presence was not experienced. However, others argued that the imbalance of power means the person being victimized is powerless to make the bullying stop, therefore, the presence of physical dominance is not always necessary. There has been no disagreement as to the negative consequences of cyberbullying as there was for traditional (face-to-face) bullying.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Cyberbullying research encompasses many theories and perspectives from various fields such as psychology, sociology, technology and education. Bullying and cyberbullying have always been associated with young people even though it is known that adults also bully and cyberbully. Research on cyberbullying has followed the research on traditional forms of bullying by firstly concentrating on a psychological individual approach investigating the online behavior with a dyadic lens involving the student bullying and the student being bullied. More recently, however, a sociological approach has been utilized, situating bullying within Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. In this model there are five systems that characterize the social-ecological model that were expanded by Swearer and Espelage to a *social-ecological framework of bullying*. This framework was further expanded by Cross and colleagues to a *social-ecological framework for understanding and reducing cyberbullying behaviors*. The theory of Affordances positions cyberbullying not as a relational problem, as psychology and sociology do, but as a behavior or product of advanced technology. From an educational perspective Redmond and colleagues have very recently developed a cyberbullying conceptual framework for educators consisting of three categories: identification, management and prevention.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures which Form Different Viewpoints**

The first and somewhat continuing rupture was the controversy about the definition of cyberbullying. At first the behavior was called by many different names, such as e-bullying, tech bullying, or online bullying. However, after some research, a controversy arose with some researchers arguing that the behavior was not bullying at all as it did not always entirely fit with the three pillars of bullying (intention to hurt, usually repeated and an imbalance of power). Other researchers maintain there is no such behavior as cyberbullying, only cyberaggression, or that cyberbullying is a completely different phenomenon from bullying. The second disruption was of attitudes that a person who cyberbullied was labelled a bully, therefore describing a trait rather than a behavior. It is now known, however, that there are very few school-aged children who persistently bully but rather that bullying roles are fluid and changeable over time. Person first language is now preferred, that is, a child who is bullied rather than a victim.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presuppositions**

The major assumption in public discourse is that cyberbullying is becoming an epidemic and is rapidly increasing. This assumption is false as many studies show that traditional bullying is still at least twice as prevalent as cyberbullying, even though all modes of bullying overlap. This assumption can lead adults to a moral panic, which is exacerbated by the fact of the generational digital divide, in which adults make decisions about technology and young people that are not based on facts or evidence. Another assumption by the public is that cyberbullying inevitably leads students who are victimized to suicide. There are many factors which tragically come together for students to take their own lives, and while cyberbullying could be one factor there are always many others. This assumption also spreads unnecessary fear, especially among parents. Many people also assume that any student who cyberbullies is a coward and that popular students do not bully. Neither of these assumptions are correct and these perceptions often hinder adults in seeing cyberbullying incidents clearly.

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### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the emergence of cyberbullying behaviors and their relationship to traditional or face-to-face bullying in young people. Estimated prevalence rates and consequences are presented. The various theories and conceptual frameworks that attempt to explain this behavior are then examined. Current strategies of school leaders, of policies, legal solutions and prevention programs are discussed. Finally, different strategies that school leaders and managers need to consider are presented.

### **History of the Word Cyberbullying**

Although “cyberbullying” entered the lexicon in the mid-90s, it was yet to populate the vernacular or academia. For example, a presentation to The Children’s Defense Fund by Morino (1997) – although advocating for the education of young people in “cyberspace” and urging caution and discernment online – did not use the term. Similarly, a study emanating from Australia on the effects of being ignored on the Internet (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000) referred to “cyberostracism” not cyberbullying. In the UK, awareness of cyberbullying as a concept appears to have gained currency around 2001 (Smith et al., 2008), with a reference to the sending of “malicious emails or text messages on mobile phones” emerging in government literature in 2002, and the first research on text message bullying appearing in 2003 (Smith et al., 2008).

The origin of the term “cyberbullying” has been attributed to several sources. Bill Belsey, a Canadian teacher and cyberbullying activist, has been credited by many scholars and popular writers with the coining of the term when he launched his website [www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca) in 2003 (Bauman, 2012). Smith, del Barrio, and

Tokunaga (2012) note the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) added the word to their database in 2010, where it states the first use of cyberbullying appeared in the *Canberra Times* in 1998 (Cyber-bully and cyber-bullying, 2020). It was soon located in an earlier article in the *New York Times* in 1995 by Bauman in 2011 (Bauman, 2012; Campbell & Bauman, 2018), although the OED now claims an appearance of the term “cyber-bully” in 1994 in the San Diego Union-Tribune (Cyber-bully and cyber-bullying, 2020).

One of the first uses of the term in academia appeared in Australia in a discussion of the growing problem of “cyber bullying” and its virtual absence from the literature (Campbell, 2005). Since this time, use of the term in research and in everyday parlance has become commonplace. For example, a Google Scholar search performed on 21 April, 2020 for articles with the keyword “cyberbullying” yielded 54,500 results, with 1660 articles published in the year to date alone. A similar search on Google yielded 16,900,000 results.

## Controversy in Defining the Behavior of Cyberbullying

There has been vigorous debate regarding whether bullying through technology is a separate phenomenon or another form of bullying (e.g., Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015; Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2009). The crucial debate on bullying among researchers is about the applicability of the three features of traditional bullying (i.e., intention to cause harm, repetition, and power imbalance) in the context of cyber space.

Recently, there seems to be agreement that cyberbullying has all three of the characteristics of other forms of bullying (e.g., Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Hemphill et al., 2012; Olweus, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). The unique element distinguishing cyberbullying from traditional bullying is that cyberbullying is performed through technological space (Langos, 2012).

The definition of cyberbullying is an important question not just for research and theoretical reasons but for the implications it has for prevention and intervention strategies. If cyberbullying is a completely different form of aggression, then it could be necessary to have different strategies and programs than for traditional bullying. If cyberbullying is the “fourth” form of bullying, along with the traditional forms of physical, verbal, and social exclusion bullying, then should these strategies be based on what we already know about reducing traditional bullying, which have not been particularly successful to date (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

## Prevalence

One of the main reasons that there are so many differences in studies of the prevalence rates of cyberbullying is age. Most cyberbullying prevalence studies have been conducted with adolescent populations, where it has been found that, unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying does not seem to diminish as much

from younger to older adolescents and it has even been argued it increases from primary to high school (Schenk, Fremouw, & Keelan, 2013). Rates of cyberbullying victimization in adolescents range between 12% and 25% (e.g., Lazuras, Barkoukis, Ourda, & Tsozbatzoudis, 2013), and rates of perpetration between 3% and 15% (e.g., Li, 2008), with cyberbullying incidences peaking between the ages of 11 and 15 (e.g., Tokunaga, 2010). There is also evidence cyberbullying continues into adulthood. In a study of university students, approximately one in six (17%) reported cyberbullying by a peer and one in 13 (8%) reported they had cyberbullied another student in the past 12 months (Wozencroft, Campbell, Orel, Kimpton, & Leong, 2015).

Culture also influences the rates of rates of cybervictimization with some countries having higher prevalence rates than others. This has been shown in school and tertiary populations using the same measurement tool. For example, a study involving nearly 5000 students aged from 7–19 years from eight European countries found cyberbullying and cybervictimization were most prevalent in Bulgaria and Hungary and least prevalent in Spain (Sorrentino, Baldry, Farrington, & Belaya, 2019). Gender, however, does not seem to influence cybervictimization rates. Boys were found to be more globally involved in cyberbullying in seven out of eight countries but there were no significant gender differences in rates of cybervictimization (Sorrentino et al., 2019). A similar finding was reported by Baroncelli and Ciucci (2014) in research on 669 pre-adolescent children with a mean age of 12–13 years in Italy and in a study on 2582 adolescents in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan (Chen & Chen, 2020). Khong et al. (2020) also report that systematic review of the literature has established trivial effect sizes for gender differences in victimization.

What is also important to realize is that usually cyberbullying is not the only form of bullying individuals experience. Many studies have shown that being victimized by cyber-means indicates individuals are being victimized by traditional means at similar times (e.g., Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Wright & Li, 2013).

## Consequences

The consequences of being cyberbullied seem to be similar as for traditional bullying. Cyberbullying has been linked with anxiety (Navarro, Yubero, Larrañaga, & Martínez, 2012) and depression (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012), loneliness and low self-esteem (Brewer & Kerlake, 2015), suicidal ideation (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013), and reduction in academic attainment and performance (Eden, Heiman, & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Yousef & Bellamy, 2015).

However, some studies suggest cyber perpetration and victimization have more negative consequences than traditional bullying (Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2012). For example, a study comparing the experiences of adolescents of both forms of bullying found those in the cyber bully/victim group in particular had the most negative scores on most measures of psychological health, physical health and academic performance (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

## Theoretical Perspectives

As was noted in the preceding discussion on the history of the term “cyberbullying,” the emergence of this new form of aggression sparked a great deal of interest in both the public and academic domains. Research commenced in the latter around the turn of the millennium, with the first empirical research on cyberbullying victims occurring as early as 2001 (e.g., Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001), and studies on cyberbullying perpetration appearing several years later (e.g., Campbell, 2005; Li, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Thomas, 2006). Much of this early work is now considered descriptive (Barlett, 2019; Espelage, Rao, & Craven, 2012) – a result of studies that aimed to address or shed light on the problem and scope of cyberbullying rather than develop our theoretical understanding of it. Research in the cyberbullying space has therefore been described as *atheoretical* (Barlett, 2019; Espelage et al., 2012) – that is, not based on or concerned with theory. Moreover, that an emerging field might be characterized by a lack of phenomenon-specific theory is not uncommon. As Barlett (2019) notes, a similar effect can be observed in early research on video game violence, which drew on the literature of film and television violence in much the same way cyberbullying research looked to that on traditional bullying. This kind of activity lays a foundation for the building of theory particular to the emerging field.

Bullying is not a contemporary phenomenon – it has been noticed throughout history (Saracho, 2016). Emerging in recent times in line with advances in technology, cyberbullying can in many respects be viewed as the modern day outplay of otherwise age-old behaviors. Yet unique features – such as the capacity for anonymity and repeatability, the eroding of the kinds of strength differentials that characterize traditional bullying, and the lack of physical aspects in general (Barlett, 2019) – distinguish cyberbullying from its traditional counterpart. That the two forms of bullying are “same, but different” is an aspect that has shaped the history of the theory of cyberbullying.

Although cyberbullying has characteristics which distinguish it from traditional bullying, both share many aggression-related constructs. Unsurprisingly, this has led to the use of traditional bullying theory to explain cyberbullying, with both positive and negative effects. That traditional bullying theory provided scholars with a platform from which the problem of cyberbullying could begin to be explored was an advantage. However, a lack of contextual specificity was less so, along with the fact that although bullying in its traditional form has been observed for more than five centuries (Saracho, 2016), systematic study of it commenced as recently as the 1970s – and particularly in the late 1970s following the publication of the seminal work *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (Olweus, 1978). Therefore, it too is a relatively new discipline and has faced the same kind of atheoretical and descriptive teething problems as the cyberbullying domain (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). Moreover, these “problems, disputes and unsettled issues” (Saracho, 2016, p. 14) have carried over to cyberbullying.

Two disciplines that have contributed substantially to bullying and cyberbullying research and theory are social psychology and sociology. A theory widely used in

bullying research emerged from the latter arena with the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977), who proposed an ecological model of human development and produced several iterations of his model including bioecological and chaos theory-driven models in 1998 and 2000, respectively. These were adopted by aggression scholars and named the *social-ecological model* (Espelage, 2014). The five micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-systems that characterize the social-ecological model were expanded by Espelage and Swearer in 2004 to add to provide a framework for understanding “how individual characteristics of children interact with environmental contexts or systems to promote or prevent victimisation and perpetration” (Espelage, 2014, pp. 257–258). Their *social-ecological framework of bullying* was expanded in 2015 for the cyberbullying context (Cross et al., 2015). Drawing on research on the safe use of the internet by young children (Valcke, De Wever, Van Keer, & Schellens, 2011), Cross et al.’s (2015) *social-ecological framework for understanding and reducing cyberbullying behaviors* identified five interacting ways in which young people use online environments: the online *contexts* in which they spend time; the *contacts* they make; the extent to which they manage their *confidentiality*; their *conduct*; and the *content* they upload, use and access. It has since been utilized in empirical research (e.g., Cross et al., 2016; Redmond, Lock, & Smart, 2020).

Another sociological theory, *routine activity theory*, developed by criminologists Cohen and Felson (1979) to explain the link between positive, macro-level change, and crime statistics, hypothesized that changes in routine in daily life can lead to antisocial behavior. Applied to crimes such as stalking in the late 1990s, it has been used in the cyberbullying perpetration and victimization context by scholars for the last decade, from Mesch (2009) who examined parental mediation, online activities, and cyberbullying, to Wachs et al. (2020) who used the approach to investigate cybergrooming victimization among adolescents internationally. *General strain theory* (Agnew, 1992) also emerged from criminology (albeit with a social psychological focus) and is used to predict antisocial behavior and now cyberbullying perpetration. A strain is a stressor that increases the likelihood of negative emotional and affective states and leads to antisocial behaviors. It has been applied to bullying for the last decade – commencing with research by scholars including Hay and Meldrum (2010) and Patchin and Hinduja (2011). It entered cyberbullying research at the same time, commencing with Hay, Meldrum and Mann in (2010). Recently, Torres, D’Alessio, and Stolzenberg (2020) examined the effect of social, verbal, physical, and cyberbullying victimization on academic performance through a general strain theory lens.

Social psychology theories of bullying draw on aggression and related literatures to focus on the personal and situational factors that influence behavior at the individual level. As Barlett (2019) has documented, the *theory of reasoned action* (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and *theory of planned behavior* (Ajzen, 1991) have been applied to a range of topics including cyberbullying (e.g., Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Festl, Scharkow, & Quandt, 2015; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). More recently, a comprehensive *general aggression model* (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) emerged as a social-cognitive model to predict aggression and

was adapted for the cyberbullying domain some 8 years later by Ang and Goh (2010) and others (e.g., Ang, Tan, & Talib Mansor, 2011; Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Çetin, Yaman, & Peker, 2011).

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## School Leadership Practices at Present

School leaders are usually committed to preventing and managing cyberbullying behavior in their students. The first and supposedly easiest way to do this is with an anti-bullying policy and procedures. Rarely do schools use the law to reduce cyberbullying but prefer an educational approach such as delivering programs.

## School Policies

Most schools have an anti-bullying policy, usually mandated by the Education Department in their country. A policy is a framework, mostly written, which contains the principles that guide the actions of an organization. Procedures to enact the policy are usually separate so they can be kept updated but most schools combine procedures with their school's anti-bullying policy. Anti-bullying policies are intended to keep students at school in a safe learning environment. Some schools use these policies for marketing and recruitment purposes or to avoid litigation (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Avoiding litigation for not having a school anti-bullying policy is, however, a double-edged sword as schools have been sued when they do not follow their own policy.

It is interesting to note that many school policies only described traditional bullying until recently, even when cyberbullying behavior was known to be conducted by the students at the school. The controversy over definitional aspects of cyberbullying (mentioned before) of whether cyberbullying was actually a form of bullying or other phenomena could have accounted for this, or the perception that as cyberbullying was mainly conducted outside of school then it was not the school's responsibility. However, in the last few years most school policies now include cyberbullying as the fourth form of bullying and have procedures in their policies to prevent and intervene. In fact, many schools now demand that students and parents bring the evidence of cyberbullying to the principal to be dealt with. This of course poses a problem which schools have not really thought through: that the availability of evidence for cyberbullying makes it easier for students to "prove" they have been bullied but what evidence is therefore needed to "prove" other forms of bullying?

Despite the legal and educational obligations of schools to create an anti-bullying policy there has been scant research to show that these policies actually reduce bullying. Those studies which have been conducted have mixed results with most showing no association of a school's anti-bullying policy and a reduction in bullying behavior (Cross et al., 2011; Lambert, Scourfield, Smalley, & Jones, 2008). This could be because of the poor dissemination or poor implementation of the policy (Campbell, 2018).

## Legal Solutions

Most Anglo-American countries have legislated against cyberbullying behavior (Campbell & Završnik, 2013). However, these laws seem to have failed to curb this behavior among young people at school. Although teachers and parents and the public expect that the criminal law will provide a legal response to cyberbullying conducted by school students (Kift, Campbell, & Butler, 2010), most schools take a more educational and school disciplinary approach rather than resorting to the law.

In addition, the civil law which allows students and parents to sue a school for inadequate anti-bullying policies or non-compliance to their own policy, concerns schools. Schools are often confused by the complex legal environment and often fear the civil law rather than considering the law as societal support for their community (Pennell, Campbell, & Tangen, 2020).

## Programs

Many schools and parents advocate that stand-alone programs on the topic of cyberbullying are the best way to prevent cyberbullying behaviors among students (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). For example the Cyber Friendly Schools program has been shown to reduce cyberbullying in Year 9 students by 30%, however, there were problems with fidelity of the intervention as teachers could not always find the time to implement the program in an overcrowded curriculum (Cross et al., 2018). There are also problems with programs of cost effectiveness and sustainability. Students do not learn and retain knowledge with one program delivered once. Nor do they change attitudes and behavior unless there is a spiral curriculum each year which builds on the lessons of the previous year. If teachers are to work towards preventing cyberbullying then these lessons and behavioral changes need to be included in the regular curriculum.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Perhaps educational policy makers and managers need to consider the conflicting messages that schools are being given – on the one hand to return to basics and make sure the three Rs of reading, writing and ‘rithmetic are prioritized, but on the other hand to ensure that students are good digital citizens; to keep them safe online as well as offline; to educate them about social relationships; and to instill values of respect and kindness. This fourth R of relationships is just as important as the other three Rs but schools are not resourced to do this.

Schools are a microcosm of society and bullying in all its forms is a deeply embedded social relationship problem. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which has been observed for most of human history. There is some controversy whether it could be an evolutionary behavior or a learnt behavior (Campbell, 2017). As bullying is now seen as a public health problem, schools require assistance from



health departments with psychologists and social workers, public health campaigns against bullying and buy-in from technological platforms and social media companies.

Whatever viewpoint is taken as to whether cyberbullying is learnt or not, children do model adults' behavior and adults bully each other. We cannot expect schools to reduce cyberbullying without adults taking responsibility for their own behavior as well. Parents are crucial role models for children and are their first teachers. Parents need to take much more responsibility for guiding their children's Internet experiences from a very young age. It is no longer acceptable for parents to say they are digital immigrants and do not know anything about technology. They are the ones who buy the devices for their children and need to teach them how to use them safely and not abuse their peers through technology.

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## Cross-References

► [The Micropolitics of Workplace Mobbing](#)

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**Part VII**

**Leadership, Policy, and Politics**



# The Teacher as Union Member and Professional Educator: The Continuing Challenge of Bread and Butter and Professionalism

# 48

Todd A. DeMitchell

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**Abstract**

*Historically, professionalism has been defined in ways that are detrimental to union organization. (Kerchner & Caufman, Elementary School J 96, 107–122, 1995, p. 110)*

Teachers are central to education; they stand at the crossroads of education. It is chiefly through their efforts that the goals of education are achieved or thwarted. Susan Moore Johnson, Harvard Graduate School Professor of Education, sagely wrote just over 30 years ago, “Who Teaches Matters” (Teachers at work: Achieving success in our schools. Basic Books, New York, 1990, p. xii). Eric Hanushek concurs writing, “First, teachers are very important; no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement” (The economic value of higher teacher quality. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, Calder The Urban Institute, Washington, DC, 2010, p. 3). The COVID-19 pandemic with its shutdown of many schools brought to the forefront the importance of teachers interacting with their students in classroom settings. Try as the teachers may, their virtual presence was a questionable substitute for the personal dynamics created by teachers with their students.

Teachers consider themselves to be professionals, providing a fundamental service, and seek to present themselves to the public as professionals. Juxtaposed to the critical importance of the teacher is the fact that public school teachers are part of a heavily unionized workforce.

For some, there is a challenge between being a professional educator and being a member of a union. Dana Goldstein, in *The Teacher Wars: A History of America’s Most Embattled Profession*, asked, “Could unionized teachers fight for their own interests as workers for the educational interests of the city’s children? Or were those two priorities at odds?” (The teacher wars: a history of America’s most embattled profession. Doubleday, New York, 2014, p. 74). Essentially, is unionization organized in a way that supports the professionalism of teachers? DeMitchell and Cobb, in their study of unions and teacher professionalism, ask, “[Are] teacher unionism and collective bargaining compatible with teacher perceptions of professionalism?” (West’s Educ Law Reporter 212:1–20, 2006, p. 19).

This chapter explores the challenges of unions and teachers in developing and sustaining the union, which balances the traditional and legitimate responsibility that unions owe to the educators they represent while supporting the professional responsibility of the teachers to act in the best interests of their students.

The discussion will begin with an exploration of professionalism – what does it mean to be a professional. Next, the rise of teacher unionization and the divergent paths of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers in relation to professionalism and unionization will be discussed. The organizing principle of the emerging state collective bargaining laws formats public sector laws consistent with the industrial union model of private sector unionization and the impact of industrial unionism on teachers



and teaching. The chapter concludes with a review of DeMitchell and Cobb's research on the tangled fit of being both a union member and a professional educator.

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**Keywords**

American Federation of Teachers · Bread and butter · Collective bargaining · Industrial union · National Education Association · National Labor Relations Board Act · Professionalism · Public sector unions · Unionism · Wagner Act · Working conditions

**Field of Memory**

Unions and collective bargaining are important elements of the broader field of labor relations. Labor relations is the relationship, interaction, between the employer and employee. It includes legal mechanism, policies, and practices and their formal and informal maintenance. The basic elements, for purposes of this chapter, remain, but the actual structure ebbs and flows given the changing political and economic conditions. This is especially noteworthy in the last couple of decades accelerating around 2010 and the passage and aftermath of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Act. Attacks on teacher unions were ratcheted up, teachers were denigrated, tenure and agency fees were attacked in the courts, and legislatures were rolled back bargaining rights (DeMitchell, 2020).

**Field of Presence**

Toward the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the tide of criticism started to ebb. Teachers garnered public support in response to statewide strikes in states that do not have collective bargaining laws. Elected state officials were turned out of office, and the movement toward right-to-work legislation appeared to have reached its apex and had begun to recede, and courts turned back suits seeking to eliminate tenure.

**The Field of Concomitance**

The field of labor relations is supported by the study of law on such fields as labor law and discrimination. Industrial psychology and research on negotiations also informs the study labor relations.

**Discontinuation and Raptures**

The most noticeable recent change is the absence of discussions on the contours of professional unionism. Practicing educators, policymakers, and scholars may have abandoned the exploration of replacing the industrial union model with a professional union model.

**Critical Assumptions**

Critical assumptions of labor relations in education include the necessity to perceive the organization as people intensive. It is the relationship between actors that defines

the quality of service rendered. The assumptions also include that web of rules (state bargaining laws, collective bargaining agreements, and labor laws) characterizes the environment in which employees and administration interact.

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## Introduction

*Teachers want to be respected, want to be thought of as professionals, yet are members of strong labor unions.* (Schuman, 2004, p. 89)

The conundrum for teachers is that while their union advocates and bargains for their self-interests, teachers are professionals who provide a valuable service in the best interests of their students. Teachers tend to see themselves and describe themselves as professionals. Typically, they do not define themselves as union members, but they become union members when threats to their work, their livelihood, and their security arise. How do teachers fit these two roles, of professional and union member, together?

For the great majority of teachers, the crush of the workday in the classroom consumes their time and energy with little room left for union activities. Cooper and Liotta write that while “teachers in many communities are union members, they still see themselves and their work as primarily professional—helping children to learn. They identify with their students and the needs of their students” (2001, p. 109). For most teachers, the reality of the classroom forces the role of the professional front and center. Comments such as “I am a professional, this is my professional judgment, and I need to be treated as a professional” are heard more often in schools than the comment “I am a union member.” Teachers seek to present themselves to the public as professionals. Professor Wendy L. Poole characterizes this conundrum of teacher self-interest and professional interest as a paradox (2000, p. 117).

Professionalism is built around expert knowledge. The work of the professional teacher is complex and not routine. It involves the exercise of discretion. Teaching involves a standard of practice recognized and adhered to by the practitioners but applied in varying contexts, even within the same school district. Professionals use their judgment and take actions within the accepted standards of the profession that are in the best interests of the client, patient, or student. The focus of the professional is the best interests of the “other” and not the “self.” Unions seek to secure the self-interests of members. Professions are predicated on acts designed to further the interest of the patient, client, or student, and not the professional. Both the interests of the professional and the interests of the “other” are legitimate, and both are in tension with the other.

There is evidence that teachers do not perceive their union membership to be related to their teaching. DeMitchell and Barton (1996) found that teachers were not aligned with their building union representative on issues of the impact of collective bargaining on educational reform even though the building representative was a

colleague in their school and not a faceless bureaucrat. They offered in the analysis of their data that “teachers may not see unions and collective bargaining as being related to activities that are at the core of teaching” (p. 376). Similarly, a RAND study of teacher unions and educational reform revealed that teachers expect their union to stick to their knitting, which is obtaining the bread-and-butter issues usually associated with industrial style collective bargaining. If a union does not secure these essential items, any foray into professional issues is risky. McDonnell and Pascal (1988) in the RAND study found that “union efforts to obtain status benefits such as increased participation in school-site decision making often engender teacher suspicion and a feeling that the union is ‘falling down on the job’” (p. 53).

The challenge of providing an important public service as a professional emerged with the passage of state collective bargaining laws that defined teachers as members of a collective bargaining unit. The adopted legal definition of a public sector union, in many ways, placed teachers in both the professional classroom and the union labor hall.

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## What Is a Professional?

Professionals hold a special place in our society. William J. Goode in his study of professions asserts that there are two generating qualities/principles that define professions. The first is a “service orientation.” The second pillar of professional is the acquisition of a specialized body of knowledge (1960, p. 903). Simply put, professionals exercise the standard of accepted practice acknowledged by the profession within the structure of a recognized code of ethics that is developed in the best interests of the client/patient/student. He asserts that professionals fashion solutions based on the needs of the client, “not necessarily [on] the best material interest or needs of the professional himself” (1969, p. 278).

To be a professional means the professional must act in the best interests of the person receiving his/her services. Noted educational policy researcher Linda Darling-Hammond writes, “Professionals are obligated to do whatever is best for the client, not what is easiest, most expedient, or even what the client himself or herself might want” (1989, p. 67). Therefore, the predicate of a profession is the best interests of the client, not the needs, interests, and desires of the professional.

Professionalism is built around expert knowledge. The work of the professional teacher is complex and not routine. It involves the exercise of discretion. The work involves a standard of practice recognized and adhered to by the practitioners but applied in varying contexts, even within the same school district. Professionals use their judgment and take actions within the accepted standards of the profession and in the best interests of the client/patient or student. The focus of the professional is on the best interests of the “other” and not the “self.” Unions seek to secure the self-interests of members. Professions are predicated on acts designed to further the interest of their patient/client/student and not the professional. Both are legitimate, and both are in tension with each other.

## Unions and the Rise of the NEA and the AFT

What is a union? According to Tannenbaum, “unions are organizations designed to protect and enhance the social and economic welfare of their members” (1965 p. 9). A union is “a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives” (Webb, 1920, p. 1). They are a voluntary organization, which offers a service designed to meet its members demands for a level of benefits, working conditions, and representation with management.

Essentially, unions exist to represent the interests of the employees in the bargaining unit mainly through bargaining and implementing an enforceable employment contract through grievances, arbitration, and unfair labor practices. Those bargainable interests, often called bread-and-butter issues, include terms and conditions of employment, and wages and benefits. “Teachers join a union in order to secure more tangible benefits than they would without the union” (DeMitchell, 2020, p. 29). The union must provide a service securing benefits and security that the teachers (members of the bargaining unit) believe that they could not get on their own. Potential consumers of union service judge the value received by what is secured through bargaining and other activities, which enhance the interests of the employee.

### The Rise of the NEA and the AFT: Association or Union?

Teachers began to organize well before the rise of public sector collective bargaining. Low pay and low status were precipitating factors. The two major teacher unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), arose in response to these two forces. In some ways, the difference between the two unions can be attributed to which one of the two forces the NEA and AFT focused their energy. The NEA, dominated by male college presidents and administrators, focused on professionalizing the teaching force, which did not include pursuing the welfare interests of teachers for better wages and benefits.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), from its inception, was a union of teachers. “It was organized by teachers, the membership was composed of teachers, and, most important, the leadership came from classroom teachers” (Streshly & DeMitchell, 1994, p. 9). The AFT aligned itself with national labor. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of NEA at the turn of the century, called the Chicago Federation of Teachers, the forerunner of the AFT, “insurrectionists” and “union labor grade teachers” (Murphy, 1990, p. 54).

When public sector collective bargaining marched across the educational landscape in the 1960s, the NEA thought it would destroy professionalism and would erode the teacher’s status in the community. For example, in 1958, Theodore Martin, the National Education Association (NEA) director of membership, proclaimed just prior to the advent of public sector collective bargaining:

Unionism lowers the ideals of teaching, by emphasizing the selfish, though necessary economic needs of teachers—salary, hours, tenure, retirement—unionism misses altogether the finer ideals of teaching and the rich compensation that do not appear in the salary envelope. (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988, p. 57)

In contrast, the AFT embraced collective bargaining arguing that teachers would gain respect because their salaries would finally be commensurate with their preparation. In the 1960s, the NEA started losing members to the AFT primarily over the issue of which union could better represent and protect the self-interest of teachers. The NEA's long-cherished concept of professionalism was seriously challenged. "Teachers wanted higher salaries and better benefits, not necessarily a higher standard of respect" (Streshly & DeMitchell, 1994, p. 10). In order to remain competitive with the AFT, the NEA changed its philosophy and tactics. It came to look and act more like the AFT. Reflecting on this sea-change by the NEA in the 1960s, Bob Chase, the president of the NEA in 1997, stated, "we took a rather quiet, genteel professional association of educators, and we reinvented it as an assertive--and, when necessary, militant--labor union" (Chase, 1997, p. 2).

The transformation of the NEA to a labor union was prompted by the passage of public sector collective bargaining laws. When these public sector-collective bargaining laws were passed, the predominant labor-management mold was the industrial union of the teamsters, autoworkers, and coal miners. The procedures for conflict resolution, the definition of management and labor, and their respective rights were all borrowed, in many cases word for word, from the private labor sector, which embraced the industrial model.

The job of the union is to "get" those things for its members. Unions provide a collective voice that seeks to enhance and secure the social and economic well-being of its members. This initial choice of models to use for the public sector has had major consequences for education, given the uniqueness of public schools and a work force that struggles with the issue of professionalism.

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## Public Sector Industrial Unionism: The Organizing Principle

Congress in 1935 passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), commonly called the Wagner Act, which established the right of private sector employees to collectively bargain with their employer through an exclusive representative of their choosing. The act created substantial rights for private sector employees but left the states free to regulate labor relationships with their employees. However, starting in 1962 with President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10988, public sector bargaining took root. The resulting public sector collective bargaining laws were largely grafts from the NLRA and the Taft-Hartley Act. This reliance on the NLRA as a model for state-collective bargaining laws developed for the private sector, largely industrial union workplace, has had and still has wide reaching ramifications for teachers and school districts. Most states followed the NLRA lead several decades later granting similar rights to their public employees.

Public sector bargaining is a creature of legal mechanisms. It is through individual state legislation built upon the foundation of federal legislation on private sector labor relations (the NLRA) upon which public sector labor relations rest. Courts and public employee labor relation boards' decisions give substance to the law which guides labor relations in education and other public activities performed by a unionized work force (While charter schools are considered public schools, several unfair labor practices have been successfully brought through the NLRA. For a short discussion of these cases, see Jacob Bennett, *Sidebar: NLRB and Charter Schools* (DeMitchell, 2020, pp. 41–43)). Another important legal aspect of the legal framework for public sector collective bargaining is the United States Constitution.

When the public sector-collective bargaining laws were passed, the predominant labor-management model was the industrial union of the teamsters, autoworkers, and coal miners. The procedures for conflict resolution, the definition of management and labor, and their respective rights were all borrowed, in many cases word for word, from the private labor sector, which embraced the industrial labor model. This initial choice of models to use for the public sector has had major consequences for education, given the uniqueness of public schools and a work force that struggles with the issue of professionalism.

## Us and Them

The industrial union model is essentially an adversarial process that fosters an “us” and “them” mentality. Collective bargaining assumes a conflict of interest and a community of interest. The interests of teachers are pursued by their union, while the interests of the students and the community are the province of the school board. Both sets of interests are legitimate and both are separate. Not everything in the work setting that is good for teachers is good for students and vice versa. Without a conflict of interest, there is nothing to bargain; agreement has already been achieved. If there is no community of interest, reaching agreement may be difficult to impossible. How to find and expand the sweet spot of community is the challenge.

When the industrial labor model is applied to education, teachers become labor and administrators become management. The fact that both groups are educators with common goals and values is lost in this model. It takes the broader, inclusive concept of educator and sharply splits it into “us and them,” fostering and reinforcing a schism between teachers and administrators. “The separateness of some work activities performed by teachers and administrators is emphasized, and not commonality of purpose, roots, interests, or overlapping functions” (DeMitchell & Fossey, 1997, p. 21). Consequently, the emphasis on separateness places a great premium on conflict management within the labor relations and bargaining the contract. A relationship predicated on conflict and adversity has consequences for the long-term goals of the institution. Linda Kaboolian writes of this consequence, “adversarial relationships between teachers and school management significantly impede change efforts required to improve student achievement” (2005, p. 24).

This focus on conflict management is further enhanced because collective bargaining is a system for creating agreement when trust is low and the union members believe that they must be protected by a legally binding instrument that spells out in some detail the rights and responsibilities of their employment. Labor contracts, therefore, must be explicit, unambiguous, and provide for enforcement. These requirements may emphasize the conflicts of interest and diminish the community of interest. This is so fundamental that the absence of conflict actually “arouses anxiety and uncertainty among both union leaders and school managers who fear that they will be seen as having ‘gone soft’” (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988, p. 237).

Separateness of educators, teachers, and administrators is exacerbated and central to bargaining a labor contract. Professionalism embraces their practitioners’ differentiation of tasks and responsibilities. Whereas, “[i]ndustrial unionism assumes permanent adversaries” (Kerchner & Cauffman, 1993, p. 15). How to move from the “them” of bargaining to the “us” for educating students is the challenge.

## Policy Restrictions

Workers relinquished control over the outcomes of the product of their work with the advent of industrial unionism. Decisions about what is produced and how it is produced passed into the hands of management. Industrial workers are divorced from the formation of policy; all they can do is implement it. Under the industrial union model, teachers, like factory line workers, are only supposed to perform a labor function; they are not supposed to influence the outcome of the product. However, we know that this is not the reality of teaching. Classroom teachers’ daily work with students is a translation and reconfiguring of policy to meet the highly individualized contexts of their classroom. Educators do not turn out mass-produced widgets; teaching is a highly complex process calling for the use of judgment. Classroom teachers fashion and adapt policy with the myriad decisions they make daily. Teachers are not divorced from policy, as the industrial union labor model would have us believe; they influence, adapt, and implement policy. They are one of Michael Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrats (1980).

Excluded from public sector bargaining are issues of policy. Policy issues, such as what shall be taught, are reserved for the school board as the elected representative of the community. The New Jersey Supreme Court in the early years of public sector collective bargaining in *Ridgefield Park Education Association v. Ridgefield Park Board of Education* supported policy matters as a prohibited subject of bargaining asserted, “Matters of public policy are properly decided, not by negotiation and arbitration, but by the political process” (1978, p. 287).

Because teacher unions are prohibited from bargaining the educational policies of the school district, it does not mean that they do not exert political influence. Both teacher unions have become powerful participants in the state, and national arenas as well as a leading interest group in school board policies (Cowen & Strunk, 2014; Moe, 2011). Education policy professors Wirt and Kirst asserted nearly 25 years ago,

but with the same salience today, that no other group has had an “increased influence on education policy in recent decades as much as have teachers. The timid rabbits of 30 years ago are today’s ravening tigers in the jungle of school systems” (1997, p. 181). From elections of school board members to the President, from curriculum issues to school responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, unions are players in policy debates. Consequently, the reach of teacher unions extends beyond the bargaining table in the school district to acting as issue partisans seeking to influence items on the public agenda.

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## The Union Member and the Professional: Research on Teacher Perceptions

Professors DeMitchell and Cobb conducted a single study on the fit between union membership and a member of a profession but reported their findings in two articles. The two studies will be briefly reviewed. The overarching question was, “Are teacher unions and collective bargaining compatible with teacher perceptions of professionalism” (DeMitchell & Cobb, 2006, p. 19).

The survey included 24 Likert-style items that asked respondents their level of agreement with a variety of statements relative to their perceptions of the teaching profession and teacher unions. Fifty-one percent ( $N=103$ ) of the 200 educators who were contacted responded to the two-part survey. The survey was developed to discern respondents’ understanding of how they reconcile the apparent contradiction of the role of unions predicated on furthering their self-interest and their role as a professional grounded in service to the student (e.g., *professionalism is compatible with union activity*).

The survey items were constructed around seven categories: (1) the intersection of professionalism and unionism, (2) the legacy of the industrial union, (3) the tension between self-interest and professional interests which focus on an ethic of care to one who receives the professional service, (4) the separation of educators into us and them, (5) the elements of professional work, (6) the intersection of teaching and the contract, and (7) serving the professional needs of teachers.

The second part of the research asks teachers to respond with short answers to two prompts. These prompts sought to gather more in-depth knowledge about teachers’ perceptions of professionalism and the role of the union by asking whether unions support or harm professionalism. While it uses qualitative analytical tools, it is not, strictly speaking, a qualitative design. The two prompts are as follows: *Unions support professionalism in the following ways*, and *unions harm professionalism in the following ways* (DeMitchell & Cobb, 2007).

The respondents were given the following definition of professionalism in an effort to provide clarity and consistency in responses for both the quantitative and short answer sections.



For purposes of this survey, please use the following definition of professionalism or professional work:

- Professionalism involves the use of expert knowledge gained through extended study
- Professionalism involves the use of expert knowledge in unique and problematic situations.
- Professionalism is bounded by a code of ethics that emphasizes service to a client/student.
- Professional work is essentially intellectual and varied.
- Professional work requires the autonomy to control one's work.
- Professional work is not routine work. (Ibid., p. 28)

Only a few of the more salient findings of the 2006 quantitative portion of the study (DeMitchell & Cobb, 2006, pp. 11–18) will be reported here leaving the reader to go to the original if greater depth of understanding is warranted. The Likert scale used the following responses: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

## The Profession and the Union

- Ninety-nine percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that teaching is a profession ( $M = 4.91$ ).
- Two-thirds of the teachers agreed/strongly agreed ( $M = 3.63$ ) with the statement, "Professionalism is compatible with union activity." The next question asked whether the union supports my ability to provide a professional service to my students. The mean was the same ( $M = 3.63$ ) for the question on union activity.

This set of responses points to a belief that teachers are professionals and that there is a good fit with being a professional and the general work of unions.

- However, when asked whether they consider their union to be more of a professional association or a traditional industrial union, nearly 75% agreed/strongly agreed that their union was not a traditional union but was a professional organization ( $M = 3.80$ ). They apparently saw a difference between their association and the teamsters and united autoworkers in which both bargain for its unit members and enforce the contract for them.
- The following question plumbed this relationship further asking whether "Hardball tactics, such as work-to-rule or strikes, associated with industrial unions conflict with my sense of professionalism." The mean for agreeing/strongly agreeing dropped to 3.34 with less than 50% agreeing that these union tactics conflict with their sense of professionalism, and 24% took a neutral position. Why this number of respondents took to a safe harbor of neutral is not known. Almost one-third of the respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed thus believing that there is no conflict. Union office holders scored significantly different than nonoffice holders holding that there is no conflict with hardball tactics and professionalism. It is important to note that teacher unions have used both hardball tactics.

We next will review the questions that juxtapose the actions of unions to serve the interests of the teachers with the tenets of professionalism.

### **The Work of the Union**

- Unions are predicated upon serving the self-interests of its members. Yet, less than half of the respondents in this research (42.5%) agree or strongly agree with the proposition ( $M = 3.10$ ). Why would teachers not acknowledge this essential truth?
- The respondents seemed similarly conflicted about the role of the union protecting the interests of the students ( $M = 3.15$ ) and the interests of the public ( $M = 3.01$ ). These latter two statements are more consistent with the role of professionalism, protecting the “other” over self.

This question tends to lay bare the issue of unionism versus professionalism. If unions do not protect the public’s interests, can teachers lay legitimate claim to being part of a true profession since teachers tend to find unionism and professionalism to be compatible? It also appears to be in opposition to the question above about the compatibility of unions and professionalism – can the work of the union be compatible if it does not serve the interests of the other (students or the public). The question is, do teachers understand the responsibilities and the work of the union.

### **Teaching and the Contract**

This section goes to the heart of professionalism and unionism. Five questions sought to understand how the contract supports or inhibits teaching, the core professional activity. Teachers believe that the contract protects their professional activities, but the mean response to the statement that the contract fosters quality teaching is on the other side of neutral; thus, the contract does not foster quality.

While the teachers believe that the contract supports their ability to make independent decisions regarding their teaching, they also believe that the artistic/creative elements of teaching cannot be addressed in the contract nor can quality teaching be standardized into a contract ( $M = 2.45$ ). Teachers in this study perceive that teaching may be too complex to fit neatly into the strictures of collective bargaining. The responses to this section underscore how tangled the relationship is between a union member and a member of a learned profession. The contract, according to the responding teachers, supports professional decision-making, but it does not seem to support quality teaching.

### **Short Answer**

A total of 77 teachers responded to the prompts of harm and support. Most responded to both prompts, but not all did. All responses were transcribed, and an

iterative process of reviewing each response was conducted. Categories of responses were developed and then refined several times. Three themes emerged from the support prompt, and four themes emerged from the harm prompt. The theme of protection was found in both prompts but with opposite meanings.

### **Prompt #1: Unions Support Professionalism in the Following Ways**

A total of 71 teachers responded to this prompt. There was a strong sense in some of the responses of harbored past wrongs. Specific resentments were directed at administrators, whether at past or present administrators is unknown. For example, an elementary school teacher wrote, *“Provide support to abused teachers (those unfairly reprimanded),”* and a high school teacher stated, *“They protect my legal right from being trampled.”*

Three themes emerged from the data: protection, advocacy, and support.

#### **Protection**

The major thrust of this theme is that teachers would be in deep trouble without the union protecting them from administrators who are often characterized as mean, venal, and petty. For example, teachers write:

- *“I feel that teachers would be taken advantage of by administrators in their district if not protected by our union”* (elementary school teacher, union office holder).
- *“Protect you from inept administrators and Protect teachers from the whims of administrators”* (elementary school teacher).
- *“Protection from arbitrary actions by incompetent administrators who stifle the creative professionalism possible in our career”* (high school teacher, union office holder).

These written responses are consistent with the responses to a question in the section *The Profession and the Union*. (“Without a union school administrators would diminish my professional decision making.”) The mean was 3.49 with 55.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the union protects teachers from administrators.

#### **Advocacy**

The theme of advocacy includes how the contract attracts, retains, and frees up teachers. A number of these comments describe a powerful union that “assures” and “allows” teachers to perform their professional duties without interference from administrators. The comments tend to give the impression that the union is not just a restraint on administrative action but that it may compel administrative action.

These comments describe a proactive union and not a reactive union. These elements focus on one of the major duties of the union, bargaining a contract.

Another related concept is that unions enhance teaching through their advocacy that teaching is a profession. The comments on the contract as advocate include the following: *“bargains for teachers to be paid like they are professionals”* (elementary school); *“guarantees competitive wages, etc. to keep good individuals in this profession”* (middle school teacher, emphasis in original, union office holder); *“Union contract speaks to a variety of important conditions that make professionalism prosper”* (high school teacher, union office holder); and a middle school teacher provides a good summary, *“Allow[s] teachers to pursue their profession with less concern for contractual issues, which they would otherwise dedicate valuable time pursuing if they negotiated individually.”*

The concept of enhancing teaching within the advocacy theme includes such comments as *“In this era of ‘scripted teaching,’ I am assured my right to teach students in creative & effective ways”* (elementary school, union office holder) and *“My union allows me to try things without long term censure from my administrators”* (middle school teacher, union office holder).

However, the union’s advocacy for teaching autonomy may be questioned in the responses to two survey questions. The first statement reads, “The artistic/creative elements of teaching can be addressed in a contract.” The mean is 2.66 (disagreeing) with only 26.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Furthermore, just over 61% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the following proposition, “If I had a professional issue/question, unrelated to the contract, I would first turn to the union for assistance.” It is questionable whether the responses to these two questions are aligned with union advocacy of teaching if teachers do not believe that unions through the bargained contract cannot address the creative/artistic aspects of teaching. These critical aspects of teaching appear to be beyond the normative reach of a collective bargained contract. Furthermore, is the union the resource for professional issues unrelated to the contract? The other finding may demonstrate a distance that the responding teachers perceive that the union and the work of the union have from their core professional responsibility, teaching.

## Support

The last theme concerns in-service days and professional development. The respondents credit the union with securing time for these important pursuits. There are a total of 14 (eight elementary school teachers, four middle school teachers, and two high school teachers) responses constituting 20% of the total written comments. Offering workshops, peer collaboration, promoting activities to support best practices, encouraging professional development, and *“require[ing] professional development as part of the contract”* (high school teacher) are cited as examples of how unions support professionalism.

The teachers, who responded to this prompt of support, believe that not only is union membership compatible with professionalism but that it is also associated with providing a professional service to students. The responses comprising these three themes reflect the quantitative responses that the teachers need the protection of the union and that they are better-off working under a union contract than working without a contract.

## **Prompt #2, Unions Harm Professionalism in the Following Ways**

A total of 23 (seven union office holders) elementary school teachers, 23 middle school teachers (four union office holders), and 15 high school teachers (five union office holders) responded to this prompt. The views expressed are not as hard-edged as some of the comments cited above. While there are some frustrated commentators, the comments, by-and-large, do not contain the same emotional content of suffered personal wrongs. The comments appear to be more disagreements with and lamentations about the current state of affairs. However, one middle school teacher's comments may have captured the tone of the most strident criticisms of unions and summed up for many their concerns about unions. The middle school teacher wrote in the prompt for how unions support professionalism, "*Unions are the antithesis of professionalism!*"

Four themes emerge from the analysis – blind protection, the work of unions, divisiveness, and the union label.

### **Blind Protection**

The issue of protection was the strongest theme of how unions support professionalism. It is also the strongest theme of how unions harm professionalism. Clearly, the issue of union protection is central to many teachers, and it is also a cause of great concern for many other teachers. Protection appears to be a double-edged sword: The union provides needed protection from the powerful and sometimes less than professional administrators versus protection of incompetent teachers, which demeans the profession. Protection of the least capable teacher is a challenge for unions because most teachers are "troubled by the presence of incompetent teachers in their school building."

For some, union protection is almost an unthinking genuflection of protection of the least worthy, while for others the protection of a union member is important for all teachers regardless of the fitness of the individual. One high school union leader wrote of this conundrum for unions in the harm prompt, "*Sometimes we have to support people who we think are poor teachers.*" An elementary school teacher and union office holder stated, "*Automatically defending teachers whether they are right or wrong.*" However, one high school teacher placed the blame on administrators for the retention of incompetent teachers writing, "*If administrators would do their jobs there has always been ways provided in contracts to help these teachers or eventually remove them.*"

## Work of the Union

Two subthemes comprise this theme: union activities (“*Unions focus on money, making teachers seem self-serving and unprofessional.*”) and pressure to conform (“*Also, if the union member does not wish to participate in certain activities, such as refusing to do activities after the school day, other staff members will sometimes try to apply pressure to conform*”). The larger connection of the two subthemes is found in an elementary school teacher’s response: “[*The union*] *totally disregards the work ethic teachers choose to put into their job and instead places trivial issue sat the forefront of their day-to-day business.*” This comment incorporates the pressure to conform – the disregard of the effort teachers put into their job – and what the teacher chooses is immaterial if it does not fit the viewpoint of the union on what should be done as part of the work. This is opposite to the positive theme of advocacy discussed above.

## Divisiveness

Some of the comments are purely descriptive – “*Creates a ‘them’ and ‘us’ atmosphere*” (middle school teacher), while some respondents see conflict in the divisiveness – “*Often promotes an antagonistic relationship between teachers and administrators and school board*” (middle school teacher) and “*Interfere w/ positive interactions between admin & teachers • Create adversarial atmosphere*” (high school teacher, union office holder).

Interestingly, the responses to the survey instrument paint a different picture. The responses to the statement “Unionization institutionalizes conflict between teachers and school administrators” can be separated in the following manner: 45.8% (strongly disagree/disagree), 29.2% (neutral), and 25% (agree/strongly disagree). And the same analysis can be applied to “The contract separates educators into us (teachers) and them (administrators)”: 30.4% (strongly disagree/disagree), 22.5% (neutral), and 47% (agree/strongly agree).

The responses to these two questions are consistent with the other in this subset of us and them. Sixty-four percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their professional activities are enhanced through collegial relationships with administrators.

## The Union Label

The union label theme refers to a belief that association with a union harms professionalism in the eyes of teachers and possibly more importantly in the eyes of the public, which one can argue confers the honorific of professionalism. One elementary school teacher stated “*just the paradigm of ‘union’ causes hostility.*” A middle school teacher wrote, “*Unions harm professionalism in the negative feelings/opinions that some have of unions.*” Another elementary school teacher may have

summed up this theme with the comment “*I don’t hold banners/pickets . . . it’s not what I do if it’s for self interest.*”

Teachers in this study want the protection of a union and a collectively bargained contract. They, however, note that there are limits to what the contract and the union can do to support their professional activities, especially when it comes to bargaining the professional contours of teaching. Union leaders and nonleaders differ significantly on several specific issues. However, they appear to be united as to whether they are better off with a union and a contract. While their responses as to how unionism and professionalism fit together may be tangled, they are clear that ambiguity is preferable to working without a union and a collective bargaining contract.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

“The problem, of course, is that schools are utterly dependent upon teachers not acting like industrial workers.” (Kerchner, & Koppich, 2000, p. 284)

This section starts with the following assertion, “Both roles of union member whose interests are being served by a union and a professional who serves the needs of others are legitimate and both may be contradictory at times” (DeMitchell, 2020, p. 93). Teachers are professionals; they struggle for ways to find a fit between their union membership with its emphasis on pursuing self-interest with their possibly greater identification as a professional providing service in the best interests of their students. Their daily work is a translation and reconfiguring of policy to meet the highly individualized contexts of their classrooms. The industrial union model ill-serves a profession that thrives on the collegial relations necessary for educators. “The industrial union paradigm fits uncomfortably on the shoulders of educators” (DeMitchell, 2010, p. 39). How their professionalism meshes with union membership and bargained contracts is tangled.

The policy knot is not unraveled through the call to “weaken or eliminate union power over schools” (Moe, 2006, p. 230). Neither a rigid, reflexive response by teacher unions and teachers that what is good for teachers is what is good for students nor an automatic demonizing of unions and teachers should be the response. However, words and deeds from all parties that enhance professionalism and reduce the obstructive elements of the industrial union model must be pursued by all parties. Changing labor relations is hard work involving heavy lifting for all parties. Teachers are not just served by a union; they also serve a learned profession.

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# Choice and the End of the Dream of the Common School

# 49

Eileen S. Johnson

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the history of the common school movement in the United States in order to understand the origins of and the shifting landscape of education and public schooling over time. Two major historical challenges to the common school ideal are examined, and contemporary challenges including school choice are considered with a particular framing within the perspective of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Finally, the idea of a new common school that is “radically democratic” is considered in light of the economic, social, civic, political, and global realities facing education and school leaders today.

## Keywords

Busing · Charter schools · Democracy · Equity · Magnet schools · Parochial schools · Privatization · Radical education · Vouchers

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### **The Field of Memory**

In the field of memory, the idea that the common school in the United States is one that equitably and appropriately served the educational needs of all citizens is easily challenged with an inspection of history. Indeed, even the idea of the common school as a source for ensuring the continuation of democracy among citizens must be scrutinized carefully through the lens of history and which groups were bestowed vs. denied citizenship and civil rights. As noted by Goodridge (2019), too many authors have positioned the issue of school choice in an ahistorical context that is firmly rooted in the language of contemporary education and economic policy, ignoring the historical antecedents and lived experiences of marginalized communities that have led to its emergence during the latter part of the twentieth century.

### **The Field of Presence**

The field of presence demands a re-analysis of the common school from its inception through the current time with a clear understanding that while a majority in the United States may be well served by the common neighborhood school and that these schools are even places of democracy, intellectual development, academic excellence, and humane treatment, this ideal continues to elude many marginalized groups even today. It is within this field of presence that a solution must be sought for those who have been and continue to be left outside of the school walls, both figuratively and literally.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The field of concomitance for analyzing choice and the common school tends to center on those ideas borrowed from or otherwise absorbed from business and economics. In particular, notions of the school as a factory model, the management styles of educational leaders, and capitalism and the free-market have been invoked to problematize and delegitimize the public school and to argue in favor of both nonprofit and for-profit models of school choice.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Discontinuities and ruptures in the idea of the common school have existed since the very beginning, as the question about the role of government in the daily lives of citizens is pondered. Indeed, questions regarding the very nature and purpose of schooling as well as who is to be served and by whom are as old as schooling itself and continue unabated today. It is therefore imperative that when considering the seemingly contradictory ideas of a common school vs. school choice, these discontinuities and ruptures be kept well in the forefront of any discussion and analysis.

### **Critical Assumptions**

A primary critical assumption centers on the idea that families, communities, and democratic societies generally want to enjoy a good life and that education is a fundamental human right. However, another critical assumption is that what is

meant by education and what constitutes a good life vary tremendously. Therefore, assumptions about the nature of school choice and its influence, both positive and negative, on public education must be considered.

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## Introduction

“Dreams are impartial, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche, outside the control of the will. They are pure nature; they show us the unvarnished, natural truth, and are therefore fitted, as nothing else is, to give us back an attitude that accords with our basic human nature when our consciousness has strayed too far from its foundations and run into an impasse.” (Jung, 1970)

Dream (n.)

Dream in the sense of “that which is presented to the mind by the imaginative faculty, though not in sleep” is from 1580s. The meaning “ideal or aspiration” derives from the earlier sense of “something of dream-like beauty or charm.” (Online Etymological Dictionary, 2005)

As the quotes above indicate, a dream represents a vision of an ideal, an aspiration to a perfect state. However, as the history of the ideal of the common school in the United States reveals, the dream and aspiration of a publicly funded, truly common school system that serves all citizens equitably has often fallen quite short. The purposes of this chapter are to first delve into the history of the common school movement in the United States in order to understand the origins of and the shifting landscape of education and public schooling over time. Two major historical challenges to the common school ideal are explicated, although a multitude of challenges historically existed. Next, contemporary challenges to the common school, especially that of school choice, are considered with a particular framing within the perspective of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Finally, the idea of a new public education that is “radically democratic” is considered in light of the economic, social, civic, political, and global realities facing education and school leaders today. This chapter explores the question of whether school choice has signaled the end of the dream of the common school, or whether it is, in fact, a dream that is still in the making.

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## Education Before the Common School Era

Before the United States was fully formed as a nation, education and schooling existed in a multitude of forms but generally in the absence of any cohesive system. The first schools opened in the early to mid-seventeenth century and included the first and now oldest public school, the Boston Latin School, in 1635 (Boston Latin School [BLS], n.d.) and the Mather School, the first tax-payer supported public elementary school, in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1639 (Sacchetti, 2005). The Boston Latin School “. . .centered in the humanities, its founders sharing with the ancient Greeks the belief that the only good things are the goods of the soul.” From its inception, the school emphasized dissidence and persistently encouraged dissent with responsibility (BLS, n.d.).

Dissent, however, was not generally encouraged in early forms of education in the colonies. Indeed, most scholars recognize the education policies of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the 1647 “Old deluder Satan” laws as a precursor to the public school system in the United States. This law required towns to establish schools that would teach reading and writing in order to maintain religious values and obedience to authority. Grammar schools (precursors to modern high schools where Latin, Greek, and advanced subjects were taught) and college were the means by which elite social status was maintained or gained. Schooling in the southern colonies, on the other hand, relied much more heavily on private tutors, studying abroad, or attending institutions operated by the Anglican church (Spring, 2018). In all of the various forms of schooling in the early colonies, however, there was little in the way of a democratic theory of education, and the purpose of schooling was primarily aimed at maintaining the existing social and religious order (Welter, 1962).

By the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a somewhat global shift toward revolutionary thinking that placed the state rather than the church at the center of the social order. Postrevolutionary America, with its newly formed independent government and steady influx of immigrants, increasingly viewed mass schooling as a primary means by which to stabilize the nascent nation, persuade those English colonists who remained loyal to the English government to shift allegiance to the newly formed American government, and ensure the loyalty of European Americans and immigrants alike (Spring, 2018).

In fact, this idea of linking mass schooling to the building and maintenance of a nation-state was the original impetus for the common school and was eventually replicated around the world. While this movement was designed to unify a multicultural society under the common principles underlying the ideals of the newly formed nation, it also served as a means by which the stripping away of languages, cultures, and religious traditions that diverged from the overwhelmingly Anglo-Protestant founders was legitimized (Feinberg, 2007). While many factors and individuals contributed to the development of the common school era, two in particular stand out. Noah Webster’s work throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s is considered to have laid the groundwork for later developments toward the common school ideal. His textbooks, for example, were written and designed to unify a multicultural society while defining a new American language and culture (Litto, 1985; Spring, 2018).

Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, viewed schooling somewhat differently and proposed a three-tiered system in which a common grammar school education at public expense would be provided to all children at the first level while increasingly smaller, select groups of male students would go on to obtain higher levels of education. In essence, Jefferson thought that a public education had two goals: to prepare ordinary citizens for life and liberty and to prepare political leaders who would emerge as a “natural aristocracy” from this selective process. In any event, by the beginnings of the nineteenth century, there was a general movement toward a more comprehensive model of schooling that would be some form of education to citizens and that would not rely exclusively on private benefactors nor the initiatives, financial means, and connections of individual families (Spring, 2018).

## The History of the Common School

Common (adj)

c. 1300, belonging to all, owned or used jointly, general, of a public nature or character; from Old French *comun* “common, general, free, open, public” (Modern French *commun*), from Latin *communis* “in common, public, shared by all or many; general, not specific; familiar, not pretentious.” The second element of the compound also is the source of Latin *munia* “duties, public duties, functions,” those related to *munia* “office.” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2005).

Horace Mann is generally credited as being the father of the common school era. However, as noted above, Mann’s work did not take place in isolation, and several social, political, and economic factors converged during the early to mid-nineteenth century that resulted in what is now referred to as the common school era. Education reformers at the time had a vision of a system of publicly funded compulsory schooling that would further solidify a common American language and culture and that would be administered by state and local governments in order to address and remedy social, political, and economic problems facing the country. To this end, Mann and other education theorists looked to the Prussian model of education, which had been laid out by Frederick the Great in the mid-eighteenth century (Spring, 2018). Prussia was one of the first countries in the world to implement a compulsory education system that would be fully supported by taxes and administered by the state.

This relatively novel idea of requiring, at minimum, an eight-year program of study for all citizens would include instruction in basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also the arts and citizenship before select students went on to study at the gymnasium, which functioned largely as a university preparation school. In addition to the idea of an eight-year program of compulsory study for all citizens, the Prussian model of education also contributed the ideas of a standard, national curriculum; a largely secular approach to education; professional training for teachers in specialized, dedicated colleges; professionalization of teaching, including higher salaries; funding to build schools; and administration and oversight of schools by the government (Jeismann, 2006).

The Prussian model of education increasingly captured the attention of high-ranking educators and policy drivers in the United States in the early nineteenth century, and several states began to make way for a more comprehensive, publicly funded system of education during this time, although southern states were much slower to follow suit. According to Spring (2018), “The major difference between schools before and after the common school movement was their goals” (p. 90). To achieve these goals, the common school reform ushered in the idea that schools should serve the public goals of the government and required a new organization as well as a new ideology.

Spring (2018) asserted that there were three distinct features of the common school movement: (1) to educate all children regardless of economic status or religious, cultural, or linguistic heritage in a common schoolhouse in order to build a common American culture and to ameliorate social class conflict;

(2) common schools were seen as necessary to provide a public good in the reduction of crime and poverty, to improve the morality of citizens, and to provide equal opportunity to all citizens; and (3) in order for a comprehensive, common system of schooling to work efficiently and effectively, it would need to be administered by state and local agencies designed for that purpose (pp. 91–92). One important notation regarding the influence of the Prussian model of education on the development of the American common school is that Mann in particular advocated that not everything about the model was desirable, and that its positive aspects should be implemented while its negative aspects, such as its overt emphasis on obedience to authority, should be discarded (Phillips, 2001).

Interestingly, much later, Michel Foucault's term, *biopolitics*, would be used to criticize the Prussian educational model as an important force in nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation-building. Biopolitics "examines the strategies and mechanisms through which human life processes are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge, power, and the processes of subjectivation" (Garrison, 2013). Indeed, as many authors have noted, the primary goal of the common school movement was to protect an American culture that was based largely on Protestant ideology and mores (Burke, 2012; Carper, 1998; Halstead, 2007; Kaestle, 1983; Spring, 2018).

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## Historical Challenges to the Common School

In his discussion on the development of the common school in the United States and, later, in Britain, Pring (2007) noted that "The fight for the common school was essentially a moral one in terms of achieving greater social justice and equality, respect for persons and preparation for citizenship within a democratic order" (p. 504) that required a common culture to overcome divisions arising from economic status, social position, and religion. He further noted,

On the other hand, the common school brings together people from different communities, maintained through different cultural traditions that are central to their sense of identity and that embody distinctive visions of the life worth living. How is it possible to reconcile these two- creating a common culture whilst respecting and supporting the distinctive cultures within the school community? (p. 511)

This is indeed a question worth considering in analyzing both the successes and failures of the common school model in the United States.

However, as many authors have observed, there are at many examples of those who were never adequately or even marginally served by common schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. For the purposes of this chapter, two primary examples will be examined: that of Irish Catholics and that of Black and African Americans. However, it is important to note that while these two examples will form a basis for analysis of the common school and its limitations, it is not in any way meant to deny or otherwise ignore other groups in the United States that have been

historically and systematically denied equal educational opportunities, including but not limited to those of Latino (MacDonald, 2013; Moreno, 2008; Tashakkori & Ochoa, 1999), Asian (Bow, 2007; Hinnershitz, 2017; Spring, 2018), and Native (Spring, 2018; Steineker, 2016; Takaki, 1993) ancestry as well as students with disabilities and special needs (Osgood, 2007; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Winzer, 1993).

## **Irish Catholics and the Common School**

As has already been noted, the common school movement was not a singular, unchallenged movement wherein a state-supported system of education was smoothly implemented. Even among Protestant groups, the idea of a secular system of education was viewed with skepticism, as noted by Gaither (2012). Added to this was anti-Catholic sentiment, fueled by a large influx of immigrants from Ireland, and who – along with other minorities, including those of African, Asian, Mexican, and Native descent – were viewed as morally, culturally, and intellectually inferior to Whites (Takaki, 1993). Indeed, as noted by Spring (2018), anti-Catholic hostility ran deep, and the Catholic religion was considered to be, at best, a threat to Protestant values and communities and, at worst, the instrument of Satan himself (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Takaki, 1993).

As a result, the common schools of the nineteenth century were not really common to all, as Catholics felt excluded by the overwhelmingly Protestant values and anti-Catholic sentiment expressed through the curriculum and school policies. In fact, it was not just a feeling of exclusion but one of being alienated from deeply held religious, cultural, and family heritage (Walch, 2003). For example, Brinig and Garnett (2014) highlighted several instances in which Catholic students were punished severely and even expelled from public schools for refusing to recite from the King James Bible or observe other Protestant traditions. Ultimately, these clashes escalated to violence and rioting as the struggle for control of the common schools – or at least of recognition and accommodation of differing religious texts and viewpoints within the newly established, publicly funded schools – continued. As a result of the ongoing clashes and conflicts, the Catholic church issued a mandate via three plenary councils in Baltimore in the years 1852, 1866, and 1884 that would establish a system of parochial Catholic schools that would largely be funded by local parishioners in the absence of much hoped-for public funding (Spring, 2018; Brinig & Garnett, 2014).

In the ensuing years, battles for public funding for Catholic schools took place in several cities across the nation, as Catholic families were strongly urged by the church to send their children to parish schools rather than the local public school. This resulted in a sense of being double-taxed for schools (Kaestle, 1983), and efforts to secure public funding for the burgeoning system of Catholic schools continued to fail at both state and national levels although attempts to secure public funding in the form of vouchers and other state support have continued to this day (Brinig & Garnett, 2014). Despite the lack of public funding, however,



the determination to maintain schools that would align with the community values, norms, and teachings of the Catholic church resulted in the development of the largest system of private schools in the world at the time, a system that was loosely organized and built, financed, and operated largely by local parishes (Walch, 2003).

According to Brinig and Garnett (2014), parochial Catholic schools proliferated throughout the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in urban areas. To some extent, the structure and curricula of these schools were modeled after that of public schools. However, other parish schools took a different approach, maintaining a curriculum that would emphasize the ethnic culture and native language of the local parish in an effort to sustain cultural and linguistic heritage and resist assimilation into the broader American culture. By the end of the 1960s, Catholic school enrollment in the United States was at its peak, exceeding five million students (NCEA, 2012).

However, due to a complex array of social and economic factors that changed the demographics of urban areas and shifted the work of parochial schools to a largely lay population, thus causing significant economic hardships for parochial Catholic schools, enrollments steadily declined after the late 1960s. As Burke (2012) ironically noted, despite the pride of self-management, independence from government interference, and nearly 200 years of educational service to American – especially urban – communities, Catholic schools and neoliberal school reform policies have become “strange bedfellows” in the school choice movement:

The move to align Catholic schooling, Catholic teacher preparation and Catholic educational lobbying with marketized neo-liberal reforms in the United States is perhaps not surprising given the abject fear that comes about from extreme contraction. . . . Lost, however, amidst this fear, is any sense of nuance or any turn to larger structural inequities that might be adversely affecting schooling on a whole and Catholic schools specifically. That is, what if we were to consider the broad disinvestment in the public social contract. . . rather than focusing in on how to better compete for a shrinking pool of money for education? What good might be done to advocate for better services for all children rather than leaner models perpetrated on a notion that winners and losers are necessary in a market system?. (p. 194)

## **Black and African Americans**

Watkins (1996) cautioned that “The schooling or miseducation of African Americans has been inextricably connected to the politics of colonialism, slavery, and the subsistence labor practices of the corporate-industrial United States” (p. 6). The long and deplorable history of racism and the treatment of African American and Black individuals in the United States is well documented and ingrained systemically in nearly every institution of society, and schooling is no exception. Not only was citizenship and naturalization denied to both enslaved and freed individuals until the civil rights act of 1866 and the ratification of the 14th amendment in 1868, this amendment did little to squelch the racism and segregation that was endemic throughout the county and fell short of actually ensuring civil rights and equal

protection under the law. It was, at various times and places – notably in the southern colonies and states – illegal to educate African Americans but even in the northern states, education was difficult for free Blacks and African Americans to access, either due to exclusion or overt hostility and racism.

As early as 1787, African American leaders in Boston petitioned the state legislature for a separate Black school due to the hostility and prejudice faced by their children the existing schools. The legislature tasked a committee, the Boston School Committee, with making a determination, and the request was denied based on concerns that such a concession of establishing and funding a separate school system would lead to other groups demanding similar accommodation. By 1806, however, the committee reversed its position and opened a school for Black students using a combination of public funds and philanthropic contributions, and the movement gained momentum across several cities in the USA (Grant, Brown, & Brown, 2016).

Similarly, in several southern states, Black schools were established by Black communities during the reconstruction years and thrived with high enrollment (Foner & Mahoney, 1995). For example, Butchart (1980, 2002) noted that, in Georgia, private benefactors in the north and the federal government aided efforts to establish Black education, but the primary impetus and sustaining force came from the state's African Americans as literate Black men and women opened new, self-sustaining schools that predated the state mandate to establish a state-wide system of public schools. In a move that would be repeated in several areas of the country, states would eventually absorb these schools and ultimately deprive them of their fair share of public funding and resources necessary to sustain them while concomitantly, private and philanthropic contributions declined (Foner & Mahoney).

As would be seen during the postreconstruction era and continuing throughout the first half of the twentieth century, several states enacted laws that required “separate but equal” educational facilities, and even where no such laws existed, schooling became largely de facto segregated as White families resisted sending their children to the same schools where Black children would attend and so-called white flight bifurcated urban areas from newly sprawling suburban areas (Spring, 2018). Despite the landmark decision of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in 1954, which ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, schools tended to remain segregated and a variety of policies were put into place across the country, especially in urban areas, that would theoretically remedy the continued inequities.

Two pervasive policies that were implemented in numerous cities across the nation included “one grade at a time” approaches to desegregation and busing students from one location to another in order to achieve greater integration. However, as noted by Woodward (2001) in her analysis of desegregation policies and practices in Nashville, the “one grade at a time” policy of desegregation was implemented in part so as to render the process so slow and limited that the White communities would have time to find alternatives via private schooling, newly established open enrollment policies, or relocation. Further, Delmont (2016) noted that the forced busing of the 1960s and 1970s not only placed significant burden on

Black students in terms of time and distance traveled as well as safety considerations, it also rendered the ideal of the neighborhood common school nearly obsolete in some areas.

Delmont (2016) also pointed out that busing as an issue was often used as a “dog whistle,” a means of hiding racist agendas behind a seemingly common issue that faced oppositions from both Whites as well as Blacks and other minority groups. However, the media largely focused its attention on White opposition to busing while marginalizing or ignoring the goals of the Black community. In fact, the opposition from the Black community was not uniformly about the issue of busing per se but, rather, focused on hopes and desires for public schools in Black neighborhoods to provide quality, culturally relevant education and allow families the choice to access better funded schools beyond the officially zoned neighborhood.

Many black parents wanted to see more black school board members, more black teachers, and black history and culture included in the curriculum. Various currents on black thought – Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and grassroots educational traditions – fueled calls for black community control of schools, and in each case, racial integration was not on the horizon of educational equality or black freedom.” (Delmont, 2016, p. 169)

In other words, members of black and minority communities wanted full integration but first and foremost demanded high-quality education and representation in all public schools.

Nevertheless, as a result of misguided policies, half-hearted attempts at school integration, and more often, outright resistance to achieving equity and integration in public schools across the country, Black neighborhood schools were often ultimately left even more underfunded, understaffed, and underutilized and too often ultimately slated for closure. The issues of school desegregation and busing are complex, and it is easy to oversimplify the issues. However, the significance of attempts at desegregation and the subsequent resistance in the form of protests, riots, school boycotts, political maneuvering, hostility, and outright violence cannot be overstated in understanding the entrenched racism that continued to plague American society and, thus, that of public schools. It is this complex interaction of political, social, and economic factors that ultimately resulted in the de facto resegregation of schools (Formisano, 1991) that led to a burgeoning phenomenon in the form of alternative approaches to schooling.

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## School Choice and Contemporary Challenges to the Common School

### Choice (n.)

Mid-14c., “that which is choice,” from choice (adj.) blended with earlier *chois* (n.) “action of selecting” (c. 1300); “power of choosing” (early 14c.), “the person or thing chosen” (late 14c.), from Old French *chois* “one’s choice; fact of having a choice” (12c., Modern French *choix*), from verb *choisir* “to choose, distinguish, discern; recognize, perceive, see,” which is

from Frankish or some other Germanic source and related to Old English *ceosan* “to choose, taste, try” (from the root \**geus-* “to taste; to choose”). Late Old English *chis* “fastidious, choosy,” from or related to *ceosan*, probably also contributed to the development of choice. Choice replaced Old English *cyre* “choice, *free will*.” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2005)

As noted by Levinson (2007) in her outlining of the four justifications for the common school, “Common schools stand as public symbols of our civic commitment to diversity, mutual respect, social justice, equality and solidarity” (p. 636). However, as stated in the previous section, while public schooling in the latter part of the twentieth century generally moved away from *overt* attempts to bar specific groups from attending or benefitting from public education, inequities in school funding and allocation of resources as well as residential segregation continued to result in a system of schools that did not serve all students equitably (Logan, 2018). As a result, the 1970s saw spate of innovations that were designed to achieve greater racial integration and to ameliorate inequities, especially in urban schools (Goodridge, 2019).

### **Magnet Schools, Charter Schools, and the School Choice Movement**

The controversial nature of forced busing as a means of achieving school desegregation during the 1960s and 1970s prompted school districts across the nation, mostly in urban areas, to consider other models that would attract a more diverse student body, offer a variety of educational alternatives, and reconceptualize the idea of school zoning. Funding for alternatives was included in Emergency Schools Aid Act (ESAA) of 1972, which authorized local education agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop and implement innovative school options. One particularly popular model of early school choice was the magnet school (Peters-Lambert, 2015). The primary driving force behind the development of magnet schools was to achieve a level of racial integration that previous legal challenges, court orders, laws, and policies had largely failed to realize by providing specialized curricula, programs, or pedagogy and competitive admissions that would attract White students into schools that were serving predominantly minority students (Kryczka, 2018).

While secondary magnet schools tended to have specialized areas of focus, such as performing arts, STEM (science, engineering, mathematics), business, health care, etc., elementary magnet schools tended to have specialized pedagogical approaches or organizations such as a Montessori or an open schools approach (Rossell, 1979). As the idea of alternatives to the neighborhood school gained traction in the 1970s, magnet schools proliferated across the country with some districts going so far as to mandate that every school become a magnet school of some kind. However, the level of desegregation that was ultimately achieved by the magnet school movement varied tremendously across different cities and contexts (e.g., whether the magnet school was only one vs. the primary component of a more comprehensive desegregation plan), and many districts ultimately abandoned the idea of magnet schools due to unsustainable costs and innovations and a concomitant lack of data to demonstrate increased integration and effectiveness in educational outcomes (Peters-Lambert, 2015).

Another alternative model of public schooling that became more widespread is that of charter schools. As with every aspect of education and schooling, the story does not unfold in a neat, easily digestible narrative. While many assume that charter schools are a relatively recent phenomenon, springing up only during the early 1990s in the post-Reagan years (Cohen, 2017), charter schools actually have an ideological basis that predates the market-driven school choice movement of recent decades. According to Moses (2017),

... charter schools represent an important juncture in the history of Black people's continual struggle for meaningful education. Specifically, charter schools have served as one avenue for the evolution of the Black independent school movement that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the Black Power and Pan-African Nationalist movements. The Black independent school movement came on the heels of a largely failed push for substantive integration. As it became clear that the federal and state implementation of post-*Brown* integration orders had little real effect on the majority of Black students who were still trapped in highly segregated, under-resourced, and academically substandard schools, community members shifted their focus to gaining control over their local schools. When this movement for community control met staunch resistance from teachers and administrators, the Black community, influenced by the era's burgeoning emphasis on Black pride and African cultural consciousness, turned their attentions toward developing autonomous institutions. (para. 3)

What is important to note here is that the idea of choice was borne of a lack of effective schooling brought about by systemic racism, underfunding, and policy decisions that reproduced and sustained the hegemonic power hierarchies in place since the beginnings of the country.

As noted by Hedgecoth (2019), the original philosophy of charter schools was not so much about achieving racial integration but was centered on empowering teachers and communities with the agency and greater freedom to implement innovative curriculum and instructional methods. It was essentially an experiment to allow select public schools to operate independently under the auspices of the charter authorizer, usually a university, nonprofit organization, or other government agency. This idea was not new. For example, some argue that while Dewey was a strong proponent of education as public good, he viewed public schools as narrow-minded and undemocratic, and his notions of progressive education were implemented largely in small laboratory schools attached to colleges of education rather than public school systems (Reese, 2001).

Nevertheless, several factors including the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), increasing calls to apply free-market approaches to counter the "monopoly" of public education by Milton Friedman and other proponents of school choice, and the continued failure of schools to improve performance on standardized tests, especially in large urban districts serving predominantly lower SES minority students (Goodridge, 2019), led to the eventual implementation of the first voucher system in Milwaukee which would ostensibly allow families to break free from poorly performing neighborhood

public schools and access better opportunities for education, including nonsectarian private schools. As Goodridge further noted,

The Milwaukee policy brought to the surface the historic tension between the state and the individual. The common school ethos predicated in large part on the desirability of social engineering was being challenged by the seemingly antithetical nexus of the traditionally marginalized African American community and libertarian leaning conservatives. (p. 292)

However, there was still a pervasive and deep distrust of an unregulated voucher system that threatened to destroy public education (Jacob, 1986). Nevertheless, the voucher movement provided a gateway for what would ultimately become a burgeoning charter school movement following the first state legislation in 1991 in Minnesota (Goodridge, 2019). There have been a plethora of studies investigating the quality and efficacy of charter schools compared to traditional public schools, with results varying tremendously (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015). What is clear is that charter schools have paved the way for reduced per-pupil funding, alternative routes to teacher certification, restricted access to schools, and market-based, for-profit models of schooling that threaten the very core notion of education as human right and public good (Fiddiman & Yin, 2019; Hedgecoth, 2019).

In his discussion of the idea of choice as a foundation for schooling, Hedgecoth (2019) draws upon the work of Barry Schwartz and noted, “[he] goes on to deconstruct this seemingly innocuous, straightforward syllogism and lays out a compelling position that we as a society should be skeptical of politics that promise to improve our lives simply by giving more options” (p. 197). And yet, as of this writing, several states are ushering in or expanding legislation that provides public funding for tuition at private schools as well as parochial and religiously oriented schools (Fiddiman & Yin, 2019) although the Tennessee State Supreme Court recently ruled the voucher program unconstitutional (Aldrich, 2020). As noted by Fiddiman and Yin, these voucher and scholarship programs pose an inherent risk to civil rights as public tax dollars are diverted to nonpublic schools that, because of their private or parochial status, are allowed to implement racially and culturally discriminatory dress codes, exclude students based on disability or ESL status, gender identity or expression, and deny admission to students of differing religious faiths.

## **Toward the Future and the Continuation of the Dream of the Common School**

*What Happens to a Dream Deferred? Does it dry up Like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore – And then run? Or crust and sugar over – Like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags Like a heavy load. Or does it explode?*  
(Langston Hughes, “Harlem,” 1951)

In his famous poem, *Harlem*, Langston Hughes asks a poignant question about a dream deferred. In his analysis of the poem, Challenger (2019) observed that,

It would not be an exaggeration to say that every time the ‘American dream’ is invoked, Hughes’s question is there, asking what that dream is, what conditions make it possible, and why for so many it seems little more than a trap, or an illusion, or a promise that no longer meaningfully obtains.

We might similarly apply this analysis of the poem to the idea of the dream of the common school and ask why, for so many, access to fully funded, quality public schooling has seemed more like an elusive dream, one deferred but not dead. However, public schooling is continuing to face significant challenges, including the proliferation of online charter schools, the continued reduction in funding for public education, and concomitant increase in voucher programs that divert funding from public schools to private and religious-based schools, for-profit corporate controlled schools, and perhaps the newest challenge, that of social entrepreneurship. As stated by Dees and Anderson (2003), “We live in an age in which the boundaries between government, nonprofit, and business sectors are blurring. This blurring results from a search for more innovative, cost-effective, and sustainable ways to address social problems and deliver socially important goods, including education” (p. 25). The ethical point to consider with the advent of social entrepreneurship as a driver of education policy is the extent to which education, by its very nature as a human right, differs from that of other corporate ventures. Is it ethically defensible to profit from a public good in general, and the education of children in particular? Is it even ethically possible for a for-profit corporation to balance the “double bottom line” of ensuring profits for shareholders while simultaneously focusing on the social good without compromising either? (Tewksbury, 2016).

For many educators, the answer is a resounding no, and the privatization of other forms of public good involving human rights such as the prisons (Austin & Coventry, 2001) and health care (Williams, 2020) have often led to crises and failures. As English (2013) observed, the corporatization of public education has led to the “. . . loss of any humane vision for the purpose of education as a common good by helping humans to become more human instead of salable commodities in the contemporary work force as the sole measure of successful schooling” (p. 50). Indeed, Duarte (2012) held firm in his insistence that the common schools must remain *res publica*, a place that is held and shared equally by all. “Ideally, the common school represents a counter-hegemonic symbol of a not-for-profit education, a place of learning that refuses to be a business selling a commodity to consumers in a competitive market” (p. 492) and that resists the cult of privatization. Fielding and Moss (2011) suggested that it is not only possible but absolutely paramount that the idea of choice and the maintenance of education as a public good coexist in a democratic society and are not be considered mutually exclusive. Instead, they propose a radical education that attaches “. . . strong value to parental choice, but to a particular understanding of choice: parents participating in the democratic life of a common school, including *collective* choices or decision-making as opposed to the *individual* choice of the market model” (p. 131).



## Conclusions and Reflections

As noted by Spring (2018), different historical interpretations of the common school movement reflect not only the conflict surrounding the movement's origins, methods, and purposes, but also reflect the debates that continue today about the role of public schools in the United States. Indeed, Spring stated,

On the one hand, there are those who see the common school period as a battle between liberals and conservatives for the establishment of a school system that would be of great benefit to all members of society. On the other hand, some historians argue that the common schools were established to protect dominant economic and cultural elites. These broad differences in historical interpretation contain elements of the debate that continues to this day about whose interests are served by the public schools. (p. 112)

This chapter attempted to trace the history and development of the common school movement, including some key historical and contemporary challenges. Of particular concern, both historically and currently, are the inequities in access to quality education, inequities in funding of public schools, and the ability of the common school to meet the hopes, needs, aspirations, and dreams of the public in a plural, multicultural society.

The question becomes not whether public schools can and should be reshaped and re-envisioned to empower communities with agency and the ability to share input into the nature and form of education their children receive but, rather, how to achieve this while maintaining education and schooling as a public good that serves all. In the words of Duarte in his discussion of the radical education proposed by Fielding and Moss (2011), "Democracy is a lived experience, fulfilled in the present. Not to be postponed for later, education and school where it takes place must be the lived experience of democracy as a way of being in the world, a shared community where democratic fellowship is both a condition and an aspiration" (p. 493).

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# The Corporatization of Educational Management

# 50

John Tharp

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## Abstract

K-12 educational management ideas continuously devolved into demands to run a school like a business, namely, to find ways to reduce the tax burden on individuals and corporations that were the main revenue streams of public schools. The business principle of operational standardization in the name of increasing shareholder profits did not work for a school operation as it ran counter to the purpose of the democratically run public schools. That purpose was to prepare the next generation of citizens for active participation in the federal republic.

Managing schools like a business with the values and practices of a private profit-making enterprise tore at the fabric of a public school as well as interfered with the primary educational goal of teaching all students to learn. This chapter brought awareness of the past, present, and future of the corporatization of educational management as well as the needed resistance of the neoliberal

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political agenda that was pushed on schools and school leaders. Public awareness of the assault on democratic institutions in the United States such as public school districts created a call to action to stop billionaire philanthropists, elected officials, managerial trained leaders, and think tanks who were all trying to remove the public from the management of education.

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### Keywords

Elementary and Secondary Education Act · 1965 (ESEA) · No Child Left Behind · 2001 (NCLB) · Accountments · Captains of erudition · Corporatization · Era of accountability · Globalization · Instructional leadership · Management by objectives · Managerialism · Neoliberalism · Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) model · Race to the Top (2009)

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## The Foucauldian “Enunciative Field”

### A Field of Memory

The call to run a school like a business had been an enduring idea of the late nineteenth, all of the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century. The prohibitive costs of mass education in the early to middle 1800s in the new United States meant that the only education that existed were in private schools or with individual tutors hired by elite rich families who had the means to pay. There was no formal schooling for anyone else. The beginning of mass education in the United States was in the form of the Lancastrian plan that began in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1801, and this ineffective type of school employed one teacher for up to 1000 students. Later, the Boston school model was adopted as the father of public education; Horace Mann returned from a visit to German schools and duplicated their model in order to standardize schools. Mann’s goal was to better assimilate immigrants under a melting pot ideology of dropping native cultural norms in favor of the development of a one America anglicized identity (Tharp, 2008).

### A Field of Presence

The standards based movement of education was an idea to repair the purported broken system of education by ensuring all students were taught a set of minimum concepts and skills in each class and grade level. This movement had origins in 1957 when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union or USSR) launched the first satellite into orbit, named Sputnik. The existing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union moved to a space race, and in the United States, the public schools were rated as failures by US officials who decided that schools were not adequately teaching students well enough to keep up with the technological advances of the USSR (Spring, 2008). In 1983, the United States executive branch of the federal government under President Ronald Reagan issued a report titled *A Nation at Risk*, a publication that declared public education as a failed enterprise that did not fulfill its mission of educating the nation’s youth (Spring, 2011). Still

later school reforms of the 1990s and 2000s called for government-funded student tests administered to all students to measure their success or lack thereof in schools, coupled with punitive measures for teachers and school administrators if the test results were deemed unacceptable (English & Steffy, 2001).

Running parallel to the standards movement was an ideology that schools were not operating effectively because they lacked business principles and the school leaders lacked basic business acumen to serve as effective stewards of these taxpayer-funded enterprises (Broad, 2003). The business principles of raising capital, investor relations, managing contracts, and brand management (Davis, 2009) were included in the corporatization of educational management by education influences from business. In addition, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the American corporation was moving away from actual production of finished products to subcontracting that work out and instead focused on designing and marketing their products (Davis, 2009). These corporate business ideas also moved into public education management by billionaire businessmen who through their philanthropies funded and promoted new school leadership training programs and non-educator personnel for school management positions (Spring, 2014).

### **A Field of Concomitance**

Ideas on school and school district leadership pulled from the social sciences, business, and think tanks that compared managerial expertise from other fields like business and medicine as examples for school leaders to emulate to improve their leadership (Peck & Reitzug, 2012). Educational leadership training provided by schools of education in universities received criticism for the purported lack of preparation for leaders versed in business-minded principles of leadership. Independent organizations such as the Broad Foundation, Chiefs for Change, and New Leaders were funded by captains of industry with stated missions of improving student learning outcomes and providing business efficiencies to public schools at a reduced cost to taxpayers with new school management ideas and managers trained under their own auspices.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The movement to change who worked in education was by the training of teachers and administrators under business type organizations and out of the hands of university schools of education. This was a way to change the landscape in schools with companies like Teach for America, the Broad Foundation, Chiefs for Change, and New Leaders as well as university business management schools at Rice University, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Yale University, and others leading the charge. The newly minted leaders from both within and outside the ranks of education were willing to focus on corporate business ideas (Moeller, 2020) such as the marketing and branding of their product of education instead of a school leadership role of nurturing and supporting families, teachers, and schools in the development of the students (English & Ehrich, 2016). “OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) such as Nike or Hewlett-Packard typically focus on design and marketing and contract out most or all of the actual production tasks. One of the OEM’s signature strengths is in building and managing the brand” (Davis, 2009, p. 184). For public schools, this model looked to education

technology and publishing companies to design the products (Moeller, 2020; Spring, 2014) and the new generation of leaders to market their brand (the school and school district), according to the political slogans of the day as opposed to the relational and technical leadership aspects of teaching and learning. This followed the path of the turn of the twentieth-century university leaders and their leadership shift from education principles to business principles (Veblen, 1918). The non-education leaders were seemingly willing participants in using taxpayer dollars to increase the footprint of corporate principles in schools (Moeller, 2020).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The US corporation of the twentieth century was described as a corporate welfare model that provided workers with a lifelong position, career ladder advancement opportunities, full health and dental medical benefits, and a defined-benefit retirement pension. The corporate model changed by the twenty-first century with a shift to an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) model that reduced employer costs for worker salaries, benefits, and retirement costs by contracting out the manufacturing work to other companies that created the finished products, instead, but did not offer good salary and benefit plans. In this manner, large corporations avoided the enormous past costs associated with employing a staff to manufacture products. In following the new corporate model, the welfare model of public education of salary, benefits, and pensions for teachers and staff were targeted by neoliberal ideologies that promised cost reductions for taxpayers. Some success had occurred by 2021 with an increase in charter schools and voucher schools, organizations that provided lower salaries, reduced benefits, and no public pensions plans, instead shifting to 403b plans. The 403b retirement plans were defined-contribution plans that were less expensive for the employers. With the OEM model as the corporate example to follow, neoliberal leaders were looking to find additional methods to reduce the high costs of employing teachers and administrators. Teacher unions and loosely organized citizen groups fought back against the corporate takeover attempts, but charter and voucher schools continued to increase nationally in the beginning of the twenty-first century (Spring, 2008) and into 2021.

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## **Introduction**

The corporatization of K-12 educational management was a movement to reshape the \$800 billion dollar public education enterprise and mold it along the lines of a corporate business model of operation under the neoliberal mantra that private business enterprises and their people are more efficient and effective than government and its actors. The goal of many business leaders was to gain a foothold in this industry to make money and train future workers based on the needs of their company (Moeller, 2020). One method used was to change who worked in leadership positions in education to people from business, finance, and the military who were trained in business-type organizations and not in university schools of education. While running a school like a business did not improve school operations, the

consideration of business management expert Peter Drucker's ideas on leadership and management provided a road map for present and future school leaders.

The Oxford English dictionary (OED) reported the earliest usage of the word corporatize was in 1947 by Grunchy in *Modern Economic Thought*. In the chapter, the meaning was to associate the principles of a big business in order to increase profits.

Businessmen have found it profitable to "corporatize" economic activities. They have found it to their economic advantage to use the interlocking directorate, the multiple holding company, no-par and nonvoting common stock, and many other corporate devices for centralizing the control of industrial assets.

Further, the OED dictionary definition of corporatize as a verb was the following, "[t]o make corporate by introducing or imposing the structures, practices, or values associated with a large business corporation. . ." as well as in specific terms of business and economics, "[t]o convert (a state-run company or organization) into an independent commercial company; to privatize." As a noun, the term corporatization was defined in the OED dictionary as, "[t]he introduction or imposition of the practices or values associated with a large business corporation; commercialization; the loss of independence or individual character, homogenization." The earliest known use of corporatization was in 1958 in the publication *Patterns of Government* by Eckstein, who stated the following public entities in Britain changing into a private business model, "Seventeen such semi-official monopolies were created, and British agriculture, which previously had been ruggedly. . . individualistic, was to a very large extent brought up to the industrial level of corporatization" (corporatization, 2020). The corporatization of a public run operation meant that the entity was adopting the principles of business operations as well as a bottom-line goal of increased profits from sales with reduced production costs.

The nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution ushered in the factory as the primary work setting to manufacture products on a mass level and schooling followed suit, adopting the same organizational model (English, 2008). Frederick Taylor introduced the assembly line and the job specialization process into manufacturing in the beginning of the twentieth century with the purpose of efficiently producing finished products from raw materials in the least expensive manner possible (English, 2008). The rise of the factory led to a systems approach to the work as well as an ideology to manage the workers. Taylor was known as the father of the assembly line process that standardized production with "scientific management" to increase efficiency in the operations of mass production (English & Bolton, 2016). Further, Elton Mayo developed a management theory to use language to convince workers that they had voice and choice in their work lives, but this contrasted with the reality of management decision-making practices that remained autocratic and hierarchical. Mayo was an immigrant who rose up the ranks of the Harvard School of Business by creating what management leader Peter Drucker believed to be a subversively paternalistic management style for leaders to run a factory based on



what Mayo called “scientific management” and to control the workers to fit the needs of the owner (Hoopes, 2003a).

At the same time, Thorstein Veblen of the University of Chicago and later Stanford University wrote about the selling out of the foundational ideals of the university, the journey of exposing students to deep and novel ideas and concepts that they could wrangle with and create new solutions for and instead favored more superficial work to produce higher rankings for prestige in order to attract wealthy donors as well as more students for additional revenues. Veblen (1918) in *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* stated:

It appears, then, that the intrusion of business principles in the universities goes to weaken and retard the pursuit of learning, and therefore to defeat the ends for which a university is maintained. This result follows, primarily, from the substitution of impersonal, mechanical relations, standards and tests, in the place of personal conference, guidance and association between teachers and students. (p. 111)

This focus on bottom-line business management goals ran against the goals of what Veblen believed as the role for university leadership, the promotion of scholarship.

The roots of marketing and the production of slogans, catch phrases, and competitions to raise money and achieve greater acclaim found its roots in the turn of the century university presidents that Veblen (1918) termed the “captains of erudition,” a play off of the captains of industry descriptor used for the monopolistic minded business leaders of that era (p. 111). Luminaries in university leadership such as Presidents C.W. Eliot of Harvard, William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago, and others reconceptualized the job of the university president in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from a lead professor concerned with the details of curriculum, instruction, and student learning to a business and marketing manager with a focus on popularizing their institution to increase student enrollment as well as on generating additional revenue streams (Moser, 2014, p. 9). Veblen believed it was misguided overemphasis of marketing and bottom line financial ideas by university presidents and their administrative teams instead of their time spent on crafting and cultivating experiences for students to further the intellectual mission of the university. Veblen wrote,

The fact that the universities are assumed to be irreconcilable competitors, both in the popular apprehension and as evidenced by the manoeuvres of their several directors, is too notorious to be denied by any but the interested parties. Now and again it is formally denied by one and another among the competing captains of erudition, but the reason for such denial is the need of it. (p. 45)

The idea of running a school like a business was contrary to the mission of the universities according to Veblen.

## A Description of School Districts and School Leaders

In the United States, there were over 13,500 school districts (Institute, 2014), and the districts varied in the number of schools and students under their supervision. Some school districts had schools with students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, others only went from ninth to twelfth grade, and some districts had hundreds of students, while others were hundreds of thousands of students in size. The New York City Public Schools enrolled almost one million students, the largest school district in the country based on student enrollment (Institute, 2014), while the largest school district in terms of square miles was the North Slope Borough School District in Alaska, that covered over 94,800 square miles (Proximity One, 2014). There were school districts that consisted of only high school aged students such as New Trier High School, a one school district of over 4000 students in grades 9–12 in Winnetka, Illinois. There were also school districts that served only elementary-aged school children and school districts that had students from early childhood education through eighth grade such as the Franklin Special School District in Franklin, Tennessee, with over 3800 students. Some school district boundaries were an entire county like Wayne County Public Schools in North Carolina that made up the entire county with a land area of over 550 square miles, a total resident population of over 120,000, and a student population of approximately 20,000. Contrast this district to the Greendale Public Schools in Greendale, Wisconsin, that served students in the Village of Greendale as well as students from other municipalities in Milwaukee County as a result of alternative attendance programs. The village was five square miles in land size, with just over 14,000 residents and about 2600 students in the public school system (Tooms Cyres, 2017).

The roles, descriptions, and titles of educational management positions varied based on the configuration as noted above and the needs of schools and districts. At the district level of a public school district, the nomenclature for the top leader was superintendent, district administrator, or the chief executive officer. In most school districts, a democratically elected Board of Education hired, oversaw, and evaluated and renewed or non-renewed the superintendent's contract for employment. School management under the direct supervision of the superintendent included positions with the following titles: deputy superintendent, chief of staff, assistant superintendent, executive director, director, chief operations officer, chief academic officer, chief equity officer, chief technology officer, associate superintendent, chief of school administration, chief of teaching and learning, chief of human resources, director of curriculum and instruction, director of human resources, chief finance officer, and director of finance, among others.

The most common administrative title was school principal, with the role of day-to-day operations management of a school. The history of the principal had its roots in nineteenth century schools when a school designated a lead teacher to be the principal teacher. The role of the principal included managing the staff, day-to-day operations, the budget of the school, oversight of the physical plant, student conduct

and achievement, sports, fine arts productions, and the drop off and pick up of students to and from school. In 2020, the principal was also charged with oversight of online education, ensuring that students attended and received education both asynchronous and synchronous in an online setting on a computer while at home as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic that closed school buildings.

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## University Preparation Programs

The preparation of school leaders for administrative positions in K-12 schools and districts rested in the universities and their schools of education. In these preparation programs, candidates enrolled in course work that provided students with foundational knowledge in preparation for school administration positions. The courses included training in school leadership such as leading teachers in the alignment, delivery, and assessment of curriculum; the politics of education; working collaboratively with school boards and state elected officials; the basic principles of school finance including the funding laws and regulations of a particular state government; the management of educational resources; special education co-teaching models, best practices, and federal regulations governing the education of students with disabilities; case law in schooling and legal practices for school management; and as a culminating activity, a practicum experience conducted under the supervision of a current leader of a school for practical experience. The completion of the course work for this degree signaled that the graduating student had devoted sufficient time and effort studying to attain the necessary credential to qualify for an administrative license to lead a school.

The generally stated goals of a program of studies for the preparation of school leaders was to equip candidates with foundational knowledge and skills practice in order to prepare them for future school leadership roles. With intensive study as well as reflective questions and discussions, the students developed the background knowledge and transferable skills to gain the necessary state license that allowed them to serve as a public school administrator. The purpose of education seemingly was to prepare students as critical thinkers and problem solvers who tackled the problems in education novel to the time.

The School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) had a conceptual framework with principles and dispositions to prepare students for participation in a democratic society. From the UNC website in the fall semester of 2020, the principles were “that candidates will become leaders supporting and promoting the development, teaching and learning of all students in multiple contexts” (n.d., <https://ed>). Students gained content knowledge, leadership ideas, skills to interpret assessments, and effective communication and collaboration dispositions to work effectively with students and stakeholders. Training included research results and demonstrations that all students learned, given appropriate schooling conditions, along with personal development of continuous reflective thinking that was necessary in school leadership. These broad goals ensured that

the future leaders were trained in order to provide teachers and students with a collaborative work approach to succeed.

In addition to teaching the courses in educational management, university professors conducted research in the field of education to answer questions related to what worked for leadership in schools and school districts. Papa (Papa & English, 2011) found essential components of a successful educational leader in what she described as the “accoutrements” of a good leader. The accoutrements included the following: adult learner, human agency (one-size-fits-all does not work for students), ignored intended skills (such as good listening), intellectual curiosity, futurity (awareness of educational fads), and imaginativeness (pp. 106–107). School leaders developed as social justice advocates and viewed schools as training for future participants in democratic society, not just as job preparation factories. School leadership was about more than the business details of managing resources, budgets, and standardized test results. The qualities, experiences, and developmental ideologies of effective school leadership contrasted with the people and organizations that advocated for leaders who were from fields outside of education (Papa & English, 2011, pp. 123–125).

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## University Course of Study in Educational Management

In order to become a school administrator, a person had to qualify for a license from the particular state to work. The license certified the candidate met the established criteria, and it granted permission to serve in a supervisory capacity in a school. University schools of education served as the organizations that provided the program of study for candidates to receive a school administration license. An example of a program of study was at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) that offered a program that included 33 h of coursework with a school-based practicum experience counting for one course. A school administration candidate needed prior experience as a licensed teacher for at least 3 years to qualify for the administration program of study. The Educational Administration and Supervision program at UWM was similar to other programs at universities around the country.

The minimum criteria for admissions included a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university with a 2.75 minimum grade point average, proficiency in the English language, and the successful completion of a criminal background check. In addition, requirements also included a minimum number of years as a classroom teacher prior to acceptance into a school leadership master’s degree program as listed on the fall semester, 2020, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education website. At UWM, a student began the program with a cohort of other students with the goal of moving through the coursework together and the majority of the students worked in education as classroom teachers or other K-12 roles and therefore attended on a part-time basis in evening class sessions and the summer after regular school day hours. The cohort path was for students to take two courses per semester and complete the program in 2 years.

University programs for aspiring school leaders provided foundational knowledge that was characterized as significant and useful for future school administrators. In general, the programs of study were often taught by professors with prior experience in K-12 teaching and school leadership and the curriculums focused on topics pertinent to preparation for political, instructional, and school managerial leadership experiences. The coursework for a master's degree in educational administration and supervision at UWM included the following courses, Leadership in Educational Organizations (ADLDSP 702), Organizational Change and Team Leadership (ADLDSP 710), Instructional Leadership (ADLDSP 712), Foundations in Student Services and Special Education Administration (EXEDUC 861), Curriculum Planning and Ideologies (CURRINS 701), School Law (ADLDSP 752), the Politics of Education (ADLDSP 732), Management of Educational Resources (ADLDSP 762), and a Principal's Field Practicum (ADLDSP 792), experience, and two electives related to the student's interest in curriculum, special education or the business office aspects of the job. In addition, students completed a portfolio of their work that was reviewed by professors and then submitted to the Department of Public Instruction in the state of Wisconsin as the final check in order to attain a license to serve as a public school administrator (n.d., <https://uwm>).

The coursework prepared students with the requisite foundational knowledge necessary to lead a public school. The School Law course helped students understand key legal theories and practices related to K-12 education with a focus on the role of a school principal as well as gaining an understanding of identifying and providing appropriate responses to legal issues administrators commonly dealt with in schools. Students also completed an analysis of school legal issues and applied critical analysis in concrete situations to develop skills that were useful in future education leadership positions.

The Politics of Education course's purpose was to increase students' understanding of the politics of education with an examination of ideology, the political landscape, the framing of educational problems, and decision-making in political contexts. In this course, the reading requirements provided a context for understanding the topics relevant to leadership in education as students participated in collaborative activities as well as writing assignments to enhance their ability to make informed decisions in contexts where multiple stakeholders with competing visions were involved in educational decision-making. The author taught this course at UWM from 2015 to 2017 and had primary knowledge of the information about the program of studies and course work.

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## **Challenges to the Hegemony of University Preparation Programs**

Business organizations and business schools challenged the hegemony of university school of education leadership programs with criticism that the aforementioned programs lacked the effectiveness to train leaders to improve schools. One such organization was the Broad Foundation that established a non-profit school

leadership preparation organization in 2001. This organization was founded by Eli Board, a billionaire national home builder of KB Homes. The mission of the Broad Foundation was to provide better leaders for schools and school districts through their own training program. This foundation's broad brush clarion call was that university school of education programs was not capable of properly training school leaders. From the Broad Foundation website, the following statement summed up the view of schools of education training school principals: "what one typically learns in a university-based 'leadership training' program – and what a state certification bureau looks for – are a far cry from the qualities that matter most to those actually selecting a school's principal. It's character that matters most, not credentials" (Broad, 2003, p. 29). In terms of a good school district superintendent, the Broad Foundation's manifesto included the following: clear vision, strong leadership, relentless focus, political acuity, personal accountability, effective management, and fortitude (Broad, pp. 27–28). While the accoutrements from Papa served as research-based skills and dispositions needed for school leaders, the Broad Foundation believed in managerialism as the holder of the values, knowledge base, and dispositions needed to be an effective educational administrator. The Broad Foundation's manifesto was dismissive of any university preparation training for future school leaders in the schools of education.

Today, graduate schools of education, responding to legislative and regulatory demands, offer a menu of courses that may or may not be relevant to the day-to-day realities of school leadership. People who dine from that menu then get hired as principals, regardless of whether their skills, experience, and academic courses have readied them for the issues they will confront on the job. (Broad, p. 33)

A Broad-trained school superintendent candidate reached the finals for the East Baton Rouge, Louisiana school district's top job in June 2020. The transcript from the Broad Foundation that was included in the candidate profile listed the courses taken from the foundation. The titles were as follows: Foundations of Urban Education, Residency Application of Learning, Leadership Development, Residency Application of Learning, Organizational Change, Strategic Transformation of Educational Systems, Practicums I and II, and a Master's Thesis. The transcript further stated that the Broad Center staff determined passing grades (n.d., <https://ebrschools>). While the Broad organization and its foundational document called for a change in educational leadership preparation, there were no substantive criteria upon which formed the basis of this call for change or for the creation of their own leadership preparation program. No research base supported their anecdotal assertions.

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## **Running a School Like a Business in the Push to Advance Globalization**

Managerialism was a private sector theory that a manager was trained in the basic principles of leadership in terms of accountability and hierarchy of leadership. This training meant the person had the requisite knowledge to serve in a management role

of any entity, business, non-profit organization, or even a public school, because they possessed the basic understandings of finance, law, human capital, and motivation, and this foundational knowledge allowed them to serve effectively as the leader (Hoopes, 2003b). In the Broad Foundation Manifesto, the concern was that there was a “pipeline problem” which meant that more non-traditional candidates who did not rise through the ranks of education were better served to lead schools. In order for our most challenging schools to have a good shot at engaging the very best leaders, this “marketplace” needed to become as vigorous and visible as the competition for corporate executives according to the Broad Foundation (Broad, 2003, p. 33).

The managerial training model for school leadership was a master’s in business administration (MBA) program where a candidate learned all of the business principles necessary to operate an organization. Self-purported school reforms in the beginning of the twenty-first century believed schools of education were ineffective in improving schools (Spring, 2014) with their training in curriculum leadership, school finance, operations, community relations, and social justice (English & Ehrich, 2016). Brand management, the principles of accounting, marketing, and entrepreneurship were the cornerstone ideas that managers needed expertise to successfully lead schools according to this line of reasoning (Hoopes, 2003b).

The impact of running a school like a business and adopting the principles that underlay a corporate business philosophy were twofold. First, the focus of school management shifted from cultivating a culture of nurture and support for student development, and the shift away “exacerbates existing structural inequities across race, gender, class, and nation” (Moeller, 2020, p. 238), to a culture of bottom-line test score results that actually measured poverty of the families and set aside the reality of the systemic inequality in society (Heilig, Brewer, & Pedraza, 2018). From English and Bolton (2016), the description of the original principles of managerialism from Frederick Taylor was the following:

the preoccupation of management is control of the worker and the rigid subdivision of the worker into smaller tasks to reduce the costs of high-priced labor and permit application of rigid cost controls and profit maximization. (see Kanigel, 1997) (p. 100)

Second, positions were added to a school district, not additional teaching positions or teacher pay raises, but rather central office district-based roles with the job descriptions that in general terms were for finding ways to increase accountability measures and supervision of schools based on test score results. These positions included family specialists who planned meetings to connect with the community, communications department staff to produce marketing materials with good news, additional academic coaches to focus attention on test scores to increase them, and additional managerial staff to pay attention to bottom-line high stakes test results. None of the aforementioned served to help families, students, and teachers to develop, inspire, and motivate students to improve cognitive development and become well-rounded persons, but rather to market the good news of the district while at the same time devaluing educators as a result of seemingly low standardized test scores (Heilig et al., 2018).



The branding and marketing of an education organization following a business model approach diverted resources away from teachers and classrooms and paid for services to boost the good news of the district. In a corporate style of communication, how a school district communicated to the public was termed a public information model. Grunig and Hunt and Moore, Bagin, and Gallagher (2012) created descriptions of communications models that organizations used. The four models were press agency-publicity, public information, two-way symmetric, and two-way asymmetric (p. 13).

Grunig and Hunt estimate that 15 percent of the organizations practice press agency-publicity, 50 percent public information, 20 percent two-way asymmetric, and 15 percent two-way symmetric. (p. 14)

Grunig and Hunt stated that a two-way symmetrical communication model was the best for schools (Moore et al., 2012). The two-way symmetrical model sought to create a communications plan that responded to input from stakeholders and acted accordingly instead of merely acting and communicating out. The practice of some school districts for the branding and marketing followed the path of the Original Equipment Manufacturers and away from a recommended two-way symmetrical communications plan that engaged with families and students in authentic ways, engagement that served to build relationships between educators and families so students gained self-confidence and competence throughout their schooling.

Neoliberal theory posited that a private company more efficiently and effectively performed the work of a public service better and at a lower cost to taxpayers (Spring, 2008). An example of neoliberalism in public education was the Edison Schools organization and their goal to take over underperforming public schools and turn them into high functioning schools with dramatically increased student scores on high stakes tests with reduced operational costs and equity payments to shareholders. The Edison Schools takeovers never bore the fruit of their promises and eventually became a school technology software company with the name of Edison Learning in 2021.

## Edison Schools

Edison Schools began in 1992 under billionaire publisher Christopher Whittle of *Esquire* magazine. They marketed their school improvement services of higher student learning outcomes with the take over and management of high poverty, high minority, and low-performing schools such as two schools in the Wayne County Public Schools, North Carolina. The two schools were Carver Heights Elementary and Dillard Middle School in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Edison Schools efforts later expanded into tutoring, after school and summer school programming funded from the federal government's reauthorization of ESEA, known as No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, with their related company known as Knewton Learning. While Edison Schools promised to achieve marked improvement for the schools under



their purview, no data showed that any improvement ever happened, including at Carver Heights and Dillard in North Carolina.

Edison Schools developed their after school and summer school programs in districts across the country when the federal government offered up billions of dollars for these types of ancillary school programs under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Spring, 2008). They offered programming for students outside of school hours to increase the time students spent in school, but no marked improvements on state tests were ever recorded (Gill et al., 2005). The idea that additional time in a school building after school hours and in the summer improved student learning outcomes was the impetus behind NCLB federal legislation and its outlay of taxpayer dollars to private organizations such as Edison Schools and Knewton Learning. Edison Schools struggled to financially turn a profit and shares fell precipitously on the Nasdaq exchange in 2002 and later Edison Schools were not able to turn a profit (Spring, 2008, p. 207). The company was sold off and rebranded as Edison Learning and became an educational technology company (Gill et al., 2005); however, associated individuals seemingly personally profited, in the neighborhood of millions of dollars each from the above taxpayer-funded schemes.

### **American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)**

The corporatization of educational management was also intertwined with political entities that sought to dilute the power and influence of public school districts in favor of a privatized model of education that was less expensive for taxpayers. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) was a conservative leaning organization that influenced legislative policy at the local, state, and federal levels. The online agenda from the July 15–17, 2020 ALEC conference in Orlando, Florida, had several position papers related to public education. Under the Education and Work Force Development task force, these ideas included the following titles: Digital Teaching and Learning Plan, Resolution Supporting Homeschooling Freedom, Homeschool Credential Recognition Act, Statewide Education Online Act, and the Virtual Public Schools Act. In the midst of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the shutdown of schools across the United States, ALEC sought to lobby and influence legislation that further expanded the rights and reach of homeschooling at the expense of the public schooling enterprise across states as written on the American Legislative Exchange Council website.

The mission of the ALEC Education and Workforce Development Task Force is to promote excellence in the nation's educational system, to advance reforms through parental choice, to support efficiency, accountability, and transparency in all educational institutions, and to ensure America's youth are given the opportunity to succeed. (American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC], 2020)

Further, the taskforce issued a state report card annually for its measurement of education in each state, with the statement, “[t]he status quo is not working. Whether

by international comparisons, state and national proficiency measures, civic literacy rates, or career preparedness, American students are falling behind” (ALEC, 2020). The goal of ALEC was to improve public education and the learning outcomes of students through the privatization of public school operations, namely, by supporting charter and voucher programs.

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## Neoliberalism and the Reduction of the Role of Government

The job losses, homelessness, and desperation created as a result of the Stock Market Crash in 1929 and subsequent Great Depression of the 1930s led to unprecedented government activity and federal intervention in the economic system. Beginning in 1933 with the inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the US Congress and executive branch began taxpayer-funded public works programs under the moniker, the New Deal. The goal of these programs was to increase and improve the infrastructure of the country while providing jobs for unemployed people in hopes of accelerating consumer spending. The growth in public sector jobs began on the premise that private sector businesses were not able or willing to increase spending to employ workers and continue production during the economic downturn. As a result, new government programs were created to benefit mostly men with jobs, unemployment benefits, and a supplemental pension system for retired workers known as social security.

Neoliberalism, also called neoconservatism, was an economic theory that arose in Europe following World War II that assumed private enterprise ran public entities more effectively, efficiently, and at a lower cost to taxpayers. From Spring (2014) neoliberal belief was in private sector superiority over government-run entities:

The basic assumption of neoliberalism is that governments services, such as schools, water and sewer systems, electric power, and so on, can be better provided by private companies and nonprofit organizations. This assumption is based on the unproven idea that corporate bureaucracies are more efficient than government bureaucracies and that the free market is more responsive to the public interests than governments. (p. 41)

Education was a publicly run enterprise that neoliberals viewed as an expensive and ineffective system and called for the takeover of schools. University of California Irvine Law Professor Mehrsa Baradaran in her July 2, 2020, New York Times opinion article, *The Neoliberal Looting of America*, stated:

By the 1980s, neoliberalism was triumphant in policy, leading to tax cuts, deregulation and privatization of public functions including schools, pensions and infrastructure. The governing logic held that corporations could do just about everything better than the government could. The result, as President Ronald Reagan said, was to unleash “the magic of the marketplace.” (Baradaran, 2020)

Neoliberal methods for the privatization of public schools were in the form of charter schools and voucher programs, the latter that provided families with money

for private school tuition. From English and Bolton (2016), the accepted rationale for the privatization of schooling was:

Public education is a protected monopoly and therefore restricts the consumer from obtaining the best price and services. The solution was the marketization of public education and all social services to incentivize agencies within a specific sector to offer better services at lower costs. (p. 110)

Trends in education in the twenty-first century included the contracting out of services to private businesses under the ideology that services provided in this manner were better and cheaper.

When lawmakers wanted to decrease the burden of taxes, they focused on cutting public services. Public sector job examples such as school teachers, police officers, firefighters, water works, road building and maintenance, and the military were taxpayer-funded personnel positions in government organizations that provided salaries, healthcare benefits, and retirement pensions. In the state of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Policy Forum published reports that showed over 30% of the state budget was spent on K-12 education (Wisconsin, 2020), and further in school districts in most states, around 80% of a K-12 school district's budget went to the salary, healthcare, and pension payments of the workers (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2013). One major way to reduce costs in K-12 education was to not increase salaries at the rate of inflation. Other examples included the outsourcing of custodial work to private companies to clean and provide general maintenance of the buildings and outsourcing bus transportation. First Student was the largest school-aged transportation provider in the United States, as it was a part of an international transportation conglomerate, FirstGroup PLC, a company with corporate offices in Aberdeen, Scotland, and traded on the London Stock Exchange. More radical ideas came from the private charter school business such as Rocketship, a for-profit charter school company that replaced teachers with less expensive computers to stand in their place in order to decrease operating costs and increase their personal salaries and sell software contracts to technology company contacts (Bacon, 2014).

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## The World Bank and Globalization

Neoliberal reforms followed the guidance of the World Bank and its influence toward increasing globalization and the defined role it gave for education across continents and nation states. From Spring (2010), "The World Bank's educational ideology contains a particular vision about how society should be organized... a good society is one based on the mass production of consumer goods within a global economy" (p. 40). In terms of education, the World Bank's concept of lifelong learner meant workers in a global economy were constantly flexible and learning new skills as they were disrupted and shifted from job to job based on irrational market demands as well as global political and environmental conditions. "New skills have to be constantly learned. In addition, workers needed basic literacy and

math proficiency to constantly learn new occupational skills” (p. 40). Education was viewed as the training ground for the global, consumer-based, corporate-controlled, and irrational market economy, and continuous re-learning was needed as the market demands changed.

Reform of schools based on neoliberal principles accelerated under the federal administrations of George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama. Under Bush, *No Child Left Behind* rated schools and students as successes or failures based on standardized test score results with sanctions on schools for low results such as students choosing new schools with transportation provided by the district, mass firings of school personnel to turn around the school and make it successful with higher student test scores, and the outright closing of schools if overall test scores were determined to be consistently too low (Spring, 2008). Under Obama, the high stakes testing era continued with the *Race to the Top* Federal Department of Education grant opportunity that provided additional federal funds to school districts as long as they adopted what were termed “turnaround” ideas, such as firing all teachers and administrators in schools with low test scores, creating teacher quality ratings based on students’ test scores and more school closures in high poverty, ethnic minority neighborhoods (Spring, 2011). By erasing all other quantitative and qualitative measures of schools and students outside of the results on the high stakes tests, neoliberals controlled the conversation on school reform backed with their sloganeering such as “education is the civil rights movement of our times” (Robinson, 2016). If the scores remained what they determined to be too low and unacceptable, then the solution given was to replace the adults in the schools and hire different people (Peck & Reitzug, 2012). The replacement adults included non-traditional persons from business backgrounds who operated under the theory of managerialism.

When a school leader was trained under a managerial framework, the person focused primarily on standardized test score data; used formative district data incorrectly (Popham, 2008) as summative data; used resources to hire staff who further dissected, supervised, and communicated the data; led in an authoritarian manner under the nomenclature of data driven decision-making; and hired, fired, and moved staff around under cover of low test score data. The flaw in the logic of these management practices was that it cancelled out all other information about students, staff, and schools and deemed yearly state tests results as the only authority in determinations of success or failure and schools and students did not perform better, but actually worse when measured longitudinally (Popham, 2008). Predictably, schools with high SES (socioeconomic status) were rated as successful as their norm referenced test scores were above average and schools with low SES were rated as failures for comparatively lower overall test results. The binary success or failure label was inescapable as this school rating system excised the social factors of the racist, misogynistic, and exploitative capitalistic society that created economic, gender, and racial disparities and instead blamed educators for students’ low scoring test results. The Obama administration ramped up this blame game with the marketing slogans of turnaround schools. This term turnaround was used as an attempt to disguise a corporate based cutthroat leadership strategy of firing staff and hiring

new teachers and administrators in a school deemed low performing as measured by state standardized test results in order to give an appearance of school reform and improvement (Ravitch, 2010, p. 248).

Education management under this type of leadership ideology did not improve student learning, but in some instances led to local community members coming together under a united cause to protect their schools. A mobilized community effort against neoliberal reform occurred in Texas when a local community fought to keep their school when the superintendent and school board attempted to disrupt the school by continuously changing principals, renaming the school, reconstituting the staff and then attempting to close the school, all without community input or advance notice. The plan was to turn the operations over to a for-profit charter school company (Pazey, 2019). The community mobilized to fight back against the takeover of their school as members considered it an integral institution in their community, and many disputed the negative labels that state test score results pinned on their school.

Neoliberal reforms create an achievement-gap master narrative that (a) categorizes schools as good or bad, (b) differentiates the educational quality of one school over another school as academically acceptable versus academically unacceptable, and (c) dichotomizes the students who attend them as a success or failure. (from Pazey, 2019, p. 1897)

In speaking to the school board on the night of the vote to turn the school over to the for-profit charter school organization, the parents, students, and community members spoke out against the takeover as well as told their stories about the positive role that the school played in the lives of the people and for the community. One student talked about the full ride scholarship he received to college (Pazey, 2019), another stated that “Our children are not orphans... We should not be putting them on the auction block to the highest bidder” (p. 1896), and a teacher stated the following about the school, “as accepting, caring, family-like culture, safe to be themselves, no bullying” (p. 1881). A student voiced to the school board, “Public opinion of those who think HHS students are failures: not true, majority of students work for ‘betterment’ of HHS, what is best for the community” (p. 1882), and the local newspaper reported the following, “District administration does not value feedback from HHS supporters at information sessions” (p. 1883). A community leader, vocally pleaded at the board meeting, “You need to treat and respect our people as humans with respect and dignity!” (p. 1884). The speakers at the school board meeting provided alternative perspectives on the relative success of the school and the role that it played in the community and for its students.

While the Texas school example highlighted the push back against school closure based on Obama administration school turnaround ideas that were from corporate business culture, much of the time schools like the Texas school were closed in low SES neighborhoods without resistance as the community was often powerless to resist. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s ideas for the Department of Education came from his tenure as Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools where he closed

numerous low SES schools on the southside of the city as he believed that schools who underperformed on state tests needed to be closed down (Ravitch, 2010).

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## Peter Drucker and Educational Management

While this chapter featured unfavorable portrayals of corporate influence in educational management, a final consideration of the business leadership ideas of Peter Drucker served to help educational leaders manage schools. Drucker's 1954 book, *The Practice of Management* was a self-described foundational text for management in the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. In 1985, Drucker penned the preface of a reprinting of the book and wrote: "The Practice of Management has remained the one book which students of management, young people aspiring to become managers and mature managers still consider the foundation book" (Drucker, 2006, p. xi). While the purpose of a business was to create a customer (p. 37) and while this was not the purpose of a school, there were leadership ideas written by Drucker for education leaders to consider adopting. Drucker was known for the creation of the Management by Objectives (MBOs) idea that "enables a business to get where it should be going rather than be the plaything of weather, winds and accidents" (p. 61). This concept and other ideas served education managers well in school districts in 2021.

In thinking about leadership during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020, Drucker wrote about leadership as empowering workers in an organization to reach their full potential and help one another even under difficult circumstances. In Table 1, Peter Drucker Leadership Concepts for Educational Management, a summary was provided of Drucker's ideas as well as applications for education management. If school leaders closely adhered to these concepts, then their leadership was focused in a way that enabled schools to operate in an effective manner for teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the education policy initiatives of top education leaders including superintendents, state departments of education, and the federal US Department of Education usually never followed Drucker's concepts, and instead they launched harmful policies and practices against public education. Below are five key questions about management with answers based on Drucker's ideas as well as transference into educational management:

1. Are leaders born or made?
2. What type of person should not be in leadership?
3. How did a leader ensure accountability for job performance?
4. What were Management by Objectives (MBOs) and how did MBOs function best?
5. How did a leader inspire everyone to work to the best of their ability?

The age-old question for leadership was were some people born to lead as a result of their birthright or were people made into leaders. The qualities of character and

**Table 1** Peter Drucker leadership concepts for educational management

Management by Objectives and Self-Control
MBOs and Self-Control Explanation and Drucker Citation Highlights
<p>Management by Objectives (MBOs) was a lasting contribution to management from Drucker. The idea of MBOs was twofold, to focus the work to combat both complacency and the development of silos within a business and to also provide workers with objective job performance measures based on results instead of the impulsive whims of superiors. From Drucker, "Business performance therefore requires that each job be directed toward the objectives of the whole business. . . each manager's job must be focused on the success of the whole" (p. 121). Drucker emphasized that work was not to be done in silos, but instead the varied departments and workers used their knowledge and skills to ultimately contribute to the entire business operation. He wrote, "Workmanship must be encouraged in the business enterprise. But it must always be related to the needs of the whole" (p. 122). While workmanship can drift away from the overall goals of the business, Drucker stated that "but this striving for professional workmanship in functional and specialized work is also a danger. It tends to direct a man's vision and efforts away from the goals of the business" (p. 123). Therefore, each worker in the organization needed clearly defined goals that were personally established and approved in order to keep the focus on the work. "Each manager, from the 'big boss' down to the production foreman or the chief clerk, needs clearly spelled-out objectives. . . . Right from the start, in other words, the emphasis should be on teamwork and team results" (p. 126). Along with MBOs was self-control defined by Drucker as the ability to have control over the work that a person was responsible for on a daily basis. Self-control as opposed to "domination by bosses," led to greater productivity according to Drucker. He said, "The greatest advantage of management by objectives is perhaps that it makes it possible for a manager to control his own performance. Self-control means stronger motivation: a desire to do the best rather than just enough to get by. It means higher performance goals and border vision" (p. 130). Also, from Drucker, "One of the major contributions of management by objectives is that it enables us to substitute management by self-control for management by domination" (p. 131). It was important for workers to not be controlled by the domination of managers which were their biased perspectives and not objective qualitative and quantitative data. The ability to set and control the work objectives was a major part of MBOs.</p>
MBOs and Self-Control Application in Educational Management
<p>The concept of MBOs was used in schools to measure teachers and administrators; however, it was contrived so that in many cases, only high-stakes standardized student test scores were used to determine the effectiveness of teachers and administrators. Drucker wrote that workers and managers at all levels of the organization needed to set their goals and go about accomplishing them. This was the concept of self-control versus the otherwise oppression – the whims of upper management. In public education in 2021, the only goal that was seemingly set was school year achievement by each new cohort of learners by grade level. Each new cohort needed to improve over the test scores of the previous cohort or the educators at the school level was deemed failures in achieving their objectives. All other metrics were erased. From Drucker, self-control instead of domination meant that by setting goals and going about achieving them, the workers and managers were not beholden to the arbitrary whims of upper management. In education, upper management used cliches such as a lack of a sense of urgency, inequitable practices, turnaround ideas, or the need for more accountability as the reasoning behind personnel changes. MBOs were used in education as SMART goals which were an acronym for specific, measureable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. As stated previously, the important component of self-control was missing, and teachers and administrators were directed to create goals only based on increased results on high stakes standardized state tests.</p>
Leadership with Integrity
Leadership with Integrity Explanation and Drucker Citation Highlights

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**Table 1** (continued)

Drucker's idea on leadership determined that the defining qualities that stood out over all others were character and integrity. In his writing, he believed in a principled person to lead people and a business that also provided for the general welfare of the community and society. He wrote, "Integrity may be difficult to define, but what constitutes lack of integrity of such seriousness as to disqualify a man for a managerial position is not. A man should never be appointed to a managerial position if his vision focuses on people's weaknesses rather than on their strengths. The man who always knows exactly what people cannot do, but never sees anything they can do, will undermine the spirit of his organization. . . He should be a realist and; and no one is less realistic than the cynic" (p. 157).

Additionally, in the dichotomous leadership question was a leader born or made was Drucker's answer. "Does it require genius, or at least a special talent, to be a manager? Is being a manager an art or an intuition? The answer is "No." What a manager does can be analyzed systematically. What a manager has to be able to do can be learned. . . Yet there is one quality that cannot be learned, one qualification that the manager cannot acquire but must bring with him. It is not genius; it is character" (p. 349).

Leadership styles varied, and for Drucker, it was not a particular style to judge a leader, but rather a person's character. "If he lacks in character and integrity- no matter how knowledgeable, how brilliant, how successful- he destroys. He destroys people, the most valuable resource of the enterprise. He destroys spirit. And he destroys performance" (p. 158). It was the precarious nature of senior leadership that made or broke organizations. The necessity for organizational strength rested in top leadership, according to Drucker. "If an organization is great in spirit, it is because the spirit of its top people is great. If it decays, it does so because the top rots; as the proverb has it, "Trees die from the top." In appointing people to top positions, integrity cannot be overemphasized" (p. 158).

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#### Leadership with Integrity Application in Educational Management

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Leaders were made, and not born and if the leader was not focused on the strengths of the teachers and administrators, based on Drucker's criteria, they were not management material for schools and school districts. Also, educational management had faced criticism and calls for the hiring of people to lead schools and school districts from business, state government, and the military ranks. For example, Wake County Public Schools in Raleigh, North Carolina, hired retired Army brigadier general Tony Tata in 2011, who had 19 months of education experience (Huntsberry, 2012). The idea was that education was well served to hire from other industries such as the military in order to attain better quality leaders than those produced from education.

However, according to Drucker, in addition to character and integrity, experience is a necessary component in order to set the necessary objectives for the business that the person led.

"Traditionally a manager has been expected to know one or more functions. This will no longer be enough. The manager of tomorrow must be able to see the business as a whole and to integrate his function with it" (Drucker, 2006, p. 373). Based on Drucker, people fresh from other professions did not have the necessary experience to serve in leadership roles in education.

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#### Accountability and Management Decision- Making

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##### Accountability and Management Decision- Making Explanation and Drucker Citation Highlights

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Drucker termed the spirit of the organization as the necessary component for high worker performance. It was the practices of the organization that were in place to make people perform. "This is true of the United States Supreme Court with its ability to transform hack politicians into great judges" (Drucker, p. 146). From Drucker, the high performance expectations were set not from above, but rather, "Insistence on high goals and high performance requires that a man's ability both to set goals and to attain them be systematically appraised" (p. 149).

Goals for accountability, based on Drucker, were to be set for more long-term growth as a focus on short-term goals only actually harmed the organization. "It is misdirection of the worst kind to tell managers that they have to balance objectives so as to preserve the long-term earning power of the

(continued)



**Table 1** (continued)

business while basing their pay on immediate short-range profits” (p. 151). Drucker advocated for team work that focused on goals and initiatives for long-term success. “Moreover, the individuals must be organized as a true group organized for working together rather than against each other, rewarded for their joint as well as their individual efforts, identified for themselves as well as for the people around them as a cohesive social unit, proud of themselves, of each other and of their performance” (p. 298).

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Accountability and Management Decision- Making Application in Educational Management

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The accountability movement in education included the rating and evaluation of teachers and administrators based on yearly student standardized state test scores, only. Teacher pay was ostensibly kept artificially low as a result of student standardized test scores determined to be low by states’ government education officials. Drucker’s ideas on performance and accountability did not align with the accountability movement in education in 2021 because the hyper focus on short-range goals distracted school leaders from focused work on long-term goals and solutions. In addition, value-added measures for education were created by William Sanders, a professor of agriculture at the University of Tennessee who convinced educational policy makers such as former Tennessee Governor and Senator Lamar Alexander of a way to measure whether or not teachers sufficiently grew students academically each school year and thus grade the teachers. Sander’s formula was previously used to measure the effectiveness of fertilizers on a particular crop, termed “split-plot design” (Strauss, 2011) not students and tests. Sanders created the formula to seemingly determine if teachers provided the instruction needed for students to complete their grade level work at a low, medium, or proficiency level. While the margins of error were too great for the data to be statistically significant, states used student test data to rate the “effectiveness or ineffectiveness” of teachers in tested areas, normally math and language arts and sometimes science and social studies classes were included.

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The Areas for Business Performance Objectives

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The Areas for Business Performance Objectives Explanation and Drucker Citation Highlights

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In a business setting, Drucker outlined the performance objectives that needed to be considered and set in order to grow and experience success. “To be able to set market-standing objectives, a business must first find out what the market is. . .

1. The desired standing of existing products in their present market
2. The desired standing of existing products in new markets
3. The existing products that should be abandoned
4. The new products needed in existing markets
5. The new markets that new products should develop
6. The distributive organization needed to accomplish the markets goals
7. A service objective measuring how well the customer should be supplied with what he considers value by the company” (Drucker, pp. 67–68).

What Drucker concluded was that after all the goals were set the leadership in an organization was the differentiator for success. “Businesses have pretty much the same resources to work with. . . the only thing that differentiates. . . quality of its management. . . And the only way to measure this crucial factor is through a measurement of productivity that shows how well resources are utilized and how much they yield” (Drucker, p. 71).

After setting the performance objectives, it was determined how many years forward for the business to turn a profit with consideration for ebb and flow during the time period of years. “Profitability as such is meaningless and misleading unless we know for how many years the profit can be expected. . . We should always consider the rate of return as an average resulting from good and bad years together” (Drucker, p. 78).

Additionally, Drucker did not advocate for sole reliance on quantitative measures. “Performance and results in these areas cannot be fully measured quantitatively. . . What we need are qualitative standards, judgment rather than data, appraisal rather than measurements” (Drucker, p. 81). As Drucker said about profit, “To emphasize only profit, for instance, misdirects managers to the

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**Table 1** (continued)

point where they may endanger the survival of the business” (Drucker, p. 62). Most interesting from Drucker was the reality of American economic success: “The economic revolution of the American economy since 1900 has in large part been a marketing revolution caused by the assumption of responsibility for creative, aggressive, pioneering marketing by American management” (Drucker, p. 38).

The Areas for Business Performance Objectives Application in Educational Management

When leaders wanted to implement business-related market objectives in schools, the results were less than what was expected.

Business innovation was for the creation of products or services to expand existing or into new markets, and the innovation departments were new creations in school districts such as Milwaukee Public Schools in Wisconsin and Hamilton County Schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The goals of these offices were to purportedly personalize education which meant to offer education in a variety of settings and different means to reach a high school diploma and incorporate the latest technological advances available to accomplish personalization. In reality, innovation was a marketing ploy to reach middle class families and lure them to public schools under the guise of them having a choice of schools.

Test score results were measured year to year and punitive consequences resulted. No business operated in this manner according to Drucker’s ideas. Contributed value in a business provided quantitative as well as qualitative measures. Also, business objectives and results from Drucker were determined based on longer range plans of 5 or more years. Further, test scores best measured the relative wealth of the family of the students. Overlaying Drucker’s philosophy here, continuously rating students from poor families and closing schools in poor neighborhoods as a result, was not an accurate measure of productivity and was the opposite of the mission of public education.

Erasing all other measures and punishing educators based on standardized student test scores did not align with Drucker’s ideas on management decision-making. The Obama era school turnaround idea was to fire school principals and replace the cadre of teachers in a school deemed failing on student standardized test scores with replacements. The schools were always in poor communities with mostly poor, minority students. President Obama’s Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, closed over 50 schools during his tenure as the Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools, while erasing all of the benefits and stability the school provided to a local community (Strauss, 2020). Duncan’s policies can be characterized as sloganeering such as under the guise of “education is the civil rights issue of our generation” (Robinson, 2016).

Peak Performance

Peak Performance Explanation and Drucker Citation Highlights

Annual reports were released that the best companies to work for were determined based on surveys of employees. Employee satisfaction was a meaningless concept according to Drucker, “It is passive acquiescence” (Drucker, p. 303) and Drucker turned to management practices that encouraged worker autonomy as the way to lead for peak performance. “What we need is to replace the externally imposed spur of fear with an internal self-motivation for performance. Responsibility- not satisfaction- is the only thing that will serve” (Drucker, p. 303). Further, Drucker determined that management needed to lead by example and provide the model for high performance. “Management set and enforce on itself high standards for its own performance of those functions that determine the worker’s ability to perform . . . Few things demoralize employees as much as to sit around waiting for work while management fumbles” (Drucker, p. 305).

“The worker should be enabled to control, measure and guide his own performance. He should know how he is doing without being told. The rules for procedures and information that apply to managers apply to workers as well” (Drucker, p. 306).

Drucker said that people cannot be made to feel proud at work, but rather “People are proud if they have done something to be proud of- otherwise it is false pride and destructive. People have a

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

sense of accomplishment only if they have accomplished something. They feel important if their work is important. The only basis for genuine pride, accomplishment and importance is the active and responsible participation of people in the determination of their own work and in the government of their own plant community” (Drucker, p. 308).

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Peak Performance Application in Educational Management

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Drucker understood that fear-based leadership and external pushes did not lead to top performance. Peak performance was a personal and internal driver. Pay for performance plans for public schools were implemented in the state of North Carolina beginning in the late 1990s and were rolled out for schools and teachers as an incentive for high student standardized test scores on end of year state tests. For example, test score results were high at Chapel Hill High School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, as most students were from upper middle class and well-educated families and teachers thus received between \$750 and \$1500 as a yearly bonus for the student standardized test results. This contrasted with teachers at West Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, who never received bonus pay as the test scores for the high minority, high poverty students never reached the mark. In essence, teachers in schools with high wealth students were rewarded, and teachers in low wealth schools were punished which was counter to what Drucker determined led to peak performance.

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integrity were the necessary ingredients for leadership according to Drucker. It took a person of integrity who respected others and ensured justice in an organization to hold a top spot (Drucker, 2006, p. 158). Leaders were made, not born (p. 157), and a person learned through careful analysis over many years all of the technical aspects of an operation as well as how to manage people. To effectively lead, people required the aforementioned and developed qualities of character and integrity (p. 158). In addition, “Trees die from the top” (p. 158) was the phrase Drucker used to stress the importance of the leaders of an organization. Top leaders were to be chosen carefully as the entire organization suffered if non-qualified persons ascended to the highest positions.

The major disqualification of leadership was any person who focused on the negative traits of people instead of focusing on the strengths and positive qualities that persons brought to the organization (p. 349). “The man who always knows exactly what people cannot do, but never sees anything they can do, will undermine the spirit of his organization” (p. 157). Never elevating this type of person was Drucker’s non-grata criteria for leadership. In education, a leader needed to understand the work of teachers as well as have the ability to set long-term goals for success and guide that work for accountability. Expertise in the field of education was needed, and the acute understanding of the staff and their strengths were the characteristics to promote upward in education leadership positions, following the ideas of Drucker (2006).

Management by Objectives was a goal set by workers for their own work that provided targets for them to reach and to measure their contribution to the overall organization. The entire Drucker concept was “Management by Objectives and Self-Control” (p. 121). MBOs were used in schools in 2021, but half of Drucker’s concept, “self-control,” was missing from the goal setting procedures. Drucker created “Management by Objectives and Self-Control,” and the self-control was to prevent top leaders from making arbitrary personnel decisions based on faulty

personal assumptions, and instead decisions were based on more objective criteria (p. 130). In education in 2021, however, teachers and administrators were most often required to follow prescribed goals only for the annual high stakes standardized test results of students, with a lack of the “self-control” part of MBOs. Further, these very narrow goals had to result in an increase in the current cohort of students’ test scores on state standardized tests over the previous years’ cohort or the teachers and administrators were rated as failures. This was an example of what Drucker called “management by domination” (p. 131), as it was the opposite of teamwork that he espoused (p. 126), and it led to “friction, frustration and conflict” (p. 121).

MBOs and Self-Control that adhered to Drucker’s ideas were written by teachers and administrators that measured their work in classrooms and schools using a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures of activity and growth over the course of many years. This was the correct method for the use of MBOs and Self-Control versus the more common misapplication as described above.

Finally, the high-quality work in an organization that Drucker coined as “peak performance” (p. 303) occurred when people set and measured their own performance and contributions to the whole of the organization (p. 122). The measures were on a variety of functions and included quantitative and qualitative goals over a period of many years. Furthermore, in setting goals, basic macroeconomic understanding was needed. In business, the foundation of the US economic growth over the twentieth century was not manufacturing genius, but it was the mass marketing revolution (p. 38). Business success where others failed was based on the marketing strategies of management. Also, measuring goals for success or failure only on profit was, according to Drucker, a sure fire way to sink a business as this constricted view was harmful for ultimate growth, success, and existence (p. 62). In public education, the parallel example was the sole focus on yearly standardized test results. School reformer Seymour Sarason said that “knowing a child’s test score tells us absolutely nothing about the context of learning” (Sarason, 2004, p. 7). The performance objectives listed in Table 1 under “the Areas of Business Performance Objectives” highlighted the need for broader goals and objectives for organizational strength and success. In education, more depth of understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning and goal setting with MBOs and self-control improved educational outcomes of students over time.

Organizational leaders empowered people to do their best when they valued individual contributions and promoted teamwork. A leader did not make a person feel proud of their work, according to Drucker, but instead created the conditions for workers to internally develop a sense of pride of accomplishment (p. 306). It was not sufficient to rely on job satisfaction measures to know how people were feeling as these were meaningless and measured something that did not get to peak performance. Job satisfaction surveys measured “passive acquiescence” (p. 303) which meant that people were compliant with the objectives of their job, but there was nothing outstanding that pushed them to do their best work. A leader needed to tap the internal drives of people, and then the sense of accomplishment were the drivers to top personal performances.

## Conclusions and Reflections

Corporate America was the term used to describe business and its work culture in the United States in the twenty-first century. In 2020 and into 2021, the Covid-19 global pandemic led to widespread unemployment with the resulting loss of pay and healthcare benefits for millions of workers in the United States. As a result, the federal government provided some assistance to workers with an extra \$600 per week for unemployed workers from roughly May through July 2020, as well as two stimulus payments to qualifying families. Corporate America, generally speaking, rolled back salary and benefits for workers. Emily Stewart wrote for the Vox news and opinion website on July 23, 2020, described corporate America's Covid-19 role:

When the Covid-19 pandemic took hold in the United States this spring, companies jumped on the opportunity to advertise the ways they were supporting their customers and workers. . . . Now companies have begun quietly rolling back many of the benefits, perks, and allowances they so loudly announced earlier this year. The state of the Covid-19 pandemic isn't materially different than it was a few months ago – arguably, it's now more widespread and worse. But corporations seem ready to move on.

The praise for a corporate bureaucracy seemingly matched the unfavorable criticism of government bureaucracy (English & Ehrich, 2016) even when corporations brazenly made workers expendable under cover of protecting shareholder equity.

The march to globalization and the increasing production of consumer goods created a dilemma for public schools in the United States. Public schools traditionally served to develop young citizens as future active participants in the nation's democratic political system. The goal of a market based world economy was to develop youth with advanced skills to compete in the "faster paced world economy over their less well prepared counterparts" (Spring, 2014, p. 46). The students in the aforementioned school takeover fight in Texas wrote to the school board stating, "I am not a number on a piece of paper! I'm a person. You keep putting me under the bus! And no matter what I do – it's never enough!" (Pazey, 2019, p. 1903). Schooling was about the cultivation, development, and nurture of young students to prepare them for full participation in our democratic society. The high stakes testing game of winners and losers left the most vulnerable citizens without future opportunities as they were considered as deficient based on test results and not worthy of the full fruits of democracy (Ravitch, 2010). The neoliberal school idea was for the benefit of elite business profiteers who enriched themselves off of taxpayer money, ensured their children attended private schools and were able to outcompete the public schools with resources, as well as benefited from elite personal and political connections as the country moved away from democracy and towards an oligarchy of elite rulers. Running a school like a business never improved student learning and success, but the push to upend public education continued.

School leaders in 2020 and 2021 operated schooling during the Covid-19 global pandemic that presented unique challenges as educators figured out how to teach while protecting the safety of their students and themselves. The uniqueness of

schooling during this pandemic highlighted great opportunities when the online learning worked well but also shone a light on great disparities as online learning was not available to all students since Wi-Fi connections, routers, and computers were not standard items in all homes.

The election of Joe Biden as US President in November 2020 also ushered in the opportunity for the national Democratic political party to move away from their neoliberal agenda for public education and adopt a position of backing and support for teachers and schools. This meant a move away from the Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) and market-based educational policy and choosing a Secretary of Education who was not saddled by any organization that espoused neoliberal principles. It also was a new opportunity to end the inequitable and heavy-handed approach to high stakes, zero sum game standardized testing that punished schools who educated high percentages of students from low wealth families.

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# The So-Called Death of Common Core: Discourses on a Backlash

# 51

Mark Johnson and Ariel Tichnor-Wagner

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## Abstract

Foucauldian analyses of history do not seek to create linear narratives of our progression toward greater liberty or enlightenment (Dreyfus HL, Rabinow P. Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics. University of Chicago Press, 1983; Foucault M. The archaeology of knowledge: and the discourse on language. Vintage Books, 2010). Rather, Foucault was interested in locating systems of thought and the “often aleatory path of descent and emergence” (Garland D. Punishm Soc 16:365–384, 2014, p. 372) that gave rise to current rules, practices, and institutions (Dreyfus HL, Rabinow P. Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics. University of Chicago Press, 1983; Fadyl JK, Nicholls DA. Nurs Inq 20:23–29, 2013; Gutting G. Foucault: a very short introduction. Oxford University Press, 2005).

The following chapter explores the backlash to the Common Core State Standards initiative. Rather than describing the backlash in the form of a singular narrative of events, the authors discuss three categories of competing discourses

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that permeated the thoughts and words of education policy subsystem participants and members of the public regarding the initiative:

- 1) Education policy agendas (i.e., the competing and entangled visions for reform associated with the equity and excellence/standards agendas)
- 2) Federalism (i.e., tensions regarding the appropriate balance between federal and local control)
- 3) Socio-political beliefs (i.e., the opposing values associated with individualism and the common good)

These three categories were derived from an analysis of data from semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 15 members of policy organizations and advocacy groups who had expert knowledge of the backlash to the Common Core. Having identified the categories of discourses from the interview data, the authors conducted a deep reading on these three topics.

The interview participants were recruited and grouped by organization type, using a framework based on Rhodes' (*An education in politics: the origins and evolution of no child left behind*. Cornell University Press, 2012) typology of the major players in contemporary debates over elementary and secondary education reform. There were five overarching groups of organizations: business organizations (e.g., the US Chamber of Commerce), civils rights organizations (e.g., the Education Trust), organizations representing educators and educational leaders (e.g., the National Education Association), educational conservative organizations (e.g., the Thomas B. Fordham Institute), and organizations representing state officials (e.g., the National Governors Association). Three people were interviewed from each of these five groups by the first author in 2017; they were purposively selected based on their participation in the education policy subsystem and proximity to debates on the Common Core.

The inclusion of interview data within Foucauldian analyses of history has been flagged as philosophically and methodologically problematic (Fadyl JK, Nicholls DA. *Nurs Inq* 20:23–29, 2013). Interviewing involves an active form of subjectification that can impose a law of truth and generate texts (transcripts) that (re)produce discourses matching the criteria, or interests, of the researcher. While cognizant of such criticisms, the decision was made to analyze interview data alongside the data from primary texts (e.g., policy documents and transcribed political speeches) and secondary texts (e.g., narratives written by historians) as it offered the authors a means of studying the effects of powerful discourses on current ways of thinking.

The authors' reading on policy agendas revealed a common narrative among scholars of education in which the dominant discourse on reform shifted during the Reagan administration from focusing on targeted inputs for historically underserved students (equity) to a focus on elevated standards for all students, measuring outcomes, and holding schools and districts accountable for results (excellence). Tracing subsequent events, the excellence reforms of the 1980s were followed by a fairly linear policy trajectory that spanned successive

presidential administrations and reinforced the outcomes-focused discourse on standards and accountability. However, a quarter-century of mounting pressures on schools, educators, and students finally reached a tipping point during the Obama administration – sparking a backlash to the Common Core and standardized testing. Tensions stemming from competing and entangled reform agendas is the first focus of this chapter.

The second focus is federalism. The federal government has historically had restricted sway over education policy, due to constitutional law and its limited contribution to school funding. Nevertheless, in recent decades federal policymakers have sought to exert greater influence over education through an array of funding streams and other inducements. In this section, the authors explore discourses on federal versus state and local control and describe how when the adoption of the Common Core was incentivized through the federal Race to the Top program, the standards initiative became a prime target for political attacks by proponents of states' rights and localism.

The third and final focus is the tensions between arguments for common education reforms and the individualistic discourses associated with American culture. The authors explore the deep roots of individualism in the United States and reasons for the widespread disdain for collectivism. Examples are provided of the ways in which the “common” in Common Core gave rise to suspicion and opposition among groups who favored a more individualistic approach to education reform.

The title of this chapter alludes to a statement made by President Donald Trump's Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos. During a speech that she gave to the American Enterprise Institute in 2018, DeVos presented her own history of recent federal reforms and stated that the Common Core and era of federally driven reform was now “dead.” Her words were used as a starting point for investigating the history of the present.

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### Keywords

Common Core · Education policy · Discourse · History · Outcomes · Educational standards · Excellence · Inputs · Educational equity · Federalism · States' rights · Localism · State elected officials · Governors · Business community · Conservatives · Teachers' unions · Civil rights · Opportunity-to-learn standards · Performance measurement · Race to the Top · Constitutionalism · Beliefs · Individualism · Collectivism · Common good · Christian right

### The Field of Memory

*Traces of ideas in discourse:* A deep-seated aversion to centralized authority, originating from a distrust of monarchical rule and the desire for localism. A disdain for “commonness” and collectivism, stemming from Cold War anxieties. A valuing of individualism that has been traced back to the founding of the country and settlement of the American frontier.

*Concepts no longer considered viable in the field:* An understanding of equity that emphasized targeted supports (i.e., programs and resources) for historically underserved groups of students only. The concept of opportunity-to-learn standards, which called for equalizing resources, practices, and conditions among schools, districts and states.

### **Field of Presence**

*Big ideas considered valid:* Though the federal role in driving accountability has shifted with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, the discourse on standards-based reform remains dominant. This discourse asserts that elevating expectations for *all* students, and holding schools accountable for results, will improve outcomes and close achievement gaps.

### **Field of Concomitance**

The discourse on standards-based accountability resembles discourses on performance management, denoting the influence of the business community and modern trends in public administration.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

During the Reagan administration, the policy agenda shifted to focus on student outcomes. Following the backlash to the Common Core and related resistance to federal reforms, the Obama administration oversaw a retreat from federally driven accountability.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Efforts to institute change on a national level will always be constrained by forces with deep histories.

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## **Introduction**

“I agree—and have always agreed—with President Trump on this: ‘Common Core is a disaster.’ And at the U.S. Department of Education, *Common Core is dead.*”

~ United States Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, 2018, Prepared Remarks to the American Enterprise Institute.

The above pronouncement from the then-Secretary of the United States Department of Education asserted that the effort to institute a common set of educational standards in English language arts and math was over. DeVos’s statement was meant to be the final word on the Common Core State Standards (herein referred to as “the Common Core”), making good on Donald Trump’s campaign promise to kill the standards initiative (Trump, [n.d.](#)). As DeVos described it, the Common Core and the process by which the Obama administration incentivized state adoption of the standards epitomized all that was wrong with federal involvement in education – and the American public knew it.

The Obama administration dangled billions of dollars through the Race to the Top competition, and the grant-making process not so subtly encouraged states to adopt the Common Core State Standards. With a price tag of nearly four and a half-billion dollars, it was billed as the “largest-ever federal investment in school reform.” Later, the Department would give states a waiver from NCLB’s requirements so long as they adopted the Obama administration’s preferred policies – essentially making law while Congress negotiated the reauthorization of ESEA. Unsurprisingly, nearly every state accepted Common Core standards and applied for hundreds of millions of dollars in Race to the Top funds. But despite this change, the United States’ PISA performance did not improve in reading and science, and it dropped in math from 2012 to 2015. Then, rightly, came the public backlash to federally imposed tests and the Common Core. (DeVos, 2018)

The Common Core was the product of a coordinated effort by groups representing state elected officials, education policy institutes, and philanthropic foundations. Led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), it began as an initiative supported by a politically diverse range of stakeholders, including business leaders, conservatives, and teachers’ unions (Shober, 2016). During the early 2010s, the standards were adopted by 46 states. However, the unity that existed around the Common Core quickly gave way to a backlash by an assortment of “strange bedfellows.”

Though the Common Core was not a federal policy, members of the Tea Party – a conservative political movement that formed in 2009 to agitate for a reduction in the size and scope of government – believed that the Obama administration’s championing of the initiative represented an egregious example of federal overreach (Wallsten & Layton, 2013). Groups of social conservatives, meanwhile, opposed the Common Core because they viewed it as a nefarious effort by the Obama administration to influence the instructional core of schooling and indoctrinate children with liberal values and a secular worldview (Chiaromonte, 2013; SPLC, 2014). The initiative also became a target for condemnation among liberals and educator groups, including the teachers’ unions, whose initial support gave way to frustration (Simon, 2014). These groups argued that the strong focus on standards and accountability had served to demoralize teachers and depress student test scores – especially for students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities (Ravitch, 2016). Making similar arguments to states’ rights conservatives, the unions and allies advocated for greater local control of education and the need to empower teachers with the autonomy to decide how best to serve the students in their classrooms (Ravitch, 2015). Moreover, critics on the political left argued that the emphasis on higher standards had not been matched by adequate levels of investment in the resources needed to build teacher capacity and equalize opportunities for historically underserved students (e.g., funding for wraparound services and reducing class sizes) (Strauss, 2014). Within 4 years of the standards first being adopted, this backlash had resulted in multiple states retracting their support and repealing the Common Core.

This chapter examines how the Common Core came to be, its fleeting success, and quick fizzle. The authors contend that its birth was a logical next step of the decades-long entangled equity and excellence agendas that propelled the standards-

based accountability movement, and its demise in popularity came, in part, from the centuries-old fight over federalism and the ethos of individualism that has pervaded politics and culture in the United States.

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## Competing and Entangled Policy Agendas: Equity and Excellence

Outcome-based accountability has been the norm of school reform efforts for nearly four decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, federal education policies focused on educational inputs to reduce inequities – as embodied in Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was conceived as a categorical program to induce state and local efforts to better support educational opportunities for children from low-income families and historically underserved groups. This emphasis on inputs was displaced in the early 1980s with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR) (McDonnell, 2005). Produced by a blue-ribbon committee appointed by Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, ANAR provided a foundation for the Reagan administration’s signature excellence in education agenda. The types of reforms that ANAR set in motion emphasized educational quality and the raising of expectations for *all* students.

ANAR’s focus on setting high expectations and goals for all students marked a departure from the education policy discourse that had emphasized supplemental services and resources for students impacted by poverty and discrimination (Pink, 1989). Yet the report could still be read as calling for the closing of opportunity gaps: “All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 8). ANAR also explicitly stated that a commitment to excellence and reform must not be made “at the expense of a strong public commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population” (p. 13). Thus, rather than expunging language on equity from the discourse on education policy, the excellence in education agenda represented a rethinking of how to operationalize equity and improve the nation’s schools.

As described by McDonnell (2005), ANAR became “a focal point for a major shift in education policy that had its roots in other trends prominent at the time” (p. 27). Specifically, ANAR and the displacement of the inputs-focused equity agenda of the 1960s and 1970s were products of public concerns about the quality of education and business leaders’ disquiet regarding the United States’ ability to compete economically. ANAR’s language on excellence was also consistent with broader trends in public administration during the 1980s, which saw an emphasis on performance measurement (Osborne, 1988). Governors across the country were quick to heed the call of ANAR; they recognized that the report echoed existing rationales for reform that the governors and other political entrepreneurs, including business leaders, had been making since the 1970s – particularly the claim that raised educational standards would serve to bolster the economy (Manna, 2006; Rhodes, 2012). In 1986, the National Governors Association (NGA) published a report titled *Time for Results*, calling for results-based accountability in education. And in 1989,

the governors met in Charlottesville, Virginia, and formulated a plan for national education goals. Though the Charlottesville education summit was an event that had been scheduled by the newly elected President George H. W. Bush, the goals-focused agenda of the event was driven by the governors (Manna, 2006). This period saw mounting consensus between state and federal policymakers across the political spectrum regarding the logic of basing the education system around outcomes.

Standards-based reform emerged as an elaboration of the excellence in education agenda during the early 1990s. Standards advocates stressed the need to develop and institute high standards and aligned curricula, assessments, and teaching training (Smith & O'Day, 1990). The Clinton administration's Goals 2000 and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) marked the first time that standards-based reform was at the center of federal education policy making. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 codified a set of voluntary national education goals and provided grants for states to institute their own aligned standards and tests. The IASA, which was also signed into law in 1994, was the Clinton administration's reauthorization of the ESEA. Under the IASA, states and localities would be granted flexibility in their implementation of federal programs in exchange for the adoption of standards and accountability. The IASA and Goals 2000 served to further propagate a standards-centric discourse on educational equity. As stated by Rhodes (2012), under these two laws, "equity" was conceived as equitable access to high standards and rigorous curricula, rather than merely more-equitable access to school resources" (pp. 96–97). Consequently, the older inputs-based conception of equity remained subordinate to the newer understanding of equity in education that focused primarily on higher standards for all students and accountability for results.

The standards paradigm was reinforced during the W. Bush administration, as the bi-partisan passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) increased the federal role in holding states accountable for raising student outcomes. Under NCLB, all schools receiving federal funding were required to administer standardized tests for all students annually in grades 3–8, and once in high school. Moreover, schools receiving Title I funding were required to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the goal of 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. Achievement data from the tests were to be broken down by student subgroups (i.e., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities) in order to make sure that all students were making AYP. Title I schools that repeatedly failed to meet their AYP targets would be met with federally prescribed, escalating sanctions. Another significant provision in the law was the requirement that all states receiving Title I funding participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress' (NAEP) math and reading tests, at grades 4 and 8, every 2 years. Though student performance on the NAEP assessments would not be tied to the types of consequences that were associated with AYP, NAEP scores could be used as a measure for making state-to-state comparisons and for checking the rigor of the state tests: If student achievement on a state's test was high but NAEP performance for the same state was low, that discrepancy would be made visible to the public and policy makers. In accordance with the excellence agenda's

interpretation of educational equity, President George W. Bush viewed disparities in student achievement as being a product of inequitable expectations (Bush, 2000); thus, by raising standards for all students and holding educators and schools accountable for results, these gaps could be closed.

The iterative agendas of the Clinton and W. Bush administrations amplified the federal government's role in education, with the justification for federal involvement couched in the language of both excellence and equity. At the same time that it attained bi-partisan support, however, the standards-based reform movement continuously received criticism by proponents of the older inputs-focused discourse on educational equity. For example, President Bill Clinton's Goals 2000 was opposed by left-leaning members of the Democratic Party who were concerned about the idea of using student outcomes as the measure of school effectiveness. They wanted the Clinton administration to instead focus on opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards, which would set the criteria for equalizing resources, practices, and conditions among schools, districts and states (Cross, 2014). Similarly, writing about the impact of NCLB, Darling-Hammond (2004) described how despite its good intentions, the law had undermined the nation's education system by creating unmeetable targets for inadequately funded schools – thus penalizing schools serving the neediest students.

The idea for the Common Core originated due to concerns regarding inequities in state standards that surfaced following the passage of NCLB. The NCLB NAEP participation requirement “provided concrete evidence that states did, in fact, have wildly different educational standards” (Shober, 2016, p. 9), and these differences help build the justification for common standards. Following the same logic as antecedent standards-based reforms, the supporters of what became the Common Core argued that the standards initiative would serve to create equity in education through the setting of high expectations for all students (Rothman, 2011).

Though the initiative's leaders sought to tout the equity objectives of Common Core (Rothman, 2011), part of the backlash to the standards was rooted in equity concerns. As had been the case with reforms during the H. W. Bush, Clinton, and W. Bush administrations (Cross, 2014), left-leaning academics, political actors and advocacy groups criticized the Common Core for raising standards without also focusing on investing in equalizing resources among schools and districts (Karp, 2013; Ravitch, 2016). One of the groups that decried the lack of resources and supports to accompany the implementation of the Common Core was the teachers' unions. The unions opposed the way in which the standards had been introduced as yet another accountability measure without a significant investment in inputs and raising capacity. According to one prominent leader of an educator group interviewed by the first author of this chapter, the combination of new, higher standards and new performance-based evaluation systems that were being introduced at the same time – as incentivized by the Obama administration's Race to the Top program (RTTT) – ultimately resulted in resentment and a backlash by teachers and their unions:

I thought [the Common Core] would help students. I thought it would help create equity in a very inequitable situation for students who faced austerity, a lack of funding, and a lack of resources and other supports that they needed. I thought it would be something that would

help—if there was a common set of expectations for what kids should know and be able to do: standards, not standardization. It would be a basis and a way for getting kids the resources and support they needed for meeting those standards. But instead, it became about blaming and shaming and pointing fingers, and it was used as a way of punishing students, punishing schools. . . . That’s why teachers felt set up. Because a lot of teachers were very supportive of the Common Core; they embraced it and still embrace the underlying idea. They felt set up.

To proponents of standards-based reform, equity in education has typically meant focusing on providing all students excellence by way of common standards and accountability; yet to some critics of the standards movement, equity requires focusing primarily on the inputs, or resources and supports, that schools, educators, and students receive. This tension in discourses fed into the backlash against the Common Core.

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## **Federalism: The Tug of War Over Constitutional Authority**

Much of the backlash against the Common Core represented a repudiation against the federal government wielding too much power over education. In the words of an interviewed leader of an organization representing teachers, “Education is a state and local responsibility. And there is a fierce commitment in the United States of America to maintain local control over education.” Members of business organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing educators and educational leaders, conservative organizations, and organizations representing state officials independently, in interviews with the first author, described public perceptions of the Common Core in terms such as “federal overreach.” Moreover, education policy subsystem participants who worked for conservative organizations and organizations representing state elected officials described having their own reservations about federal influence over state education policy. A member of an educational conservative organization, for example, shared, “I need to be careful because though I support the Common Core, I still do support federalism: a limited federal role in education.” Likewise, a representative from an organization representing state elected officials stated,

[My organization] will always argue for states to have the right to determine for themselves what makes the most sense. If it makes sense, for example, for all the states to have the same standards, that’s up to the states to decide if they want to be a part of that. If they don’t, then that’s their right. . . . Education is explicitly a responsibility of the states through their state constitutions. So, we very much feel like states shouldn’t be encouraged to abdicate that responsibility.

Although the Common Core was not a federal law, as soon as the initiative became linked to the Obama administration’s RTTT – which incentivized the development and adoption of common standards – it came to be viewed as federally derived. This politicized what had originally been a state-led initiative with bipartisan support. Illustrating this point, one member of an educational conservative group acknowledged that the backlash was really in response to *who* was viewed as setting the standards:



If you ask [the public] if they like the idea of having standards so you can compare what a student knows in one state to another state, they do. If you ask them if they think the federal government should dictate curriculum, they say “No.”

There is legal merit to concerns raised about federal influence. The very premise that the federal government holds any level of power in education is an assumption that rests on ambiguous constitutional grounds. The Tenth Amendment delegates all powers not explicitly stated in the United States Constitution to the states. Education, not being mentioned in any of the articles or amendments of the Constitution, is one such power. And for approximately two centuries, education remained firmly under the jurisdiction of the states and local communities. Indeed, the United States Department of Education and the cabinet position of Secretary of Education were not even established until 1979. In addition to the constitutional basis for restricted federal involvement in education, the federal government pumps a relatively limited amount of dollars into the education system making it the junior partner to state and local systems in financing schools. While the percentage of federal funds has oscillated over time, it has always remained lower than contributions by state and local sources. In the past 50 years, the highest amount has been 12.7% in 2009–2010 and the lowest 6.1% in 1989–1990 (NCES, 2019). In the 2016–2017 school year, federal funding accounted for only 8% of school funding, the exact same percentage distribution as the 1969–1970 school year.

At the same time, educational liberals and civil rights entrepreneurs have long been strong proponents of federal involvement in education (Rhodes, 2012). The arguments made by those in favor of federal involvement have typically focused on the need to increase resources and ensure that all students receive equal access to schooling (Black, 2010; Cross, 2014). Advocates of federal involvement in education often evoke the Fourteenth Amendment to argue that no child should be denied equal protection of the law (Baer, 1983). The contest between discourses on safeguarding equality of access/opportunity and the discourses that argue against federal involvement has seen both the expansion of federal influence since the mid-twentieth century and strong constraints on federal policy-making efforts.

The Common Core was certainly not the first policy to ignite protests against federal overreach in education. When, in 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled to end racial segregation in schools in the *Brown v. Board* decision, conservative opponents railed against federal intrusion in local matters. White resistance to desegregation resulted in violent protests and, in Little Rock, Arkansas, federal troops were called in to enforce the integration of schools. Four years after *Brown*, when the federal National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was in committee, it was opposed by states’ rights conservatives from both major political parties. Regarding the NDEA, Republican senator Barry Goldwater wrote, “If adopted, the legislation will mark the inception of aid, supervision, and ultimately control of education in this country by federal authorities” (as cited in Sundquist, 1968, p. 178). The 1965 passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was also viewed with suspicion by proponents of state and local control. Regarding the ESEA, Howard Smith, a states’ rights advocate and Democratic representative from Virginia, is recorded as having said, “We apparently have come to the end of the road so far as local control over our education in public

facilities is concerned” (as cited in Sundquist, 1968, p. 215). Likewise, Republican senator John Williams of Delaware stated, “The needy are being used as a wedge to open the floodgates, and you may be absolutely certain that the flood of federal control is ready to sweep the land” (as cited in Sundquist, 1968, p. 215).

Though states’ rights arguments have typically been considered a pillar of American conservatism, opposition to federal influence over the instructional core of education has by no means been limited to actors and groups on the political right. For example, teachers’ unions, which have traditionally aligned themselves with the Democratic Party, have also favored local control over things like standards and curricula (Walker, 2016; Weingarten, 2019). One educator group leader who was interviewed described how teachers came to perceive the Common Core as a top-down mandate: “The state standards that have been proposed by the business community or by governors were without the support needed by the community. It was done to people, not with people.” She explained that part of the educator opposition to Common Core was rooted in arguments for classroom autonomy and teacher discretion.

The leaders and backers of the Common Core were well aware of the political threat posed by states’ rights advocates and proponents of local control if the standards were perceived as emanating from the federal government. As one educational conservative who supported the Common Core noted,

We always expected that [the Common Core] would become controversial if it was linked to the federal government. And even if it wasn’t linked to the federal government, there was some expectation it would be controversial because it has always been controversial. There is a reason why we never had national standards and tests in this country, just like we have never had national healthcare. There have been strong currents against it.

Speaking to initiative leaders at a workshop on state standards in education, organized by the National Research Council in 2008, Lorraine McDonnell, a political scientist, made the following statement regarding the nascent Common Core: “[F]ederalism is a very powerful idea in this country. I just can’t believe that any kind of common standards option or common standards movement is really going to alter this defining characteristic of U.S. education policy” (as cited in National Research Council, 2008, p. 55). Recognizing the constraints associated with federalism in the United States, the Common Core leaders intentionally made visible the fact that the initiative was state-led, and they were adamant about not conditioning federal dollars on Common Core adoption (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013). Indeed, an initiative leader, former governor of North Carolina Jim Hunt, deliberately sought to get the standards initiative off the ground without the federal government’s assistance. As an organizational leader and former state elected official shared during an interview,

I thought Governor Hunt was a genius in that what he saw was you’re never going to get anything federally. That’s just not our tradition and lances have been broken in two or three previous administrations trying to do this. So, what he did was to say, “OK, can you do it from the ground up?” And I think that even he was surprised at how relatively quickly it took hold. I was looking at a decade, at least, for this initiative to take off, and it gained traction pretty quickly.

This political actor also shared that the very name of the standards, the Common Core, was a political calculation to avoid anything that had “a federal or national ring to it.”

The Obama Administration’s RTTT complicated the effort to avoid the perception of federal involvement. In the midst of the Great Recession, in 2009, Congress allocated approximately \$100 billion in stimulus funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for education programs. Established as part of the ARRA, RTTT offered \$4.35 billion in competitive grant funding to the states in order to spur a series of education reforms (Cross, 2014; Rhodes, 2012). To be eligible for a RTTT grant award, states were asked to commit to four core areas that emphasized educational quality: (1) developing and adopting common, high-quality standards and assessments; (2) building improved data systems to measure student growth and achievement; (3) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and school leaders; and (4) turning around the lowest-performing schools. Even though RTTT did not explicitly make funding contingent on Common Core adoption, it did so all but in name by asking states to develop and adopt common standards. This was a double-edged sword. RTTT incentivized states to adopt quicker than they otherwise might have, but it also shifted the perception of the Common Core from an initiative led by the states to one pedaled by President Barack Obama. Furthermore, the Obama administration funded the consortia that developed the common assessments aligned with the Common Core. This added to the perception that the initiative was indeed Obama’s. Speaking about these events, a member of a conservative advocacy group said,

I think that “federally funded” [assessments] really is what really set a majority of people off. This was now not just 50 state governors coming together and thinking this was a good idea; this was now the federal government saying, “Oh, we think it is a good idea, too, so we are going to fund it and you guys are going to implement it” – even though it was entirely voluntary the whole way!

Reflecting on the impact of federal involvement through RTTT, an organizational leader who had worked on the Common Core suggested that the decision to include the language on common standards in RTTT was a miscalculation on Obama’s part:

It made it look like the Common Core effort was a creature of the federal government, of the Obama administration, and it was an attempt to usurp states’ rights. [The Obama Administration] didn’t do a great communications job. They didn’t do a great job of telling the stories so that people wouldn’t continue to believe that it was definitely federal intrusion.

The debate over educational governance is one piece of a deeper discourse regarding what power the federal government should wield in a federal system where authority is distributed between a central government and the states. The history of this debate goes back as far as the founding of the nation – and transcends any one policy area. In other words, the Common Core incited the centuries-old question of whether the federal government should have any power over local affairs. Members of conservative groups, educator organizations, and civil rights organizations addressed the backlash as being a function of our history. As one interview participant from an educational conservative organization explained it,

I mean there is this constitutional history here. [Education] is not in the federal Constitution, it is prominent in state constitutions, and I think that matters to a lot of people. Just the nature of doing this in an enormous continental country like ours, there is this argument that the federal government is just too far removed from the action to try to do this directly. So, I think this is just sort of a given in the United States: [education] is going to be state-by-state.

Interview participants' accounts of distrust of federal control being a function of history revealed a sense that current discourses contain elements of ideas from a field of memory, which can be traced back to the arguments against centralized, monarchical rule. Correspondingly, Corcoran and Goertz (2005) have described the decentralized and fragmented system of educational governance in the United States as being "a legacy of the deep-seated fear of centralized authority that shaped the nation's founders' views of government, the content of the U.S. Constitution, and the design and evolution of the federal system" (p. 25).

The timing of the launch of the Common Core was also a factor in its politicization. The Common Core found itself caught in the middle of a culture war being waged by right-wing populist groups, including the Tea Party, and social conservatives against federal authority and intellectualism (SPLC, 2014). The standards initiative provided a perfect foil for these groups who sought to frame the Obama administration as seeking to influence what children were being taught. A leader from a conservative faith-based organization provided the following account of how the Common Core was perceived by conservatives that he knew:

While there has always been pushback against the federal government controlling too much about education, I think it was especially difficult for conservatives and particularly evangelicals when the thought was that this perhaps was literally driven by Barack Obama. I had hundreds and hundreds of people say that they knew for certain that Barack Obama was the driving force behind Common Core.

Federalism has always been a very powerful idea in the United States, and discourses regarding state and local control of education created constraints for Common Core leaders and contributed to the backlash against the initiative.

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## **Sociopolitical Beliefs: Individualism versus the Common Good**

The Common Core also stood as an affront to those who believed that a central government – federal *or* state – should not have control over education at all, as it went against a core American value: individualism. The tension between discourses on the common good and individual freedom has been a constant throughout America's history as a democratic republic (Labaree, 1997), and it continues to manifest today (e.g., altercations about wearing masks in public during the COVID-19 pandemic). Yet, of the two discourses, it is individualism that has prevailed as a core tenet of the American Creed (Lipset, 1996) – an ideology or value system that is unique to the United States and based on a "paramount belief in the notion that all people should be allowed to pursue their own desired goals and interests, in a society

that encourages open competition, even conflict, and that is largely free of collective constraints on individual citizen” (Grabb, Baer, & Curtis, 1999, p. 516).

Foner (1998), a historian, defined individualism as “the idea of a sovereign individual who should be beholden to no one but themselves,” has the rights to fulfill their own destiny, and “make crucial individual choices free from outside coercion” (p. xviii, p. 57). Individualistic discourses have served to prop up meritocratic notions of individual success being a product of a person’s abilities and decisions in life (McNamee & Miller, 2009). Moreover, individualism has been described as a key ingredient of American exceptionalism. In 1922, for instance, Hoover (as cited by Hoover.org, 2017) provided the following words of praise regarding individualism:

Individualism has been the primary force of American civilization for three centuries. It is our sort of individualism that has supplied the motivation of America’s political, economic, and spiritual institutions in all these years. It has proved its ability to develop its institutions with the changing scene. Our very form of government is the product of the individualism of our people, the demand for an equal opportunity, for a fair chance.... The American pioneer is the epic expression of that individualism, and the pioneer spirit is the response to the challenge of opportunity, to the challenge of nature, to the challenge of life, to the call of the frontier.

While historians argue about where the individualistic ethos of Americans sprang (e.g., the Protestant work ethic, the American Revolution, westward expansion), it is generally agreed upon by cross-cultural psychologists that American culture is an individualistic one, characterized by a self-reliance and independence and an expectation that everyone looks after themselves and their immediate family (Hofstede, 2011; Kagitcibasi, 1997). The focus on individual advancement over the collective good can be seen in discourses on education, too. Corcoran and Goertz (2005), for example, described the idea of self-made citizens seeking advancement by way of education as having “deep roots in American culture” (p. 25). And education historian Labaree (1997) argued that education has increasingly been seen as a commodity to prepare *individuals* to successfully compete in the marketplace/for desirable social positions, becoming “a private good for personal consumption” (p. 43), rather than a public good to promote strong civic institutions and economic prosperity.

During the early 1980s, a group of conservatives led by the Heritage Foundation, leaders from the Christian right, and other ideological allies pushed for the decentralization of decision-making in education. As outlined by Pincus (1985), these conservatives were motivated by a shared concern that mounting federal control and liberal reforms had resulted in schools promoting secular humanism and values that were antithetical to the traditional values of conservative families. They argued that control over education must be returned to the parents. The discourse promulgated by these “New Right” conservatives stressed diversity in programs rather than a unified curriculum. And, approximately 40 years later, this same viewpoint was articulated by Secretary of Education DeVos during her 2018 speech at the American Enterprise Institute, as she argued for empowering the individual teacher and individual parent to make choices and look after themselves – showing self-reliance rather than relying on government mandates.

Federal mandates distort what education ought to be: a trusting relationship between teacher, parent and student. Ideally, parent and teacher work together to help a child discover his or her potential and pursue his or her passions. When we seek to empower teachers, we must empower parents as well. Parents are too often powerless in deciding what's best for their child. The state mandates where to send their child. It mandates what their child learns and how he or she learns it. In the same way, educators are constrained by state mandates. District mandates. Building mandates. . . all kinds of other mandates! Educators don't need Washington mandating their teaching on top of everything else. (DeVos, 2018)

The strong orientation for individualism has long fed into anti-centralized government sentiments. The founding documents of the United States – including the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution – are rooted in the thinkings of seventeenth and eighteenth century Western philosophers, such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that all individuals have a right to liberty and a right to overthrow the government when those rights are not protected. Furthermore, for reasons long debated, working class people in the United States never developed the type of socialist class consciousness that emerged in Europe, and a social democratic political party (e.g., the Labour Party in the United Kingdom) never gained a strong foothold within the political system (Foner, 1984). Within this context, socialism and collectivism came to be viewed as foreign phenomena that ran counter to individualistic American capitalism and liberalism. Antipathy toward “un-American” political ideologies grew following World War I and the Russian Revolution, and the “red scare” of the twentieth century saw mass hysteria as government officials and members of the public came to fear the rise of communism and potential subversion of American society and the government (Murray, 1955; Nichols, 2011). For a subset of Americans, “socialism” and “communism” became political smear words, used as code to mean that the government posed an existential threat to democracy and individual liberty (Forman, 2012), and policies that pushed for common approaches or leveling the playing field came to be framed as collectivist – the polar opposite of individualism.

During the Obama administration, the term “Obamacare,” which was coined to disparage the Affordable Care Act, served to evoke images of the government (embodied by President Obama) taking over an individual's right to choose health care. A similar tactic was used for the Common Core, which was dubbed “Obamacore” by the political right and depicted as “a nefarious federal plot to wrest control of education from local school systems and parents” (SPLC, 2014, p. 5).

Reflecting on the opposition to the Common Core, a leader for an organization representing educational leaders said,

I think that the word ‘common’ . . . Folks that are of a right-wing mind think, ‘Oh, you’re talking socialist education, socialism,’ and whatnot. So, I think perhaps the branding and the wording was a little unfortunate. It was exactly right; they were common if it’s a unified understanding, but... I think there were a lot of mistakes in terms of the branding.

An educational conservative dived deeper into how the standards were perceived by social conservatives that he had spoken with—namely, that the standards would impose values on students, rather than giving students and families a choice:

When they found Common Core to be a plank of sorts... it was easy to develop this narrative around it. There became these three or four talking points about Common Core.... These talking points were as follows: [The standards] began with this small group of devotees of Barack Obama; he and others led this charge, and it is an attempt by his government, if you will, and the federal government to impose a value system upon our young people, and they are standardizing educational standards. But beyond that, that's really the ruse. Right? That's the window dressing for a much larger political agenda, and that is to impose upon our young people this secularized view. And if they can impose that and suffuse it into the entire educational system, then, of course, they have won the hearts and minds of our children, and America is no longer America.

*Common*, with a connotation of sameness, uniformity, and average, is an antonym of individual uniqueness and exceptionalism. And, according to several of the education policy subsystem participants interviewed, the word “common” in Common Core came to represent an antithesis of American individualism among opponents of the initiative. Highlighting the negative meaning that stuck to the initiative’s name, a leader from the business community stated, “The word ‘common’ in any way, shape, or form, I think we’ve all learned, is just not helpful to the conversation.” Likewise, another leader from a business group shared,

I don’t think we ever anticipated that the word “common” would have such a negative connotation. And as we experienced resistance—push back—many of the individuals that were arguing against the standards kept saying, “Our children are not common. Our children are unique. One size does not fit all.” And that was not the intent!

The standards were launched at a time when partisan polarization was growing and manifesting in the form of populist movements (e.g., the Tea Party). Tensions surrounding the Common Core were, therefore, part of broader trends in which devolution, localism, and individualism were ascendant. As a leader of an organization for educational leaders observed,

I don’t think that there is any appetite nationally for a common understanding of the good of the nation, period, whether it be in education or anything else.... It’s all about me, as a state or as a locality. There is no public appetite nationally for the common good right now.

Like discourses on state and local control, discourses on individualism permeated ideas about the Common Core and fed into the opposition that emerged. Thus, the backlash to the Common Core can be understood as being, in part, the manifestation of an individualistic and anti-centralized government American ethos.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The analysis of texts and interview transcripts outlined in this chapter illustrates how the birth and subsequent backlash to the Common Core contained traces of ideas from history and from other fields. Specifically, the backlash against the Common Core can be understood as a continuation of old tensions related to the purpose of education and the structure and role of government in the United States. Three examples of dueling discourses – some as old as the country – manifested in thinking and political arguments



on the Common Core: targeting inputs versus outcomes in education agendas, federal versus local control, and the common good versus individualism. While not an exhaustive list, each of these dialogues offer a partial explanation for the opposition that surrounded the Common Core as well as previous efforts to institute national education reforms.

The pushback against Common Core and the standards-based reform paradigm, which, in addition to opposition by educator groups and conservatives, included a movement of parents opting their children out of assessments (Harris, 2015), resulted in President Obama calling for a reduction in standardized testing (Obama, 2015). Furthermore, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 devolved decision-making regarding the specific interventions used in low-performing schools back to the state level, curtailing the decades-long trend of federally driven accountability. Across the states, meanwhile, various legislatures moved to pass bills that would repeal and replace the controversial Common Core standards. Another casualty of the Common Core backlash was the centrist coalition of education reformers that had supported the standards-based reform agenda; the Common Core became a political third rail that even ardent backers of the initiative recognized as being unwise to touch in public.

In spite of these events, contrary to Secretary DeVos' assertion, the Common Core did not die: Though many states reviewed, revised, and renamed the standards that they used, major elements of the Common Core remained embedded in state standards, curricula, textbooks, and other educational resources. What is more, standards-based education remained the dominant education policy paradigm in the United States – with annual, statewide assessments aligned with challenging academic standards still being a federal requirement for funding.

As a political flashpoint, the Common Core continues to speak to an entangled set of discourses surrounding unresolved tensions in how to define educational equity, federal involvement in education, and whether the individual should be elevated over the common good. Examining the ways in which such discourses have shaped and constrained past education policy efforts allows for a re-valuing of present values and a re-imagining of the future.

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# Public School Charters: An Incendiary Topic of Political Discourse 52

Carol A. Mullen and Tara C. Bartlett

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## Abstract

Debate is intensifying in the United States with the rapid spread of charter schools and their domination of the education reform agenda. Controversy surrounds the very existence of public charter schools – an incendiary if not polarizing topic of political discourse – while the sector expands. The authors traced the pros and cons in the discussion by analyzing relevant literature (e.g., empirical research), public documents, and media sources. The complex snapshot presented signals deep discord in the public charter school movement. A creation story underlies how public charter schools came to be and the endless struggle over education reform. A narrative emerged about the past, present, and future of the charter school movement and battles over market-based solutions to public education problems that force the privatization of public education. Informed by both sides of the charter polemic, the authors developed an unusual collaboration as a critic (first author) and an advocate (coauthor). Mirroring the charter debate’s two-sided argument, the intention for this writing was to offer a gateway to productive albeit challenging discourse in a landscape that is deeply divisive and combative. The work ends with reflection on the present and future of public charter schools, and considers where shifts or anticipated ruptures or controversies can be expected to arise. This chapter’s distinctiveness is that it illuminates critical aspects of the charter debate in contemporary times, weighs pros and cons of charter schools, and advances recommendations.

## Keywords

Accountability · Approval · Authorizer · Autonomy · Black student · Charter · Charter debate · Charter proponent · Charter school sector · Choice · Class · Community · Controversy · Curriculum · Democracy · Effectiveness · Equity · Failure · Funding · Governance · Justice · Legislation · Management · Market · Operation · Opponent · Policy · Privatization · Public charter school · Public education · Race · Reform · Regulation · Segregation · Special education · Standardized testing · Standards · Success · Traditional public school · Virginia

## Introduction

### The Field of Memory

A creation story underlies how public charter schools came to be and the endless struggles over education reform. The narrative reveals an irony – teacher unions, the charter “brainchild,” have become the charter sector’s most outspoken foe. In 1988, Albert Shanker, “education reformer and American Federation of Teachers president,” shared his vision for a publicly funded, independently operated school called “charters,” which he described as places where innovative pedagogies would be carried out in teaching laboratories (Cohen, 2017; Kahlenberg, 2009). The idea was for traditional public schools to benefit from the improved practices, not to be replaced or undermined. After Shanker moved his proposal to the public, policymakers acted and charters burst onto the scene. However, Shanker was horrified that his vision was “hijacked” by profit-

seeking marketers and conservatives. As conveyed in a biography of Shanker titled *Tough Liberal* (Kahlenberg, 2009), by the mid-1990s, he rejected his own idea of reform. For-profit corporations had entered the charter school sector as permitted by state laws, and he realized that “charters might actually promote segregation, undermine public education, and be used as tools to destroy unions” (as cited in Cohen, 2017).

### **The Field of Presence**

The Shanker story is “weaponized” by both charter opponents and proponents who use the originating 1988 speech to advance their own ends. Controversy pervades the very existence of public charter schools while the industry continues to grow, emboldened by the governmental and the corporate influence on American education. Entrepreneurial involvement in public education can be seen in charter school expansion, among other markets (e.g., standardized product development targeting school use). Public discussion is generated by multiple entities – legislatures, departments of education, national organizations, teacher unions, scholars, and citizens – that organize meetings, press releases, and protests and disseminate legislation, research, reports, and media stories. Public charter school legislation is justified by supporters as a method for democratizing public education and providing a much-needed, family-friendly alternative to the education of preK–12 populations that utilizes public funding. However, charter schools’ educational quality and performance-based outcomes have long been questioned relative to noncharter or traditional (division/district) public schools, with the charter industry frequently performing unevenly and with mixed results. The charter debate is also fueled by charter advocacy claims of democratic contribution and increasing effectiveness, which opponents confront with countering ideologies, perspectives, and evidence. Arguments for and against public charter school approval and operation and the impact of local and state authorities over charter schools also attract considerable attention. Evidence-based studies expose the realities of charter school trends, particularly performance, compounded by patterns of resegregation, corruption, and fraud. Recommendations from the literature and public domain vary tremendously, stemming from battles over the very meaning of public education and fair and equitable education.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Charter schools constitute big business – the public education sector is being marketized, co-opting cherished ideas and practices in education and rebranding them. Business and industry, aided by governmental agencies, special interest groups, and educational insiders, use public monies and influence public education. Like vouchers and corporate products targeting school use, charters are examples of highly influential market-based policies endorsing free-market, privately managed schooling. Charter proponents argue that these schools support democratic schooling and citizenry through freedom, choice, and equity and achieve at a high level through differentiated education, crediting them with a private school-like atmosphere through smaller class sizes and innovative learning. Strong critics, typically within academia, counter that the charter sector systemically ruptures democracy through the intentional takeover of the public school sector by philanthrocapitalists and funded right-wing think tanks. Major

criticisms also direct attention to the lining of for-profit investors' pockets, turning citizens into clients, parading customer-driven institutions as community institutions, and draining public systems of goods and services.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Despite charter proponent claims, investigations of charter schools indicate that they are not outperforming traditional public schools in the United States as a whole. Much of the slight outperformance that is reported is explained by researchers as an overall drop on a particular year in testing in public schools or the fact that the schools outperforming traditional schools were closed due to a mismanagement of funding or failure to meet charter expectations. Earlier studies of charter school effectiveness also typically found a lack of systemic evidence for such claims; further, comparisons were difficult to make, given that, as one major rupture of social justice, charters did not have the expertise or programs to serve English Language Learners (ELLs) and students in special education. Another such rupture is the charter school industry's seclusion of students by race and class, which in effect resegregates society and reproduces educational inequality for African American and Latinx groups and those in poverty. Considerable racial isolation shows up as schools that mainly consist of students of color, with pockets of white isolation. Wealthier parents advance their own interests, in effect exacerbating class differences and the poverty gap. In some states, charter schools are not expected to educate students with the greatest needs (special needs, limited English proficiency, etc.), but charter granters should be holding the schools to racial/ethnic balance guidelines. The lack of public oversight over school choice is another point of rupture. The disruption of racial integration in public education reflects discontinuity with the traditional sector. In a sea of contradictions, public opinion fluctuates between the pros and cons of publicly funded charter schools, with recent polling showing a serious decline in support for charter schools.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Charter school expansion and legislation have influenced the perception that charter schooling is apolitical, despite evidence to the contrary: regional tensions are worsening between wealthier and poorer communities; racial tensions are deepening owing to the resegregation of schools along the lines of race and class; and fiscal tensions are arising from weak safeguards for assuring financial accountability, among other striking contradictions. While unusual, the authors of this chapter represent both sides of the charter polemic while also being strong defenders of public education and democracy.

A charter opponent, the first author assumes that the energies being used to create and sustain charter schools should be going into strengthening the traditional public school system, and that funding from these underresourced schools should not be transferred to charters. Nor should the charter system be allowed to function against the tide of evidence exposing its segregationist patterns, market-based investments, and closing of schools to boost overall performance levels.

However, the charter proponent (coauthor) believes that the charter sector provides a much-needed public service and alternative to (failing and struggling)

traditional public schools that reflects democratic will and choice. While this educator is pro public charters, she is not a fan of for-profit charters.

Assumptions throughout convey these conflicting ideological perspectives with value-laden language in the political discourse (e.g., *industry*, *market-based solution*, *privatization*, and *segregationist*) relative to charter opposition. Charter advocacy is juxtaposed through use of the same and different terminology (e.g., *alternative*, *choice*, *democracy*, and *freedom*), extending to derisive terminology targeted at traditional schools (*status quo*, etc.). Informed by both sides of the charter polemic, the authors turned their dialogue into a rather unusual collaboration. Mirroring the charter debate's two-sided argument bolstered by opinion and evidence, the intention for this chapter was to offer a gateway to productive albeit challenging discussion in a deeply divisive and combative landscape.

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## Framing the Charter Debate

A basic goal of public education is to provide appropriate and timely education that supports student achievement at a high level through differentiated education, necessary supports, and so forth (Ash, 2013). With claims to this effect, the US-based public charter school sector is showing rapid growth amid controversy over charters – an incendiary topic of political discourse. In the 2018–2019 school year, this industry served “more than 3.3 million students in 7,500 schools and campuses,” which was “6.5% of all public school students.” Charter schools and campuses have “more than doubled, while charter school enrollment has more than tripled.” Just 6 years earlier, it was estimated that “over 6,000 charter schools [served] about 2.3 million students” (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools [NAPCS], 2021; also, US Department of Education [USDOE], 2019). Since 2018, charter laws – in place in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico – support charter school operation, with 219,000 charter teachers and \$440 million in federal funding (NAPCS, 2021; also, Mora & Christianakis, 2011).

A variety of institutions, some public, manage charter schools: educators, universities, religious schools that remove religious symbols, previously tuition-charging privates, for-profit firms, parents, and community members. These diverse stakeholders broadcast positive changes resulting from the expansion of charter schools (Mora & Christianakis, 2011). The number of charter schools in each state varies: currently, Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas each have over 500, while states with more restrictive charter laws, like Virginia, have far fewer (USDOE, 2019). As of 2020, charter laws, enacted in 45 states and the District of Columbia, were nonexistent in Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont (Center for Education Reform [CER], 2021).

As stated, in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, charter schooling is said to be apolitical. The need for this very alternative in public education is proclaimed and images of success are aired, despite uneven performance outcomes and in the face of conflicting reports and data (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Frankenberg,

2011; Mullen, Samier, Brindley, English, & Carr, 2013). These points are expanded on herein.

Set within the context of the charter debate, the purpose was to trace the pros and cons in the political discourse surrounding the charter sector and its governance and operations, and claims and results. The authors were motivated to understand public charter school operations and development, identify charter trends and issues relative to traditional public schools, and “surface” the impact of the charter movement on the public education system and democratic education more broadly. Accordingly, relevant literature (e.g., empirical research), public documents, and media sources were analyzed.

Speculative questions developed for tracing the arguments in sources were:

1. What trends are currently evidenced by the American public charter school sector?
2. How do public charter schools compare with traditional public schools?
3. What processes are used to grant approval to charter schools to operate and continue?

The idea for this writing was sparked by the discovery that the authors both identify as strong defenders of public education and democracy. An opponent of privatization and the public charter school industry is concerned about its impacts on traditional public education, while a proponent supports charter schools as an expression of free-market ideology, choice, and the right to alternative education. Debating the dynamics behind such phenomena as democracy, freedom, and choice in the context of market-based solutions to public education problems, since 2018 the authors have been deliberating over key issues. Meeting as educators in Virginia, the first author is a professor at a public higher education institution and the other a teacher at a public high school. Openly exploring their opinions and perspectives on the charter debate, they proactively monitor their tensions, point out one another’s biases, and share evidence that they often interpret differently. A hope is that their dialogic approach to the charter debate inspires productive exchanges on matters of education and in the public arena.

For this chapter, eclectic sources were reviewed, and definitions set forth to help anchor the overall analysis of important charter-related trends. Reflection is on the present and future of the public charter school sector and where shifts or anticipated ruptures or controversies may arise. As will be revealed, opinions remain deeply divided about charter school options and equity in the education of public school students. Beyond the scope of this discussion, the controversy is well documented in the literature for interested readers.

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## **Description of Salient Terms**

While terms are introduced at various points throughout, five salient terms central to the charter debate are identified and described in this section.



## Authorizer

The body or group that approves the charter for a charter school to proceed is the *charter school authorizer* (Jason, 2017). Authorizers, depending on the state, can be for-profit companies, local school boards, boards of education, school divisions/districts, intermediate school boards, state public universities, or two or more local educational agencies operating under an interlocal agreement (Shen, 2011). Some states create separate boards that authorize charters. Authorizers, usually nonprofits, may include universities, but in most cases, local school boards authorize charter schools. Charters are authorized by groups defined in state law; in Virginia, for example, authorizers are state and local school boards (Ash, 2013). Virginia-based charter schools are nonsectarian alternative public schools located within a school division under the authority of a local school board (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2021).

According to the National Charter School Resource Center (NCSRC, n.d.), “an authorized public chartering agency” is “responsible for reviewing and approving or rejecting charter applications and monitoring charter school performance (generally considering performance related to both academic and fiscal/organizational metrics as well as compliance with relevant laws).” Also, “state law determines the types and number of organizations permitted to act as charter school authorizers”; examples include “public school districts, state educational agencies, or independent organizations such as statewide nongovernmental organizations or universities” (NCSRC, n.d.). Authorizers of charter schools decide whether charter schools can enter the market and expand or close, and they provide performance oversight (Dynarski et al., 2010).

## Charter

US-based charter schools operate under a contract with a charter school authorizer – usually a nonprofit organization, government agency, or university – that holds them accountable to the standards outlined in their “charter.” Charter schools differ across states with respect to which organizations can charter schools or apply for a charter. The most common are nonprofit boards, although some states do allow for-profit companies to secure charters. An independent organization (some would say business) under contract, charter schools are founded by a *charter*, an agreement that connects site-based administration and an authorizing entity. These privately run schools are established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter between a granting body (e.g., school board) and an outside group (e.g., parents and teachers) (Shen, 2011). They are frequently largely governed by corporations (for-profit or not-for-profit), but even nonprofit organizational arrangements present opportunities for financial gain (Strauss, 2014).

Charter school operations are dependent on limited contracts, with renewal subject to performance. The charter contract describes aspects of the school such as its mission, instructional program, governance, personnel, finance, student enrollment plans, and how all these are measured (Shen, 2011). Not accountable to regulatory forces like traditional schools, charter autonomy for “develop[ing]

curricula, personnel, and budgets results in, for many charter schools, comparably longer days and school years as but one difference with its traditional counterpart” (Jason, 2017).

## Charter School

A type of public school, *charter schools* are “tuition-free and open on a first-come, first-serve basis, or by lottery” (Jason, 2017), and they are subject to regulation by statutory provisions and variations from state to state that define chartering (Green & Mead, 2004). As described by the NCSRC (n.d.), a charter advocate funded by the USDOE, charters are public institutions that operate as a “school of choice.” Three avenues for public charter school approval exist: (1) local school boards (e.g., Virginia), (2) state boards (e.g., Massachusetts), and (3) alternative certification boards (e.g., Louisiana and Minnesota). Independent boards authorize charter schools after state criteria are met (National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2022).

According to the NCSRC (n.d.), charter schools “commit to obtaining specific educational objectives in return for a charter to operate a school”; “are exempt from significant state or local regulations related to operation and management but otherwise adhere to regulations of public schools—for example, charter schools cannot charge tuition or be affiliated with a religious institution”; “are publicly accountable—they rely on families choosing to enroll their children, and they must have a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency”; and “are also autonomous” – they have more flexibility in areas of operations and management than traditional public schools.

Regarding operations and autonomy, publicly funded preK–12 charters have “the freedom to establish their own methods of operation” and, like “many private schools,” determine “their instructional and social practices” (Chen, 2020). Operational latitude includes all aspects, such as hiring, operations, regulations, and rules, extending to academics, typically curricula, classrooms, and programs for meeting student needs (CER, 2018). The public charter sector draws students from across a state or even the nation. As such, charter schools are positioned to function according to “their own standards of conduct and curriculum outside the realm of local public school districts” (Chen, 2020). According to the National Education Association (NEA, 2021), however, “charter school accountability” means that “as taxpayer-funded schools, charter schools must be held to the same standards of accountability, transparency, and equity as traditional district public schools.” While some state regulations may still apply to charter schools, they are governed by a board of directors, without state oversight.

Like traditional public schools, charters are funded from the district and state based on student enrollment, known as “average daily attendance,” and funding varies across states (Center for Education Research [CER], 2018). With greater autonomy than traditional public schools, charter schools are free from some state and local regulations to achieve set goals (Shen, 2011). US state laws and charter

contracts provide schools with varying levels of autonomy from the local school divisions over curriculum, personnel, budget, and schedule.

As public schools, charter schools are prohibited from charging tuition. They must not discriminate or be religious in their operation or affiliation. In cases where there are more applications than available seats, charter school admissions are determined by a lottery. Charter schools are not exempt from federal laws that cover students' rights or safety, including special education and other civil rights protections. They are also subject to state accountability systems, and their students must take required state tests (USDOE, 2018).

## School Choice

Choice “allows public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that best fit their needs—whether that’s to a public school, private school, charter school, home school, or any other learning environment families choose” (EdChoice, 2021).

## Traditional Public School

Publicly funded by the states, these (noncharter) schools are overseen by a school district (“division” in Virginia). *Traditional public schools* serve the local needs of students under the terms of the school board and state authority. Arguing on behalf of the advantages of traditional schools, the description by traditional proponents is rooted in language like *cost advantage*, *equal educational opportunity*, *democracy*, *governance*, *legal*, *regulation*, and *support service*. These schools, which must adhere to education standards for curricular areas set by the state education board, are *not* exempt from any state, federal, or local laws regarding education. They are governed by school districts/divisions and managed by democratically elected school boards (Ravitch, 2014). Moreover, traditional public schools are “legally entrusted to provide equal educational opportunities for all students,” making “support services” like “counseling, special education, and speech therapy available for students who qualify” at “no cost to the child, making this a tremendous cost advantage for some families.” (In contrast, “independent schools generally do not provide these kinds of supports,” and “outside professional support can be an expensive consideration for special needs children.”) (Huson, 2021). Fiscally, the traditional public school sector is tapped in the funding of charters.

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## History and Growth of Charter Schools

Founded in Minnesota in 1985, the first charter school drew students who had dropped out of school. Developing student responsibility and decision-making within a personalized learning environment were identified as highlights of charter

schooling. Shanker called for higher standards for public education and was a strong voice for the professionalization of teaching through teacher evaluation systems and removing ineffective teachers, and for the protection of civil and human rights (see Kahlenberg, 2009). Former president Bill Clinton named Shanker a great twentieth-century educator (Cohen, 2017; Kahlenberg, 2009). The need for transformation of the K–12 education system through a high-quality charter alternative led proponents to support efforts to offer higher quality education to students across the United States, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Brinig & Garnett, 2012).

Amid a “charter battle” and how these schools use their autonomy (Jason, 2017), the country has seen a rise in the popularity of charter schools. Although the charter sector continues to expand, as reported by a poll (i.e., PDKPoll, 2020), support has seriously declined. While approval increased from 51% in 2008 to 70% in 2011 (Reckhow, Grossmann, & Evans, 2015) and was similar in 2013 at 68% (Bushaw & Lopez, 2013), approval was low in 2020, at 40%. Another oddity is that when *Education Next* (Fishman, 2015) surveyed parents, teachers, and members of the public across the nation in 2016, only 28% supported the formation of charter schools, yet when participants were provided a short definition of *charter school*, 52% endorsed the existence of this type of institution.

Support for the growth of charter schools can be partly attributed to Bill Clinton (USDOE, 1995), who urged states to adopt charter legislation in his 1995 State of the Union speech. Then in 1997, he persuaded Congress to appropriate millions of dollars for funding charter schools, subsequently encouraging states to pass legislation that permit these institutions to be created and held accountable for high standards (Arbogast, 2000).

Through the Public Charter Schools Program, the USDOE began funding charter school conferences, state programs, and charter school research (Arbogast, 2000). It was amended by the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 to support charter school “planning, development, and initial implementation of charter schools [in the first 3 years]” (USDOE, 2004, p. 9). Further, in 2001, the USDOE’s Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program provided competitive grants for entities seeking to enhance their credit to secure loans for operating charter school facilities or even acquiring, constructing, or renovating them (see Temkin et al., 2008).

In 2009, former president Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan launched the *Race to the Top* grant competition totaling \$4.35 billion. This federal legislative initiative also convinced states to adopt policies supporting charter school expansion. During the competition, state applications “receive[d] points based on the extent to which their laws [did] not [impede] the number of high-performing charter schools” (Mora & Christianakis, 2011, p. 95). In fact, the Obama administration underscored the competitive disadvantage for federal funding for states with restrictions on charter schools.

Throughout the history of public education, many education reformers have proposed improvements to the educational process. “Rigor and flexibility” arose as “opposed but equally important needs in schooling” (Hirsch Jr., 1996, p. 2). Perhaps like Shanker, those who look to the public charter sector to fundamentally change

traditional public educational systems envision charter schools as positive reform. They see them as a strategy for ensuring academic rigor and responding to the educational needs of constituents and families (e.g., Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2013).

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## **Charter School Option, Record, and Discord**

Charter schools have been credited with providing an option for public education that supports democratic schooling and citizenry. On the one hand, freedom, choice, equity, and achievement at a high level through differentiated education are all positives. As examples, site-based advantages are said to revolve around a private school-like atmosphere through smaller class sizes and innovative learning (Brighthouse & Schouten, 2014). On the other hand, fallout on multiple levels from the charter school option has been traced.

“Strong” (Republican) and “weak” (Democrat) is a common take on charter school legislation (Hess & Davis, 2000). Advocates critique legislation that is largely “symbolic” as ineffective. In Virginia, for instance, the 1998 “legislation mandated that charters could be granted only by the local school district, ma[king] it difficult for charter schools to escape many state laws and regulations, limit[ing] the number of permissible schools, and requir[ing] that charter schools use certified teachers” (p. 18). In their review of studies investigating charter legislation and contextual factors across states, Hess and Davis also identified catalysts leading to “strong” charter school laws: “Republican strength, a weak teacher union, low . . . test scores, a moralistic political culture, a high median income, and an urban population,” in addition to “choice politics,” “advocate resources,” “the strength of the religious right,” “presence of alternative options,” and “perceived performance of schools”; as well as a “conservative climate, Republican strength in the legislature, a Republican governor, a weakened teacher’s union, and perceived educational inadequacy” (p. 16). Such factors enabled passage of “choice proposals” where charter legislation was considered effective, again from a conservative standpoint.

As is alleged, charter schools foster unique prospects for advancing equity and opportunity, innovative teaching and learning, and excellence and achievement. The nation’s most well-known, largest charter foundation – Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), with head offices in Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, DC – projects this profile of excellence and is expanding. Self-described as a “[national] network of free open-enrollment, college-preparatory schools in low-income communities,” while “KIPP’s model has been lauded for producing better educational outcomes and test scores than district schools, others have critiqued the organization for its strict discipline, high rates of teacher burnout, and high levels of student attrition” (Baker, 2017). Many charter schools “come under fire for selection bias, [but] KIPP’s student enrollment matches up with its mission by focusing on low-income communities of color,” continued Baker, concluding that “knowledge is power, but at a cost.” Racial and class segregation within the KIPP enterprise is the norm – more members of underserved groups are enrolled

than in surrounding districts, which, in the eyes of charter critics, resegregates public education.

KIPP's character education model (and "character growth card" denoting behaviors associated with traits like grit) has also come under attack. One of thousands, Snyder (2014) paid for KIPP's online course taught by a KIPP cofounder only to discover a lack of rigor and connection with morality, narrow view of the purpose of education, and relentless treatment of character development as self-centered, careerist, and achievement oriented. Character education was apparently "latched onto" by KIPP for eradicating the "achievement gap" and pushing students through school and into careers.

Pondering a different charter's record, principals Cousin and Davis (2019) of Commonwealth Charter Academy Charter School (CCACS) indicated that this Pennsylvania school, with "9,400 students statewide," features a hands-on, K–12 program in an agricultural laboratory. The school's "agworks facility" produces plants, shelters fish, and promotes "job-ready skills" and nontraditional opportunities for personalized learning. The evidentiary trail, however, conveys a different picture. According to the Public School Review's (2021) profile, CCACS serves 8592 students (over 800 less than stated at the school website). Importantly, in the 2018–2019 school year, CCACS failed academically and was "in the bottom 50% of all schools in Pennsylvania for overall test scores." Also, only 16% of the students "achiev[ed] proficiency in math [well below the state average of 45%]"; further, only 41% "achiev[ed] proficiency in reading/language arts [far less than the state average of 62%]." Not to be overlooked, "the student:teacher ratio of 25:1 [was] much higher than the state's level of 14:1," thus inconsistent with charter claims of small classes. And while this school's "minority enrollment [was] 34% of the student body (majority Black)," it only equaled the state average. Thus, the evidence conflicts with this charter's presentation of academic excellence and performance reliability, assuming the accuracy of the Public School Review.

As a domain, charter schools' educational quality and performance-based outcomes are questioned. Different sources indicate that the charter sector frequently performs unevenly or underperforms relative to traditional public schools (Finn et al., Mullen, English, Brindley, Ehrich, & Samier, 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Public Citizens for Children + Youth, 2018). As per the Center for Research on Education Outcomes' (CREDO, 2013) finding, "charter school quality is uneven across the states and across schools" even though "different student groups [Black students, students in poverty, and ELLs] benefit from attending charter schools" (p. 3). Regarding the 2013 CREDO report, 3 years later, Finn Jr., Manno, and Wright (2016) similarly concluded that the charter track record "can best be described as stunningly uneven, although gradually improving" (p. 37). Nonetheless, even the prospect of improvement over time is debatable – the charter enterprise is not governed by the legislative mandate of public education to educate every child.

Earlier studies of charter school effectiveness (e.g., Frankenberg & Lee, 2003) typically found systemic evidence lacking for claims that charters were outperforming public schools. Apparently, comparisons were difficult to make, given that charters lacked the expertise or programs to serve ELLs and students in

special education. As noted earlier, another such problem explained by Frankenberg and Lee, among other scholars, is that the charter industry's separation of student populations along the lines of race and class reproduces "educational inequality" for African American and Latinx groups and students living in poverty. "Substantial racial isolation," a byproduct of the public school charter movement, shows up as "pockets of white isolation as well as schools that are overwhelmingly students of color" (Frankenberg, 2011, p. 102). By advancing their interests, wealthier parents in effect exacerbate class differences and the poverty gap. In some US states, charter schools "are not required to educate special-needs students or accept students with limited English-speaking abilities" (English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012, p. 40). Charter school policies have been resegregating education and racially isolating student populations (e.g., Berliner & Glass, 2014; English et al., 2012; Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Rubin & Weber, 2022).

Regarding student achievement and success, whether charter school enrollees perform the same, better, or worse than their counterparts in traditional schools remains inconclusive. Both sides of this issue are argued. While one camp argues on behalf of overall patterns of charter school superiority, the other spotlights inferiority on multiple fronts. Extending beyond questions of performance outcomes for charters, manipulation, corruption, resegregation, and other controversial dynamics attract strong criticism (e.g., Bulkley & Fisher, 2002; Chen, 2020; Mullen, English, et al., 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Rubin & Weber, 2022).

Charter school success, as conveyed, relates directly to the features of state policy (Gill et al., 2001; Hess & Davis, 2000). Further, charter school effectiveness has been reported in raising the achievement of low-income and minority students in urban areas, but not ruralities (Hess & Davis, 2000). Pointing to injustices, many scholars fiercely debate charter assertions of success and democratic contribution to equal educational opportunity: "Claims that charter schools will improve educational opportunities for all children have been undermined by the reality of increasing segregation and inequality, and fewer educational resources for the neediest students attending traditional public schools" (Rubin & Weber, 2022, p. 82; also, Mullen, English, et al., 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013). Debunking charter claims with evidence of contrary trends and disturbing realities, critics, among them Rubin and Weber (2022), argue that the charter movement has "hurt public education," "worsen[ed] inequalities," and made the charter-traditional public school relationship "adversarial" (p. 82). As clarified, "these outcomes reflect the current legal parameters and distorted incentives, particularly at the state level where charter schools are regulated" (Rubin & Weber, 2022, p. 82; also, Bulkley & Fisher, 2002; Chen, 2020).

Elaborating on CREDO's (2013) investigation into charter effectiveness, outcomes were examined in 27 states, revealing mixed results, modest improvement, and questionable practices. Based on performance comparisons between public charter and traditional school students in the "same community," "a quarter of charter schools outperform their local [traditional schools] in reading, and 29% do so in math" (p. 86). The CREDO researchers credit the gains – which they "do not see [as] dramatic improvement among existing charter schools" – to the



“closure of bad schools,” in addition to dialogue bolstered by charter-related advocates that have “raised awareness and commitment to the academic quality of charter schools” and overall school improvement. Almost half the charter schools had “above average growth in both reading and math, but the “‘low-low’ schools are a matter of serious concern [in that they] offer little chance for their students to keep up, much less make up the existing differences in achievement for disadvantaged students” (p. 87).

In charter and traditional settings, the gap in achievement persists, even though “charter school enrollment has expanded among students in poverty, Black students, and Hispanic students,” who, based on the CREDO report, “on average, find better outcomes in charter schools” (p. 85). The 2013 CREDO school evaluation currently stands as the most influential of charter studies, with significant impact on education policy focused on improving outcomes for historically underserved students (see Ackerman & Egalite, 2017).

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### **“Charter and Choice” in Theory Versus Practice**

The idea behind choice is that parents can exercise different educational options that align with their interests. The charter enterprise espouses choice as a significant benefit by giving families more freedom and control over their children’s schooling. With children not being assigned to charter schools based on where they live, families can apply for admission by the enrollment deadline. The reality, though, is that charter schools give enrollment preference to “students living in the same community school district as the school,” in addition to “returning students” and “siblings of students already enrolled” (New York City Department of Education, 2021).

“Charter and choice” is one thing in theory and quite another in practice, revealed Hirsch (1996). Interestingly, this American educator (who is a primary source for the Common Core movement through his Core Knowledge Foundation) described being a “supporter of public school choice and charter schools” in theory only (p. 61). His opinion changed upon realizing that “charter and choice” break down in practice. At the meta level, he expounded, “parental choice” “introduces competition” in autocratic, controlling “conditions that may cancel out its utility” (p. 61). But at the micro level, parents tend to choose the school closest to home; without a way to judge the quality of different schools in the area, they “keep their child in place” (p. 61). Further complications are that good teachers are in bad schools, and vice versa, and that school missions and philosophies use similar rhetoric (e.g., student-centered education), adding to parents’ confusion and uncertainty. Citing national and international evidence, Hirsch concluded that “parental choice has not greatly improved student achievement in the United States” and that by itself “[choice] is not an adequate principle of reform” (p. 61).

Pattillo (2015) would likely agree with Hirsch that choice is not sufficient as a reform principle. Conducting a Chicago-based charter study, she found that “school



choice” is both an elusive target and ambiguous concept within the African American community. Educational choice, she explained, is “promoted as one strategy to improve educational outcomes for African Americans,” with goals “in Black school choice politics [being] empowerment, control, and agency” (p. 41). However, based on interviews held with 77 Black charter parents (low-income and working-class families), the search for “a quality school” turned out to be complicated and disappointing in that “numerous barriers” arose. These families lamented “limited and weak empowerment, limited individual agency, and no control” (p. 41). This window into the urban charter world from parents’ perspective revealed discomfort around dynamics of power, agency, and control, as well as inequities like lack of agency in the context of choice.

For education reform studies of the charter school movement in action, strengths and weaknesses in actual settings may be examined and recommendations provided. Practical research as such includes Green and Mead’s (2004) work on charter schools and the law, and Miron and Nelson’s (2002) look at choice and accountability. The latter’s analysis of the charter school context in Michigan has relevance for the broader charter movement. Questions about sustainability, and solutions for improving charter schools by addressing deficiencies, are uncovered are part of the mix.

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## Virginia’s Charter School Approval and Context

In 2021, seven fully authorized public charter schools were operating in Virginia, two in Richmond, the capital (VDOE, 2021). Compared to other states, this is a small number. Ineffective Virginia state law and an onerous charter school approval process were “barriers” named to obtaining charter authorization (Hess & Davis, 2000). An opposing viewpoint is that Virginia’s charter school law is effective in that it does not allow for multiple independent authorizers to grant approval and oversee the schools (Lehnen, 2016). Besides funding, two requirements for charter authorization by a local school board in Virginia are a student population that mirrors the community and political and public support. These “wins” are not easily obtained. Consequently, despite the passing of policy in 1998 that permitted charter school establishment in Virginia, few such schools have been approved (Virginia Board of Education, 2003). As observed by Lehnen (2016), “charter school development” is indeed slow in Virginia even though charters have “swept many states in the nation” (p. 839).

Thus, to obtain approval for charter schools, per Virginia Law (1998), time-consuming steps must be taken, with funding a dominant concern. After the applicant submits the mandatory documentation to the VDOE (2021), it is advanced to the Virginia Charter School Committee Board. The board appoints a charter school committee to examine applications to ensure consistency with existing state law and the board’s approval criteria. To convey a sense of what is involved in charter seeking within Virginia, actual steps follow.

- Applications in the required format are sent to the board's charter school committee and posted on its web page.
- The committee begins its review, and VDOE staff review and comment on each component.
- If criteria are met, the committee meets with all stakeholders to discuss the extent to which the application meets the board's approval criteria.
- The committee votes on each criterion and the application.
- If the committee agrees by consensus that the criteria have been satisfied, the application is presented to the board. In the event of required changes, the applicant is given time to address them and can meet with the committee. If not handled by the deadline, the application is denied.
- Charter school applications approved by the VDOE are forwarded to the local school board for final approval. Once approved, the local school board then decides whether it will fund the new charter school. (VDOE, 2021)

Virginia's charter school law, passed in 1998, was intended to stimulate the development of charter schools, support innovative opportunities for instruction and alternatives to assessment, and offer flexibility and options to families within their school systems. The legislation was also meant to give educators freedom to establish alternative schools and scheduling options that better meet student needs, and develop school models that could be replicated in other public divisions. The bill gave local school boards the ability to approve charters and develop a contract between local school boards and the charter. Each charter school is subject to all state, local, and federal laws, and may not charge fees or discriminate against students.

This charter legislation requires each school to comply with standards of quality, satisfy the VDOE requirements for the state's Standards of Learning, make gains consistent with the Every Student Succeeds Act, meet student needs according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and observe federal antidiscrimination laws. These policy regulations and procedures from the VDOE have not fundamentally changed over the 2 decades since the charter school law was passed with the local school board as the authorizer (see VDOE, 2018).

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## **Charter School Advocacy and Opposition**

Publicly funded charter schools and, more recently, charter districts have changed the education landscape for primary and secondary schools (Gawlik & Allen, 2020). To Shen (2011), a main difference between charter and traditional schools is that charters are granted budgetary autonomy in exchange for educational results. As Raymond (2014) urged, if progress is made "improving schools," "proponents and opponents" need to examine "the facts instead of relying on their philosophies" (p. 8).

## Charter Advocacy

Competition and mandates like the choice system under the NCLB give families agency. They can opt out of underperforming public schools and enroll in higher performing districts outside their designated areas (Pattillo, 2015). With the greater flexibility afforded charter schools, they are free to develop innovative programs. While answerable to their authorizers for results, these schools can try different methods for fostering student achievement.

Motivations for support are “the opportunity of empowerment and control by the parent of their children’s education” (Oluwole, 2019, p. 15). Charters that open in predominantly Black pro-school choice neighborhoods have the support of parents and community leaders primarily because of families’ control over what school their child will attend and the staffing, governing board, and curriculum. Privatization, deregulation, and competition do not seem to drive charter support in communities (Pattillo, 2015).

While a charter school is governed by one board, “in the charter school district, there is one appointed charter school board and one superintendent for all K–12 schools” (Gawlik & Allen, 2020, pp. 15–16, 22). Existing in cities like New Orleans and Washington, DC, the charter district is thought to show promise for charter superintendents’ influence “through connections with school board members, building administrators, and the community.” As autonomous “instructional and policy leaders,” these superintendents control “instructional leadership strategies,” policy entrepreneurship, Local Education Agency (LEA) establishment, and choice.

## Charter Opposition

Arguably forcing truths to the surface, charter opponents identify a host of fundamental differences concerning public charter and traditional schools. Among them are that traditional public schools and their superintendents (a) are accountable to governmental regulatory limits in the ways that charter schools are not; (b) can only hire certified teachers; (c) face public scrutiny of their finances in that the Freedom of Information Act applies to them (but not charter schools); (d) must answer to the public (and not have their elected school boards meeting in private), lacking the autonomy of charters; and (e) should address any special needs of students. Unlike charter schools, public schools cannot shape their enrolments by deciding which educational programs and services to offer (or exclude) (Mullen, English, et al., 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2014).

Charter schools attract opposition from multiple quarters for privatizing public education. The largest American labor union – NEA – voiced that “privatization is a threat to public education, and even more broadly to democracy” (as cited in Reckhow et al., 2015, pp. 13–14). Teacher unions, a strong challenger of marketization, argue that “for-profit” options of education have less accountability and transparency than traditional public schools. In West Virginia, teachers went on

strike twice in 2019 to defeat Senate Bill 451, which “allow[ed] for charter schools to be created in West Virginia for the first time” and “public money to be used for private, online, and home schools through newly created ‘educational savings account [ETA]’” (Breitbart News Network, 2019), essentially “private school tuition” (Yan, 2019). This teacher opposition spoke to the serious level of resistance against charters, considering that the bill also set out “pay raises” for teachers and “[more] funding for public education” (Breitbart News Network, 2019). That same year, Senate Bill 451 did pass the Senate, “introduc[ing] major educational reform for West Virginia” that permitted the opening of public charters “in any school district” and by students on a “first-come first-serve” basis, for whom up to 2500 would receive the ETA (not transferrable to a public school) (West Virginia Legislature, 2020).

Elsewhere in the nation, teacher attacks against the public charter industry continue, among them the Chicago Teachers Union. In 2013, Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis (2013) accused “venture capitalists” of “us[ing] little black and brown children as stage props” to further their fight in expanding school options, adding that by advocating for “equal education” she was not being “radical” (as cited in Chasmar, 2013).

As argued, these schools take away revenue from underresourced local traditional public schools (Jason, 2017; Reckhow et al., 2015). Regarding fiscal management, the lack of oversight can be costly. For example, Ohio charter schools were found to inappropriately spend public dollars four times more often than traditional schools. Teacher unions and school boards are the greatest opponents of charter schools, concerned with the lack of transparency and opportunity to “select” higher performing students (avoiding all others). Lack of transparency; the very minor increase in test scores, if any; and the opportunity for corruption make the investment of charter schools too risky for districts (Carlson, Lavery, & Witte, 2012; Jason, 2017). Another fiscal–ethical objection is that “far too many [charter schools] are cash cows” in that they provide an income or profit to financial companies or individuals utilizing charters as an investment strategy. In Pennsylvania, as but one example, “hedge fund managers” seek charters as “investment opportunities,” and “some top political campaign donors are connected to charter schools” (Strauss, 2014).

“Fraud and corruption” are associated with the public charter movement, which “the industry is rife with,” declared Strauss (2014): “Who can forget the scheme by PA Cyber Charter founder Nicholas Trombetta to steal \$1 million in public dollars? Federal investigators filed 11 fraud and tax conspiracy charges against him and indicted others in the case.” Another scenario cited “is the Urban Pathways Charter School in downtown Pittsburgh,” which was “under FBI scrutiny for trying to spend Pennsylvania taxpayer money to build a school in Ohio.” Exposed was “a history of expensive restaurant meals, a posh staff retreat at [a] resort, and payments for mobile phones belonging to the spouses of board members”; moreover, Philadelphia had an “eighth charter school official plead guilty to federal fraud charges” (Strauss, 2014).

Violations of educational justice are also tied to choice and charters, breaching the inclusion imperative that drives democratic education. The perspective argued is that

charter schools not only make lower socioeconomic status schools less desirable but also perpetuate segregation, or a watered-down version of it. These schools fail to adequately meet the needs of traditionally underrepresented populations; homogeneous white schools lack ethnic diversity and worsen marginally segregated districts, possibly further segregating more diversified districts owing to charter school design and accessibility (Brighthouse & Schouten, 2014; Mullen, English, et al., 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2014). From a critical view, predominantly public charter school systems indicate what not to do, like New Orleans's with school choice and charter schools in 70% of all occasions. Students with disabilities in these schools have been performing below grade level, whereas those attending traditional schools receive more services and are less likely to be suspended. Similarly, schools in Arkansas, New York, and Washington, DC, report lawsuits alleging violations of federal special education laws and antidiscrimination claims (Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013). All such occurrences of social injustice have led many Virginia lawmakers to bypass public charter school approvals within the state.

ELLs' access to charter schools is another contested issue. Some districts appear to overrepresent their ELL populations in charter schools, whereas others underrepresent theirs. As a public school funded with tax dollars, charter schools are not permitted to discriminate when enrolling students. Examining ELL enrollment in both charter and traditional schools in New York City, Buckley and Sattin-Bajaj (2011) found that most charter schools enrolled a smaller percentage, although there was variance. Winters's (2014) follow-up study similarly found that the underrepresentation of ELLs in New York's charter schools was due to this group being less likely to attend during "gateway" grades like kindergarten and grade 9.

In 10 different states' urban areas with high ELL numbers, 3 districts' ELLs were overrepresented, in 4 they were underrepresented, and in another 3 they were equally represented, found Garcia (2015). The percentage served ranged widely by state and community, which strengthened Buckley and Sattin-Bajaj's (2011) findings. Thus, more data are needed to determine the charter schools in which ELLs are being appropriately served. To avoid over- or underrepresentation in charter schools, design teams would stick to data that mirror traditional school district populations.

Besides ELL representation, policymakers expressed concerns of homogeneity in schools that segregate and isolate races. Some charter advocates, like the Collective Action Coalition (CAC), self-described as "a national network of hundreds of charter school leaders of color who reflect the diversity, challenges and experiences of the students we serve," look to create a student population of color. The CAC, which includes charter investors and democrats, explained its rationale: "By supporting and catalyzing charter school leaders of color, we will facilitate their capacity to liberate marginalized students' ability to pursue thriving, productive lives" (Charter Collaborative, 2015). Opponents express concern, if not (moral) outrage, over the larger charter impetus that drives privatization, perpetuates racial and socioeconomic segregation, and drains traditional public school coffers (Mullen, English, et al., 2013; Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013; Pattillo, 2015). Evidence of support for choice suggests a high demand among Black students (Grady, Bielick, & Aud, 2010), and

Black and Hispanic educators serving as charter school principals are overrepresented (Jacobson, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Yet many Black legislators (Debray-Pelot, 2007), voters, and organizations oppose charters and vouchers. In 2010, the NAACP passed a resolution calling out the social injustice and inequities of the charter school sector, stating, “Charter schools draw funding away from already underfunded traditional public schools,” and in 2014 passed another stating its organizational opposition to the “privatization of public schools, public money for-profit public schools, and “the redirect of monies from public schools to charter schools.” Then, in 2016, the “NAACP called for a moratorium” on charter schools due to the resistance by charter supporters to legislate accountability and transparency (as cited by Vasquez Heilig, 2017, NAACP leader). In 2017, the NAACP Task Force on Quality Education’s (2017) investigation found that one in eight African American students was attending a US charter school, leading to the call for charter sector reform to bring about educational equity in support of national prosperity. NAACP delegates’ new resolution condemned segregating Black populations in underresourced public charters and schools. Charter segregation is a social justice violation affecting the Black community and the nation. The NEA (2021) announced that it “opposes the failed experiment of largely unaccountable privately managed charter schools” and “supports non-profit public charter schools that are authorized and held accountable by local democratically elected school boards.”

Deficits for democracy have been called out with the business invasion of public schools sponsored by “funded right-wing think tanks and neoliberal philanthropocapitalists” (English et al., 2012, p. 41). A hollowing of the state comes with undermining public education. Ravitch (2014), another vocal critic of market-based policies like charters and vouchers, contended that not only is “privately managed, free-market” schooling overtaking public schools but that the mushrooming of charters systemically uproots democracy through the “deliberate effort to replace . . . the public school system” (pp. 4–5).

Ultimately, the quality of charter schools starts with the authorizers (Jason, 2017). Annually, around 200 charters in the nation closed due to poor management, a decrease in student demand, financial hardship, or mismanagement of finances. Every charter school has a state-sanctioned organization that grants or renews its license, reviews its performance, and provides guidelines (Jason, 2017). In Virginia, the responsibility of granting charter status to a school falls both to the VDOE and individual school districts (VDOE, 2021). According to Angrist et al. (2013) and Jason (2017), the belief that the quality of charter schooling begins and ends with the authorizing organization has prohibited the passing of further bills and legislation in Virginia, enabling individual school boards to maintain control over these charter sites.

Charter schools, as argued, pose a serious threat to democratically governed neighborhood public schools. Questions about their practices, and lack of accountability and transparency in areas of management and finance, resound as they expand. Proponents of traditional public school education like former New York City Public School chancellor Richard Caranza and former United Teachers Los

Angeles president Alex Caputo-Pearl opposed public charter schools as alternate forms of education. In 2016, Save our Public Schools (an alliance of teacher unions, parent–teacher associations, the Jewish Labor League, the Brazilian’s Women’s Group, the NAACP, the mayor of Boston, and Senator Elizabeth Warren) defeated a measure that would have allowed the state to expand charter schools in Massachusetts. In effect, this coalition managed to educate the public about the loss that needed to be prevented of funding and program cuts to traditional public schools (Yan, 2019). To repeat, among the criticisms expressed about charters, they draw money and students from district schools, are not held properly answerable, resegregate public education and spread racial isolation, perpetuate high teacher turnover (24%), and privatize public education under a false guise (e.g., Ravitch, 2014; Yan, 2019).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

This chapter ends with a reflection on the present and future of the public charter school sector. Where shifts or anticipated ruptures or controversies can be expected is considered. Although chartering started as an approach to reform the education system, charter schools have become extremely polarizing in the political discourse and regulatory environment. Existing data on the performance effectiveness of charter schools are inconclusive and somewhat attributed to the diverse school types in the country. Despite the outcomes afforded by data-based studies, “no consensus” exists “among researchers on charter school effectiveness in the USA,” in part because of “discrepancies in the research methods employed” (Ackerman & Egalite, 2017, p. 363), and because the results support approval and disapproval of public charter schools. This deep divide affects public opinion, shaping policies and politics. With 50 state educational laws and 45 charter approval laws, charter school approval varies greatly from state to state, as do the governing organizations that approve them (USDOE, 2018).

Thus, charter school policies and development are likely to become more deeply partisan and increasingly polarizing: “Support for charter schools by former US President Trump and Secretary of Education DeVos, and the constant stream of charter school scandals, have made [progressive] Democrats increasingly skeptical, if not outright hostile, to charter expansion” (Rubin & Weber, 2022, p. 82). They elaborated,

Most 2020 Democratic presidential candidates opposed for-profit charter schools. US President Biden pledged to support measures to increase accountability for all charter schools. Charter schools will likely continue to have the backing of more conservative Democratic politicians, most Republicans, and many philanthropists. (p. 82)

Regarding policies and practices that would considerably improve charter schools, currently the contemporary American public favors more public school funding, school equity and integration, and a de-emphasis on standardized testing: “More



than half of all Americans and nearly 70% of Blacks and Hispanics believe that school segregation is a serious problem, and 53% of Americans believe that the federal government should take steps to reduce it" (Rubin & Weber, 2022, p. 82). As these charter critics urged, "This confluence of political preferences makes possible policies that increase financial equity and integration in public education while moving away from reliance on high-stakes standardized testing" (p. 82).

As the past 3 decades are looked upon in the context of today's educational climate and the future, one can expect to see ongoing efforts to produce greater accountability, transparency, and equity alongside a growing appetite for market-based competition in the public education sector, despite increasing inequalities and the worsening of segregation. Controversy persists over the privatization of public education and charter schools' expansion, resegregation, and claims of effectiveness. The policy debate is expected to continue around private companies and individuals supporting public charter schools, in addition to the establishment of charter school districts.

Not to be overlooked or underestimated is the growth of the charter school district and the promise of its trajectory, situating charter school superintendents on a different plane as policy actor and political leader (Gawlik & Allen, 2020). For a few decades, some superintendents have sought to make cities "charter districts," with American presidents proposing chartering at all levels of the education system. Former president George H. W. Bush, credited with being an architect of education change, was behind charter reform. Al Gore, former vice president under President Clinton, envisioned charter schools as uplifting distressed urban areas (Hill, 2001).

Based on a study of charter school districts (see Gawlik & Allen, 2020), attention was drawn to how this kind of district model functions as an autonomous public policy landscape in cities like New Orleans and Washington, DC. Moreover, it was found that charter school districts serve as a conduit for charter superintendent's influence "through connections with school board members, building administrators, and the community." As "instructional and policy leaders," they have control over "instructional leadership strategies," policy entrepreneurship, LEA establishment, choice, and more. Unlike in charter schools, each of which is governed by one board, "in the charter school district, there is one appointed charter school board and one superintendent for all K–12 schools" (pp. 15–16, 22). Researchers Gawlik and Allen (2020) called attention to the political role in establishing a vision for a school community as paramount, and the role of superintendents and other key players in providing transparency and accountability for these educational sites.

Unmistakably, charter schooling is hotly contested among interest groups, activists, and scholars. At the local and national level, charters are the site of political competition between advocacy networks and groups clamoring to constrain or expand school choice (Malin, Lubienski, & Mensa-Bonsu, 2020; Zhang & Yang, 2008). "Political and institutional forces" more than "educational needs" are said to propel charter school dissemination, perpetuating the divide on the charter debate among stakeholders (academicians, policymakers, teachers' unions, business groups, activists, philanthropists, etc.) (Zang & Yang, 2008, p. 571). To this end,



Reckhow et al.'s (2015) survey of "public attitudes" found that "charter school opinions diverge along ideological lines among high-information respondents" (p. 207), implying that educated perspectives exist on both sides.

In general, the empirical research reviewed does *not* support the claim that US-based charter schools outperform traditional public schools as a whole. Much of the slight outperformance reported is explained as an overall drop on a particular year in testing in public schools or that the better performing charters were closed owing to mismanagement or failure to meet expectations (Ash, 2013; CREDO, 2013).

Recommendations from the literature and public domain vary tremendously, stemming from battles over the very meaning of public education and what rights to fair and equitable education look like both in theory and practice. Proposals advanced by charter critics range from enacting stronger charter school legislation, to reforming the culture of charters, to strengthening the traditional public school system. Dismantling the charter system is implied by the most extreme opponents. While one camp fights for parents' right to choose the type of education best suited to their children's needs, the other confronts intrusions into the public education sector and market-based solutions to public education problems.

Charter critics seeking constructive ways to deal with the charter sector conflict and threat to its democracy have advanced recommendations. Ravitch's (2014) 11 strategies are aimed at reforming the culture of charters rather than eradicating this system. Importantly, tackling poverty and school segregation and improving charter schools were included, along with better programming, smaller class sizes, and more. Explaining that "the most successful charters follow a [rigid] formula" (p. 178) and are customer-driven institutions (not community institutions), she called for a new type of charter school that would revive the original purpose of charters as laboratories for "bold innovations" in which teachers are empowered to experiment with new ideas and approaches to education. In an older source from the USDOE (2004), the promise of charter schools as a research and development vehicle was recognized and applauded in general terms. The idea was for the public education system to prosper through approaches from the charter sector.

Without a doubt, the public has an important role in holding the charter sector accountable. Frankenberg and Lee (2003) emphasized, "In addition to monitoring student achievement and financial management, charter granters must hold charter schools to racial/ ethnic balance guidelines in those states and districts with such legislation or court orders"; they added that "public oversight over school choice" plays a large role in determining whether "racial integration in public education" is supported by this sector (p. 38). Pressure on charter school laws is needed "to address segregation, prevent additional abuses, and create a more level playing field with traditional public schools" (Rubin & Weber, 2022, p. 82). It has even been theorized that increased competition between public charter schools and traditional public schools would promote better educational programming and improved outcomes for all students (Chen, 2020; Kahlenberg, 2009; NEA, 2021).

This chapter offered analysis of current issues and dynamics embedded in the public charter school industry, adding to the literature. The sources reviewed elicit

ideological perspectives and evidence from both camps: charter proponents and opponents. Their debate is expected to persist around issues of choice, performance, effectiveness, and democratic contribution. Arguments for and against charter approval that allows for the public charter school option in states, in effect propelling the charter movement that opponents view as undermining traditional public schools, will continue to inform the dispute. The spread of district charter schools in US cities, which is furthering the movement, is expected to intensify the conflict. More studies and opinion pieces are likely to expose the realities of charter schools, particularly around performance and resegregation trends and with increasing attention on ethics, corruption, and fraud. Yet more legislation in support of charter school authorization and development is on the horizon given the strong lobbying for charter schools and argument that this option is a necessary alternative to traditional public schooling and that it serves to democratize public education.

The first author sought to raise uncomfortable issues involving charter existence as a marketing scheme in defense of public education and reclaiming it. *Democracy, equity, freedom, reform, social justice*, and other cherished ideas of public education have been co-opted, if not distorted, by the public charter school movement. Activists and strong leaders need to respond with a loud, unified voice in support of public education and the fate of this cherished institution, and on behalf of vulnerable student populations. In her own writing and with colleagues, she advances these perspectives, including on the marketization of public education as a policy peril. Doing so, she expresses deep concern about neoliberal foundations and think tanks' rise and commodifying of education (e.g., English et al., 2012, Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013). Academic results appear to be hyped by the media, politicians, and others amid racial isolation, social injustice, and educational inequity. Even though in some US states elementary and middle school charter schools perform better than secondary charter schools, they are "hyper-segregated." Charter schools promote racial inequality, isolation, and high attrition, while luring the best-performing students from public schools. "Charter schools and voucher programs" have been found to advance "the resegregation of the nation's school systems" (English et al., 2012, p. 40). While charter advocates claim to equitably represent the demographics of local communities, given state law requirements, it is disconcerting that charters fail to enroll their fair share of special education students, ELLs, recent immigrants, homeless people, and refugees (e.g., Mullen, Samier, et al., 2013). Even though charters rely on taxpayer funding for the privilege of privatizing education, this sector lacks accountability and transparency. Citing problematic charter dynamics, elsewhere she (Mullen, 2017) has ventured, "Knowing more about the networked corporate dynamics behind this movement could help to inform the debate around student academic outcomes—and the mixed results in studies of charter schools" (p. 103). She advised following the "moneymaking lobbyists" whose actions advance "reforms that give parents choice and make schools more accountable" but benefit "charter schools that make money, not public schools" (p. 103).

The second author is a strong advocate of equity and choice. An experienced K–12 public school educator, she views the public charter system as a means for fostering equal access for education and an inclusive gateway to equitable learning opportunities. As such, she is constantly on the hunt for ways to help students succeed. While she believes in traditional public education, she does not think that one size fits all, which is how she became interested in public charter schools and the promise they hold as an educational alternative for families. In 2020, she had the opportunity to talk directly with founding members of a public charter school in Virginia – community advocates, parents, retired teachers, and charter school board members. They conveyed that they were looking for ways to improve public education with solutions. She is keen to share information about charter schools, including charter contracts and approval processes, with interested parents and others, as well as strategies for starting schools of their own or improving existing ones.

Finally, if the goal of education is to fulfill children’s potential in an increasingly global context, then unified forces are needed to ensure this outcome. Looking ahead, while charter advocates will understand this vision one way, opponents will interpret it very differently. The uncommon collaboration represented by the chapter authors enabled a more balanced view of the public charter school movement and take on crucial issues at stake in the charter controversy – without one camp holding sway. Readers are encouraged to add to the broader conversation.

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# The Global Challenge of Educational Reform

# 53

Corrie Stone-Johnson

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## Abstract

Three vectors describe the research about the global challenge of educational reform (Shirley, *J Educ Change* 21(3):385–392, 2020). These vectors address fundamental questions within the field: Who is doing the work and how are they supported? How can reform that is successful in one realm be both sustained within that context and travel to other contexts? Who benefits? These sticky questions are not rhetorical, and yet they also do not have an answer. In spite of decades of practice and research, much of the field of educational reform remains in flux. This chapter builds upon such scholarship, describing the global challenge of educational reform, briefly tracing the history of reform over the last 20 decades in order to frame the understanding of educational reform, and then outlining the obstacles that have been met along the way. These waves of reform and across the waves the vectors of change play a strong role in making sense of the past and highlighting the global challenge of educational reform work. The chapter then describes the challenges of the present moment, including but not limited to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on reform efforts.

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**Keywords**

Educational change · Educational improvement, Educational reform, Effective schools · Instructional leadership · Professionalism · School leadership

**The Field of Memory**

The field of memory in global educational change begins with a focus in classrooms, moves to schools, and ultimately lands in larger state and national systems. The memory begins in the 1950s when, as described in Fullan's (2007) classic book *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, reform efforts began in an effort to improve pedagogy to spark student achievement gains in the United States after Russia's launch of Sputnik. At that time, the assumption was that if ideas were good, they would travel on their own (Elmore, 1996). Fullan (2007, p. 5) calls the era from the late 1950s through the 1960s the "adoption era" of reform; the theory of change undergirding this era was that simply getting the ideas out would lead to improvement. Certainly small-scale change occurred as well. Teachers would "tinker" in their classrooms (Huberman, 1989), adapting their own practices in their own classrooms but without a sense of scale or scope in relation to other teachers, classrooms, or schools.

From a leadership perspective, and slightly later, research on improving schools began to explore how leaders could reform schools in order to raise student achievement, particularly in urban schools. This research, typically referred to as school effectiveness research, looked at the relationship between school leadership and school outcomes. Bossert and colleagues' (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982) review of the literature on effective schools described four areas of effective principal leadership: principals in high achieving schools emphasize achievement; effective principals are more powerful than peers in less effective schools in curriculum and instruction; successful schools are better organized; and effective schools have higher quality human relations due in part to the work of effective principals. Over time, this notion of effective schools transformed into a contested concept of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership situates the principal or school leader as the driver of change, setting high expectations for all in the school, overseeing curriculum, and tracking progress (Marks & Printy, 2003). Much of the criticism of instructional leadership centers on the view of the principal as the lone hero leading change. As Hallinger (2011) points out, while the early research on school effectiveness indicated that strong instructional leadership was characteristic of effective urban schools in the United States, the nature of the work of instructional leadership remained hazy, as did how it contributed to school improvement.

Thus, the field of memory in global educational reform is characterized by two beliefs: "good" reforms will find their way from individual classrooms on their own, and "good" leaders are primarily responsible for "good" schools. These beliefs underscore the notion that educational reform, in order to succeed, needed to find a way to move beyond localized pockets of progress and beyond a vision of reform as an independent effort. The very idea of reform signifies grand scale change, yet

the research at the earliest stages in this arena suggests that change at such a scale was not occurring. The problematic nature of these beliefs became evident as research on reform grew and globalized.

### **The Field of Presence**

As scholars, policymakers, and practitioners – and for the purposes of this chapter, school and system leaders – attempted to understand how reform operates and spreads, a burgeoning field of study grew out of the exploration of schools and school reform. For the purposes of this chapter, the terms change and reform are used interchangeably. The last several decades of research on educational reform can be characterized by the following three concepts. Each of these concepts grew out of lingering questions from the earliest days of reform. While these will be described more in depth later in this chapter, they include:

**Sense-making:** How do teachers, leaders, and communities make sense of reform?

As more and more schools, districts, states, and nations attempted to make changes, it became increasingly evident that knowing more about how teachers and others enact and experience change was central to any reform's success. Sense-making can vary by age (Evans, 1996; Hargreaves, 2005), career stage (Evans, 2000; Hargreaves, 2005), experience with change (Kelchtermans, 2009), and generation (Stone-Johnson, 2016), among other reasons. Acknowledging how teachers orient to change is increasingly viewed as a key to understanding the potential for success of educational reforms.

**Scale:** How do reforms move from one context to another and from pockets of success to widespread success? More specifically, how do reforms that have been successful in one context get taken up in new contexts? Questions about how changes start small and become bigger and more widespread dominated, and continue to dominate, much of the study of educational reform (Harris & Jones, 2018; Le, 2018; Malone, 2018; Stein, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2004). More recent research has explored the complexity of scale and whether it is advisable or even possible (Elmore, 2016).

**Structure:** How are schools structured, primarily through leadership and policy decisions, to help or hinder change efforts? Within the notion of structure are concepts such as professional learning communities (Hargreaves, 2003), distributed leadership (Harris, 2007; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), and collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017, 2018), all of which focus on how schools are situated (or not) to foster successful educational reforms. Questions regarding structure focus less on reforms themselves and more on the decisions school leaders make to shepherd the changes through.

These three concepts ultimately address the most challenging aspect of reform, sustainability. What is the potential for reform to endure, and for how long? While the concept of sustainability is situated within the field of presence, it is important to note that it may be the area with the least amount of knowledge. In spite of waves of reform, it remains unclear whether reforms last – or why. Scholarship within the field

of reform continues to discuss the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994), the recalcitrant nature of schools to revert back to their original structures in spite of reform efforts (Mehta & Datnow, 2020). Much is known about the factors that hinder sustainability, but less is known about how to remedy these factors.

Across the field of presence, more questions than answers define the understanding of the challenge of global reform. Why is it so difficult for change to take root? And how can teachers, leaders, and school systems persevere in the face of such a challenge? To understand this vexing question, many scholars have turned to other fields.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

In 2011, noted educational change researchers Andy Hargreaves and Alma Harris sought to explore how organizations in the fields of sports, business, and education achieved success against the odds. In this influential study, the research team explored businesses and sports teams to understand the factors that drove success. In brief, the team found that organizations that perform beyond expectations: strive to reach a clear and compelling destination in relation to an unwanted or underestimated departure point; establish solid underpinnings and creative pathways as well as clear indicators of progress for reaching the desired destination; cultivate and co-ordinate everyone's capabilities to embark on and complete the challenging journey together; and develop the drive that maintains momentum and provides the steering and direction that ensures the effort does not miss the mark (Hargreaves & Harris, 2011, p. 4). The authors note in their study that "systematic cross-checking" (p. 35) of educational practice with practice in other fields is rare; indeed, this study is one of the few attempts to do so.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Perhaps the greatest rupture in the study of global educational reform is a fundamental belief about whether or not it is truly possible. Deep divides in scholarship addressing this question persist in spite of decades of reform efforts. In an editorial in the *Journal of Educational Change*, authors Shirley and Noble (2016, p. 142) write: "In spite of everything that has been said and written, scholars and practitioners persist in believing that a single intervention—be it through innovative technology, curricular change, or just the right pedagogy—will lead all educators to a never entirely defined promised land." Yet at the same time, deep skepticism remains about sustainability and spread. Harris and Jones (2018) warn of the dangers of borrowing reforms from other contexts, most especially nations' lack of readiness and different approaches to governance that can hinder implementation. Likewise, Le (2018) warns that even the best-intended reforms can ultimately reify rather than challenge existing norms.

In addition to the challenge of scale, three additional discontinuities shape the field of global educational reform. Shirley (2020) calls these discontinuities vectors. The first vector is educators' professionalism. Within this vector, scholarship explores where professionalism resides (and does not reside) and how it has grown or diminished over time, particularly in relation to large-scale national policy efforts. The second vector is scale. As described earlier, questions of scale relate to the identification of successful reform or change efforts and how such reforms or changes travel

across contexts. Scale also relates to impact; how does a successful reform grow in its reach from one classroom to many? Finally, the third vector is justice. Questions of justice in the field of educational reform respond to how educators and educational institutions both empower students most in need of quality education and eliminate or mitigate the barriers that may keep quality education from occurring.

While these vectors describe the discontinuities within the field, it is also essential to delineate the areas where scholarship in the field remains in need of development. For the field of educational reform and change, these areas primarily center on the locus of the research, both where it is generated and the areas it describes. As Garcia-Huidobro and colleagues write (Garcia-Huidobro, Nannemann, Bacon, & Thompson, 2017), the Anglo- and US-centric nature of educational change research limits the capacity to truly understand change writ large. At the same time, the research is generated primarily from scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe, again limiting a deep understanding of reform (Fleisch, 2020).

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Two essential critical assumptions of global educational change are that change takes time and that schools are fairly immutable organizations. First, the idea that change takes time is perhaps one of the most fundamental understandings of reform as well as a primary source of tension between policy and practice. Policy is undergirded by urgency, whereas practice is undergirded by deep contextual understandings of the nuances of reform. The assumption that change takes time is a key understanding in Fullan's (2007) *The New Meaning of Educational Change* and underscores one of the inherent tensions in reform work: while the need for reform typically emerges from crises or emergencies within educational sectors, the process of reform is nuanced and slow. Thus, reform is frequently seen to fail, yet rarely is the fact that not enough time was allowed seen as a potential factor.

A second critical assumption is frequently referred to as the grammar of school. Originally described by Tyack and Tobin (1994), the grammar of schooling includes those aspects of schooling which have become institutionalized and are particularly challenging to disrupt. A challenge of education reform is that in spite of myriad efforts, schools nearly always revert back to the grammar of schooling. More recent writing (Mehta & Datnow, 2020) moves the needle by suggesting that a challenge of reform research is that it tends to focus on averages rather than outliers; in their article, Mehta and Datnow suggest that understanding reform may need to shift more toward looking at exceptions rather than rules.

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## **Introduction**

As described earlier, three vectors describe the research about the global challenge of educational reform. These vectors address fundamental questions within the field: Who is doing the work and how are they supported? How can reform that is successful in one realm be both sustained within that context and travel to other contexts? Who benefits? These sticky questions are not rhetorical, and yet they also

do not have an answer. In spite of decades of practice and research, much of the field of educational reform remains in flux.

Others have traced the arc of educational reform scholarship over time (Garcia-Huidobro et al., 2017), elucidating the waves of educational change through research and practice in the field. This chapter builds upon such scholarship, describing the global challenge of educational reform, briefly tracing the history of reform over the last 20 decades in order to frame the understanding of educational reform, and then outlining the obstacles that have been met along the way. These waves of reform and across the waves the vectors of change play a strong role in making sense of the past and highlighting the global challenge of educational reform work. The chapter then describes the challenges of the present moment, including but not limited to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on reform efforts. Finally, the chapter presents a vision of the future of educational reform.

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## The Origins and Outlines of Educational Reform

In this chapter, it will not be possible to describe the entire history of educational reform. Rather, the chapter will describe the outlines of educational reform, providing a shape and structure, albeit shifting, of the influences impacting the durability of educational reform in a global context. Instead of focusing on events from a historical perspective, the chapter includes several key concepts in the field as well as the scholars and research that have shaped the development of educational reform as a field of study. It is important to note additional limitations of this work. First and foremost, as described earlier, for most of the last century and even into the current one, the *understanding* of educational reform has derived nearly exclusively from Western contexts. More specifically, as referenced in the waves of reform listed above, the understanding has come from the United States and the United Kingdom. This is not to say that only those contexts have experienced educational reform; rather, it is to highlight the concern that those areas remain the most dominant contexts for study and exploration of educational reform. Second, what is described in this chapter comes from scholarship in academic journals; there is a wide array of writing in other venues including practitioner journals, but for the purposes of this chapter, the focus is only on books and articles from more academic venues.

## The Global Challenge of Educational Reform

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the history of educational reform is a small chapter in the general study of education more broadly. The *Journal of Educational Change*, the academic venue dedicated to the study of reform and change, is only now entering its third decade. Across this span of time, however, a great deal has been learned about educational reform. This section includes a deeper description of the three key understandings of global educational reform described earlier in the Field of Presence.

## Sense-Making

In spite of policy efforts that seem to imply a linear relationship between reform and change or improvement, educational reform is not simply a technical matter. Rather, reform is highly relational, shaped, and influenced by the myriad interactions and relationships as well as personal factors that exist within school buildings and those who work in them. Reform cannot occur, and most certainly cannot succeed, without people, and people, it can be simply said, are complex.

Research underscores the relationship between biography and teaching experience (Kelchtermans, 2009); a key feature of reform is how teachers experience it and make sense of it (Coburn, 2001). Reform is deeply intertwined with who teachers are as unique people. That is to say, reform efforts may have differential impact based on teachers' prior experiences with change (Bailey, 2000; Huberman, 1989, Kaniuka, 2012; Sannino, 2010), which affects their readiness or willingness to engage in new reform efforts. Additionally, reform is influenced by teachers' beliefs about change (Kelchtermans, 2009), as well as teachers' unique attributes such as their biography (Kelchtermans, 2009), generational identity (Stone-Johnson, 2016, 2017), age (Evans, 1996; Hargreaves, 2005), and career stage (Evans, 2000; Hargreaves, 2005). Similarly, reform itself is not neutral; when enacted in schools, its meaning shifts, requiring individual and collective sense-making which result in varied responses and effects (März & Kelchtermans, 2013).

Why, then, is sense-making a challenge for global educational reform? Primarily, research on sense-making highlights the tension between the necessity for reform and its subsequent implementation and the lived experiences of those asked to enact the reforms.

Even as research that supports the idea that people must believe in particular reforms for them to succeed, reforms are pushed at skyrocketing rates. The lack of attention to teachers' experiences is a primary driver of reform failure. Not only do reforms without teacher buy-in fail, there are long-lasting effects on teachers' careers. For example, in Huberman's (1989) classic study of the teacher life cycle, experienced teachers who engage in reforms but do not meet with success depart from their career more bitter than those who are more successful. The effects can be equally devastating for new teachers as well, including departure from teaching jobs as well as from the profession as a whole (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006).

## Scale

The enticing lure of educational reform is that change is possible. Schools and systems worldwide engage in reform efforts to improve outcomes for students. It is logical, then, that when success happens in one realm, others will want to attain the same success in their own realm and will attempt to borrow reforms to enact in their own contexts. In a highly influential paper, Elmore (1996, p.4) raised the question of how reforms can move from "pockets of excellence" to more classrooms:

The problem of scale is not a problem of the general resistance or failure of schools to change. Most schools are, in fact, constantly changing—adopting new curricula, tests, and grouping practices, changing schedules, creating new mechanisms for participation in

decisionmaking, adding or subtracting teaching and administrative roles, and myriad other modifications. Within this vortex of change, however, basic conceptions of knowledge, of the teacher's and the student's role in constructing knowledge, and the role of classroom- and school-level structures in enabling student learning remain relatively static.

The last two decades of research in educational reform, however, have brought to light the issues that arise when a reform that is successful in one context is either taken up or forced in a new context (see, e.g., Stein et al., 2004). Most recently, the importance of context has taken center stage. In a special issue of the journal *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* about context and scale, guest co-editor Helen Janc Malone (2018, p. 192) draws attention to the importance of attention to local context, arguing that “shared practitioner values, beliefs, goals, processes, and opportunity to authentically collaborate facilitate the likelihood of an intervention implementation in a way that both honors the strategy and the context in which it is situated.” When reforms honor context, they can flourish. For example, Niesz and Ryan (2018) describe how Activity-Based Learning drew upon teacher ownership at every stage to scale from a local effort to a statewide strategy. Similarly, Osmond-Johnson and Campbell (2018) describe how the province of Ontario scaled up reform efforts through partnerships, attention to teachers' professional needs, and a networked approach to support, drawing on individual and regional strengths to spread change. In contrast, when reforms are implemented without attention to context, they may be more likely to fail. Le (2018) describes how Vietnam's attempt to adopt the child-centric and teacher-focused reform *Escuela Nueva* suffered when local norms of valuing textbooks hampered the spread of the reform's innovations.

After years of study regarding scaling up educational change, Elmore (2016, p. 531) recently revisited his earlier writing, pointing to the importance of context in the role of scaling up educational reform: “[I]f we have learned anything from 25 to 30 years of attempts to ‘reform’ education it is that every effort at reform is heavily influenced by the contexts, micro and macro, in which it exists. In the face of this understanding, the idea of ‘scale’ seems either very superficial or downright wrong.” Thus, an essential learning from the field is that reforms cannot simply be transported from one context to another without knowledge and understanding of the factors that hinder or support its success. As Stone-Johnson (2018) writes, five contextual features influence the potential for reforms to spread. First, a system's size affects its ability to scale reform. Smaller systems are more likely to support fidelity to reforms, whereas larger systems depend upon implementation in multiple local levels which can dilute the capacity for fidelity. Second, a context's locus of control matters. Centrally controlled systems can stymie reform efforts, whereas systems with more organic and participatory decision-making can be more supportive. Third, a system's norms matter. Systems with high levels of managerial norms encourage compliance rather than the necessary forms of sense-making described earlier; in contrast, systems with lower managerial norms allow for more grass-roots decision-making. Fourth, the socio-cultural context of a system matters. Contexts with deep rule-abiding norms foster fear over engagement, whereas cultures that support risk-taking offer teachers more agency. Finally, a context's socioeconomic development



matters. In contexts where teachers hold multiple jobs as a means of economic support, teachers have less stability in their roles; in contrast, more developed contexts provide a sense of stability that fosters sustained engagement.

### Structure

Much of the conversation in this chapter thus far has related to the *nature* of the changes themselves as well as the people who implement them and the national and international contexts where they are implemented. Less attention has been paid to the schools themselves: how schools and spaces within them are or are not set up to facilitate reform and its spread, how days and working spaces are or are not arranged to provide time for both young people and adults to learn together, and how school leadership does or does not talk about or support teachers in the process of change. Yet these structural concerns may be equally important to the success of reform. As with sense-making and scale, understanding how schools themselves facilitate reform warrants exploration.

One of the most studied structural changes influencing global educational reform is the introduction of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities bring professionals and evidence together in order to generate improvements in practice and student learning (DuFour et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Professional learning communities are intended to promote collaborative work and discussion and to focus tightly on improving student learning. As such, they attempt to address the challenge of heroic leadership described in the introductory portion of this chapter. School leaders cannot reform alone; the work requires a team effort. At their heart, professional learning communities are intended to bring teachers together to focus on change efforts. In reality, as McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) note, not every professional learning community is actually concerned with improvement. Professional learning communities are most successful when they have shared values and vision; employ collective responsibility; include reflective professional inquiry; rely on collaboration; and promote group as well as individual learning; include mutual trust, respect, and support among members; are inclusive in membership beyond just the members; and look beyond the school for inspiration (Stoll et al., 2006).

The danger of professional learning communities comes when they are viewed solely as structural rather than social changes. As Hargreaves (2003, p. 185) writes, “Professional learning communities do not flourish in overly standardized systems which restrict teachers’ discretion for decision-making and self-initiated change.” With pressure to focus on data and student achievement, professional learning communities can quickly devolve into what Hargreaves (2003) describes as performance training. Under such conditions, professional learning communities lose or at least minimize the benefits outlined above and devolve into performance training sects which can lack teacher reflection or judgment. In a pressurized context of raising student achievement in the United States and United Kingdom, professional learning communities ultimately became equated with quick fixes rather than long term ways of thinking and learning in school (Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2017).



To address this concern, more recent research suggests a shift away from a focus on professional learning communities and toward collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). The difference is more than semantic; Hargreaves and O'Connor describe collaborative professionalism as a transformation rather than a reorganization of teaching and learning. Professional learning communities and their very structure are endangered by the potential for usurpation by larger policy needs, whereas collaborative professionalism, as more of an organizing principle, may be less fragile.

While teachers are at the heart of collaborative professionalism, strong school leadership creates, supports, and nourishes it. One of the most enduring concepts over the last two decades in research in educational administration and educational reform is distributed leadership. Harris and Spillane (2008) define distributed leadership as the perspective that within a school there are multiple leaders and that the activities of leadership are spread both within and across organizations (Harris, 2007; Spillane et al., 2004). Distributed leadership is not the same as delegating leadership; it is a reframing of the work of leadership to move beyond the challenge of instructional leadership as dependent on one leader to the belief that leadership resides throughout a school. At its heart is the elevation of teachers and others in the building to a semblance of teacher leadership. While the definition of teacher leadership, as with many concepts, is varied, Wenner and Campbell (2017, p. 140) define teacher leaders as “teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom.” A full description of teacher leadership is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is necessary to demark the importance of leadership and the shift from heroic to shared as a factor in educational reform. Leaders cannot do the work of reform without others, and yet forcing reform on others is not a viable or desirable solution. Leadership that is inclusive and woven throughout a building is more likely to result in change that lasts.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

This chapter traces the arc of the challenge of global educational reform. In doing so, it identifies three interrelated concepts: sense-making, scale, and structure. Sense-making refers to how teachers and others who are expected to implement reforms orient to them. Evidence indicates that reforms are not neutral but rather shaped at the ground level by a variety of factors including but not limited to teachers' prior experiences with change, their age, their career stage, and their generation. Scale refers to the process of taking a reform that has been successful in one context and attempting to implement it in another. While the possibility of scale remains debatable, most recent research indicates that understanding the contextual features of new reform locations is essential to any potential success. Finally, structure refers to how schools and systems are arranged to facilitate or hinder reforms efforts. School leadership plays a prime role in this effort through organizing schools and classrooms to be sites of collaboration, professionalism, and shared decision-making.

Had this chapter been written a year ago, a discussion of shifts or anticipated ruptures or controversies would likely have included a plea for schools and systems to prioritize each of these three factors. Attention to teachers' experiences with reform would center on the high number of new teachers in the field and the rising rates of teacher turnover even as the last generation of teachers retires. The potential for institutional memory fades in the face of such high turnover. A focus on how less experienced teachers orient to change would be needed in order to address this challenge. A controversial stance would be to investigate how alternative school arrangements such as charter schools in the United States have addressed this challenge, as such schools are associated with high levels of teacher turnover (Stuit & Smith, 2012).

Attention to scale would likely have included a plea to focus more on the contextual challenges of reform implementation. Pressure to improve with the publication of international indices such as PISA and TALIS can drive systems to adapt quick and a-contextual changes but, as the research argues, doing so would likely not result in any sustainable improvements. Identifying factors associated with systemic readiness for reform would be an essential next step in understanding if and how reforms can travel.

Attention to structure would likely have included the suggestion for schools to become sites of genuine collaboration and professionalism. Understanding the importance of valuing joint work and finding ways to make work meaningful would ultimately benefit teachers' experiences with reform as well as systemic capacity to support it over time.

At the writing of this chapter, however, a new variable has added a layer of complication. Beginning in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic upended schools, shuttering nearly every school building around the world for at least a period of time. Many, especially in the United States, remain closed or open only in a hybrid fashion with some learners in the building and some learning from home. Even as Covid-19 has laid bare some of the deepest challenges of schooling, most especially educating the most vulnerable students, the pandemic does offer a chance for many of the challenges outlined in this chapter, particularly the grammar of schooling, to finally be overcome. At the school level, Powers and colleagues (Powers, Brown, & Wyatt, 2020) describe a unique school that relies on project-based learning, teacher looping, and support for social emotional learning, among other aspects, to support students through transitions in and out of school. At the teacher level, Hargreaves and Fullan (2020, p. 335) indicate that the pandemic sparked creativity and collaboration in response to the crisis facing schools, decoupling educators from "bureaucratic micromanagement." At the system level, Sahlberg (2020) offers two ideas. First, addressing inequality means more than technology support; governments must focus on equity to move forward. Second, ideas should come from those who work in the schools. Sahlberg (2020, p. 364) suggests that leaders should "loosen the grip on control and increase freedom."

Given the longitudinal nature of this chapter, it may not be wise to focus on the impact of Covid-19 on the prospects for global educational reform; its full impact has yet to be determined. Regardless, the earth-shattering nature of the pandemic on schools may, for those with an optimistic outlook, provide the fuel necessary to overcome the challenges described in the earlier portions of this chapter.

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# The Intervention of Paradox in the Constitutive Politics of School Leadership

# 54

Chris Dolan

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## Abstract

While essentially a borrowed concept in the field of educational leadership studies, this chapter makes a case for paradox as both theoretically and practically useful as an intervention in the constitutive politics of school leadership. Drawing from the historical emergence of epistemological paradox, the pragmatics of organizational studies and some of the threads of post-structuralism, paradox is conferred with additional theoretical content directed to its use in critical-oriented inquiry. A paradox lens is subsequently formulated to reveal the conflicting forces

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shaping school leaders and their work. A number of paradox examples, taken as central in the working lives of leaders, are provided to illustrate claims to an enlarged functionality, to illuminate ways of seeing school leadership differently, and to test whether paradox might be fitted to the critical engagement of school leaders in matters of power, authority, and freedom. The aim of the chapter is not to make a complete case for the application of paradox, but rather to ask and try to answer the question “does the use of paradox translate into *crucial functions* and *practical gains* in understanding that otherwise would not have been available?”

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**Keywords**

Paradox · Epistemological paradox · Contradiction · Tension: Ambiguity · Dilemma · Antinomy · Dialectic · Organizational studies · Post-structuralism · Foucault · Barthes · Doxa

**The Field of Memory**

Currently favored depictions of school leaders give prominence to singular and idealized versions over those which foreground paradoxical qualities. In neoliberal times, the rich history of paradox in Ancient and Renaissance literature is subjugated to popular models of leadership that emphasize an agile and single-minded compliance directed to optimizing participation in the schooling marketplace. However, by dint of the continued presence of conflict and ambiguity in the lives and work of contemporary leaders, it remains possible to detect important paradoxical qualities and, more ambitiously, to bring the historical prominence and current-day relevance of paradox to the development of new theoretical possibilities for thinking and seeing school leadership differently.

**The Field of Presence**

In thinking about leaders and their work, the objectivity of the sciences and positivist assumptions about a capacity to discover an absolute and generalizable truth have marginalized other claims to the truth made in an outside space of multiple, and even contradictory, readings. Instrumental and scientific models of leadership dominate a field that constructs schools as corporate businesses and asks school leaders to respond by making themselves entrepreneurial and responsible agents of neoliberal transformation. The necessity of these populist models is sheeted home by causal links constructed between effective leadership and measured improvement in student outcomes and by devising generic lists of desired traits, attributes, and behaviors against which leaders can be chosen, managed, and valued.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Thinking and seeing with paradox draw heavily from outside the field of critical leadership studies. While Ancient and Renaissance uses of paradox provide useful historical into their longevity and durability, the most influential contemporary insights come largely from the field organizational studies. Ideas about the tensions

that arise out of competing interests and ideas, the simultaneity and interdependence of the sides in paradoxical conflict, the joining and separating of paradox from a number of its familial concepts, and the importance of managing persistent and systemic contradictions in the workplace all draw heavily from the theoretical insights and empirical work of organizational studies scholars.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

Interrupting a tendency to benign and generic readings of leadership and expectations of uniformity and compliance in those designated as leaders requires consideration of the political possibilities that paradox might add to understandings of school leaders and their work. Post-structural thought about the constitutive possibilities in discourse, the primacy and ubiquitous presence of contradiction, and the way a doxa/paradox dialectic brings contingency to cemented-in orthodoxies about leadership, all connects paradox with politically oriented functions. These threads of post-structuralism reveal how paradox, when taken as formed in an unstable network of dominant and subjugated discourses, might suggest new subjectivities, less restrained freedoms, and practices of critique and resistance.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Claims made for expanded theoretical and practical uses of paradox rest on the important assumption that paradox forms and operates in discourse, rather than as a reflection of it. Further advancing this perspective, depictions of paradox as a constitutive presence, rather than just a symptom of tension and conflict, rely on a Foucauldian interpretive that takes the operations of discourse as *forming* reality, thus opening productive possibilities for thinking about what discourse is doing in situations where paradoxes form. Importantly, this interpretation broadens the epistemological space of paradox by rendering it as neither neutral nor apolitical. Another presupposition forms around satisfying paradox's demand for an audience to its workings. Taking school leaders as a willing audience to paradox makes broad assumptions about their willingness to interpret the conflicts in which they enmeshed as paradoxical, to hold open the sides of these conflicts to deep and extended scrutiny, and to resist the temptation to hasty, oversimplified, or one-sided resolution.

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## **Introduction**

In the West, paradox has its origin in the Greek *para* (beyond) and *doxon* (opinion) signifying opposite meaning. In ancient Greek literature, it appeared to denote situations or propositions that opposed or even reversed the common meaning or expectation, conferring on paradox the "ability to challenge common opinions, to rankle to unsettle" (Platt, 2016, p. 4). These qualities are amply displayed in *Zeno's paradoxes* (written by Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea, 490–430 BC), including the



famous Arrow and Achilles and Tortoise paradoxes. The 10 known paradoxes attributed to Zeno are formulated against scientific assumptions of the day about divisibility of time and space. While this creates the enduring paradoxical quality of the seemingly impossible existence of contrary sides, it also shifts the emphasis in these paradoxes from tight rhetorical construction to thinking about and constructing new oppositions to the status quo.

Somewhat akin to the enduring interest of western philosophers and scholars in Zeno's paradoxes, this chapter is directed away from resolving persistent ambiguities in the lives and work of school leaders by trading off contrasting options or employing strategies for resolving conflict. Rather, it is concerned with using paradox to think about, talk about, and see things differently – to hold open and scrutinize its “complex pluralistic tensions” (Ivory & Brooks, 2018, p. 349) and to find generative possibilities in the coexistence of its contradictory elements.

Applied to the forces shaping leaders and their work, such analysis has paradox exceed its depiction as a symptomatic presence in the workplace. Instead of functioning only as a representation of conflict, ambiguity, and tension, paradox is taken to be formed in the constitutive practices of discourses and, following Foucault's theoretical insights, to open productive possibilities to think about what discourse does (or is doing) in situations where paradoxes form. Such a “constitutive approach” opens a wider epistemological space and reveals paradoxical tension as neither neutral nor apolitical.

The suggestion in the title of this chapter that paradox might intervene in the shaping of school leaders and their work assumes a level of functionality and efficacy for paradox that is not immediately obvious in its everyday, common language use. Against a tendency to refer to the sides of any argument as “paradoxical” and to easily resort to the clichéd claim that “it's a paradox,” this chapter works to establish a broader interpretation and more practical application. Underpinning these aspirations, a two-part process is used in this chapter to, firstly, establish additional *theoretical content* for paradox as a tool of thought and, secondly, to shift this theoretical content into practice by using a *paradox lens* to explore the constitutive politics of school leadership.

In building theoretical content, Colie's (1966) notion of “epistemological paradox” is used to hinge a case for thinking with paradox that draws from its historical prominence and durability. Further support is derived from the use of paradox in contemporary research, especially in the field of organizational studies, and from its productive links with the work of post-structuralist philosophers including Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. Theoretical possibilities for thinking with paradox are subsequently translated to practice by using a paradox lens to look differently at school leadership. This lens is deployed to various purposes directly related to the practices of leaders, including challenging the certainty of currently available leader subject positions, causing mistrust in the entreaties of the neoliberal policy field in which school leadership currently resides and finding in paradox ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that render the status quo more contingent and fragile. Several examples of paradoxes are used to illuminate practice and suggest a broader functionality for paradox in the field of critical leadership studies.

## Critical Deployment of a Paradox Interpretive Lens

The conjoining of the theoretical content of paradox to a paradox interpretive lens is to analyze school leadership practices by foregrounding complexity, plurality, and contradiction. To support such analysis, various conflicts and oppositional forces, taken as prominent in the lives and work of school leaders, are formulated in terms of their paradoxical qualities. These examples of paradox are used to illustrate the utility of a paradox lens. The aim is not to traverse the broad terrain of school leadership or to claim that a paradox lens provides a complete response to the question of constitutive influences. Rather, it is to show how paradox might be deployed as a critical tool for gaining insights that would otherwise be inaccessible. Deacon (2000) neatly captures the place of this work:

This is not to suggest that one ought to focus exclusively on discontinuity, to celebrate contingency, or to extol difference; rather it is a question of problematizing the superficiality of what appears to be profound, of warily exposing the transitory patterns that configure capricious chaos. (p. 142)

While conceding the illuminative limitations of a small selection, the critical deployment of a paradox lens in the examples which follow is directed to a range of “actionable and useful” leadership practices (Lavine, 2014, p. 191), including:

- *Joining macro-policy discourses of neoliberalism to the micro-practices of school leaders* – showing how the power effects of various discourses on the subjectivity of leaders directly influence both the conflicts, contradictions, and ambiguities that confront them and the choices they have for managing them.
- *Highlighting how the componentry of each paradox supports revival and maintenance of conflicting truths* – keeping or bringing into play the conflicting sides of paradox to suggest possibilities in subjugated and alternate practices and to highlight the presence of struggle over leader subjectivity.
- *Suggesting political possibilities for paradox that challenge the power relations that support the current doxa* – testing whether theoretical possibilities for paradox might have practical application in mitigating the risks and consequences of working beyond accepted and orthodox responses and in deploying critique to more palpable practices of transgression and resistance.

The confident assertion of these purposes, which prima facie may appear to counter the frequent calls made in the chapter for leaders to remain undecided in the face of conflicting alternatives, is to propose that a bigger space in which leaders might do critical work emerges when the tendency to rational reconciliation of the competing sides of paradox is halted. Marcus and Fischer (1999) provide support for this stance in claiming:

The only way to an accurate view and confident knowledge of the world is through a sophisticated epistemology that takes full account of intractable contradiction, paradox, irony, and uncertainty in the explanation of human activities. (pp. 14–15)

## Epistemological Paradox

Rosalie Colie, in her seminal text *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (1966), draws upon the “many collections of paradoxes, ancient and modern” to chart the rediscovery and rise to prominence of paradox in Renaissance times “amongst the learned who made them up and the educated who were amused by them” (p. 4). Through an extended engagement with the literature, Colie suggests that paradox reached its intellectual peak in the Renaissance (see also Luhmann, 1995; Platt, 2016) as it gained a broader audience for its word games and tricks of logic, as well as exceeding its entertainment value in creating unorthodox oppositions and multiple perspectives. Drawing from this latter function, Colie (1966) describes paradox as “a formulation of any sort running counter to received opinion” (p. 9) and attaches to certain paradoxes an “epistemological” quality.

Colie’s “epistemological paradox” provides historical insights into thinking with paradox and opens possibilities for finding theoretical content beyond the logics and poetics of its Renaissance deployment. Colie (1966) says that “the epistemological paradox calls into question the process of human thought, as well as the categories thought out (by human thought) to express human thought” (p. 7). Following Colie, epistemological paradox opens possibilities for other ways of thinking and talking by “stimulating further questions, speculation, qualification, even contradiction on the part of that wondering audience” (p. 22). Colie’s claims for epistemological paradox offer an important first step in mitigating a tendency to regard paradox as “logically unserious” in the construction of theory (Luhmann, 1995, p. 30) and in ushering in new knowledge-forming possibilities that counter the scientific and rational explanations that saturate the current field of educational leadership studies. Epistemological paradox also orients paradox towards more critical purposes. As Colie notes, such paradoxes “play with rational discourse” and challenge “at the edge of progressive thinking,” that which has become fixed “into adamant hardness” (p. 7).

### **Finding Other Ways of Thinking and Talking: *The Paradox of Team Belonging***

The shifting of paradox “from a label to a lens” (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 222) carries the promise of epistemological paradox to prompt new thinking and to call into question that which has become a matter-of-fact and obvious. *The paradox of team belonging* is used here to illustrate these qualities.

Team membership and collaborative work have become cornerstones in multiple depictions of school leaders and leadership in the literature (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Senge, 2006; Spillane, 2012). Taken collectively, these accounts suggest that large amounts of leaders’ time, both within and beyond their schools, are (or should be) devoted to working together in teams. These readings provide various expressions of leaders’ commitment to collaboration and teamwork, for example, in

outwardly generous efforts to distribute leadership responsibility, fostering broader participation by establishing professional learning communities, championing an open-door policy, and engaging in various professional and social interactions with colleagues. The preference for being “one of the team” is also found in a dislike among leaders of a vocabulary that signifies their power and control and a preference for descriptors such as “influential” and “collegiate” (see Dolan, 2020).

While seemingly benign and productive in its various iterations, the team belonging that leaders appear to covet, when viewed paradoxically, redirects “thoughtful attention to the faulty or limited structures of thought” (Colie, 1966, p. 7) that allow an uncritical embrace of collaboration and teamwork. Lewis (2000) provides a useful template for a paradoxical reading in what she terms “paradoxes of belonging”:

Paradoxical tensions arise because actors strive for both self-expression and collective affiliation. Seeking to comprehend their roles in a group, organisation and/or community, members attempt to artificially distinguish themselves (e.g., differentiating personal competencies, occupational practices, or ethnic values). (p. 769)

*The paradox of team belonging* applies the tension that Lewis depicts between “collective affiliation” and “self-expression” to school leaders and their work. A wider epistemological space for thinking about leaders’ fondness for various affiliations is proposed by paying closer attention to the paradoxical qualities in two aspects of leadership practice.

Firstly, *the paradox of team belonging* highlights a personal conflict of identity. Leaders in schools might appear greatly enamored with being “one of the team,” but, paradoxically, they also enjoy depictions of themselves that draw on metaphors of ship captains and company chief executives, and that point to their positional power and strong and decisive individual actions. To understand the workings of this paradox requires thoughtful attention be paid to the reasons for leaders’ involvement in a multiplicity of group settings such as committees, working parties, consultation groups, professional networks, and learning teams.

Against an idealized depiction of wholehearted and generous involvement, a paradoxical understanding rests on more diverse set of leaders’ experiences and more searching consideration of their motives for collaboration. Reading from Lewis’ (2000) observation of “the tenuous and often seemingly absurd nature of membership” (p. 769), a certain ambivalence can be taken to surface when leaders feel compelled to displays of willing participation in groups and at meetings where they feel disconnected and irrelevant. Bringing this ambivalence to the sides of Lewis’ (2000) identity/belonging tension, it becomes possible to interpret an enthusiasm among school leaders for their collaborative commitments in terms of the opportunities they can derive to both express their individual worth and find a purpose that is personally useful. Such an interpretation speaks to the identity tension founded on the leader’s desire to distinguish and assert themselves individually while simultaneously displaying loyalty and allegiance to the group.

A second expression of this paradox takes the clamor of the individual desire for distinction and a strident preference for teamwork as competing interests in the work

leaders do in “people management . . . to meet structural and follower demands” (Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015, p. 538). A significant component of people management involves leaders in establishing, managing, and sustaining a wide range of groups within their schools. Group membership, whether derived from mandatory or voluntary participation, is lauded not only as a vehicle for accomplishing change and improvement but also as creating a sense of loyalty and belonging. Accordingly, leaders are regularly engaged in public affirmations of the work of groups (and private affirmations of individuals within these groups), in linking various teams to identified school priorities, and in using group structures to build consensus and resolve conflict.

New ambiguities and conflicts materialize in the complexity of these team-affirming practices, as smooth and positive depictions of team belonging emerge in practice as not only uneven and messy, but potentially problematic and exclusive. The unambiguous regard leaders show for the power and importance of teams when joined with their desire to “seek both homogeneity and distinction” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 383) surfaces questions about whether leaders’ outwardly altruistic reasons for garnering the collaborative participation of others may disguise motives of self-interest and personal advantage. Here, *the paradox of team belonging* works epistemologically “to stimulate further thought in the reader, even further speculation” (Colie, 1966, p. 21) by raising issues, for example, about the uneven contribution of individuals to teams, the symbolic and perfunctory qualities of membership, and the inherent jealousies, competitions, and squabbles that confound perceptions of smooth order. A paradox lens also interrupts the logic on which teams are founded and publicly championed, thus revealing the role that membership plays in excluding those not deemed suitable and enhancing the status and personal ambition of those who “make the cut.”

Against the opportunism and deception that may be read into a tendency among leaders to direct team involvement to enhancing their personal standing and power, a paradox lens may also be turned to more productive ends in identifying a need to find different ways of working together. Here, *the paradox of team belonging* points to the potentiality of a new “democratic horizon” (De Lissovoy, 2015, p. 24) at the intersection of various leader identities. It opens the possibility of a multiplicity of authorities and collaborations and for engagement in different processes of democratic leadership practice and self-formation.

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## Meaning and Distinction

Shifting away from concerns with orthodox/unorthodox positions and the reversing of common meaning, contemporary research into workplace paradox – principally conducted by organizational studies scholars – appears more interested in the “tug-of-war experience” of contradiction (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016, p. 10). In examining the tensions that arise out of competing interests and ideas, definitional emphasis shifts to what Smith and Lewis (2011) describe as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (p. 382).

Carefully establishing the meaning of paradox – and positioning it alongside other familial terms – is first directed to a more complete explication of its theoretical content and practical application in school leadership by making a case for resisting the reductive qualities and simplified shaping of dilemmic conflicts and embracing the possibilities in what is termed “true paradox” or antinomy.

### Resisting Closure: Paradox, Dilemma, and Antinomy

A componentry of contradictory yet interrelated elements brings into sharp relief the differences between paradox and the “cleft stick” qualities of *dilemma*. Paradox works against a tendency to see tension and conflict forming in the “either/or” choices of separate and opposing poles and resists the temptation a dilemmic construction provides for “weighing the costs and benefits of each choice and deciding which one is most advantageous” (Stoltzfus, Stohl, & Seibold, 2011, p. 351). Rather, a paradoxical reading supports a “both/and” approach (Smith, Lewis, & Tushman, 2016) that adds new theoretical content by using the simultaneity and interdependency of conflicting sides to hold open and keep in play opposing elements and their interactions. Translating this theory into practice means inviting school leaders to resist closure and embrace the complexity of a paradoxical interpretation rather than trying to configure their conflicts as dilemmas and seek quick resolution using more reductive and expedient possibilities. These contrasting practices yield important insights into the challenges of thinking with paradox while also working to shift a “both/and” approach away from allegations of weakness, ambivalence, and fence-sitting. They suggest that, in seeking a more “rigorous, skeptical intelligence” (Stevens, 1996, p. 210) in paradox, leaders must also manage attendant risks and discomforts in a struggle between prized leadership qualities of “parsimony and internal consistency” (Lavine, 2014, p. 191) and a need hold to less decisive and more expansive ways of managing conflict and tension.

Adding persistent and entrenched qualities to its meaning moves paradox away from an entertaining play of logic and rhetoric towards more serious contemplation of its entwined sides. Rappaport evokes the *antinomy* in claiming that researcher must distinguish between the “false” paradox that may resolve, disappear, or crumble under scrutiny and the “true” paradox constituted as antinomy by the validity of the claims held in its opposing arguments and its resistance to easy resolution. Enhanced theoretical possibilities emerge as the consideration of paradox as antinomy strengthens calls to question accepted ways of reasoning that are directed to single solutions.

For school leaders, identifying and working with true paradoxes include a call to abandon the search “for one monolithic way of doing things” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 137) or, put differently, to concede the impossibility of deciding in favor of one side of deep-seated and irreconcilable opposites. The risks and difficulties of such a concession are clear in Quine’s (1976) famous essay *The ways of paradox*, when he notes that antinomies “bring on the crises in thought” by establishing that “some tacit and trusted pattern of reasoning must be made explicit and henceforth be avoided or

revised” (p. 5). The qualities of the true paradox and the seductions, simplifications, and drawbacks of dilemmic construction of tensions are now illustrated through *the paradox of stability and transformation*.

### **Dealing with Antinomy: *The Paradox of Stability and Transformation***

In models of transformational leadership and associated literature, Ball (2012) notes that designated school leaders, especially principals, are cast as the “one figure . . . invariably crucial either in initiating or supporting change in the school” (p. 78). As already noted, school leaders are deeply interested in building collegiality and loyalty among members of the school community. *The paradox of stability and change* works from the inherent tension between the change agenda that those in designated leadership positions seek to enact and a workforce that, by virtue of long-established loyalty and organizational identification, is resistant to the change and more wedded to the stability and comfort of existing arrangements.

The construction of this conflict as paradoxical draws heavily from the now famous research of March (1991) into the tension in organizations between what he terms “exploitation” and “exploration.” Succinctly put, March claims that *exploitation* – the short-term operational work of organizations expressed in “the refinement and extension of existing competencies, technologies and paradigms” – is at odds with *exploration*, the longer-term, innovative work associated with “experimentation with new alternatives” (p. 85). March contends that both exploitation and exploration are necessary for success but that there is a tension brought on by the incompatibility between the reliable gains and efficiencies sought in exploitation and qualities of exploration, such as variation, risk taking, trial and error, flexibility, and discovery.

This tension is often masked by an orientation to the more comfortable and familiar preferences of the parties involved. Non-leadership staff direct their work to an understanding of what designated leaders want, thus creating an iterative and self-reinforcing effect as the leaders in turn provide affirmations of that work. Some obvious benefits flow from these arrangements. Staff are motivated to accomplish tasks and contribute to broader organizational objectives, levels of comfort and work satisfaction are enhanced, and a deeper loyalty to leaders and a stronger identity with the school are built. For leaders, these arrangements support their use of team metaphors about staff cohesion and loyalty and the uniqueness of the group while providing a context for showings of praise and regard that help legitimize claims about individual competence and school achievement.

Interpreted into the work of school leaders, this preference for the comfortable and familiar translates to a way of mobilizing the existing staff to effect short-term change and improvement or, in the vernacular of organizational research, exploiting “the information currently available to improve present return” (March, 1991, p. 72). Leaders create the parameters within which the rest of the staff execute agreed and known tasks. The mutually beneficial outcomes of those tasks become part of a cumulative loop of feedback and accomplishment. In effect, even if leaders recognize a conflict between exploitation and exploration, it is likely constructed as a



dilemma that is most comfortably resolved by staying with the familiarity of existing arrangements.

However, a number of limitations are revealed when the stability inherent in exploiting the known is considered against the need for change or, in March's (1991) words, "the exploration of new possibilities" (p. 71). While exploitation may yield short-term success, limitations of current knowledge and expertise narrow the possibilities for new ideas and innovation. Levels of comfort gained through mutuality and familiarity may morph into complacency and to what Watson (2013) describes as "stagnation and lack of adaptability to new situations" (p. 259). March's work emphasizes the interplay of exploitation and exploration and the need to maintain an appropriate balance between the two.

A preference for courting and championing of current staff as the key to the success of the school may, paradoxically, work to limit success by stultifying new possibilities and privileging comfort and mutual admiration over risk and dissonance in working relationships. An obvious reversal of this paradox can also be discerned in a preference for change over stability. As a "true paradox" or antinomy, *the paradox of stability and transformation* also suggests that the innovative and risky work of exploration must also be subject to closer scrutiny. For example, innovations such as major shifts in pedagogical practice, experimentation with new technology, and rearranging the school's leadership structure, while designed to gain advantage, may, in reality, be shown to be frustrating, time-consuming, and subject to failure.

*The paradox of stability and transformation* is instructive on several levels. For example, it notes the existence of a tangible space for the local shaping of change and innovation, separate from the pronouncements of outside policy. Interpreted through micro-politics of schools, it surfaces the power relations circulating through the practices of designated leaders associated with building loyalty and affiliation that are, more generally, rendered as benign and apolitical. In recognition of its antinomous qualities, *the paradox of stability and transformation* warns of the consequences for schools of leaders favoring one side of a persistent tension over the other while also suggesting advantages in holding open competing sides so that their separate merits and interrelations can be used to local advantage.

## The Dialectic

Continuing to draw on familial concepts, the *dialectic* can be interpreted as belonging in the paradox fold when it is not taken as a battle of antagonistic opposites and the interplay of its contradictory forces is not directed to having one subdue the other. Rather, the dialectic is aligned more closely with paradox when emphasis is shifted to matters of contingency and plurality, so that the interactions, convergences, and various alignments in its sides become the basis for discussion and analysis. Colie (1966) supports and extends this interpretation when she claims "(t)he paradox is always somehow involved in dialectic:



challenging some orthodoxy, the paradox is an oblique criticism of absolute judgement or absolute convention” (p. 10).

In this reading, the dialectic is shifted away from the Socratic processes for detecting truth and error through argumentative dialogue and Hegelian prescriptions for synthesizing a fixed meaning in the interplay of the thesis and its antithesis. Instead, close contemplation of relational qualities involves dialectics in “the synergies and possibilities beyond dichotomous tensions” (Lavine, 2014, p. 193) and, towards revealing the workings of power, emphasizes the incorporation of “multiple and competing viewpoints” (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016, p. 119). This contribution to the theoretical content of paradox can be productively captured by using the idea of “thirdness” – the generation of “concepts and patterns of activity that go beyond and transcend the available opposing forces or options” (Engeström & Sannino, 2011, p. 371). “Going beyond” adds to the canon of paradox thought, possibilities from outside of the imagined boundaries of opposing sides that might first appear peripheral, irrelevant, or fanciful.

For school leaders, the idea of thirdness invites more creative possibilities in the contemplation of commonly depicted dialectic relationships such as subjectivity/freedom, control/resistance, individual/team, stability/change, and leader/follower (see Collinson, 2005). Dialectical studies, when focused on simultaneity, further caution leaders against the premature choice of one option over another in decision-making by suggesting the need to be sensitive to broader possibilities. It brings *heteroglossia* – the hearing of many voices and the consideration of multiple perspectives – to the language of paradox and, following Collinson (2014), “can surface important questions about organisational power relations, conflicts, tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions that are typically under-explored or marginalized within mainstream leadership studies” (p. 38).

## **Revealing Multiple and Competing Viewpoints: Leader/Follower Paradoxes**

*Leader/follower paradoxes* are revealed by problematizing a simplistic interpretation of school leadership as a top-down practice of control and coercion carried out by formally designated leaders, with followers rendered as docile and powerless. This dichotomous thinking perpetuates the idea of clear separation between leaders and followers and, in the asymmetry of its construction, fails to notice the active and influential role that followers play in constituting leaders and their work. In support of an interpretation of the multi-directional workings of power, Collinson (2005) emphasizes the importance of “followers’ practices” claiming that “they are frequently proactive, knowledgeable and oppositional” (p. 1419).

Implicit in thinking of followers as “knowledgeable agents” (Collinson, 2005, p. 1422) is the idea that power is not just the province of designated leaders. However, abundant images of heroic and visionary individuals feed favored constructions of leader identities and what Roberts (2009) describes as a “fictional

belief in the self as an autonomous entity” (p. 967). This leader-centric focus not only brings the leader/follower bifurcation into sharper relief but also overlooks the power and importance of followership. Leaders who assume identities that are individualistic, autonomous, and heroic are, paradoxically, dependent on the perceptions, “projections and fantasies” (Sinclair, 2011, p. 510) of followers to endow such an identity upon them.

In describing “the political and discursive processes by which manager and leader identities are manufactured, controlled and occasionally resisted,” Sinclair (2011) notes that leaders maneuver the well-known “characters and metaphors” of leadership “to provide consistency to their conflicting leadership experiences” (p. 508). This work is not just about a personal attachment to a preferred identity. It is also performative work, where public displays of qualities such as empowerment, collaboration, approachability, and mutual respect can be interpreted in terms of the recognition and admiration they induce in followers and the contribution they make in presenting the leader to followers as “watertight attractive” (Sinclair, 2011, p. 508). More productively, leaders’ overt displays of their attractiveness can be understood as a form of pastoral power (Foucault, 1982) directed not just to courting followers but also to mobilizing them. This interpretation is captured by Ball and Carter (2002) when they describe how teachers are “subject to the charismatic gaze” of leaders who “project a charismatic identity in order that they get results . . . in terms of staff commitment, motivation and empowerment” (p. 564).

The importance of the dialectical qualities of this *leader/follower paradox* affecting identity lies in its explanatory and interpretive functions related to power. It reveals something of the circularity of local power relations and a “micro-political conundrum” (Ball, 2012, p. 82) which has the leader caught in the tension between their own attachment to versions of themselves and their vulnerability to the opinions of others (see Collinson, 2006, p. 182). In this dynamic, a further paradoxical quality emerges when leaders, in their attempts to fashion their true and stable leadership selves – and thus render themselves “authentic” leaders – must take account of the power of followers to endorse, modify, and reject their performed identity. Paradoxically, this identity work is more likely to reinforce the very ambiguity and insecurity they are trying to overcome.

Interpreting the leader/follower dialectic through a paradox lens reveals the importance of taking account of the micro-political environment within which leader subjectivities are formed. Notions of a docile and impotent followership are refuted as a paradoxical interpretation reveals the constitutive importance of follower opinions and perceptions. Rejecting a bifurcated relationship and looking beyond the apparent deceptions of simplified portrayals of leader/follower relations allow in the creative possibilities of “thirdness,” for example, in critiquing of current hierarchical arrangements and scrutinizing claims of more democratic ways of leading schools.

An example of applying the leader/follower dialectic more creatively can be drawn by critiquing the way models of leadership that elevate and exalt designated leaders are often treated as the binary opposite of those that advocate shared and

distributed leadership. Dualistic positioning of these models overlooks important questions about the relationship between them. A dialectical approach, directed to new (“third”) possibilities, draws additional insights from this relationship, for example, regarding the distribution of power in models where leadership is shared, about a leader’s need for “follower” endorsement even in the most hierarchical arrangements, and in the merit of leaders trying to hold open conflicting positions in decisions about the allocation and distribution of leadership responsibilities.

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## Post-Structural Threads and Rhetorical Resources

Platt (2016) supports his assertion that “paradox looks different after post-structuralism” (p. 15) with discussion of how the historical weakness of paradox in political work is addressed in the works of philosophers often connected with *post-structuralism*, such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Lacan. This final move in expanding the theoretical content of paradox does not attempt to capture a particular meaning for post-structuralism from a somewhat strewn and discordant academic history (e.g., Bansel, 2015; Niesche & Gowlett, 2015; Howarth, 2013). Rather, it aims to highlight some of the “threads” (Woermann, 2016, p. 6) that run through the canon of philosophical work associated with a post-structural system of thought. These threads include, most pertinently, “the significance of the non-closure of meaning” and “the contingent nature of knowledge and identity” (Woermann, 2016, p. 6) and a fascination for “doubleness, undecidability and radical ambiguity” (Platt, 2016, p. 6).

This selective use of post-structuralist “threads” is to join paradox with more generative thinking about matters of freedom, conflict, politics, and power. Formulated as a gradual opening of possibilities, a three-part expansion of the theoretical content of paradox is proposed drawing from the work of Foucault and Barthes.

## Paradox and Discourse

Under the influence of post-structural thought, and, more particularly, the insights into discourse provided by Michel Foucault, a new configuration of the relations of paradox and discourse emerges. Early references in this chapter to paradoxes being formed in the constitutive practices of discourse may have appeared to take paradox as part of the discourses that signify and vivify current reality. Foucault (1972) reverses the notion that discourses work to *reflect* what is real and instead asserts that their operations (or their discursive practices) *form* reality, so that the world and its subjects can only be “known” through an understanding of these operations. This aspect of Foucault’s thinking about discourse suggests for paradox a different consideration of its origins, emergences, and qualities. The constitution of paradox is now set in an array of competing discourses, marked by variations across space and time, differential interminglings, and the asymmetrical levels of prominence and influence of its sides. The apparent symmetry and pragmatism of two-sided conflict,

which is assumed in more logical renditions, is replaced with a “tangled plurality” of practices (Foucault, 1972, p. 53).

In using Foucault’s discourse to expand the theoretical content of paradox, conflicting possibilities arise. On the one hand, this joining of paradox and discourse appears as a chance to add more productive and influential qualities. Foucault (1977) alludes to such qualities in one of the few direct references in his work to paradox:

What if thought freed itself from common sense and decided to function only in its extreme singularity? What if it adopted the disreputable bias of the paradox, instead of complacently accepting its citizenship in the doxa? What if it conceived of difference differently, instead of searching out the common elements underlying difference? (p. 182)

Against a complacent “citizenship” in the fixed and reputable surrounds of existing arrangements, Foucault’s thoughts on paradox align with post-structural interests in contingency, ambiguity, and undecidability. Working from the premise that paradox forms in many competing discourses, his advocacy for paradoxical thinking and suspicion of the “doxa” may also be taken to suggest for paradox new possibilities in critique, problematization, and political opposition.

Against this productive reading, Foucault’s insights also reveal a tendency for paradox to be obscured by the dominance of certain discourses. In the context of school leadership, the current constitutive work of neoliberal policy discourses (see Dolan, 2020) serves as a useful example. The apparent authority and validity of discourses of choice, excellence, entrepreneurship, and managerialism, in neoliberal times, hide the presence of conflicting or ambiguous ideas that “manifest in the half silent murmur of another discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 31). The presence of paradox is obscured by a status quo that works to appear natural and untroubled by its oppositions. For school leaders, as policy subjects, dominant discourses shape their available subjectivities and, in their formulation as seductive and natural, provide taken-for-granted truths to which leaders are compelled to attach their identity and authority. *The paradox of politicized subjectivity* works to reveal the power effects and constitutive presence of dominant discourses and to extract a more ambiguous form of leader authority from neoliberal promises of autonomy and agency.

### **Detecting a More Ambiguous Authority: *The Paradox of Politicized Subjectivity***

*The paradox of politicized subjectivity* provides a broad schema for the relations of power in which school leaders are enmeshed. This paradox relies on Butler’s (1997) interpretation of Foucault’s work on the productive function of power and its implication in the process of subject formation. School leaders may understand and feel the oppressive effects of power exercised from above and outside – a type of power that “subordinates, sets underneath and relegates to a lower order”

(Butler, 1997, p. 2). However, the very power that pushes down on leaders and asks for them to submit to external demands is the power, paradoxically, on which they depend for their authority and identity and which they “harbor and preserve” (Butler, 1997, p. 2). Butler describes “a fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency” (p. 2).

In this paradoxical arrangement, the school leader appears to be afforded some power to act. However, it is not expressed as unencumbered choice, but rather set against the rules and structures that work to constrain and contain it or, as Benwell and Stokoe (2006) say of Butler’s account, “the subject is never fully determined by power, but neither is it fully determining” (p. 32). Such an understanding guards against idealized positivist accounts and, instead, takes leaders and their work as discursively constructed within the inherent tensions and ambiguities of “politicized subjectivity” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 32).

The school leader, as politicized subject, while not fully enclosed but already constructed by power (Foucault, 1982, p. 781), is susceptible to interpellation when answering the call of the authoritative outside voice to comply and submit. However, politicized subjectivity, when understood in its paradox, involves more than a “hailing” (Althusser, 1971) of the leader as obedient subject. Rather, the discursive and non-discursive forces acting on leaders require and form particular technical “mentalities” that are not usually open to question by those who use them but are ubiquitous and persuasive in governing their conduct. In neoliberal times these mentalities of rule – what Foucault terms “neoliberal governmentality” (see ► Chap. 27, “The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the “Neoliberalization” of Educational Leaders”) – penetrate deeply into the lives of leaders to create an expectation that they not only submit to being governed, but also submit to lending a hand to the mode of governing to which they are subjected. Their “agency” under these conditions is cast in an interdependent relationship with their subjectivity. It is found in the efforts of school leaders to seek in themselves qualities such as agility, flexibility, and enterprise and in the way they take responsibility for their own choices, expertise, and susceptibilities and watch, measure, and audit the value they return to their schools. In short, their agency is derived from their efforts to govern themselves.

Championing of school leaders as agential and transformational – for example, in the centrality of their positioning in the school effectiveness movement – tends to obscure the power relations that underpin their compliance and submission and which entreat their self-governance. The practical application of the *paradox of politicized subjectivity*, therefore, necessitates critical work that surfaces and examines how power operates to produce leader subjectivities, and a constrained form of agency, and the extent to which it forecloses other opportunities for freedom and autonomy. This paradox describes, in its simultaneity and the inter-relatedness of its parts, a fundamental shift from sociology’s traditional structure versus agency debate and, more particularly, a permanent separation from the idea that agency is a free-floating quality that individuals apprehend and use (see also Clarke et al., 2015, p. 57).

## The Primacy of Contradiction

The second part of this imbrication of post-structural thought and paradox continues to draw from the work of Foucault. In the *Contradictions* chapter of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) provides an antidote to dominant regimes with an account that more resolutely follows post-structural threads about the non-closure of meaning and the contingency of knowledge. He describes how an analysis of discursive practices brings into play “a fundamental contradiction . . . a model for all other oppositions” replete with “incompatible postulates [and] intersections of irreconcilable influences” (p. 168). Foucault’s (1972) thoughts draw closer to paradox when he says that archaeological analysis “erects the primacy of a contradiction that has its model in the simultaneous affirmation and negation of a single proposition” (p. 155). “The great game of contradiction,” Foucault says, is “present under innumerable guises” (p. 153).

From this reference to innumerability, more nuanced and fluid influences on paradox emerge, along with the possibility that paradox, when considered as constituted in discourse, is imbued with a different language and new theoretical content. Treated to this point as largely apolitical and detached, the oppositional forces in paradox, when read alongside of Foucault’s account of contradiction, can be viewed as invested with the power of competing discourses. Applied to school leadership, these oppositions usher in new theoretical and explanatory possibilities for bringing paradox to the constitutive forces operating on leaders and their work. For example, they suggest paradox could be used to challenge the rationality of absolute judgments and commonsense solutions carried by the dominant discourses affecting school leadership, and they highlight the contingency and uncertainty brought on by competing discourses, thus rendering the power relations in which leaders are enmeshed as more dynamic and unstable.

Using Foucault’s thoughts on contradiction more forensically, thinking with paradox may uncover the political interests that advocate fixed interpretations of leaders and their work, in turn revealing the production of subjectivities as a “complex accomplishment” under the influence of multiple, competing discourses (Walkerline & Bansel, 2010, p. 11).

## Seeing Contradiction and Complexity: *The Paradox of Choice and Equity*

Bringing a paradox lens to notions of choice and equity reveals their oppositions and imbrications. School choice is enshrined by broad public/private options and reinforced by more intricate choices among schools based, for example, on history, location, facilities, and perceived status. Choice is favored in biased funding arrangements and given a kind of political “bullet-proofing” through its promises of improved student and school performance. Notions of equity and social justice, in focusing concern on the vulnerabilities, needs, and aspirations of individual students,

seem to bring affirmative and separate logics to the purposes of schooling. However, in neoliberal times, these logics are more likely bound up in the hopeful rhetoric of continuous improvement and high achievement and in related measures of excellence on which successful school choice outcomes rely.

In taking a school's equity and social justice outcomes as occurring within the strictures of dominant neoliberal discourses, paradoxical qualities begin to emerge from both local priorities and broader social concerns. Inside the school, leaders and teachers are urged to improve achievement outcomes for all students, but paradoxically their concern to redress disadvantage and attend to the needs of individuals must be subordinated to the more pressing demands of summative and mandated measures of excellence and associated school-of-choice status. More broadly, choice and equity are cast in an antinomial relationship where the merits of choice, and any improvements that flow to students through competition between schools, are not available to those who need them most. Choice can only be exercised by that group with the required income, mobility, and location. As a result, the entwinement of choice with equity – including equity of access, participation, and opportunity – is one which actually (and paradoxically) produces very significant *inequities*, with the disadvantage of students already at risk compounded by their very limited schooling options.

The discourse of choice implicates school leaders directly in the work of “competing to be chosen” (Angus, 2015, p. 396) and in the promulgation of marketing campaigns that must exemplify a school's best qualities and differentiate it from competitors in order to appear as more attractive to those who are choosing. In shaping the identity of school leaders, the choice discourse exemplifies the aforementioned qualities of “politicized subjectivity” as leaders look to derive greater worth and authority by submitting to the entreaties and demands of a favored discursive order founded on the logics of the market. Showings of willing participation by school leaders help disguise the power of this discourse – a quality noted by Binkley (2009) when he describes “the practical, ethical work individuals perform on themselves in their effort to become more agentive, decisionistic, voluntaristic and vital market agents” (p. 62).

While revealing qualities of dominance and subjugation, and suggesting inherent problems in bringing equity under the school choice banner, *the paradox of choice and equity* can also be used to prompt new deliberations on the complexities inherent in (re)instating socially just and equitable classroom and leadership practices in the face of homogeneous systemic and societal requirements for growth and achievement. In terms of shaping leader subjectivity, these paradoxes raise the possibility of multiple affiliations and an associated plurality of subject positions. They highlight how the discursive construction of school choice exposes the apparent fixity of its meaning to more critical and dispersed interpretations. Berkhout (2007) describes how this discursive construction “opens up a critical creative space for school leaders to engage with competing discourses and narratives, in the interest of social justice and transformation, and to engage with what is vying for privilege” (p. 411).



Aligning *the paradox of choice and equity* with Berkhout's "creative space" suggests, for school leaders, differently oriented work on the self as they seek to alleviate, mollify, vary, and resist the effects of the market-oriented choice discourse. More expansively, it opens new constitutive possibilities that reside in the contingency and variability of the process of their neoliberalization (see ► [Chap. 27, "The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the "Neoliberalization" of Educational Leaders"](#)). This is not to imagine the unencumbered "social justice leader" (DeMatthews, Mungal, & Carrola, 2015) fighting for equity beyond the reach of dominant discourses. Rather, it is to (i) position leaders as subjects who can access and invigilate versions of themselves that rearticulate, interrupt, and resist vivid and pressing neoliberal representations and (ii) privilege that aspect of leader's practice that DeMatthews et al. (2015) describe as an "ongoing struggle" focused "on the day-to-day realities of creating more socially just schools in inequitable societies" (pp. 18–19).

## Responding to the Doxa

While Foucault's archaeological insights suggest a potential for paradox to do political work, the theoretical insights of Roland Barthes are now used – as a third incursion into post-structural thought – to formulate a more explicit oppositional freedom from the doxa's oppression. Barthes describes a two-tense dialectic as "the tense of *doxa*, opinion, and the tense of *paradoxa*, dispute" (Barthes, 1975, p. 18, italics in original). Elsewhere, he characterizes this dialectic as "the stereotype and the novation, fatigue and freshness" (Barthes, 1972, p. 68). However, he is also mindful of the limitations of paradox in influencing this dialectic when it is reactively formulated as just a contrary opinion to the doxa. While the interrelatedness of its parts has, to this point, been recognized as a theoretical strength in paradox, Barthes (1972) suggests that, in a doxa/paradox dialectic, paradox is at risk of turning bad and becoming "a new concretion . . . a new doxa" (p. 71). To counter this tendency, he proposes that paradox must be rendered as dynamic and uses the metaphor of the spiral to suggest the discovery of a third term "which is not a synthesis but a *translation*" – an imagined and fictional alternative "at another turn of the spiral" (Barthes, 1972, p. 69, emphasis in original).

Barthes' theoretically rich doxa/paradox dialectic refutes notions of leaders and their work as constituted in a cemented-in orthodoxy. Instead, it suggests new ways of being and working might emerge from a competitive, messy, and unstable network of dominant and subjugated forces. While Barthes studiously avoids engagement with any pragmatic application of his thinking, the doxa can be considered to exert particular versions of its politics, albeit in subtle and diffuse ways. For example, it may insist on the commonsense logic of its controlling discourse and may evoke in school leaders what Pierrot (2002), drawing on Barthes (1972), identifies as a struggle against an active force from which they cannot be free (p. 431). Space for paradox to work politically thus appears diminished by a doxa



that lays claim, along with the sciences, to “an arrogance and discourse of truth” (Pierrot, 2002, p. 431).

Barthes’ helps enlarge and color this political space by underlining the need, already established in Foucault’s work, to be skeptical of the current orthodoxy, to be mindful of the political power bound up in it, and to acquire productive ways of disputing and resisting it. He suggests that more dynamic and ephemeral iterations are needed to work within and against dominant interests – versions of paradox that do not merely give simplified expression to opposing sides, but that show a nuanced understanding of the active and shifting qualities of the stereotype and find, within and beyond the doxa’s political discourse, a “sumptuous and fresh wisdom” (Barthes, 1972, p. 123).

### **Complicating a Cemented-In Orthodoxy: *The Paradox of Policy Implementation***

Policy discourses so often depicted as hegemonic and homogenous, “given the strength of the coercive extralocal forces mobilized and channelled by neoliberalism” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 396), may actually materialize in schools as variegated and uneven and, therefore, susceptible to local influence and interpretation (see Springer, 2012). Part of the cemented-in orthodoxy of policy implementation in schools is the casting of school leaders, in particular principals, as willing and apolitical subjects, keen to act as conduits for centrally mandated directives and to keep the intentions of policy-makers intact. Rizvi and Lingard (2009) superimpose a more complex dynamic when linking the aspirations of policy-makers with school implementation of policy:

Policy desires or imagines change – it offers an imagined future state of affairs, but in articulating desired change always offers an account somewhat more simplified than the actual realities of practice. (p. 5)

While the compliance of school leaders is typically assumed, and conveyed as natural and unproblematic, a paradox lens reveals that the doxa’s claim to a certain truth about smooth and faithful policy implementation is interrupted when local practices are brought to bear. Paradoxically, the casting of school leaders as compliant policy subjects may actually work against desired consistency and homogeneity when precise expectations about implementation come into tension with in-school processes variously described as *translation*, *enactment*, and *settlement*. Leaders are at once cognizant of both their systemic responsibility to implement centralized policy and the need to respond to local pressures to adapt, diminish, and even ignore outside directives in order to better meet the needs of their school. This puts leaders at the center of competing political interests where they can fashion opportunities for reinterpreting, challenging, and changing policy while necessarily espousing compliance (Berkhout, 2007, p. 408).

Introducing the contingency of “central input and local inflections” (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 15) interrupts notions of a linear flow of policy knowledge and assumptions of a smooth and untroubled implementation of ruler ambitions and intentions in schools. This paradox also encapsulates, in practice, Butler’s (1997) interplay of subjectivity and agency as depicted in *the paradox of politicized subjectivity*. The policy discourses of neoliberalism cast leaders in a particular and preferred mold while at the same time promulgating a range of subjectivities governed by seemingly unavoidable forms of disciplinary power and “technologies of control” (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998, p. 329). In practice, however, the policy work of school leaders is imbued with degrees of resistance, ambivalence, and conformity as processes of translation, enactment, and settlement are variously enacted and expectations of obedience are interrupted by more dispersed constitutive possibilities.

It is in this dispersion of possibilities that *the paradox of policy implementation* draws closer to Barthes’ (1972) metaphor of the spiral and to imagining alternatives outside of a doxa/paradox dialectic. Available subjectivities now include those that dwell on more fertile possibilities in a space of “creative enactment” (Webb, 2014, p. 366) between the macro concerns of policy (and policy-makers) and micro-practices of leaders in schools. Clarke et al. (2015) fill some of this creative space in claiming contestable and oppositional possibilities in the “translation” of policy at the local level:

rather than translation being deterministic and unidirectional, translation should also be understood as contested, and, as such, translation inevitably includes the possibility of retranslation, of redefining and resisting, of ‘talking back’ to dominant understandings, or taking back the possibility of self-naming. (p. 40)

The assumption of a space of dissent easily accessed by school leaders doing their policy work on behalf of their local community belies the complexity and professional risks involved in such work. A more pragmatic reading is of the ambiguity and tension intrinsic to the positioning of leaders as they make their “with and against” responses to neoliberal-inflected technologies and policies. These responses provide a key to understanding *the paradox of policy implementation* as imbued with power relations and as providing an illumination, in practice, of a struggle over the subjectivity of leaders.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

F. Scott Fitzgerald (2009) wrote:

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. . . . It is through the exploration of these opposing ideas, or uncertainty if you will, that we come to better outcomes. (p. 69)

While this chapter has been oriented to establishing useful thinking and seeing possibilities for paradox and applying these to the constitution of school leaders and

their work, its underpinning tenets run close to the thoughts of Fitzgerald. Principles of undecidability, resistance to closure, and productive use of the simultaneity and interrelatedness of oppositions provide essential support to claims that paradox adds productive theoretical and practical possibilities to critically oriented analysis of school leadership.

The conclusion to this chapter is directed to more evaluative and reflexive ends in testing Fitzgerald's (2009) claim that, via uncertainty, "we come to better outcomes" (p. 69). While the eclectic and partial qualities of the chapter are acknowledged, for example, in the opportunistic use of historic and contemporary insights and the selective use of paradox examples, it remains reasonable to ask and try to answer the question "does the use of paradox translate into *crucial functions* and *practical gains* in understanding that otherwise would not have been available?". In keeping with a paradoxical rendition, the response to this question is framed equivocally, with each of the following claims made for the value and relevance of paradox accompanied by references to its limits, delimits, and limitations.

*Paradox attends to the significant conflict, tension, and ambiguity that characterize the working lives of school leaders.* Bringing paradox to critically oriented research works against simplified and essentialist accounts of leadership that characterize positivist studies to restore complexity and reveal more nuanced and theoretically rigorous renditions. The limitations on this claim arise from the inability of paradox to provide an adequate representation of actual complexity and a related tendency to normativity in the framing of conflict. As Woermann (2016) notes, "the only complete description of a complex system is the system itself" (p. 11).

*The constitutive qualities of paradox impose a requirement for critical scholars, and for leaders themselves, to understand the implications held in the different ways conflict, tension, and ambiguity are conceived, apprehended, and managed.* The examples of paradox used in this chapter portray school leaders are deeply invested in the "task of deciding between competing and conflicting demands in the context of uncertainty" (Watson, 2013, p. 256). Dameron and Torset (2014), in a reference to "building subjectivities through tensions" (p. 294), suggest that such an investment might also shape leaders and their work. These constitutive possibilities, often referred to in this chapter and held in competing and conflicting demands of paradox, become both "crucial" and "practical" when they prompt questions for further inquiry – questions about the varying levels of prominence given to conflict by individual leaders, the different ways they make sense of it (and give sense to it), and the responses they choose in apprehending and managing it. Bringing paradox to critical inquiry also asks after the macro- and micro-sources of conflict and the ways in which multiple pressures are exerted on leaders' choices. However, this work is delimited somewhat by the representation of complexity that the componentry of paradox encourages, with a tendency towards enclosed (and often two-sided) depictions of conflict, tension, and ambiguity possibly working against more imaginative and resourceful solutions.

*Paradox creates opportunities for new learning.* Schad et al. (2016) allude to these learning opportunities when they observe that "paradoxes stare us in the face – taunting our established certainties, while tempting our untapped creativity" (p. 6).

Dolan (2020) proposes a “pedagogy of paradox” and outlines a “schema . . . to offer possibilities for learning with paradox, and to argue the efficacy and functionality of the different categories of learning proposed” (p. 200). A range of learning opportunities are proposed for leaders that connect the generative possibilities in paradox with, for example, improved capacity to represent and make sense of contradiction and ambiguity, revealing a wider range of decision-making choices in the face of intractable conflict, and possibilities for critical engagement held in understanding the “politics of subjectivity” and the “intrusion of power relations” and in bringing the theoretical content of paradox to processes of critique and agonistic resistance. While such learning opportunities appear to exhibit crucial and practical qualities, each is also conditional on filling the prerequisite need for a “wonderer” – an audience to paradox who admire and wonder about it and who are willing to share in and prolong its actions (Colie, 1966, p. 519).

*Paradox can work politically to direct attention away from the status quo and towards new possibilities.* In “exploring the critical consequences that complexity holds” (Woermann, 2016, p. 3), the relevance of thinking and seeing with paradox shifts to the possibilities in using the language of paradox to narrate the politics of opposition to the status quo. A paradox language directs leaders away from reductive and simplified problem-solving logic and supports strategically challenging the current orthodoxy, troubling one-sided interpretations, seeking creative alternatives, and keeping options open by delaying the rush to resolution.

An extended possibility related to this political work is to suggest for paradox a capacity to help better see what Giroux (2008), citing the philosopher Ernst Bloch, describes as “the possibilities of the *not yet*” (p. 139). This concept of the “not yet” connects with trying to visualize, from a paradox platform, the more distant and diffuse possibilities of new and productive gaps for the agonistic expression of resistance and freedom. Such visualizations rely on a more imaginative reading of the “epistemic friction” (Medina, 2011) between the fixed assertions of neoliberal policy discourses and the plurality of local knowledges and oppositions – readings which not only represent this pluralism in paradox, but use “the gaps, discontinuities, tensions and clashes among perspectives and discursive practices” (Medina, 2011, p. 24) that paradox reveals to envisage new ways in which school leaders might fashion their political participation.

The limits of this political function lie, most obviously, in its translation into practice. In neoliberal times, leaders are caught in a lopsided contest, with the authorized and seductive shaping work of neoliberal policy discourses dwarfing sporadic and dispersed practices of agonism, transgression, and resistance. Even when conceived as a struggle, its inherently paradoxical qualities are obscured and diminished by the efficacious work that dominant discourses do to hide their hegemonic aspirations and present themselves as self-evident and natural.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Leadership As Artistic Practice and Connoisseurship](#)
- ▶ [Leadership, Leaders, and Leading](#)

- ▶ [The Archaeology of Educational Leadership as an Enunciative Field](#)
- ▶ [The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the “Neoliberalization” of Educational Leaders](#)

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## Utilizing Precarity and Microaggressions in Neoliberal Reform

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### Abstract

A form of workplace aggression, mobbing refers to targeting collective hostility at a member with the objective of removal from the organization. The phenomenon is not new, but has only recently garnered professional and academic attention in the USA. In this chapter, the authors offer an overview of the emergence and evolution of the concept and connect current reports with neoliberal reforms. Recognizing a need to theorize mobbing, a micropolitical perspective is presented that draws on Stephen J. Ball's work on micropolitics and managerialism. Considering mobbing in educational settings undergoing reform,

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the authors argue: (1) neoliberal reforms intended to enhance organizational responsiveness generate conditions of precarity conducive to mobbing; (2) mobbing dynamics may serve managerial ends of organizational control; (3) overlapping and intersecting with microaggressive practices, mobbing may contribute to minoritization and marginalization; and (4) managerial efforts to curb minoritization and marginalization may be more symbolic than substantive and may contribute to rather than counter mobbing conditions.

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**Keywords**

Workplace aggression · Workplace mobbing · Workplace bullying · Harassment · Hostile workplace · Micropolitics · Marginalization · Minoritization · Microaggression · Managerial discourse · Managerialism · Neoliberalism · Neoliberal reform · Precarity

**The Field of Memory**

Workplace aggression and tolerance of it is reflected a variety of once prevalent conceptions. These include: (1) normative expectations for leadership, organizational behavior, and belonging shaped by patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, etc.; (2) trait-based, “great-man” theories of heroic leadership which sanctioned aggressive behavior toward subordinates and peers and encouraged “trial by fire” approaches to member induction; and (3) theories of leadership and organization that pathologized organizational conflict and valorized organizational conformity around monolithic visions associated with “corporate culture” (Bates, 1987) and “management of culture” approaches (Cooke, 2003).

**The Field of Presence**

Growing concern about workplace aggression such as mobbing correspond to theories of leadership and organization that feature – rhetorically if not always in practice – more socially, culturally, and politically informed conceptions of belonging. These yield more inclusive approaches to organization which promote and value diversity in membership and leadership. These also reflect more complex theories of leadership which expand conceptions of who may lead as well as the more collective, collaborative, and distributed forms leadership takes. Further, contemporary theories of leadership increasingly reflect more nuanced ideas – or ideals – of reciprocity between organizations and members and leadership responsibilities for the social and emotional health of workers and the workplace.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Leadership improvements in identifying and addressing workplace aggression capitalize on more sophisticated theories of organizational behavior, dynamics, and health. Seeking to head off or mitigate damaging effects of workplace aggression, leadership utilizes insights into the erosion of productivity, morale, retention, etc. from scholarship on human resources/relations, organizational psychology, and

counseling psychology. This is complemented by work of legal scholars and employee advocates outlining the risks, responsibilities, and liabilities based on existing and evolving obligations of employers and organizations. Increasingly, critical leadership scholars benefit from an array of incisive critiques of transnational neoliberal reform policies and managerial practices offered by critically oriented scholars in politics, sociology, anthropology, and public affairs.

### **Ruptures and Discontinuities**

While neoliberal reforms took root in the 1970s, a series of events and movements following the 2008 financial crisis may be exacerbating organizational dynamics contributing to precarity, workplace aggression and awareness of connections to neoliberalism. The Occupy movement protested social and economic inequality and erosion of substantive democracy through a privileging of corporate interests over those of workers. Recognized as a stalking horse to undermine LGBTQ+ rights, efforts by social conservatives to impose so-called religious freedom protections drew intense backlash from the left and, to some degree, from moderates and the business community. The Black Lives Matter movement drew public attention and galvanized opposition to ongoing police violence experienced by communities of color generally and the Black community in particular. Finally, and most recently, the politicized response to the global covid-19 pandemic revealed disparate health and economic impacts, yawning gaps in social safety nets, and deep distrust in social and political institutions. Separately and in concert, these have called attention to the role and influence of multinational corporations in shaping and intensifying uneven conditions of precarity and accompanying social and individual anxieties. As discussed below, these contribute to the enabling conditions for and the theorization of workplace aggression such as mobbing.

### **Critical Assumptions**

In theorizing the micropolitics of mobbing and its relationship to managerial discourse, the authors presume that organizational activity and leadership are inherently political. Members and groups pursue personal and professional interests in and through organizational activity. This extends to those in positions of authority – leaders and managers – who may capitalize on worker anxiety and organizational conflict in pursuit of personal as well as organizational goals. The authors also presume that the within-organization or “micro”-politics are influenced by, but do not completely mirror, the broader macro-level politics of the community and society.

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## **Introduction**

Nearly 20 years ago, both authors had the distinct pleasure of enrolling in Gideon Sjoberg’s graduate class in critical social theory. An urban sociologist recognized for his work on preindustrial cities and sociological methods, Professor Sjoberg spent his entire 60-year career at the University of Texas at Austin. The authors were struck

by his presentation of Foucault's inversion of Mill's principle of utility. Reading passages from *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, the octogenarian revealed how Foucault turned Mill's utilitarian vision of morality on its head by surfacing, as only Foucault could, the subjective character of the common sense of the utility of pain and pleasure.

The authors came to know Dr. Sjoberg a little better prior to completing their studies. He was by his own account something of an odd duck, choosing not to work or socialize much with his departmental colleagues. A night owl, he refused to arrive on campus before noon and worked into the early morning hours. At the time, the authors viewed these as endearing quirks of an academic nonconformist. The authors did not know – nor could they have fully appreciated at that point – that midway into his career Gideon Sjoberg had been the target of a professionally damaging and personally painful academic mobbing of the sort they explore below. This occurred years before the term as it is now applied was coined, but his account of ostracization and degradation offered in *Notes on the life of a tortured optimist* (Sjoberg, 1989) is a textbook case. In this chapter, the authors invoke his example and memory as they seek to make sense of the micropolitics and administrative utility of mobbing.

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## An Overview of Mobbing

A form of workplace aggression, mobbing refers to targeting collective hostility at a colleague with the objective of removal from the organization. The phenomenon is not new, but has only recently garnered professional and academic attention in the USA. This chapter offers an overview of the emergence and evolution of the concept and connect current reports with neoliberal reforms. Recognizing a need to theorize mobbing, a micropolitical perspective is presented that draws on Stephen J. Ball's work on micropolitics and managerialism. Considering mobbing in educational settings undergoing reform, this perspective suggests: (1) neoliberal reforms intended to enhance organizational responsiveness generate conditions of precarity conducive to mobbing; (2) mobbing dynamics may serve managerial ends of organizational control; (3) overlapping and intersecting with microaggressive practices, mobbing may contribute to minoritization and marginalization; and (4) managerial efforts to curb minoritization and marginalization may be more symbolic than substantive and may contribute to rather than counter mobbing conditions.

Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry (2007) define workplace mobbing as “the non-sexual harassment of a coworker by a group of other workers or other members of an organization designed to secure the removal from the organization of the one who is targeted” (p. 398). Borrowing from Garfinkel, Duffy and Sperry (2012) characterize mobbing as a “degradation ceremony” through which members persecute, humiliate, and degrade the target or targets. The description as “degradation ceremony” is reaffirmed by Cornoiu and Gyorgy (2013) who suggest the purpose of mobbing is “professional, psychological and social destruction of the victim” (p. 711) occurring through “a series of persecutions, attacks and humiliations that occur slowly, subtly and persist for a long time” (p. 712).

In contrast to workplace bullying, which has received increased reporting and study, “the problem of workplace mobbing is less well understood, at least in English speaking countries” (Shallcross, Ramsay, & Barker, 2008). Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) suggest that most research on mobbing focuses on the targets and victims and note that the limited knowledge around mobbing and workplace bullying is partly explained by methodological limitations dominated by cross-sectional designs. Issues of definition and reporting frustrate measurement of workplace bullying and mobbing (Keashly, 2018). Surveys in the UK suggest that from 12–50% of the UK workforce experiences bullying (Khoo, 2010, p. 61). Looking across efforts to assess prevalence, Keashly estimates that 7–8% of US workers report being mobbed within the prior 6–12 months and 25% over the course of their career. Moreover, she finds that one-third to one-half of workers encounter aggressive behavior each year which may develop into bullying or mobbing. These figures are concerning in terms of damage to organizational productivity and professional standing, but more so given documented links between mobbing, depression, and suicidal ideation (Nielsen, Nielsen, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2015).

In the opening chapter of the expansive two-volume *Workplace Bullying and Mobbing in the United States*, Yamada, Duffy, and Berry (2018) recount the emergence of organizational bullying and mobbing as topics of professional and academic interest. They note that workplace mobbing is related to a variety of phenomena including workplace bullying, workplace aggression, abusive supervision, harassment and hostile work environment, and workplace incivility. While related and overlapping to a degree, each of these reflects distinctive uses and meanings. Yamada and his colleagues credit journalist Andrea Adams, scholar-activists Gary and Ruth Namie, and European researchers and theorists Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf, and Cary Cooper with bringing *workplace bullying* into public and scholarly consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s. The related phenomenon of *workplace mobbing* derived from foundational work by Swedish psychologist Hans Leymann in the 1980s, further developed by Canadian sociologist Kenneth Westhues in the 1990s. Mobbing was introduced into the US discussions of employee relations by Noa Zanolli Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwartz, and Gail Pursell Elliott in the late 1990s. The first major US work on mobbing did not appear until the 2012 publication by Duffy and Sperry of *Mobbing: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*.

The term mobbing emerged in the literature in relationship to, and is often used interchangeably with, workplace bullying (Sperry, 2009). However, Duffy and Sperry (2012) distinguish mobbing from bullying in its organizational dimensions and situatedness:

Unlike bullying, mobbing is a systemic phenomenon that involves the interplay of organizational, group, and individual dynamics and behavior. Mobbing always includes organizational dynamics and involvement, whereas bullying does not (p. 4).

This organizational involvement is consequential, increasing the severity of mobbing relative to bullying as a function of the extent of collusion and the degree of abusiveness (Sperry, 2009). Bringing focus to the interplay of individual, group,

and organizational behaviors and dynamics, this distinction points to the political – or micropolitical – dimensions of the phenomenon.

Sloan et al. (2010) find that workers in the field of education, along with those in social and health services, are nearly three times more likely to be mobbed than the average worker. Drawing from Crawford (2001) and Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliot (2002), Erdemir, Demir, Yıldırım Öcal, and Kondakçı (2020) describe educational organizations as “mobbing-prone” contexts. For example, Khoo (2010) finds that college and university campuses are common grounds for “nonviolent, polite, sophisticated kind of academic mobbing culture” (p. 61). This seems further borne out in reports of mobbing in schools (Olweus, 1978; Pikas, 1975) and colleges and universities (Erdemir et al., 2020; Frazier, 2011; Hernández-Saca, Martin, & Meacham, 2020; Keim & McDermott, 2010; Khoo, 2010; Minibas-Poussard, 2018; Oravec, 2012; Prevost & Hunt, 2018; Wylie, 2019). Citing neoliberal reforms as a proximate cause, Erdemir et al. argue, “New work patterns and values that came with globalization have inevitably brought strained relationships and abusive work behaviors into the academic context and caused what is referred to as mobbing” (Erdemir et al., 2020, p. 127). These are important insights. However, where Erdemir et al. focus on leadership mitigating mobbing, the focus below is to problematize the ways management may leverage mobbing in those educational reforms.

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## Toward a Micropolitical Theory of Mobbing

Workplace aggression is not new, nor presumably is workplace mobbing (Erdemir et al., 2020). Reflecting on Leymann’s coining of the term, Westhues (2012) observed,

Leymann’s gift to us all was to put a name on this extraordinary process, exhilarating to the perpetrators and terrifying to the target, momentous in the lives of all involved. Having the word *mobbing* in our lexicon lets us recognize and understand bizarre events in our working lives that would otherwise be incomprehensible. (p. viii)

Recognizing the damage and destruction to individuals and organizations, Yamada et al. (2018) caution against devoting undue energy to debating terminology. However, while invaluable, the coining of the term and subsequent evolution of the concept to focus on treating and heading off the trauma have contributed to an undertheorization of the phenomenon (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) argue that

because the scientific study of workplace bullying seems to have arisen from a need to address an important social problem rather than as the result of purely academic and theoretical interest, theories guiding workplace bullying research are therefore relatively few and far between. (p. 77)

In an effort to theorize mobbing, This chapter presents a micropolitical perspective to illuminate the dynamics of mobbing. This approach is informed by the apparent emergence of mobbing as a phenomenon of interest in the wake of a global shift toward

neoliberal management (Erdemir et al., 2020; Vandekerckhove & Commers, 2003). Though the latter is not confined to the USA, the organizational conditions required of mobbing may be common and common sensical in the distinctive American context which valorizes rugged individualism and downplays corporate and employer responsibility (Duffy & Yamada, 2018). In seeking to elucidate the micropolitics of mobbing in the context of those reforms, this chapter draws heavily on the work of UK educational sociologist Stephen J. Ball to situate mobbing within a managerial discourse. This begins with a brief overview of his exploration of micropolitics, managerialism, and neoliberal reforms.

### **Borrowing from Stephen J. Ball: Insights into Micropolitics, Managerialism, and Markets**

Given the organizational emphasis of mobbing, it is instructive to trace a particular line of Ball's work, beginning with his early interest in educational micropolitics, through his Foucauldian analysis of managerialism, to his more recent critiques of neoliberal reforms in education. This approach reveals Ball's project as a consistent, coherent, and incisive analysis of the instrumental and political use of "managerial technologies" to shape educational policy and practice. His exploration, which tracks the prevalence of neoliberal reform logics and associated practices, helps locate mobbing as a specific outgrowth of that evolving form of governmentality.

*Micropolitics:* Ball published *The micro-politics of the school: Towards a theory of school organization* in 1989. Reflective of a growing interest in intraorganizational politics,<sup>1</sup> the book uses UK case studies to call out shortcomings of "system-oriented" theories of organization. Referring to the top-down perspectives and managerial bias of these approaches he asserts,

In this way theories of organization actually become ideologies, legitimations for certain forms of organization...[which] actually close down the possibility of considering alternative forms of organization. (p. 21)

Challenging managerial orthodoxy which treated conflict as counterproductive and pathological, Ball viewed schools as "arenas of struggle" (p. 34) featuring actual and potential conflict over legitimate differences in member interests. He suggested,

once the loose-coupled or anarchic character of schools and their ideological diversity are recognized then the ever-present potential for conflict must also be accepted...These conflicts often call up elements of personal belief and commitment that go beyond technical opinion and beyond individual or group interest, although in many cases philosophies and self-interest develop together in close and interdependent relation. (pp. 31–32).

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<sup>1</sup>The 1980s and 1990s saw a growing interest in the intraorganizational politics of schools that has come to be known as "micropolitics" (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Blase, 1995; Hoyle, 1982; Iannacone, 1991; Lindle, 1994; Malen, 1994; Marshall & Scribner, 1991).

Eschewing management-inflected prescriptions in favor of a rich description, Ball called for pragmatic and critical study of “micropolitical” activity as an expression of member efforts to pursue vested, ideological, and self-interests through control of organizational resources, policies, and agenda. Occupying “an uneasy middle ground between...hierarchical...and member-controlled organizations” schools feature “diverse and contradictory strategies of control” (pp. 24–25).

This attention to intra-organizational conflict and struggle for control offers a window into the personal and interpersonal dynamics of mobbing. Particularly instructive are Ball’s observations regarding the backstage realities and emotional dimensions of organizational life featuring gossip, rumor, and humor as means of social control. As argued below, it is the administrative displacement of conflict to these backstage spaces that “inadvertently reinforce[s] bullying and mobbing behavior” particularly in “[o]rganizational cultures that support a veneer of civility” (Sloan et al., 2010, pp. 91–92).

*Management as moral technology:* The following year, Ball edited the volume *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge* (1990), an early effort to employ Foucauldian analysis to evolving discourses and disciplinary disputes in the field of education. In this text, he theorized administrative bias in schools as a form of what Foucault termed “governmentality.” His chapter “Management as moral technology: A Luddite analysis” examined the role of management in the ongoing reconstruction of teachers’ work. Noting the growing influence of market logics on schooling, he observed “[t]eachers are increasingly subject to systems of administrative rationality that exclude them from an effective say in the kind of substantive decision-making that could equally well be determined collectively” (p. 153). Where his earlier book recognized schools as arenas of struggle over the means, ends, and conditions of work, this chapter emphasized the ways management depoliticized its colonization of that lifeworld:

Management is, *par excellence*, what Foucault calls a ‘moral technology’ or a technology of power...an all-embracing conception of organizational control. It subsists both as a body of theory to be learned and internalized by managers, and as a set of practices to be implemented, encompassing managers and managed. (p. 154)

Noting the instrumental reason inherent in this form of governmentality, Ball suggested, “[m]anagement is a theoretical and practical technology of rationality geared to efficiency, practicality and control. It is a means to an end and its participants are also means” (p. 157). But, “[m]anagement is also an imperialistic discourse. Management theory views the social world as locked into irrational chaos, as needing to be brought into its redeeming order” (p. 157). As such, “Opposition to control, to change, to methods of efficiency, are thus treated as the worker’s problem, typically as a ‘symptom’ of personal dissatisfaction or unfulfilled needs” (p. 158). In this discourse and as discussed below, mobbing functions within a discursive practice of control produced by and directed toward the pathologizing and disciplining of dissent and difference.

*Markets, managerialism, and performativity:* In the 2000s and 2010s, Ball turned attention to the corrosive impact of neoliberal logics animating the managerial

technologies noted in his earlier “Luddite analysis.” He directed attention to the impact and influence of neoliberal reforms that combine technologies of *market*, *managerialism*, and *performance*. Recognizing the role of policy borrowing in the proliferation of neoliberal technologies, Ball (2016) noted that such reforms are neither instituted through sweeping legislation nor do they sweep out existing commitments.

Rather, reform is made up of small, incremental moves and tactics, a ratchet of initiatives and programmes that introduce new possibilities and innovations into policy and practice which, once established, make further moves thinkable and doable, and ultimately make them obvious and indeed necessary. (p. 1048)

Ball’s focus on the personal and interpersonal nature of the incremental moves and tactics of these reforms are of particular importance in understanding the transformational power of these educational management technologies, and the political utility of mobbing,

the crucial aspect of these technologies and the reform process generally is that these are not simply changes in the way we do things or get things done. . . . They do not just change what we do; they also change who we are, how we think about what we do, how we relate to one another, how we decide what is important and what is acceptable, what is tolerable. As I have said already – these changes are both out there, in the system, the institution; and ‘in here’, in our heads and in our souls. (2016, p. 1050)

Discussing impacts of neoliberal reforms, Ball finds schools, colleges, and universities function in a devolved environment incorporating interrelated policy technologies of market, managerialism, and performativity. The latter “is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)” (2003, p. 216).

As the authors have written elsewhere (Maxcy, 2009, 2011; Maxcy, Sungtong, & Nguyen, 2010), the trends Ball and others note express the reform principles and practices encapsulated in the discourse of New Public Management (NPM). Hood (1991), who coined the term, noted argued NPM as a managerial discourse promoted organizational values of efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of values such as resilience and fairness.<sup>2</sup> This shift in and of itself – by generating individual and group anxiety – produces ideal organizational conditions within the ranks for mobbing. However, Ball’s insights into “performativity” as a related reform technology suggests mobbing may be a particular and predictable discursive production in and for neoliberal

<sup>2</sup>“According to Hood NPM does not see the performance of the public sector as something hopeless, but rather as something to be improved, which could be done if it would act similarly as the market sector does, . . . if internally it would become merit-based and careers would be organized on a professional instead of formal-legal basis, if management-objectives would become dominant over legal arrangements, if mobility would increase and flexible work contracts would replace seniority principles, if the bureaucratic ethos would disappear and the emphasis would be on the quality of service delivery and e-government. . . .” (deVries & Nemeč, 2013).



reform environments. To elucidate the micropolitics of mobbing, this chapter examines administrative technologies that emerge around the threats to resilience and fairness.

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## The Micropolitics of Workplace Mobbing: An Exploration

### Generating and Harnessing Precarity: Using Mobbing as Technology of Social Control

Neoliberal reform logics were premised on the benefits of markets to discipline bloated and unresponsive public sector organizations (Hood & Peters, 2004). Early adoption of these logics in education reform occurred through the introduction of market-like forces through systems of performance accountability in the 1990s and early 2000s (Maxcy, 2009, 2011). Over the past 20 years, reforms have increasingly invoked true market pressures. To reduce reliance on public dollars, funding policies for schools, colleges, and universities have been reworked to foster competition for student headcounts and thereby emphasize and reshape the management of client relations. In higher education, this occurs as state legislatures reduce direct appropriations and also shift financial burden to tuition-paying students with the transition from grants to loans. In PK-12 education this occurs as states expand school choice options and increase the availability of public vouchers for private and parochial schools. Invocation of market forces also included the contracting out of services in both arenas (Ball, 2016).

In these marketized environments, organizational choices about recruiting and retaining students or about contracting services become existential questions: *Who are we? Who do we serve? How should we invest our resources? How will we make ends meet?* Neilson (2015) attributed subjective shifts of this sort – shifts from ontological security to existential anxiety – to “circumstantial precarity” derived from trends toward neoliberal organization.

Existential anxiety, understood as mental unease induced by the self-reflexive perception of life’s precarious character, is intensified by the reality of deepening social and material precarity. In contrast, everyday trust in the continuity of life or ontological security is encouraged by circumstantial security (p. 185).

While the anxiety is generalized, Neilson recognizes that responses are varied, complex, and conditioned by a variety of factors.

The questions derived from existential anxiety are also political questions concerning the vested, ideological, and self-interests of the members: *Who wins and who loses when janitorial or food services or curriculum development or professional development are contracted out? What are the implications of our choices for recruiting and retaining teachers, or scholars, or students? Or as Chana Joffe Walt asks in her New York Times podcast, how should we (re)organize a Brooklyn middle school (again and again) to appeal to “Nice White Parents”?*

Devolved to the organization, the choices reflect real and material consequences for individual members. These decisions influence the nature and conditions of work, opportunities for advancement, compensation, as well as determining who is and who is not a member. According to Ball (2003), neoliberal shifts in management mobilize the *terrors of performativity* “as teachers, as ethical subjects, find their values challenged or displaced.” He argues,

the policy technologies of education reform are not simply vehicles for the technical and structural change of organizations but are also mechanisms for reforming teachers (scholars and researchers) and for changing what it means to be a teacher, [to] produce new kinds of teacher subjects. . . . This is the struggle over the teacher’s soul. (p. 217)

By design, markets focus conditions of circumstantial precarity for the organization and the members; poor choices imperil the organization. Using Ball’s terminology, management utilizes a “technology of precarity” generating anxiety to treat the “bureau-pathology” (Kaboolian, 1998) of organizational unresponsiveness.

Recognizing politics as an inherent part of organizational activity, the dynamics intensify as stakes increase, as does the potential for interpersonal conflict to mount, morph, and metastasize. At a minimum, such conditions move the organization toward the more abusive end of the workplace continuum where mobbing becomes more likely (Erdemir et al., 2020; Fernando, 2018; Sperry, 2009).

While organizational politics may be inevitable, the practice of mobbing is not. Thus, it is worth considering whether mobbing is a by-product or a central feature of *a technology of precarity*. Ball’s conception of “management as moral technology” suggests behavior of that sort may be predictable under conditions of precarity. This management “presents itself as an objective, technically neutral mechanism, dedicated only to greater efficiency” (Ball, 1990, p. 157). But, as an “imperialistic discourse” (p. 157) this sort of “cold management” (Bottery, 2003) operates at a distance to establish order as individuals and groups vie for control over policy and resources. In this workplace,

Dissensus or conflict are not necessarily totally ignored. . . but are regarded, within the logic of the paradigm, as aberrant and pathological. In this way oppositional activity within the organization is defined, in terms of the perspectives of the dominant groups, as inherently irrational. . . . The resister is cast as social deviant, and is normalized through coercive or therapeutic procedures. (Ball, 1990, p. 158)

From this perspective, mobbing functions as part and parcel of the disciplinary technology: *a discursive practice condoned if not (indirectly) directed by management to enforce compliance whether through acquiescence or expulsion*. Viewed from outside the organization and with appreciation for the value and dignity of each individual member, mobbing practices such as isolation, humiliation, character assassination, and degradation appear destructive and abhorrent. Within the organization, such “normalizing” actions may be cast by the dominant group – and affirmed by management – as necessary, appropriate, and even ennobling given the potentially destabilizing effect of internal strife which may compromise the

organization's viability and thus the members' and clients' security. If, from a micropolitical perspective, schools are arenas of struggle,

The ground of such struggles is often highly personal. Expressed in the lexicons of belief and commitment, service and even love, and of mental health and emotional well-being. The struggles are often internalized and set the care of the self against duty to others. (Ball, 2016, pp. 216–217)

Through tacit approval or abdication, the “technically neutral” moral technology of management transmutes via mobbing “the terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003) into group discipline. In this way, the impersonal forces of the market, transmitted through the technology of precarity, are embodied in the personal and interpersonal efforts to reform practices and people by targeting, leaning on, and/or pushing out “dissenters” and “deviants.”

It must be emphasized that deviance and dissent are read against dominant group preferences and expectations. The mobbing literature reports victims are often members acting with integrity and in accord with organizational policies, espoused values, legal requirements, and professional norms and principles (Khou, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2018; Sloan et al., 2010; Tigrel & Kokalan, 2009). In such cases, a mobbing presents a tactic in organizational realpolitik that recasts legitimate dissent and challenges to authority and/or orthodoxy as oppositional, uncollegial, and self-serving. “Deviant” members may then be targeted despite acting on principle, making reasonable demands based on the law, formal policy, and/or espoused organizational values, and even when sincerely pursuing the collective interest. While charges of deviance spread through whisper campaigns may not withstand scrutiny, the effectiveness of gossip and rumor as tactics of social control does not depend on veracity of the claims (Ball, 1989). Moreover, advances in communication and social media technologies offer cyber dimensions to workplace bullying and mobbing with enhanced reach, speed, and destructive power (Hladíková, 2020).

### **Fostering and Leveraging Unfairness: Mobbing, Microaggression, and Deniability**

Neoliberal reform discourses value productivity over resilience and fairness (Hood, 1991). The latter has direct and indirect implications for the production and utility of mobbing. The market, management, and performativity generate precarity and with it distrust of the organization and among members. Indirectly, distrust may be a predictable manifestation of the more generalized organizational anxiety resulting from a devaluation of resilience relative to productivity. Responding rationally to the reform logics, members may rightly recognize a weakened organizational commitment to them which contributes to a sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis management. The more Hobbesian organizational conditions that result favor more aggressive and ruthless micropolitical behaviors among members and managers.

In parallel to and compounding the disciplinary dynamics discussed above, members' angst about their relative position and prospects in the organization may corrode interpersonal trust by recasting colleagues as competitors. Unease may fester and grow in contexts where open expression of discontent is disallowed and subject to group discipline as noted earlier. In this way, mounting distrust serves as a counterpart to anxiety in producing a "culture of unhappiness" (Bottery, 2003) and with it those workplace conditions conducive to mobbing (Sperry, 2009). In these contexts, mobbing may reflect responses of pressuring those actively or potentially breaking with the dominant group.

However, the dynamics of distrust derived from job insecurity or concern about professional status and standing may lead to preemptive targeting of rivals and scapegoats. Both are evident in accounts of mobbing (Friedenberg, 2008; Sloan et al., 2010; Westhues, 2004). For instance, the literature finds that mobbing of highly productive members is not uncommon (Khou, 2010). While destructive to the individual and counterproductive to the organization, undercutting a rising star is an unsurprising micropolitical tactic to protect the status of those being outshone and outgrown (Ball, 1989). This play may be rationalized on the grounds that it protects avenues for advancement for "more deserving" members, that is, those from the fold. Relatedly, the mobbing literature reports incidents in which members are singled out for blame for group failures and dysfunctions (Sloan et al., 2010). The resultant mobbing seizes upon and exploits a perceived failure or weakness as grounds for punishment, ridicule, and potential expulsion (Duffy & Sperry, 2012). Regardless of the grounds for the projection, mobbing in the form of scapegoating increases the potency of a well-worn micropolitical tactic of displacing blame.

While predictable, mobbing rivals and scapegoats does not reflect fair play. However, fairness is downplayed relative to productivity in neoliberal reforms, (Hood, 1991). As a result, workplace conditions conducive to mobbing mount at the same time that organizations disinvest in safeguards. As the chapter takes up next, mobbing generated and managed under these conditions take on familiar shapes and targets.

### **Precarity and Microaggressions: Mobbing, Minoritization, and Marginalization**

Noting shifting work patterns and values, Erdemir et al. (2020) suggest reforms associated with globalization result in strained relationships, abusive behaviors, and mobbing in the academy. As past is prologue, it would be surprising if dominant groups did not target more isolated and vulnerable members as markets, management, and performativity combine to intensify organizational anxiety and distrust. In fact, Sloan et al. (2010) report that members of historically marginalized groups, older and younger workers, along with women, are at greater risk for mobbing. Connecting mobbing, marginalization, and microaggressions they suggest the psychological and emotional terrorism characteristic of mobbing are anchored in hate.

Hate speech is one mechanism that can be used to create and maintain the unequal power relationships of bullying and mobbing, particularly when the target is a member of a traditionally marginalized group. Hate speech is designed to harm and silence while creating a context for expanding microaggressions that support the waging of violence that appears normal. (p. 88)

This connection to work by Derald Sue and colleagues (2007) on racial microaggressions is instructive. Elaborating the term coined by Pierce, Sue et al. define racial microaggressions as “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (p. 273). Quoting Sue et al. at length,

Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones. These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous. Yet, as indicated previously, microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they impair performance in a multitude of settings by sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities. . . . (p. 273)

In form and effect, the microaggressions discussed by Sue et al. mirror practices associated with mobbing (Sloan et al., 2010) and represent powerful tools to maintain the social order. Said differently, microaggressive techniques deployed through mobbing produce marginalization and minoritization as instruments of social control.

To be clear, the immediate focus is on the intraorganizational processes of marginalization and minoritization rather than broader societal forms of oppression. However, micropolitics do not simply mirror the politics of their environment, nor can they be wholly extricated from those macropolitics (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Ball, 1989), particularly as these relate to racial politics in education (Larson, 1997; Lopez, 2003). Neoliberal reform dynamics intensify precarity in ways that activate micropolitical efforts to secure positions and prospects as already discussed. Within this vein, microaggressions reflect techniques of control adapted to and from ever-evolving forms and expression of oppression, including racism as well as sexism (Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014), heteronormativity (Sterzing, Gartner, Woodford, & Fisher, 2017), and ableism (Keller & Galgay, 2010).

With regard to racial microaggressions, Sue et al. distinguish the modern symbolic racism of political conservatives from an aversive racism of White liberals. Beyond or in service to belief in white supremacy, the former centers ideologies of individualism and meritocracy which mesh easily with neoliberal reform rhetoric. Whether expressed through *microassaults*, *microinsults*, or *microinvalidations* (Sue et al., 2007), microaggressions animated by individualist and meritocratic narratives valorize the existing order, repudiate would-be complainants as malcontents, and stigmatize those outsiders who enter and/or rise in the ranks as benefiting from unearned advantages.

Sue et al. (2007) contrast these with progressive-appearing “aversive” forms of racism which are perhaps more prevalent among the White liberals who populate

large segments of schools and colleges. These forms combine espoused commitments to egalitarianism with implicit biases based on race, gender, national origin, disability, etc. Despite an uneasy fit of egalitarian ideals with neoliberal logics, these too may fuel mobbing associated with racial microaggressions. That is, while liberal White members may decry competition promoted by neoliberal reforms as inappropriate and unfair, they cannot countenance that they have participated in and benefited from the maintenance of the status quo. Notwithstanding their egalitarian rhetoric, they minoritize and marginalize through microinsults voiced, for instance, as sincere but backhanded compliments, or microinvalidations offered in sympathetic and empty deflections blaming “the Man” or “the system.” Perhaps more insidiously, they respond with outrage if their egalitarian overtures are called out and more so if their motives and positions – ideological or organizational – are challenged. Deflections of this sort facilitate mobbing by maintaining “a toxic work environment that supports a culture of secrecy, rumor, and innuendo and the presence of a veneer that brushes over organizational violence” (Sloan et al., 2010, pp. 91–92). In this way – though on different grounds than their avowedly conservative colleagues – they too police the margins and discipline minority malcontents.

It is worth noting that others – or Others – are also susceptible to holding and acting upon implicit bias, deficit orientations, and stereotype. To be certain, US history and organizational demographics favor White males in this regard (and others) and increasingly White females in educational settings. As the covid-19 pandemic made clear, circumstances of precarity and associated anxiety may be experienced broadly, but the consequences are visited disproportionately on vulnerable members and historically marginalized communities. Similarly, mobbing inflicted upon minoritized and marginalized groups as a consequence of precarity is an entirely predictable by-product of managerialism. Less obvious are the ways precarity may contribute to within-group discipline among both dominant and minoritized/marginalized groups. Likewise, anxiety and vulnerability may increase the potential for mobbing across minoritized and marginalized groups. In these ways, precarity feeds a politics of resentment among members and groups which erodes empathy and undermines efforts to mobilize to improve conditions.

### **Threats to Fairness: Elaborating the Moral Technology**

As suggested above, mobbing is a predictable by-product of neoliberal reforms which create conditions and feelings of precarity among members and groups. The authors have also suggested here and elsewhere (Maxcy, 2009, 2011; Maxcy et al., 2010) that these reforms are channeled through new managerial discourses that value productivity over values of resilience and fairness. Addressing the latter, attention turns here to the ways management as a moral technology addresses – or evades – the concerns of fairness that emerge with precarity and mobbing. From a micro-political view of intergroup conflict, Ball’s language is instructive,

Management theory views the social world as locked into irrational chaos, as needing to be brought into its redeeming order. . . .The language of management deploys rationality and efficiency to promote control; it is a regime of ‘jurisdiction’ and ‘veridiction.’ (p. 156)

Ironically, while neoliberal management in the first instance combines with markets and performativity to intensify precarity, it is positioned in the next as arbiter of the resulting discord playing out among members and groups. While volumes have been written on managing organizational conflict (see Blank, 2020; Rahim, 1986; Roche, Teague, & Colvin, 2016), the chapter will highlight three discursive practices indicative of managerial efforts to moderate, mediate, and mitigate conflict. The first is the promotion of “learning communities” to moderate conflict. The next is use of conflict mediation processes to “work through” member differences. The third is the institution of formal roles and structures to adjudicate and discipline member behavior, particularly as these involve issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion discussed above.

*Moderation.* Interest in professional learning communities in educational organizations grew in the 1990s (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). As discussed by Bottery (2003), the appealing nomenclature belies a managerial inflection of the concept. The appeal capitalizes on the “political utility” of devolved decision-making to manage conflict, enhance efficiency, enhance responsiveness, and/or offer compensatory legitimation displacing blame from management to the rank and file (Malen, 1994; Weiler, 1990). In the 2000s, attention turned to so-called “distributed leadership” approaches (see Gronn, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), many of which featured similar instrumental logics veiled in depoliticized and/or democratic terminology (Hatcher, 2005; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006). As Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers (2007) find regarding the distribution of leadership on teacher teams, managerial responsibility is reduced to striking a proper balance between enabling and disabling levels of autonomy, where team autonomy is defined in terms of organizational outcomes. Similarly, the authors found that managerial tolerance for distributed leadership expressed by teacher teams serving Vietnamese and Latinx communities depended on perceived congruence with administrative prerogatives (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006; Nguyen & Maxcy, 2015; 2020).

In conditions of precarity, this “cool management” (Bottery, 2003) approach simultaneously erodes organizational trust and the already fragile professional standing of educators. While PLCs and distributed leadership may emerge from common purpose and reflect norms of collegiality, the terms and conditions of membership merit scrutiny. Group and community discipline may be enforced by the specter if not the practice of mobbing.

*Mediation.* If promising gains in productivity, professional community and distributed leadership also hold potential for conflict among members and across teams – particularly in conditions of precarity. When this occurs, management as a moral technology channels conflict toward particular resolutions. “As a counsel of perfection and as an epitome of efficient form, management stands in tension with its imperfect servants. . . .prone to irrationality, atavistic practices, and surfeits of



emotion” (Ball, 1990, p. 158). Commonly Presented as “above the fray” and “seeing the big picture,” management simultaneously signals its neutrality as a virtue and pathologizes conflict as it “looks out for the greater good.” As it pertains to mobbing, this discursive practice effectively incentivizes acquiescence among the parties and stigmatizes any who persist as self-serving. To press in calls for fair treatment, for instance, is to place one’s personal (or group’s) interests above those of the organization as a whole. But this also reveals the constricted terms of mediation. Management is not disinterested, but establishes and reinforces particular terms of resolution by portraying ongoing conflict as a threat to efficient operation and ultimately to organizational viability. As discussed above, conditions of precarity enable and ennoble management’s invocation of mobbing as a form of coercion by proxy to bring recalcitrant members into line.

*Mitigation.* A disclaimer is appropriate prior to examining structures and processes to advance organizational fairness and justice. The interest here is not to question the value of diversity, equity, or inclusion to the organization or to its members; very much the contrary. Likewise, there is no implied judgment about the sincerity or integrity of professionals championing those values and/or charged with administrative responsibility for those. Rather, the objective is to trouble the common sense of that which is taken as normal, natural, innocent, or inherently good and right. In particular, the effort is to surface and consider implications of contradictory managerial logics contained (or retained) in the elaboration of the moral technology through what they term specific fairness technologies and more collectively as a fairness infrastructure. The specific assertion is that while this elaboration is a logical managerial extension with significant “political utility” (Weiler, 1990), its value in mitigating mobbing is limited.

There are instances in which conflict over fair treatment produces new managerial roles and procedures. Management may face demands to address persistent conflict premised on grounds not easily dismissed. For instance, management is legally bound to intervene when members of protected classes face harassment and hostile working conditions. Inaction is not simply a moral failure, but may be a violation of federal law which poses real and material risks for the manager and the organization. Thus, the drift toward a more abusive or hostile workplace conducive to mobbing – conditions intensified through neoliberal reforms – presents a managerial dilemma. As discussed above, management may be inclined in the name of efficiency to allow or even encourage those who benefit from the dominant order to discipline discontented members. However, failure to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to coercion that violates a member’s rights as defined in law and policy invites investigation, legal action, and sanctions. Given alignment of reform logics and ideological commitments noted above, mobbing of those in protected classes poses a predictable and potentially costly outcome.

Consistent with the managerial logic, the dilemma may be addressed administratively through elaboration of the moral technology. To lessen the risk that operational managers ignore or mishandle particular types of conflict, organizations create dedicated roles and procedures to manage such conflicts. These are often made the



concern of offices for human resources and personnel management (Daniel, 2018) and may become the purview of separate offices dedicated to promoting equal opportunity and advancing organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion. In either case, personnel with commitment and professional expertise are charged with developing and implementing programming to promote those values, to ensure legal and policy compliance, and to limit the organization's liability. Ideally, this occurs through proactive measures such as fostering and securing collective commitment, institution of clear procedures, and appropriate training. However, recognizing the potential for violations – particularly given the conditions generated through neoliberal reforms – necessarily includes processes to investigate, adjudicate, sanction, and remediate through technical assistance.

As outlined above, management as moral technology trades on its apparent objectivity and technical neutrality as an arbiter of conflict. In that regard, investments in the *fairness infrastructure*—which refers here to the array of administrative offices, policies, and procedures for addressing workplace mistreatment and inequity—hold political utility via compensatory legitimation (Malen, 1994; Weiler, 1990) even the range of responses (or especially) when these are more symbolic than substantive. Nonetheless, that legitimacy is more tenuous and fragile in the elaboration of more discrete, specific policies, procedures, and practices—termed here *fairness technologies*—which will be perceived and valued differently according to the ideological commitments of members and groups. For political conservatives, the institution of these fairness technologies confirms the inability of “protected” members to compete without coddling. For those progressives prone to aversive racism, these pique paranoia that their privileges will be called out and their egalitarian bona fides called into question. For allies, these will be championed as necessary but insufficient protections for vulnerable colleagues. Most ironically, those vulnerable colleagues face a Catch-22: the potential to invoke the wrath of those served by the dominant order dissuades any open appeal for intervention except as a last resort, when in the case of a mobbing much if not all has already been lost.

Given its dependence on perceived legitimacy, this ambivalence and dissensus undermines the fairness infrastructure if not rendering it impotent. In the first instance, policing fair treatment will be read as counter to the interest of the more numerous and powerful members of dominant groups and thereby exacerbating conditions of precarity. As aggressors become more aware, vigilant, and anxious, their microaggressions are less likely to dissipate than to become more subtle, coded, shaded, and pointed. At the same time, the grounding of microaggressions in stereotype and pervasive deficit orientations (Sue et al., 2007) will contribute to the resonance of gossip, rumor, and humor deployed at the expense of those deemed to be outsiders. As a result, the risk to benefit ratio limits the appeal of any particular fairness technology for those minoritized and marginalized members for whom the infrastructure promises protection.

Ironically, overtures to fair process intended to curb ambivalence and legitimate the approach may further erode effectiveness. As noted, engaging fairness technologies presents risks for minoritized and marginalized members that may exacerbate victim angst and trauma. For instance, formalization of a complaint of bullying, harassment, or mobbing forces the victim to reveal and recount painful experiences,

which may be traumatic in and of itself. However, complainants must also contend with the prospect that claims will be doubted and dismissed, or worse, that they will be deemed culpable upon review and relitigation of every behavior. Further, victims face threshold expectations that complaints merit organizational attention and intervention, demanding significant investment in documentation while enduring ongoing hostility.

A sense of foreboding on the part of victims is not misplaced given conflicting responsibilities of HR offices to members and the organization (Daniel, 2018). The mobbing literature and resolution statistics suggest administrators take on the prejudices of the perpetrators and may perceive victims as paranoid and refer them for counseling (Leymann, 1990). These dynamics undercut both the effectiveness of, and confidence in, legal protections for victims and allies intended to prevent retaliation for reporting harassment. This may also raise doubts regarding the objective of the counseling referral, deterring victims from seeking support.

A hallmark of fair play, investigation by an objective and disinterested party is neither neutral nor innocent in cases of mobbing, particularly when the effort to know is shaped by epistemological racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997). In calling for investigation, the victim invites scrutiny of the administrative gaze and instrumental eye. In the name of documenting the violations, this objectifying practice invades and exposes the victim's private world, making public the "hidden transcripts" and "arts of resistance" (Scott, 1990) that the "prudent sub-altern" enacts to survive, thrive, and subvert domination (Nguyen & Lee, 2013; Nguyen & Maxcy, 2020). Paradoxically, breaking silence and stripping back the veneer of collegiality to document patterns of harassment and hostility commonly invite characterizations of hypersensitivity, uncollegiality, and paranoia – and invite mobbing (Sloan et al., 2010). Such efforts, which effectively eliminate any doubt about the identity of the complainant, may even be recast as aggression toward the colleagues who targeted them.

Given the nature and use of microaggressions to minoritize and marginalize, perceptions that complaints will be misread and mishandled are not misplaced. Victims who have been singled out, demeaned, gossiped about, and gaslighted have ample grounds for distrust. A common feature of mobbing is denial and deniability by those in positions of responsibility.

In a mobbing that, by definition, takes place within the shelter of an organization, the organization provides maximum deniability for wrongdoings visited on employees, students, or other organizational members. The claims of "I didn't know what was going on," "I was in the dark and didn't have all the facts at my disposal," and "I didn't do anything" are commonly heard responses by organizational representatives in positions of responsibility. Organizational deniability combined with moral righteousness of perpetrators in a mobbing makes for a very dangerous cocktail. (Duffy & Sperry, 2012, p. xii)

As discussed by Daniel (2018), the potential of human resource offices to intervene is compromised by multiple and conflicting responsibilities and risks facing HR professionals. As a result, members face a very real dilemma in reporting bullying and mobbing to human resources given the role of the latter in protecting managerial and organizational interests. She notes, "There is all too often some truth

to that perception,” that HR sided “with management in some of the worst workplace bullying situations brought to their attention” (p. 237).

If claims of sexual assault or harassment are commonly dismissed and discounted as “he said/she said” incidents, the “I said/they said” character of mobbing claims face even steeper odds. As the authors have written elsewhere, marginalized and minoritized groups face real risks when acts of “creative non-compliance” to evade social control are revealed (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006), even or especially when these reveal lapses in understanding of the “powers that be” (Nguyễn & Maxcy, 2020). For these reasons, the micropolitical dynamics of mobbing do not engender confidence in the prospects of an investigation or the possibilities of favorable outcomes for the mobbed, minoritized, and/or marginalized.

In these ways, the tools intended to protect may further isolate, alienate, and expose victims and ironically or by design this contributes to organizational deniability. As discussed below, this is a function of instrumental logics featured in managerialism specifically, and neoliberal reform more generally. The conclusion draws on Chantal Mouffe’s insights in an effort to suggest how this apparent inevitability might be otherwise.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

### Mobbing in Reforming Educational Settings: More than Coincidence

Neoliberal reforms reshape delivery of public sector services with markets, management, and performativity. The resulting precarity creates space for and makes use of the practice and specter of mobbing to transmit market pressures into personal and interpersonal interactions. Arguably – or perhaps more visibly to us as academics and educational researchers – the impacts seem particularly pronounced in schools, colleges, and universities where egalitarian traditions and sensibilities are revered if not practiced. Schools, colleges, and universities are targets of those reforms and, historically, have also been notoriously difficult, if not impervious, to reform. The relevant literature suggests that these spaces are common and inviting spaces for mobbing.

While neoliberal reforms are a global phenomenon, there are particular aspects of the American context which may predispose US organizations to mobbing (Duffy & Yamada, 2018). These include ideologies valorizing individualism and markets and undercutting collectivist action on labor. The USA also has a long and troubled history with racism and white supremacy along with traditions of patriarchy, xenophobia and nativism, religious intolerance, ableism, and heteronormativity. These have been effectively leveraged over the past 30 years to shape legal and policy frameworks which indemnify corporations, disinvest in public infrastructure, and erode social safety nets. The result is an intensification and normalization of conditions of precarity that make mobbing more predictable and administratively useful.

While terminology varies there have been some inroads into legislating anti-bullying and anti-mobbing policies in Europe, Canada, Australia, and Japan (Cobb, 2018).

However, this work is in its infancy in the USA (Cobb, 2018; Yamada, 2018) with proposals focused on protections from unhealthy workplaces garnering some limited traction at the local and state levels. It is troubling but not surprising that the few state and count codes offering protection from abusive workplaces focus on the personal culpability of perpetrators, obligations of victims and bystanders, and in some instances using those to effectively create employer safeguards (Yamada, 2018). Protections require alignment of personal and organizational responsibility and liability. This occurs, for instance, when universities address Title IX responsibilities by requiring employees as responsible parties to immediately report sexual misconduct. This interrupts the active suspension of conscience by bystanders and activates organizational responsibility (de Mink as cited in Sloan et al., 2010). Such approaches are promising, but not panaceas. As discussed, the approach faces additional challenges with regard to mobbing. Bystanders – and even HR professionals (Daniel, 2018) – may fear becoming a target, may lack confidence to report given challenges specifying the behaviors, may feel some culpability based on active or passive participation, and/or may infer tacit managerial approval of the mobbing. This contributes to the dynamic of deniability in mobbing-prone organizations (Duffy & Sperry, 2012).

### **Mobbing, Minoritization, and Marginalization: Radical Possibilities inferred from Mouffe**

While precarity may be a generalized phenomenon, it is important to recognize that it is experienced differently across and within organizations. This chapter has borrowed and built upon Ball's metaphor of "moral technology" to highlight how the administrative narrative "virtu-izes" amorality and fetishizes the impersonal and objective administrative gaze. This story not only permits but valorizes the application of dehumanizing instrumental reason which recasts members as objects to be managed, subjugates the individual to the corporate, and treats difference as aberrant and a problem to be solved. In the account offered here, the administrative gaze associated with neoliberal reform isolates and individualizes, induces, and leverages precarity, and normalizes mobbing, minoritization, and marginalization as inevitable, unpleasant, but ultimately manageable dynamics.

Ball's terminology is clearly ironic. Administration qua technology is neither moral nor immoral. Administrators like all members may act morally (and immorally), but administration operated as technology is amoral. It functions without conscience; whatever conscience or morality possesses an organization derives from the consciousness of its members and expresses the working out of their collective values. To quibble with Mitt Romney, corporations are not people, but they are peopled. Of concern are the ways that these logics engender a self-discipline among members which depends on the active suspension of conscience, whether to participate in the mobbing or to withhold aid to the victim. It is in those ways that members convey market forces into the personal and interpersonal, that thereby become instruments of the reforms.

But organizations even amid conditions of precarity can be spaces of hope. Viewed through the moral technology, incidents of mobbing in these hopeful spaces are dispiriting aberrations amenable to managerial correction through improved control produced through the fairness infrastructure discussed above. A more humane view might recognize victims as “canaries in the coalmine” calling out a precarious climate that has become toxic to some and dangerous for all. Accounts of mobbing reflect breathtaking acts of dehumanization, cruelty, and trauma: organized and intentional efforts to isolate, demean, and degrade a colleague often to the point of depression, despair, departure, and suicidal ideation. And these closely resemble the marginalizing and minoritizing microaggressions routinely deployed to keep colleagues of color, women, LGBTQ+ colleagues, and others “in their place.” And all reflect instrumental reductions of others – and Others – to objects to be managed rather than colleagues worthy of respect and dignity.

Spaces of hope envision and seek out conditions for individual and collective flourishing (Harvey, 2000). Such provisional spaces are avowedly political and cognizant of the productive and destructive circulation of power. Eschewing preoccupation with managing difference as a problem, difference is recognized if not celebrated for what problems it may solve and/or resolve into. If the vision is utopian, the pursuit occurs in and through the personal, interpersonal, and quotidian. As such, it is the human and humane counterpart to “Management [as] an all-embracing conception of organizational control” (Ball, 1990, p. 156) – what Habermas (1987) terms the emancipatory intent.

In contesting the inevitability of a drift into a Hobbesian world, Mouffe’s agonistic vision is very instructive (Mouffe, 2000). Calling for a return to the political, Mouffe rejects a Rawlsian consensual approach to democracy grounded in his vision of justice and fairness which offers no place for the adversary and opposition. Likewise, she takes issue with Habermas’ incorporation of systems theoretic reformulation of critical theory. However well intended, she demonstrates that his effort to account for and manage power differentials forms at its logical conclusion a totalizing and stultifying system. In contrast, Mouffe’s proposal recognizes the potential of and for radical democracy realized through politics. She does not hold fairplay and justice as preconditions of collective action. Rather, her agonistic vision recognizes the inevitability – and the right – of others to differ and emphasizes the syncretic possibilities difference may yield through political action. This view rescues and reanimates opponents; they are not objects to be managed, dominated, or annihilated, but worthy adversaries with whom to engage, argue, and struggle – and also to afford respect and dignity.

Mouffe (2000) is not naïve to the ways structural power dynamics shaped by historical conditions advantage some at the expense of others. These form the bases for individual and group differences in interest, material, ideology, etc. Neither is she naïve regarding the administrative efforts to neutralize these, a conclusion borne out historically and also notably with the purported “end of history” (Fukuyama, 2006). Thus, her call for a return to the political centers self-determination in a non-teleological working out of the terms and conditions of individual and community flourishing.

In this vision, administration has a role to play in the collective determination of the terms of and approaches to flourishing. But it is not and cannot be portrayed as above and outside the political. As such, administrative acts must be subject to scrutiny and critique with regard to whose interests are served and what values are advanced through the technology. How are the administrative levers involved in determining “who gets what, when, and how?” (Lasswell, 1936) as well as the ways these depoliticize to occlude who is not getting what and why not? (López, 2003).

## The Political Utility of Mobbing

The earlier ornithological references to odd ducks, night owls, and coalmining canaries were neither accidental nor innocent. The term “mobbing” as applied to organizational behavior was drawn initially from the work of ornithologist and ethologist Konrad Lorenz. Lorenz used the term to describe the surprising behavior of herbivorous geese to collectively attack and drive off predators. It is not improper to recognize or theorize analogs between human behaviors in an organization and those of a gaggle of geese – or a murder of crows or an ambush of tigers. But to project a moral equivalence – or lack thereof – merits careful scrutiny, particularly as that may be taken up in the “human sciences.” Invoking parallels to animal behavior carries an implied judgement of such actions as bestial, barbaric, uncivilized, or even pathological.

A mobbing undoubtedly, and by design, is characterized by incivility; it may derive from psycho- or sociopathologies. However, to view it solely as aberrant, pathological, and unproductive is to deny or obscure its political dimensions and political utility. Mobbing is political, even or especially when management simultaneously activates, depoliticizes, and denies it. In drawing attention to interests, conflict, and power, a micropolitical view helps foreground and make sense of the backstage interplay of individual, group, and organizational dynamics. To be clear, the intent here is not to legitimize mobbing. Rather, the centering of the political is intended to shed light on the instrumental use of the practice – implemented as a moral technology – as a form of social control to shape and manage the reform of educational work and workers. Tracing the circulation of power, this perspective also makes visible the political utility of overtures to fairness which offer management compensatory legitimation and contribute to organizational deniability.

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# Neoliberalism, Education Policy, and Leadership Observations

# 56

Karen Starr

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## Abstract

“Neoliberalism” has become society’s dominant organizing framework influencing all aspects of life, including education – its purposes, underpinning values, policies, discourses, practices, and leadership. This chapter explains the origins and major tenets of neoliberalism and the attendant intersecting influences of globalization and free market economics. It documents how neoliberalism emerged as a prevailing force, why and how education policy has become caught up in neoliberal pursuits, and responds to foundational questions such as: “what are education’s purposes?” “whose interests do they serve?” and “what are the effects on practice?” The chapter then focuses more specifically on neoliberalism’s effects on leadership practice and canvasses both intended and predictable outcomes, as well as unexpected consequences.

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**Keywords**

Neoliberalism · Education leadership · Education policy · Globalization · Free market economics · Policy discourses · Policy effects

**The field of memory**

Keynesian economics; the interventionist state; centralized bureaucratic power and authority; social welfare policies; state-provided and controlled service provision; policy commitments to social justice, inclusion, diversity and equity; education conceived primarily as a “common good.”

**The field of presence**

The logic of *free*, unfettered market liberalism within competitive globalization; neoliberalism as the attendant policy partner for the global free market; governments’ non-interference with market forces; small government; social justice as anathema to free market operation; revised education policies, purposes, values, and practices.

**The field of concomitance**

The valorization of market economic discourses as the basis for social theory; public sector reform, new public administration and corporate management; external audit and compliance accountabilities (imported from classical economics, the business/corporate/private sector).

**Discontinuities and ruptures**

The neoliberal hegemony disruption of long-accepted assumptions about education’s underlying values; education leadership positioned as the means for neoliberal agenda enactment; mandated accountabilities ensuring control and impact amidst institutional autonomy; inherent incompatibilities and disruption in education practice and leadership.

**Critical assumptions**

Neoliberal reform agendas frustrate traditional education aims and purposes; the adoption of neoliberal education policy similarities across international borders; education leaders’ work situated at the cross-hairs of macro and meso neoliberal policy aims/agendas and micro realities as they mediate policy, accountability mandates, and responsibilities for institutional outcomes, with considerations concerning the educational interests of students.

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**Introduction**

Since the 1980s, neoliberalism has been a major theme in scholarly texts on education, particularly in relation to policy and leadership. Definitions and information about neoliberalism’s origins, however, usually receives scant if any attention. This chapter

goes back to basics, focusing on the powerful triumvirate of globalization, the free market and neoliberalism, and unpacking the new wave of subsequent politics, economics, and social discourses that have been embraced across developed democracies as the organizing framework for society, including education and other social services. It discusses neoliberalism's history and origins, including the role of the state as a prime mover behind impacts on education policy, practices, and leadership.

Globalizing policy discourses have created similarities in education policy "reforms" around the westernized world – sometimes referred to as the global education reform movement (GERM) (see Murgatroyd & Sahlberg, 2016) – with "policy" being processes and outcomes (Ball, 1994) embodying political influences from formulation through to practice. Policy discourses morph as they circulate over time, with remnants of traditional conventions and discourses and further contextual variations (historical, geographical, political, economic, cultural, and technological) influencing local policy enactment. As a bottom line, policies attempt to legitimate certain values and behaviors, which behooves educators to ask – what and whose values and towards what ends?

Throughout the developed world, governments of varying political hues have instigated similar albeit nuanced structural reforms in response to intensified global economic competition, which have constantly fortified a globalized laissez-faire economic and neoliberal policy hegemony (see Starr, 2019). Policies, practices, and leadership discourses and behaviors have adapted and adjusted to align with market imperatives, including in education. In so doing, education's role in national economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness has assumed primacy over its individual, civic, or social benefits.

First, the history and indissoluble links between globalization, the free market, and neoliberalism are interrogated below (see also Starr, 2019). Each component of this intricate and inextricably linked triumvirate is discussed in turn, demonstrating how they work in unison. The chapter then turns to neoliberalism's effects on education policy and leadership practice.

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## Globalization

Globalization is the defining feature of our time, yet it is not new. Definitions are contested, but globalization's main features concern greater world interdependence and the breakdown of regional, national, and cultural boundaries and moves away from national "protected" economies towards "free" world trade and markets (see Al-Rhodhan & Stoudmann, 2006). Recent forms of globalization have stimulated an exponential rise in global flows of capital, people, goods, services, information, and culture, with English as the international lingua franca, aided by interconnected globalized infrastructure: ubiquitous technologies, transport, banking systems with rapid diffusion of knowledge, information and ideas as time and space across the planet are compressed.

Globalization is a fluid, unfinished project that morphs and adapts to world events, recalibrations of power and shifting circumstances, making complexity, change, and uncertainty the new normal. Globalization encapsulates multifarious processes; it is both cause and effect, and ubiquitous. Globalization unsettles

modernist and western-centric assumptions that underpinned life for most of the last century, as rapid change defies prevailing customs, antagonizes established thinking, traditions and assumptions, and fundamentally alters the way we live, work, produce, consume, and behave.

Globalization shapes the behaviors of nation states, governments, corporations, institutions, communities, families, and individuals with regular “re-forms” serving changing political and economic imperatives.

Globalization’s complex forces and processes incorporate so many dimensions to be neatly summed up in the term “globalization” – but its combined effects profoundly influence power relations between and within countries and amongst peoples. Effects are positive and negative, there are winners and losers, but no one is unaffected (Chomsky, 1999; Hertz, 2001). Without us even being aware of it, globalization profoundly influences everything and everyone – the onset of Covid-19 demonstrating how no human being on earth can escape globalization’s labyrinthine tendons.

Recent backlashes against globalization demonstrate rising dissatisfaction among some groups, such as the rise of religious and cultural fundamentalisms, anti-establishment movements, the rise of geo-politicism and populist forms of nationalism, demonstrations against governments and transnational corporations, conflicts and terrorism, concerns about rising poverty and wealth concentrations, environmental degradation, and species extinction – while coming to global consensus on urgent issues affecting the entire planet escapes consensus.

In education, globalization has created more mobile student and educator populations; greater cultural, linguistic, religious, and age diversity; policy fluidity as pursuits in one region are adopted in others, with governments everywhere becoming more interventionist, expecting increased productivity, and greater return on investment (see Litz, 2011).

Globalization changes the nature and focus of education policy discourses in teaching, learning, leadership, education business, governance, and institutional relationships with the state (see Ball, 1994). Education policy discourses have increasingly subsumed economic imperatives to achieve national objectives, focusing on enhancing national competitiveness and productivity in a global marketplace by increasing knowledge yield and ensuring a well-educated, effective, productive workforce and citizenry.

Globalization is aided by a free economic market – one freed from restrictions, regulation, and red tape – a topic to which we now turn.

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## Free Market Economics

Current global economic structures are based on ideas emanating from liberal theorists from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, Alfred Marshall, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and Friedrich Hayek, whose ideas have been revised to produce the free market economy we experience today.

At the basis of economic theories are assumptions about human nature and emotions. Adam Smith's works (1759, 1776) provide clear examples, suggesting that economic activity is underpinned by two essential human motivations: "self-interest" – individuals' basic motivations to pursue their own needs and desires, and "fellow-feeling" – regard and care for other individuals, including community connections and the social "good."

Free market economic theory contends that individuals pursuing their self-interests spur production, consumption, and competition for goods and services (Smith, 1776). The market as a place of exchange assumes that individuals will rationally weigh up all options in making transactions that meet their needs and interests. This is the notion of "Rational Economic Man" (REM) indicating the market's contingency on individual rational agency in buying and selling, consuming, and producing (see Marginson, 1997). Individuals seeking to meet their personal needs and wants heighten demand for quality and encourage innovation and invention among suppliers/producers. The market rewards successful entrepreneurs if innovation satisfies consumer needs and demand and, therefore, incentivizes entrepreneurialism. This in turn encourages "progress" through continual improvements and, as other market players emulate good ideas, through competition via cheaper consumer prices.

Competition is a natural outcome of trade as the market enables individuals to choose the best quality for the best price, whether this be the choice of workers, internet providers, or schools. Similarly with employment – individuals "sell" their labor capabilities in the market of exchange. The best employees raise overall quality because their work will be sought after and raises consumer expectations about the quality of goods or services provided (see Butler, 1983).

On a larger scale, in the free market, organizations, communities, and nations pursue their self-interests in the same way.

These ideas lead to the main tenet of the free market: that the economic social order or any facet of social life is not the result of extensive human design or intervention but is the result of unplanned market machinations between individuals. The social order is thus unplanned and unpredictable, but produces its own natural liberty resulting in better outcomes including raising everybody's living standards – an idea often referred to as the market's "trickle-down" effect. Without obstruction to the natural market order, everyone benefits although some will gain more than others. Hutton (1995, p. 169) explains:

The stated objective has been to improve efficiency, raise economic growth and so advance the welfare of all. Those at the top of the pile may do especially well, but the argument is that their enhanced efforts will improve the lot of those at the bottom of the income scale – who will do better under this system than any other.

This thinking underpins the free market mantra: "a rising tide lifts all boats."

Free market proponents believe that interference or interventions by the state (the national political community or government and its agencies) disrupt the market's naturally occurring spontaneous order because they interrupt the prices and trends that serve as indicators of demands for, and availability (supply) of, goods and

services. Being opposed to an interventionist state, free market proponents encourage private ownership of property and the means of production as issues of sovereign freedom and individual enterprise. Human nature is the integral component – the free will of individuals creates free market operations for the common good, whereas incursions disincentivize individual effort, competition, inventiveness, entrepreneurialism, and efficiency (Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1976).

Over the past few decades, the economic views of Nobel prize-winning Friedrich Hayek have been privileged by most post-industrial capitalist economies. Hayek viewed the market in terms of a game – a game of life requiring skill and luck for wealth creation. He named this the game of “catallaxy,” derived from the Greek *katalatto* – the process of exchange or “the order brought about by the mutual adjustment of many individual economies in a market” (Hayek, 1976, pp. 108–109). Butler explains:

...the market system is... a ‘game’ of exchange... What goals will be achieved first, and to what degree each player will benefit... is... unknown at the beginning... it is only a measure of doubt about the outcome which makes the activity interesting and worthwhile, stimulating people to take risks and make efforts which, in the market system, benefit others as well... the most we can do is set the rules fairly so that there is an equal chance for everyone to benefit... (1983, p. 45)

## The Role of the State

In post-industrial countries, the state has bedrock needs deriving essentially from the needs of capital – it supports capital accumulation and economic growth requiring the promotion of production and consumption. Key strategic alliances, trade agreements, and foreign policy projects are thus formed to secure state advantages. As a bottom line, the state wants to ramp up production and consumption, increase exports, reduce imports, and expand GDP (gross domestic product) to foster economic “growth.”

From a free market perspective, the role of government concerns the protection of individual freedoms through law and order and national defense, with taxation being low with a limited “safety net” social welfare spending targeted to those unable to provide for themselves (Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1976).

A “free” market calls for a “rolled-back” state (a lean and efficient public sector with many previous functions and services outsourced to the private sector) – also referred to as “small government” – that enables and supports both free market operations and the sovereignty of individuals. Further, “small” government or the “minimal” state negates government interference and disruption to the natural “spontaneous market order” (see Hutton, 1995). The state itself becomes “anti-state.”

In free market thinking, national governments best serve the market by reducing “red tape” (regulation) and anti-competitive policies and behaviors enabling trade and workforce flexibility to meet dynamic market needs (Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1976). (For example, businesses may transfer capital, resources, and infrastructure



anywhere in the world to ensure lower wages, production costs, and taxes. Some create “efficiencies” by eliminating traditional workers and workplaces altogether through virtual business.)

The state interferes, however, when reduced levels of taxation from business and industry “efficiencies” (cost savings) affect government budgets and the subsequent quantum available for spending on public services and infrastructure – including essential services like education. Hence, governments play the efficiency game themselves – instigating structural reforms such as reducing its public sector workforce (bureaucracy), reducing funding to public institutions, services and social benefits, emphasizing efficiency, productivity, requiring service “users” to contribute to costs (user-pays principles), selling public assets, outsourcing public work, or developing public-private partnerships to build and manage public infrastructure.

Given the size of public expenditure, education is often the focus of the state’s “efficiencies,” with governments seeking cost savings, greater returns on investment (ROI), and better value for money (VFM) (Starr, 2012). The state is pressured to get out of the market’s way, but the state also deems education to be compulsory to secure the benefits of an educated population. Hence, to ensure quality, it guarantees, funds, monitors, and regulates education and its operations. States produce policy to meet national aims but amidst competing interests. Many free market proponents would prefer the state to disentangle from expensive education provisioning by leaving this to the private sector or requiring individuals to meet costs themselves.

To function optimally, the global free market requires the state to develop and pursue a sympathetic and enabling policy philosophy and stance – including education. This requirement is discussed in the following section.

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## Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is the foot servant of global free market capitalism providing the ideological policy climate for promoting market practices aiding consumption, production, improvement, innovation, and investment (Starr, 2019). Meaning “new liberalism,” there is no one neat and true meaning that can be ascribed to the word “neoliberalism.” It is an assemblage of complex and interlinked political, economic, and social philosophies underpinned epistemically by the fundamental belief in the free market as the most efficient and effective means of organizing all aspects of life (Birch, Tyfield, & Chiappetta, 2018).

Hayek’s views underpin what we refer to as neoliberalism which encapsulates a strident resurgence of classical laissez-faire economic policy, a doctrine of sovereign individualism, market competition, human choice, and human capital theories, a circumvention of state interventionism, and emphasizing investment, development, and entrepreneurialism. Neoliberalism infiltrates economic coordination, social distribution, and personal motivation, with governments’ role being to protect individual freedoms while bolstering individual responsibility, obligation, and accountability.

Neoliberalism is described as “elusive,” “fluid,” “impossible to define,” while its definitions in social sciences are criticized for being evaded, scant, inconsistent,

misguided, lacking precision, or morally-laden (see Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009; Mudge, 2008; Stiglitz, 2012). Venugopal argues:

There is no contemporary body of knowledge that calls itself neoliberalism, no self-described neoliberal theorists that elaborate it, nor policy-makers or practitioners that implement it. There are no primers or advanced textbooks on the subject matter, no pedagogues, courses, or students of neoliberalism, no policies or election manifestoes that promise to implement it (although there are many that promise to dismantle it). (Venugopal, 2015, p. 5)

Those described as “neoliberals” rarely use the term to describe themselves or their policies – it is a term that “dares not speak its own name” (Venugopal, 2015, p. 5). As such:

... neoliberalism is defined, conceptualized, and deployed exclusively by those who stand in evident opposition to it, such that the act of using the word has the two-fold effect of identifying oneself as non-neoliberal, and of passing negative moral judgment over it. Consequently, neoliberalism often features, even in sober academic tracts, in the rhetorical toolkit of caricature and dismissal, rather than of analysis and deliberation. (Venugopal, 2015, p. 5)

Despite definitional difficulties, essentially “neoliberalism” is “a broad indicator of the historical turn in macro-political economy” (Venugopal, 2015, p. 15).

## Origins

Neoliberalism emanates from different schools of thought from different points in history in various parts of the world. There is little agreement about exact origins or the timing of its re-emergence in recent times.

Birch (2017) cites origins in an article by Armstrong (1884) describing neoliberalism as a new form of liberalism endorsing economic interventions by the state – the opposite conception to its current iteration, and Gide in 1898 supporting free competition as the best means of producing maximum pleasure and indulgence for the greatest number of people – a view similar to the meaning ascribed to neoliberalism today.

Waddock (2016) believes neoliberalism emerged as a major influence in western democracies at the 1947 economists’ meeting in Mont Pelerin, Switzerland. Attendees, including Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, and George Stigler, expressed concerns about government interference in individual freedoms and free enterprise. Participants’ described neoliberalism as we mostly understand it now, resolving to promote ideals of individual freedom, private rights, and a free market in their home countries.

Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) suggest “neoliberalism” emanated from the German Freiberg School, which also referred to neoliberalism as “ordoliberalism” (from the Latin “*ordo*” meaning “order”), and entered scholarly usage in twentieth century Europe between the two world wars. The Freiberg neoliberals believed

classical liberalism was outdated and wanted government intervention to be tempered with legislation, regulation, re-distributory, or “ordered” policies to counter the free market’s worst effects. Endorsing social justice and opposing market fundamentalism, the Freiberg School rejected unfettered free market proponents (e.g., Mises, Friedman, and Hayek) as “paleo-liberals.” The Freiberg form of neoliberalism corresponded more closely to what we now refer to as “liberal progressivism” (defense of social justice, equality, and inclusion with support for liberty and justice) and stood against what we now refer to as neoliberalism.

“Neoliberalism” as used by Latin American scholars during Pinochet’s 1970s/80s coup in Chile underwent a 180° transformation again, with usage connoting fundamentalist market liberalism (see Connell, 2013).

Neoliberalism’s influence became global when Friedman’s (1962) work (from *Mont Pelerin*) received endorsement by USA President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Reagan supported small government, lower tax rates, rolled back regulation, and free trade, arguing: “In this present [economic] crisis, government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem,” and “Government’s first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives.” He had support and agreement from the then UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who believed that a misguided sense of welfare entitlement was thriving in the UK. Referring to Hayek’s ideas, Thatcher believed people should take responsibility for their lives without government dependence or interference. The most famous quote (underlined below) expressing her neoliberal policy stance came from a 1987 interview with *Women’s Own* magazine:

... we’ve been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it’s the government’s job to cope with it. ‘I have a problem; I’ll get a grant.’ ‘I’m homeless, the government must house me.’ They’re casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first... People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There’s no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation.

Neoliberals equate social welfare with a mollycoddling “nanny state” that creates problems by raising expectations about rights and social entitlements, and having to contend with ever-increasing labor costs and taxation hikes to fund expanding redistributive welfare policies which disincentivize individual efforts, innovation, development, and the creation of profits (surplus value). In other words, market-driven economies promote improvement, whereas state-driven economies or “social economies” are considered “fatally lacking in dynamism” (Phelps, 2013, p. 127).

Since Reagan and Thatcher’s time, neoliberalism proliferated. Keynesian economic policies instituted after WWII espousing government intervention in fiscal and monetary stimulus to avoid recession when market demand weakened were criticized for restricting capital, corporate economic outcomes and the entrepreneurial spirit, while inflexible trade unionism and the welfare state were enemies of capitalism and growth. Neoliberal policies would enable the state’s capital

accumulation and growth processes to move from “cumbersome,” regulated mass consumption and provisioning towards flexible, deregulated, and differentiated forms of production, consumption, and investment that benefited everyone. Neoliberalism valorized supply-side economics (production – the interests of producers/suppliers/corporations) over the demand-side (consumption – the interests of consumers or the general public).

Rapid economic restructuring and social reforms freed capital from parochial policy strictures and hastened government disengagement – dismantling tariffs, protections, subsidies, wage, and price controls, reducing entitlements and welfare dependency as anathema to economic growth, and advancing sovereign freedoms for individuals and private institutions. Pragmatic neoliberalism involved a rebalancing act between capital and labor in favor of the former (Gamble, 2001; Hayek, 1976). Neoliberalism’s inbuilt remedies of individualism and individualized risk (being personally liable for lifelong needs – education, health, employment, retirement income, for example) enabled responsibility to be shifted from the state to individuals, changing the social contract.

Neoliberalism has been accepted and expanded by governments of all political persuasions, emphasizing the role and influence of neoliberal “nemes” developed at Mont Pelerin. Nemes are the discourses, ideas, phrases, symbols, and images that replicate and resonate from person to person so as to become established as universal beliefs and understandings about how the world works, hegemonically pervading thoughts, everyday narratives, actions, and plans (see Waddock, 2016).

Neoliberalism’s nemes embody its foundational axioms and values relating to individualism, including institutional autonomy and privatization; choice; competition; improvement, innovation, and entrepreneurialism; efficiency; productivity; performativity; and accountability. These fundamental beliefs are inextricably linked, mutually reinforcing, and form the powerful stable of forces that are “neoliberalism.” In collusion with these dominant discourses are those associated with new public administration systems based on corporate managerialism.

The effect is a striking change in the role of governments and their relationships with citizens, official public policy discourses and provisioning, and, in education, a major change in intersubjective relationships between education institutions and their “clients.”

So far this chapter has described neoliberalism in broad terms. The discussion will turn now to what it means for education, and for education policy and leadership in particular. To be expedient, the discussion uses school education as an example, although similar activities have occurred at other levels of education.

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## Neoliberalism in Education

The neoliberal belief is that the market is the most propitious way to deliver education, encouraging individualism – including “individuation” with curricula and pedagogy tailored to individuals’ learning needs and interests; institutional autonomy or devolved authority to enable nuanced responses to local requirements;

competition among individuals and schools, especially for rankings, enrolments, and funding; consumer choice – greater selection for parents and students about education offerings and schools; and empowered governing bodies with increased authority and decision-making at the local level (see Marginson, 1997). Meanwhile, centralized policy discourses ensure compliance and accountability, emphasizing quality assurance, continuous improvement, higher performativity, and “outputs” gauged through performance indicators, standards, capability statements, and benchmarks – transforming individual subjectivities, particularly those of education leaders – the policy enactors.

Justification for education reform along neoliberal lines usually comes in the form of criticisms about low return on investment (ROI), poor value for money (VFM), and a long list of “failures”:

- Ideological bias and provider capture
- A lack of rigor and accountability
- Resistance to change
- A lack of incentive for improvement
- Rising costs
- Under-achievement and falling standards
- Unresponsiveness to public expectations and market impetus
- Students being ill-prepared for workforce participation
- A lack of parental involvement
- Obstructive teacher unions

Early on, structural reforms in education generally took two distinct forms (see Ball, 1994; Starr, 1999, 2019). First, were those that swept across entire public services: corporatization, privatization, outsourcing to the private sector, re-engineering (replacing people with technology), organizational “downsizing” (workforce reductions), casualization (replacing permanent employees with non-tenured, contract-based workers) (see Marginson, 1993). This also involved asset sales, school closures, public works suspensions, cessations of education support services, and budgetary cutbacks.

The second type of reforms delivered varying levels of autonomy to service sites, through policy banners such as “local school management,” “devolved authority,” “independent public schools,” or “default autonomy” (see Caldwell, 2008; Smyth, 1993). As education bureaucracies “downsized” to meet “small government” imperatives, previously centralized work was diverted to the institutional level. Devolved authority is also consistent with the notion of sovereign individualism applied to individual autonomous institutions.

Some of the effects on school leadership have been predictable while others have been remarkable. It could be expected, for example, that marketized education policy would create more competition between individuals and schools, especially for enrollments. And it is not surprising that in competition, schools identify their target market, publicize their brand, and market their strengths to their niche. Equally, it is understandable that “consumers” of education (parents

and students) will make choices (as far as they can) about education and the school they wish to attend. (Some may even make the choice to reject traditional offerings and choose home schooling.) Further, it is understandable that education authorities may determine that the best way to maintain a level of control over state-funded schools – particularly autonomous schools – is via a range of mandatory accountability and compliance requirements. And to ensure policy measures are enacted, they may use various accomplishment targets, keeping education leaders on their toes to ensure successful progress and raise productivity – ways that embed a strong sense of obligation and risk aversion such that “performativity” becomes an observable leadership phenomenon (Ball, 2016). Authorities also want improved outcomes, greater efficiencies (cost savings), and value for money (VFM).

Other consequences reported by school leaders, however, may not have been so readily expected or considered. Among many other concerns, four commonly cited themes emerge from longitudinal studies across developed jurisdictions over the past three decades (Starr, 2019). It is to these unexpected consequences of neoliberalism that the discussion now turns.

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## Who Is Leading Education?

The overriding perception among education leaders is that education policy has been appropriated by the political class who decide its strategy and direction, aims and purposes, cast verdicts on outcomes and make critical determinations about resourcing allocations. Little acknowledgment is paid to academic research, with advice and advocacy deriving from political advisors, consultants, think tanks, pollsters, and auditors, such that Wright (2001) argues:

Leadership as the moral and value underpinning for the direction of education institutions is being removed from those who work there. It is now very substantially located at the political level where it is not available for contestation, modification or adjustment to local variations. (Wright, 2001, p. 280)

Politicians and policymakers thereby become the real leaders of education – individuals who are not educators, who do not work in the education sector, and who do not work with students. Politicians and policymakers, however, are perceived by school leaders as too insulated, out of touch with everyday education realities and insights, resulting in mandated policies that fail to acknowledge growing complexity, diversity, or the actual workings of education institutions.

The very strong view among education leaders across national borders is that there is too little debate, discussion, or consultation with the profession in major education policy decisions.

School leaders are charged with “implementing” policy decisions but are not involved in developing policy, casting them systemically as perfunctory middle managers (Starr, 1999).

Leaders see insufficient attention paid to students' circumstance and school context such that one-size-fits all policy mandates fail to suit everyone. They cite their growing mediating role, having to "reinterpret," "translate," or "adjust" policy intentions – through pragmatic contextual understandings – in order to achieve policy compliance in schools (Starr, 1999). This is the "political game" (Ryan, 2010, p. 360) as leaders decide whether to promote, contest, or ignore policy (Wang, 2018), although resistance or refusal is risky for leaders who are mostly employed on fixed-term bases. Those pulling the policy levers, however, are perceived to escape and exempt themselves from public responsibility and scrutiny.

School leaders are also concerned about policy evidence. Despite insisting on myriad forms of data from schools and the neoliberal push for "evidence-based decision-making," governments often fail to adequately justify or explain the rationale behind market-oriented mechanisms in education or provide evidence to validate the policy decisions they make. Similarly, long-term desired endpoints are rarely revealed. Too often policy decisions are believed to emerge from populist and politicized obsessions, justifications are often weak or based on insufficient or non-existent data (such as point-in-time standardized test results which can also delimit learning) (Taubman, 2009).

So the question "where is education heading?" underpins the second major policy concern and consequence.

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## Misguided Education Policy

Neoliberalism has dismantled education's long-established, trusted understandings and traditions. This 180° turnaround stands diametrically opposed to policy settings of the not too distant past, with previous policy inherently determining that freedom is best sought through democracy, collective participation, and the common good, and the current position resolving that freedom is best pursued through the market, sovereignty, and choice (a private, individualized settlement).

Free market neoliberalism is justified and advocated as the best available means of achieving greater education improvement, affordability, and responsiveness to "stakeholders" – governments, communities, and individual "consumers."

The assumption is that education leaders will react and respond to market pressures to improve education and behave in much the same way as private organizations. Education leaders have thus adapted to both policy and practice becoming progressively more entrenched in neoliberalism, as education is positioned as a key plank in re-shaping society along market lines and viewed as a public good only as a consequence of enhancing individuals' rights, choices, and chances.

Neoliberal policy is, therefore, criticized by education leaders who believe it is based on flawed aims and incorrect assumptions, while producing "wicked" consequences – "re-formed" education is now failing many citizens. Primary among concerns is education's growing inequities which have come into starker relief – the third major consequence and concern for those leading schools.



## The Disappearance of Equity

During the 1980s and 1990s, social justice, equal opportunity, equity, inclusion, and diversity policies were widely promulgated by education systems across liberal democracies. Although never unproblematic, there was endorsement for the underlying understanding that education should and could make a difference in the lives of all students.

This stance progressively changed from the 1990s, however, as current forms of neoliberal globalization increasingly took root with broad-sweeping de-regulation and states “rolling back” their remit, their funding and public commitments, and instigating market-influenced policies and reforms. Consequently, terms like “social justice” are rarely used in current government policy documents, while the equity-oriented policies that do exist are limited to addressing special learning needs, for example, and usually funded on a short-term basis (see Zelizer, 2015).

The abasement of equity as an education policy priority is hardly surprising, since notions of social justice and equity are anathema to free market neoliberalism (see Hayek, 1944, 1976, 1979a, b). Visions of social equity are incompatible with competitive individualism, hence, free market neoliberalism is averse to re-distributive economic policies as forms of “social engineering” that interrupt the market view that “society” is the product of unplanned spontaneous order (so no individual or group can be blamed for the range of variable social outcomes).

Hayek (1979a, b) condemned social justice legislation as contravening the social goods derived from economic freedom and its intersecting forces of “self-interest” and “fellow-feeling.” The term “social justice” he argued, misconstrues the words “justice” and “injustice,” because they can only be applied to human action and conduct, and not to collective, unbiased market activity – a free market encapsulates its own self-evolving form of “justice” but remains “neutral.” Nobody behaves in an “unjust” way, because in the market order “the overall outcome is completely unpredictable” (Butler, 1983, p. 88). In a free market, relations between individuals and society are not ends-related but means-related. “Justice” changes from being a moral issue to the outcome of the unfettered “free” market. As Friedman (1962, p. 195) argues, “One cannot be both egalitarian and a liberal.” Hence, in neoliberalism, social justice is:

... an intellectually unrespectable idea... I have come to feel strongly that the greatest service I can still render to my fellow men (*sic*) would be that I could make the speakers and writers among them thoroughly ashamed ever again to employ the term “social justice”. (Hayek, 1976, p. 97)

Education policy discourses changed from referring to social justice and equal opportunities to those based on “equity” which the OECD defines as “providing all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, with opportunities to benefit from education” (2014, p. 193). This “does not imply that everyone will have the same outcomes from their education” (Hayek, 1976, p. 97). “Equity” is about “access to quality educational resources and opportunities to learn” (p. 97) – a stance



based on the notion of “justice as fairness” (Rawls, 1972; see Starr, 2015) which is neither re-distributive in intent nor disruptive to established social arrangements and power relations.

This shift from the earlier social democratic policy agenda to laissez-faire market liberalism has shored up a different set of policy terms associated with the OECD’s equity conceptions: “evaluation,” “school improvement,” “quality assurance,” “accountability,” “compliance” which do not alleviate outcomes discrepancies between student groups.

Trickle-down economic theory suggests that social benefits are distributed in ways that enhance the lives of everyone, albeit to differing degrees, and achieved in different ways (as indicated by the OECD’s definition cited above). As such, education’s traditional mission, and still pervasive expectation, demands accessibility and equity for all. However, market extemporization invisibly manipulates education policies overtly to sort, compare, and determine “quality,” including who is successful and who is unsuccessful. Hence, rather than playing its part in nation building, neoliberal education becomes instrumental in aiding and abetting greater social, economic, and political divisions along with the negative consequences so entailed (Chomsky, 1999; Stiglitz, 2015).

Many former theorists like Smith (1776), Mill (1863), and Keynes (1919) foresaw the negative consequence of an unfettered free market’s potential to exacerbate inequities – in society and education – but their warnings have been overlooked in neo-classical economic revivalism. Education leaders lament this drastic turnaround but are witnessing a further negative outcome of neoliberal policy regimes.

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## A Changed Social Psyche

Education leaders are concerned about increasing social fragmentation, aided by social media and disquiet about anti-education, anti-intellectual, anti-authority, and anti-democratic sentiments infiltrating local, national, and global discourses (Starr, 2019; see also Bazalgette, 2017; Enfield, 2017). “Bad faith” is rooted in distrust, anger, disenfranchisement, and resentment against the political class and governments, intellectuals, traditional authority figures, educators and academics, scientists, journalists, elites, and professionals of any kind (Hawkings, 2018), who are criticized for their betrayal and being out-of-touch with “main street” interests and everyday realities. Media polls and politicians have underestimated the anger, fear, doubt, bigotry, and cynicism of large sectors of the community who claim victim status – feeling left out of conventional politics and left behind by decisions wielded in the name of neoliberal globalization.

Education leaders worry that the effects of bad faith, hate speech, and pervasive anti-intellectual, anti-educational forces are destabilizing students’ learning and visions of a fair and civil, democratic society. The social biases, injustices, and discriminations of the past are being renewed, revised, and reinvigorated – a phenomenon perceived as dangerous, divisive, and a wake-up call for education

leaders and authorities. Previously hard-won rights and accepted assumptions are more fragile and transient than many expected.

Xenophobia and nationalism rooted in racism and mono-culturalism; patriarchal, chauvinist, and/or fundamentalist views rooted in sexism, misogyny, and multi-gender bigotry; and a pervasive rudeness and “close-to-the-surface” anger and intolerance that attacks, vilifies and maligns, refuses to listen to alternative viewpoints, and poisons public debate.

Verifiable facts, history, or reality are denied, “fake news,” “alternative facts,” misinformation, and conspiracy theories abound, while usual rules of evidence and balanced media reporting are discarded while broadcasting becomes “narrowcasting.” New cultures of prejudice, intolerance, and fanaticism are viewed as threats to civility, common respect, politeness, kindness, empathy, tolerance of diversity, and democracy (see Hertz, 2001). Proctor and Schiebinger (2008) argue we are living in the “age of agnotology” or culturally constructed ignorance and suggest that if educators don’t understand the forces of ignorance, they will have little chance of surmounting this powerful “anti”-force.

Education is a quest for knowledge and skills to build capability and wisdom. It endorses students being exposed to diverse views and perspectives stemming from factual information. It encourages students to think – critically and deeply – for themselves, to find and interrogate the “facts” and examine all sides of an argument to arrive at a considered opinion. Education encourages celebration of difference and the ability to compromise. Politicization, prejudice, and attempts to skew facts, hide information, or to silence and shut down debate, undermine learning and the education endeavor, and erode democracy.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Among education leaders are pervasive concerns about neoliberalism:

- Market values infiltrating education policy and practice
- Governmental retreats from public education and its provisioning
- Shifts in responsibility, problem solving, and risk management from government/systemic instrumentalities to individual leaders, autonomous schools, and their governing bodies
- Discourses and expectations at odds with teaching, learning, and scholarship
- Education policy pursuits inspired by populist discourses and political aims
- Acceptance of inequitable education outcomes

It would be easy to pass this whole story off as the triumph of the political right over the left, but it is not. Governments of various colors across developed nations have pursued increasingly market-oriented neoliberal policies and practices in social policy, including education. School leaders believe that governments must bear responsibility for the problems neoliberalism has created, having abandoned their twentieth century remit and responsibilities for public education (Starr, 2019).

None of neoliberalism's effects augur well for education which is considered too important to be held hostage to the game of catallaxy (see also Waddock, 2016). According to education leaders, education policy is heading in the wrong direction, producing the opposite results to those it seeks – higher standards, “quality.” Education policy is moving away from equity and social justice ambitions which are anathema to neoliberalism. Consequently, human dignity and collective freedoms can't get traction under the vicissitudes of competitive individualism. Democracy itself is undermined by bad faith narratives and pervasive anti-education/anti-professional/anti-traditional authority narratives. And divided populations and their equally polarized governments exacerbate such phenomena in the contest for power, voice, legitimacy, and ideological discursive dominance. Such trends strike at what it means to be “educated.”

Education's real leaders are politicians, policymakers, and the consultants who advise them. School leaders criticize policymakers who don't consult or who arrogantly denounce practitioners' wisdom. Subsequently, education leaders “intercept” and “reconstruct” policy to make it usable and acceptable, yet it is difficult to alter the course of fundamental policy purposes.

However, theory is one thing and practice is another. During the 2007–2008 global financial crisis and amidst a global pandemic from 2020, governments have had to intervene in major ways, demonstrating that the market cannot be trusted to solve all problems, including those created through unwise or unethical market behaviors, poor regulation, or inadequate social support structures.

Covid-19 has compounded social dislocation, slippages in market theory, increasing difficulties in politics, and governing, deepening, and fractious discontents and global problems. Only time will tell if this be enough for widespread, turnaround social change, including education.

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# Foucault’s Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses

# 57

## Unmasking the Politics Underlying the Apparent Neutrality of Distributed Leadership

Denise Mifsud

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### Abstract

Literature presents evidence of the exponential rise of distributed leadership both as a focus of research and as leadership development in education in the twenty-first century (Hairon S, Goh JWP, *Educ Manage Adm Leadersh* 43:693–718, 2015; Hall D, *Educ Rev* 65:467–487, 2013), in addition to the growing criticism of the theory’s dominance and its “acquired taken-for-granted status” (Lumby J, *Manage Educ* 30:161–167, 2016, p. 161). It remains a resilient leadership concept in the guise of professional capital, collaborative networks, and teacher-led reform (Hargreaves A, *J Prof Cap Community* 1, 2016; Hargreaves A, Ainscow M, *Phi Delta Kappan* 97:42–48, 2015; Harris A, *J Manage Dev* 30:20–32, 2011a; Harris A, *Distributed leadership matters: perspectives, practicalities, and potential*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2013b). Empirical research exploring distribution dilemmas queries the coexistence of distributed leadership and hierarchical leadership, the relationship between the leader and the distributees, as well as the leadership distribution process (Mifsud D, *Educ Manage Adm Leadersh*

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45:978–1001, 2017a). This chapter revisits the literature narrative around the concept of distributed leadership and problematizes this particular school leadership discourse drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, more specifically his notion of governmentality, with a focus on the analytics of government. Distributed leadership, perceived as one of the various educational leadership discourses, emerges as a regime of government, an assembling process, and a mode of subjectification. School leadership is presented as being about distributed leadership to foster empowerment and autonomy, where the governmentality at play thus uses distributed leadership as a means of attaining the desired leadership goals (Gillies D, Educational leadership and Michel Foucault. Routledge, London, 2013). Analyzing distributed leadership discourse through a Foucauldian governmentality perspective positions leadership as a locus of political struggle, thereby enabling school leaders to be open to nontraditional ways of seeing the world. The critique presented in this chapter may thus be significant for educational practice, policy, and theory in terms of the generation of problematization.

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**Keywords**

Distributed leadership · Educational leadership discourses · Foucault · Governmentality · Problematics of government

**The field of memory**

Leadership has been romanticized as the only determining factor of the success or otherwise of an educational organization, thus constructed as an exceptional practice. The emergence of the distributed leadership concept was initiated by the recognition of the limitations of the charismatic hero.

**The field of presence**

Distributed leadership gained visibility as a focus of research and as leadership development in education in the twenty-first century. At the level of policy rhetoric, it can also be regarded as a response to policy shifts to claim power sharing and autonomy while easing in the government's agenda of centralization and managerialism.

**The field of concomitance**

Distributed leadership is a concept in the guise of professional capital, collaborative networks, and teacher-led reform. It spilled over from management literature and contemporary public service reforms that require a network regime of governance and the concept of liquid modernity in a contemporary culture. Distributed leadership is one of the discourses of educational leadership.

**Discontinuities and ruptures which form the different viewpoints of this area or field**

Distributed leadership has been problematized as the prescriptive, normative paradigm and also for being positioned as the antithesis of top-down, hierarchical leadership and the antidote to heroic leadership.

### Critical assumptions or presuppositions

There is growing criticism of the theory's dominance and its acquired taken-for-granted status. Distribution also calls autocracy, democracy, and direction into play, in addition to the dysfunctional dynamics of control-collaboration tensions.

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## Introduction

Alvesson and Spicer (2011) state that, "The leader has become one of the dominant heroes of our time . . . Whatever the problem, leadership has become the solution" (p. 1). We inhabit a "leadership-obsessed culture" where leadership is often considered as the only determining factor of the success or otherwise of an educational organization, resulting in a society pushing us to deny "ambiguities, incoherencies, and shifts in our great leaders" (ibid, p. 3). The existing frameworks of leadership construct it as something existing as an "exceptional practice," resulting in a normalizing of leadership into models dominated by stories of heroic endeavors (Niesche, 2011, p. 2). However, "leadership is seldom a matter of a great leader with a clear understanding who directs, supports, and controls followers," instead it is best understood as "full of ambiguities, paradoxes, confusions, inconsistencies" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p.48). It is apparent that sharing leadership with agencies outside their walls is still not a widespread practice among many school leaders, thus the advocacy of "genuinely shared or distributed leadership" (Black, 2008) to overcome sectoral isolation. The emergence of distributed leadership as a concept seems to have been motivated by the recognition of the limitations of the "charismatic hero" (Fullan, 2005), as well as the need to ease the burden of principals and senior leaders who have become overloaded (Hartley, 2010).

Literature presents evidence of the exponential rise of distributed leadership both as a focus of research and as leadership development in education in the twenty-first century (Hairon & Goh, 2015; Hall, 2013), in addition to the growing criticism of the theory's dominance and its "acquired taken-for-granted status" (Lumby, 2016, p. 161). Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) thus argue that "No other leadership concept, it seems, has caused so much controversy, angst and debate as distributed leadership" (p. 141). It remains a resilient leadership concept in the guise of professional capital, collaborative networks, and teacher-led reform (Hargreaves, 2016; Hargreaves & Ainscow, 2015; Harris, 2011a; Harris, 2013b). The dearth of research surrounding the meanings and implications of distributed leadership (Storey, 2004), as well as the under-theorization of identity and power issues within distributed leadership (Crawford, 2012) led to empirical research in which the author explored distribution dilemmas within policy-mandated multisite school collaboratives [in Malta] (Mifsud, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). Findings gave rise to such questions: "Can distributed leadership and hierarchical leadership co-exist? Is there a single distributor who distributes leadership? Do the distributees ever question the role of their leader as leadership distributor, how s/he distributes, and the intentions behind the distribution? Distribution: Autocracy: Democracy: Direction" (Mifsud, 2017a, p. 996). The author thus revisits the literature narrative around the concept of distributed leadership and problematizes this



particular school leadership discourse drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, more specifically his notion of governmentality.

It is to be trusted that the application of Foucauldian analysis to educational leadership discourse as presented in the literature “will unmask the politics that underlie some of the *apparent neutrality* of educational reform” (Ball, 2010, p. 7, added emphasis). In the words of Foucault (2002e), “the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent” (p. 171). Foucault’s notion of governmentality allows the author to unravel the educational leadership discourse as presented in the literature, in order to identify the rationality within and the justification it gives itself for the promotion of distributed leadership. The governmentality of leadership focuses on the shaping of others’ conduct. School leadership is presented as being about distributed leadership to foster empowerment and autonomy, where the governmentality at play thus uses distributed leadership as a means of attaining the desired leadership goals (Gillies, 2013). The critique presented in this chapter may thus be significant for educational practice, policy, and theory in terms of the generation of problematization. As attested by Niesche and Gowlett (2015), “Analyzing leadership discourses through post-structuralist ideas positions leadership as a site of political struggle and subsequently opens up traditional ways of seeing the world thereby enabling more avenues for doing leadership research” (p. 383).

The following section outlines Foucault’s (2002a) notion of governmentality, focusing on its application as an analytic concept in education studies. It then moves to an analysis of distributed leadership as a regime of government, an assembling process, and a mode of subjectification. The concluding section aims to demonstrate the usefulness of Foucault’s work in educational leadership, more specifically the discourses of distributed leadership, while advocating a post-structuralist politics for educational leadership.

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## Foucault, Governmentality, and the Analytics of Government

I don’t feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? The game is worthwhile in so far as we don’t know where it will end (Foucault, 1988, p. 9).

This is how Foucault characteristically replied to a question about his intellectual identity. Ball (2010) states how “Foucault’s playfulness and elusiveness seem to have stimulated fascination and exasperation in equal measure” (p. 1). Notwithstanding this fact, his work has impacted on a wide range of disciplines, among which are the social sciences, despite the fact that in a lifetime of academia, Foucault paid very little attention to education (and even less to the study of educational leadership) as an area of study. Foucault further elaborated on his role as

to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people – that's the role of an intellectual (1988, p. 10).

Gillies (2013) demonstrates the value of Foucault's trident of skepticism, critique, and problematization to operate within educational discourse, "Given the scale of the educational leadership literature and the relatively small amount of questioning voices raised against it, it seems eminently timely to bring Foucault into the lists" (p. 23). Skepticism doubts and challenges educational leadership, while critique involves questioning, probing, and analyzing, in an attempt to demonstrate "that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted" (Foucault, 2002c, p. 456). Gillies (2013) suggests the adoption of critique as "a professional responsibility" (p. 18), in order to articulate and employ doubt to chosen values, beliefs, and assumptions in both policy and practice. Problematization constitutes the "development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response" (Foucault, 2000a, p. 118). Conscious of the fact that Foucault was keen to avoid being seen as offering a "general system, an overarching theoretical framework or worldview" (Foucault, 2001, p. 240), I take a "piecemeal approach to his work" (Allen, 2012), by viewing it as a "tool-box" (Megill, 1987). Foucault (2002b) warns, "What I've written is never prescriptive either for me or for others – at most it's instrumental and tentative" (p. 240). Gillies (2013) therefore concludes that Foucault's (2001) support for his "gadgets" to be utilized as "thinking tools" (p. 65), combined with the current powerful status of leadership discourse within education, "make a Foucauldian analysis eminently suitable and potentially illuminative" (p. 18), the purpose of which is "to question, probe, and identify weaknesses, contradictions, assumptions, and problems" (p. 19).

Foucault's notion of governmentality has garnered proliferating attractiveness as an analytic concept (in particular Foucault, 2007, 2008), thus becoming one of his most well-known and widespread concepts. The term is developed from a combination of the words "government" and "mentality"/"rationality" in order to understand this particular domain of analysis – how government is justified and rationalized. Dean (2010) explicates this further,

Government concerns not only practices of government but also practices of the self. To analyse government is to analyse those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups (p. 12).

In his analysis of the concept of *gouvernementalite*, consisting of methods of shaping others' behavior, Foucault (2002a) stresses that institutions are fragile and have a great potential for change. Thereby, he implies that power is subject to negotiation, each individual having his/her place in the hierarchy, no matter its degree of flexibility. Foucault thereby hints at the potential for change within the retention of a pyramidal structure. Foucault understood the term "government" as

“the conduct of conduct” (2002e, p. 341), in both a wide and narrow sense, encompassing forms of activity to affect the conduct of others, as well as the relation between self and self. Governmentality encompasses both political rationality (dealing with mentalities, conceptions, and discourse) and technologies of government (dealing with the ways in which government is exercised) (Olssen, 2003, p. 197). Foucault (2002a) reveals a preoccupation with the “art of government” (p. 201), when he enquires “How to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor” (p. 202).

Gillies (2013) suggests substituting “govern” with “lead” in order to identify the relevance of the preoccupations of government for the world of education – the government of leadership is focused on the shaping of others’ conduct. According to Foucault, modern governmental rationality is simultaneously individualizing and totalizing, in its attempt to explore what it is for an individual, and for a number of individuals to be governed. In his essay “Governmentality” (2002a, p. 205), Foucault alludes to the “multifarious” practices of government “concern[ing] many kinds of people,” further describing how the art of government involves establishing a continuity, in both an upwards and a downwards direction, learning to govern both oneself and others. Gordon (1991) draws attention to the fact that this idea of government rationality may need “to be credible to the governed as well as to the governing” (p. 48). In a political context where there is a double movement of state centralization and dispersion, Foucault (2002a, p. 202) identifies a “problematic of government” that emerges through “how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, and so on.” Gordon (2002) further suggests that the “problematic of government” provides Foucault with a more practical way to address the power–freedom association, as power only functions in the presence of freedom. Thereby, certain discourses (that is, rationalities of government) are “transactional realities,” tools for negotiation, which may eventually lead to dissenting “counterconducts.” Gillies (2013) explores the utilization of a Foucauldian governmentality perspective in relation to the discourse of educational leadership – it allows one to examine the rationality of its exercise; the justification of its own activity; as well as the way it comprehends its own function (p. 66). When an analysis of governmentality is applied, “it increases our awareness of the role of construction and the constructed in governmental landscapes and institutions, and of the way in which habit leads us to accept these constructions as facts of nature or universal categories” (Gordon, 2002, p. xxiv). According to Gordon (2002), this governmentality generates critique, “a certain decided (*decisoire*) will not to be governed” (p. xxxix).

Analytically, the author will focus on the following definition of government, as explored in the work of Grimaldi (2020):

[government is] any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seek to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes. (Dean, 2010, p. 18)

The author will now proceed to outline the conceptual implications extricated by Grimaldi (2020, p. 15) that will steer the forthcoming analysis of distributed leadership as one of the school leadership discourses. Government is presented under three distinct guises: as an activity; as an assembling process; and a director of human conduct. The activity, or “regime of government,” is the set of organized practices through which we are governed and govern ourselves and others, involving the production of knowledge and truth, the exercise of power through ordering and calculation, together with the establishment of norms and ends. These “regimes” are regarded as “assembling processes that involve the mobilization of multiple and heterogeneous elements” (ibid, p. 15). Another interpretation is as “an intentional and yet non-subjective attempt to direct human conduct” (ibid, p. 15), thus linked to ethical effects. Such a notion of government as the field for investigation draws our attention to the associations between issues of government, authority and politics, and those of identity and self.

But how can distributed leadership, as presented in the literature narrative, be critiqued using governmentality as a field for investigation? Following Grimaldi (2020, pp. 16–18) and Dean (2010, pp. 40–41), it is possible to interrogate these regimes of government via four modalities of an “analytics of government” (Dean, 2010). There is a focus on:

- a) *forms of rationality*, which are characteristic ways of reasoning and querying that give rise to specific glossaries and practices for truth production
- b) *fields of visibility*, that is, modes of envisaging and comprehending that are inherent to a regime of government and are crucial to its undertaking
- c) *forms of ruling*, which are the “modus operandi” that delineates and regulates the opportunity of performing, reasoning, and existing
- d) *identity formation*, that is, practices that form the individual and collective identities within a regime of government

The table below presents the four modalities that can be addressed as potential foci for the analytics of regimes of government (Table 1).

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## **Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses: Distributed Leadership as a Regime of Government, an Assembling Process, and a Mode of Subjectification**

### **Exploring the Mechanisms of Neoliberal Governance in Educational Leadership**

The politics of the later part of the twentieth century have been denoted by the emergence of neoliberalism (Doherty, 2007), which has thus become the dominant political and ideological paradigm of our time (Pinto, 2015). An outline of the constituents of neoliberal governmentality is provided by Peters (2001b, pp. 143–144), of which the author will only mention those relevant to the issue

**Table 1** Four modalities to interrogate regimes of government (Adapted from Grimaldi, 2020, p. 18)

	Focus	Meaning
<b>The analytics of government</b> <i>A materialist analysis of practices of government as assembling processes that involve multiple and heterogeneous elements that vary from routines, technologies, ways of doing things, and agencies to theories, programs, knowledge, and expertise</i>	Forms of rationality	The distinctive ways of thinking and questioning that mobilize specific vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth in a regime of government
	Fields of visibility	Ways of seeing and perceiving that are characteristic of a regime of government and are necessary to its operation
	Techne	Peculiar modes of acting, intervening, and directing that combine distinct practical rationalities, expertise, and know-how and rely on definite techniques and technologies in a regime of government
	Identity formation	Characteristic ways of forming subjects, selves, persons, actors, or agents within a regime of government

under exploration. Government is perceived as the community of free, autonomous, self-regulated individuals with an emphasis on their “responsibilization” as moral agents. It also incorporates quasi-autonomous individuals and entities through the promotion of self-management, as well as “degovernmentalization” of the state. “Government at a distance” is developed through new forms of social accounting, simultaneously with increasing decentralization, “devolution,” and delegation of power, authority, and responsibility from the center to the local institution.

Consequently, Joseph (2007) describes neoliberalism as a “political discourse concerned with the governing of individuals from a distance” (p. 7), further stating that it “gives the pretence of freedom while acting in a coercive way” (p. 8). This hegemonic neoliberalism has been portrayed as “the closest thing to a global meta-narrative” (Peters, 2001a, p. viii). Bailey (2013) defines neoliberalism as both a political rationality and a discourse – it incites people to govern themselves while aligning their conducts with the exigencies of the state, while constructing a particular conception of the human subject and his relationship to him-/herself, the state, and society. Neoliberalism can thus be regarded as a set of accountability practices, “paradoxically re-assert[ing] the State’s role centraliz[ing] and decentraliz[ing] the State” (Webb, 2011, p. 736), with the intention of developing “governmentality constellations” (ibid, p.735). This neoliberal discourse, as such portrayed, can thus be regarded as a “practice of government” (Dean, 2010, p. 12) which is shrouded, and eventually internalized as a “practice of the self” (ibid). This governing at a distance is thus justified, albeit unknowingly via the convincing facade of autonomy, where

accountability practices sculpt the choices of these “self-managed” individuals, in our case, educational leaders.

The concomitant move towards “network governance” in education, evident in the proliferation of networks, collaboratives, and partnership working, is perceived as “one regulatory element of the policy dispositive” (Bailey, 2013, p. 817). This propensity for affiliation and distribution is being complemented by “an ideological fantasy of ‘empowerment’, which conceals the subordination of actors to these neoliberal logics by constituting [them] as powerful actors who have been freed from constraints forced upon them by central government” (Wright, 2012, p. 279). Mifsud (2016) offers a reading of Maltese school reform, more specifically the policy-mandated setting up of school networks, which reveals the coercive nature of the policy discourse under the guise of the empowerment agenda, where government still steers at a distance. The educational leaders experience disjunctures in the contradictions that unfold around issues of autonomy, accountability, performativity, and deregulation. (For more details on the presence of neoliberal discourse in the policy to practice trajectory of school networks in Malta, see Mifsud (2016).) Networking can thus be interpreted as one of the technologies of government (Olssen, 2003) through which government is exercised in a concerting subtle manner via education reform, in order to propagate the neoliberal agenda in a more widespread manner throughout the state, at both a micro and macro level.

Essentially, the concept of distributed leadership that is prolific in management literature has now gained momentum in the educational leadership discourse (Harris & Spillane, 2008). The prominence of distributed leadership results from contemporary public service reforms that require a “network” regime of governance, embedded in a societal culture that purports a flexible “liquid modern” view of space and time, together with a new work order coherent with the knowledge economy (Hartley, 2007, 2009). The attraction of distributed leadership in education lies in its capacity to bring about school improvement (Harris, 2012; Spillane & Healey, 2010), due to the enhanced line roles, project roles, and networking roles emerging within the changing policy environment (Simkins, 2005). Consequently, distributed leadership has gained popularity as a good practice (Hopkins, 2001). The justification for the proliferation of distributed leadership in educational leadership theory and practice can be regarded as an excellent example of the unfolding of the definition of government provided by Guillaume de La Perriere, that Michel Foucault elaborates upon in his essay entitled “Governmentality” – “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end” (2002a, p. 208). The “things” to be governed in a distributed leadership scenario are the schools realigned via networking in order to foster school improvement and effectiveness.

Jopling and Spender (2006) argue that there is “no simple, single solution to leading networks” (p. 5), with Hadfield (2007) describing how “the very nature of a network makes it difficult to define who its leaders are” (p. 260). Katz et al. (2009, p. 5) claim that in these new collaborative partnerships of school networking, leadership is “defined by activity other than formal position,” encompassing the

practices and activities of the various leaders across different strata both within the network and across schools. Jopling and Crandall (2006) assert that networks of schools do require some form of leadership despite their shift towards more plural, distributed, and adaptive forms. They go on to explain that network leadership is qualitatively distinct from traditional notions of hierarchical school leadership as it is facilitative rather than directive; it is about leadership emerging from interactions and relationships between people, rather than charismatic individuals – it seems to work best when it is distributed, being more responsive to context. Hadfield (2007) states that “the increasing popularity of network-based approaches is generating new and emergent leadership challenges, which in their turn are likely to create new leadership approaches” (p. 259).

Harris (2005) describes the state of networking: “we are witnessing a proliferation of collaborative possibilities schools are frenetically pursuing the goal of networks and networking” (p. 5). Consequently, Harris foresees the generation of leadership challenges in terms of the necessity of more innovative and dynamic approaches resulting in lateral and vertical forms of leadership practice. Distributed leadership is thus regarded as a complementary mode of thought about leadership practice that meets the shifting demands of multisite collaboration, due to the conception of this leadership theory being based on the metaphor of the network with its ideas of interaction, undefined boundaries, wide distributions, and power flows. The fit of distributed leadership to networks as described in the educational leadership literature can be explained as a government rationality (as both a conception and a discourse) that needs “to be credible to the governed as well as to the governing” (Gordon, 1991, p. 48). Educational leadership is regarded as “an effect of discourses of schooling” (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003, p. 143), with Niesche (2011) framing educational leadership as a discourse, or rather a set of discourses. In this chapter, the author thus approaches distributed leadership as one of the “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 2002f, p. 132) of educational leadership, within a Foucauldian analysis framework.

## **Distributed Leadership as a Technique and Rationality of Government**

Lumby (2013) argues that the conception of distributed leadership has dominated educational leadership theory and practice, thus becoming “the theory of choice for many” (p. 581), undergoing a transformation “from a tool to facilitate the comprehension of leadership ecology to a widely stipulated praxis” (ibid, p. 581). She expands on this by adding that distributed leadership theory has moved on into practice. Bush (2013) further states that this leadership model has been given “normative preference,” with Gronn (2010) noting the “accelerating amount of scholarly and practitioner attention” (p. 70) given to this model in an undivided manner. Lumby (2016) questions why “such an unsatisfactory concept” [distributed leadership] continues to be utilized “so enthusiastically” given the fact “that there is no adequate definition of distributed leadership to identify it as a distinctive way of



leading, and therefore no credible way of promoting it as action or of assessing its impact" (p. 161). Lumby further questions whether distributed leadership is "a fashion, a fad or a rational choice" (ibid, p. 162) due to her conviction of this concept as theoretically weak, with its diffusion dependent on external pressure from national or international organizations. Is it being promoted "as a purported innovation leading to greater effectiveness"? (ibid, p. 162). How can the literature narrative present distributed leadership as "the theory of choice" while paradoxically asserting its inclusion as a feature in various policy frameworks? Education practitioners and policy scholars do attempt to raise questions and difficulties inherent in their praxis for a reconsideration of improvement and change. Accordingly, Foucault (1981) defines an education system as "a ritualization of speech, a qualification and a fixing of the roles for speaking subjects. Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry" (p. 64). To what extent is the concept of distributed leadership fixing roles for the "autonomous" and "self-managed" education leaders?

Distributed leadership already features in policy frameworks in several countries and is being actively advocated. One such case is the Maltese state education system, where, similarly to England, distributed leadership underpins the new models of schooling as researched by Chapman et al. (2010). Similarly, literature by both Harris and Jones (2010), and Harris (2011b) describes how in the Welsh case, distributed leadership is a vital part of system-wide reform, manifesting itself through a national infrastructure of professional learning communities within, between, and across schools.

Definitions of distributed leadership abound in literature. Harris (2005) describes it as "collective leadership responsibility rather than top-down authority" (p. 1), subscribing to Spillane's (2005) "leader plus" perspective, moving us from a "person solo" to a "person plus" perspective, suggesting multiple leaders at multiple levels. This is premised on a collective approach to capacity building in schools (Harris & Lambert, 2003) through a recognition that leadership practice is constructed through shared action and interaction. In his emphasis on "leaders, followers, and their situation," Spillane (2005) implies an interdependent influence between followers and leaders, who emerge as leadership coproducers. Harris (2005) points out the contradiction in this model – having the idea of followership within distributed leadership. However, as Spillane (2005) rationalizes, the follower dimension incorporates followers as influencers in the determination and shaping of leadership practice. Within such a leader/follower scenario, distributed leadership can be interpreted as a form of government that unfolds as "the conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 2002e, p. 341), which encompasses forms of activity affecting the conduct of others [leaders mobilizing followers], in addition to the relation between self and self [followers as influencers and genuine leadership coproducers]. Bennett, Wise, Woods, and Harvey (2003) identify three characteristics of distributed leadership: as an emergent property of a network of interacting individuals; operating within undefined boundaries that can only vary along a continuum between wide and restricted; and with widely distributed expertise and leadership opportunities. Zepke



(2007) builds on Gronn's (2002) definition of distributed leadership as "structurally conjoint agency" (p. 543), describing it as a "community for action" (p. 305) where power flows from leader to leader as new leadership roles emerge and are nurtured.

Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) explore the misconceptions and misunderstandings surrounding the practical application of distributed leadership, problematizing it as the "prescriptive, normative paradigm," thus challenging the inherent goodness and automatic association with positive outcomes. They call into question the motivation of the leadership distributors; its "palatable" presentation as an attractive mechanism for the "top-down" delivery of policies; the "everyone is a leader" notion; and the absence of a distributed leadership blueprint or model. Consequently, "distributed leadership is not a panacea; it depends on how it is shared, received and enacted" (ibid, p. 143). In fact, according to Foucault, modern governmental rationality is simultaneously individualizing and totalizing – in the case of distributed leadership one has to consider the significance of governance for an individual and for a number of individuals.

Mayrowetz (2008, p. 425) argues that the term "distributed leadership" has been widely applied to notions of school leadership and adapted in education discourses – leading to the coexistence, persistence, and prevalence of diverse conceptualizations and interpretations of the term – thus encouraging researchers to "talk past each other." These diverse conceptualizations of the distributed leadership term can thus be interpreted as a "plurality of forms of government" (Foucault, 2002a, pp. 205–206), concerning many kinds of people. These "multifarious" practices of government attempt to establish a continuity in both an upwards and a downwards direction, leading to govern oneself (the leadership distributors) and others (the leadership distributees). Harris (2013a) distinguishes one common misuse of the term in literature which renders it more difficult to demarcate its "precise" meaning – using it as an umbrella term to encompass any mode of shared, collaborative, or extended leadership practice. Confusion is further engendered by its positioning as the antithesis of top-down, hierarchical leadership – a position critiqued by Harris (2013a), for whom distributed leadership is a form of co-leadership involving "both formal and informal leaders, it is not an *either/or*" (p. 548, emphasis added). It is this "loose" application of the term which may lead to some confusion – in the words of Hartley (2010), "If distributed leadership is indeed a loose cannon, open to doctrinal disputes, then it is perhaps of little surprise that its operationalization within empirical research is less than consistent" (p. 281).

Lumby (2016) questions the notion of distributed leadership as an antidote to heroic leadership due to its connotations of empowerment, collaboration, and the inclusion of multiple leaders. She therefore concludes that it is a "sharing of" rather than an "antidote to" heroic leadership, besides its offer of an illusion of greater empowerment, as well as its propagation as a means of moral leadership. It also seemingly enjoys a "taken-for-granted" status and is automatically linked to effectiveness in empirical research reports. Notwithstanding, Foucault (2002c) suggests "the possibility of establishing a relation between governor and governed that is not a relation of obedience . . . [that] doesn't imply either a subjection or a blanket acceptance" (pp. 455–456). Lumby (2016) goes as far as to equate distributed

leadership with “a *theoretical virus* whose continuous hybridization of theory appears to make it immune to the attacks of rational argument about its lack of clarity” (p. 165, emphasis added), moreover regarding it as a displacement activity blinding us to the transmission of inequality. Hairon and Goh (2015) unpack the construct of distributed leadership and its dimensionality, outlining three major issues involved in the explication of this paradigm that are namely (1) conceptual and operational, (2) quantifiable, and (3) contextual. The elusiveness of distributed leadership as a substantive conceptual construct weakens the methodological explanatory force of its effects as a school improvement tool, besides the lack of empirical methodological rigor in distributed leadership research. Distributed leadership measures are also absent due to the lack of rigor in the operational analysis of distributed leadership. Moreover, Hairon and Goh (2015) are skeptical about the transferability of distributed leadership to non-Western contexts.

Various reasons have been given as to the motivation for distribution. Those which feature the most prominently are what Fullan (2005) proposes as the recognition of the limitations of the “charismatic hero,” which, according to Bush (2012, p. 649), have been “supplemented but not supplanted” by concepts of shared leadership, mirroring the trend towards self-management, together with the pragmatic popularity of distributed leadership to ease the burden of principals and senior leaders who have become overloaded, as evidenced by Hartley (2010). Bush (2013), however, argues that distributed leadership oversteps this instrumental motive to an acknowledgment of the conjoint expertise of organization members. Hartley (2007) explores the emergence of distributed leadership in education through political and cultural considerations – besides providing a response to recent policy shifts foci on the merging or networking of work-based activities, distributed leadership resonates with Bauman’s (2000) concept of “liquid modernity” in a contemporary culture that favors the trend “from organized social structure to network culture” (Page, 2006, unpaginated). Dispersion of leadership within and across organizations resonates with the flexible “liquid modern” view of time and space. Moreover, Hartley (2010) claims that it fits in well with the contemporary trend of organizational learning within a so-called knowledge economy.

Harris (2013a) offers a note of warning, however:

Distributed leadership does not guarantee better performance; it is not a panacea for success, it does not possess any innate good or bad qualities, it is not friend or foe. Much depends on *how* leadership is distributed and the *intentions* behind it (p. 552, emphasis added).

Is Harris (2013a) hereby utilizing a governmentality lens to demonstrate her skepticism of distributed leadership by problematizing both the “technologies of government” (Olssen, 2003, p. 197) [the *how* of leadership distribution] and its “political rationality” (ibid) [the *why* of leadership distribution] Jopling and Crandall (2006) suggest that distributed leadership is viewed as an important practice in school networks as it offers a new way of talking about leadership in which all the voices of relatively “unrecognized leaders” are legitimized, and the language of leadership is extended. Relatively new, emergent leadership roles are given the space

to expand across the network. Distributed leadership aids leaders in challenging expectations, adding new perspectives, and making lateral and latent leadership practice more visible, as Bennett et al. (2003) say, it is “an important analytical tool for thinking about leadership and re-orientating thinking about its nature” (p. 7). Can the distributed leadership discourse itself encourage education leaders to practice critique? “A critique does not consist in saying that things aren’t good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based” (Foucault, 2002c, p. 456). According to Foucault (ibid), “A reform is never anything but the outcome of a process in which there is conflict, confrontation, struggle, resistance” (p. 457).

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### The “Problematics of Government” in Distributed Leadership Discourse

Lakomski (2008) however describes distributed leadership research as “causally idle” (p. 278), with the field having weak theoretical foundations. On a similar note, Timperley (2005) argues:

Yet, leadership has always been distributed within organizations; it is a little surprising that we have taken so long to recognize it and develop the associated conceptual frameworks. Grounding further research in empirical studies that chart the territory, as well as its inadequacies, is essential if distributed leadership does not just become another faulty conceptualization of leadership to be overtaken by the next set of ideas (p. 418).

Here we are presented with a typical example of what Foucault (2002a) identifies as a “problematic of government” that emerges through preoccupations about “how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, and so on” (p. 202). Distributed leadership is thus regarded as a neoliberal “regime of truth” (Foucault, 2002d) that explores how the subjects are produced “as an effect” through and within discourse and within specific discursive formations, that is, how the education leaders are positioned by the leadership policy discourse, and how they subsequently position themselves according to their distributed leadership performance.

Hartley (2007) suggests that one of the main reasons behind the emergence of distributed leadership in schools, at least at the level of policy rhetoric, can be regarded as it being a response to policy shifts. The notion of distributed leadership might just be used as a mask by policy producers and government officials to ease in their agenda as a normalizing discourse in schools. Hartley (2010) further elaborates on this notion of distributed leadership by stating that it “is a means to an end whose purpose is organizational *development*. It is mainly about accomplishing the *organizational* goals which comprise the instrumental tasks and targets set by officialdom” (p. 281, original emphasis). Hall, Gunter, and Bragg (2011) recognize distributed leadership as the “officially sanctioned model of good practice” (p. 32) advocated by government departments, yet suggest that discussions around this

notion reflect normative narratives and are just part of policy rhetoric to claim that power and autonomy are being shared with schools, whereas reality points to centralization and managerialism. Hartley (2007) regards it as “yet another sign of an institutional isomorphism” (p. 211), whereby the public sector purports to legitimate its policies by appeals to the new organizational forms within the private sector (Alvesson & Thompson, 2005, p. 488).

Gunter and Forrester (2008) detect a control imperative in the relationship between policy and practice in the professional practice of “policy entrepreneurs” (a term coined by Kingdon (2003)), thus concluding that the primacy of the single person (that is, the “solo” leader) remains, with distribution coming downward and used as a form of sophisticated delegation. Youngs (2009) states that education reforms by neoliberal policy agendas have privileged the economic purpose of education, leading to the opposition between self-management and mandated external accountability. He points to the lack of critique surrounding the policy environment and queries the extent to which distributed leadership practices will be shaped or hindered by “official and delegated leadership practices informed by neo-liberal ideals” as opposed to the “more educative and democratic ideals” (p. 382) informing the professionals’ performative environment. The reasons behind the emergence of distributed leadership in schools point to invisible strategies of “normalization” (Foucault, 2002e), with the educational leaders being under a “misconception” of a state of total freedom.

Lumby (2013) laments the fact that distributed leadership literature fails to problematize power and its relationship to distributed leadership, except for a few sporadic attempts, as revealed in studies carried out by Flessa (2009), Hartley (2010), Hatcher (2005), and Storey (2004). Hartley (2007) notes the under-theorization of the relationship between power and distribution. However, organizations are replete with structures of power, unlike the “mirage,” the “apolitical workplace,” that according to Lumby (2013, p. 582), distributed leadership has been used to create.

Ignoring politics can be interpreted as a political act as much as overt engagement. In its avoidance of issues of power, distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power (ibid, p. 592).

Within this unproblematized theoretical framework of distributed leadership, evidence of a hierarchical framework of control lurks – residual control which is presented as a necessity for successful distribution. Autonomy is restricted, nesting within the imperative of the official agenda, due to the potential threat to the coherence of school improvement initiatives that may come about as a result of differing agendas between the leadership distributors and those among whom it is distributed – the latter is an issue that was explored by both Harris (2008) and Timperley (2005). In his exploration of the inequality in the leadership hierarchy between the “distributors” and the “distributees,” Youngs (2009) concludes that leadership is a vehicle of power. Youngs (2009) further questions the locus of power in educational contexts and whose interests are being safeguarded. He problematizes the assumption that “official” distributed leadership is presented as “a moral and

educational act” of distribution, thus implying that those at the receiving end “do not have it in the same measure in the first place” (p. 387). He shows his concern that “distributed leadership may become a term that is synonymous with and restricted to formal leaders distributing more leadership to others” (p. 387).

This produces a directed form of distributed leadership, which ends up emphasizing rather than lessening the distinct leadership hierarchies. This notion leads to the “dysfunctional dynamics of control-collaboration tensions” as defined by Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003, p. 399). While control curtails human limitations through discipline, collaboration leads to the empowerment of individuals. Yet, if one approach gains more prominence, the danger of groupthink or distrust comes forward. This is a paradox which Watson (2013) locates in the strong advocacy of distributed approaches to leadership in the UK for the head teachers. The twin justifications provided by appeal to organizational effectiveness and democracy highlight the inherent contradictions within distributed leadership practices. These power issues point to distributed leadership discourse as “a space of differentiated subject-positions and subject functions” (Foucault, 1991, p. 58). Therefore, the subjects (educational leaders) are not shaped solely by social structures (neoliberal school environments), but actively take up their own discourses through which they are shaped and by which they shape themselves.

Some critics of the distributed leadership notion inquire whether such a concept offers a genuine alternative to other forms of leadership, or whether it just serves as “the emperor’s new clothes” (Bolden, 2011, p. 254) or as a pragmatic response to society’s demand for equity and purpose. Lumby (2013) accuses distributed leadership of offering “yet another nuanced rebranding, anchoring the nebulous concept of leadership to a seemingly fresh and inclusive activity” (p. 589). She argues that in this way distributed leadership subjects educators to the ever-increasing limitations posed by centralized curriculum control, surveillance, and marketization. This comes about as distributed leadership appears to loosen the bonds in encouraging staff to embrace it as a “technology of the self” (Foucault, 2000b, p. 177), thus leading to the successful enactment of policy discourse. Hartley (2010) suggests that it is “little more than an emancipatory rhetoric” (p. 279), building on the accusation of Hargreaves and Fink (2008) of distributed leadership being a “more subtle and clever way to deliver standardized packages of government reforms and performance targets” (pp. 238–239). On a similar note, Spillane, Healey, and Parise (2011) argue that distributed leadership has “effortlessly entered the conversation about school leadership and management often with simplistic and unwarranted mantras such as *everyone is a leader* or *the more leaders the better*” (p. 159). Discourses construct subject positions, as is the case with distributed leadership which brings about its own specific discursive formations.

According to Woods (2004, p. 22), as with other discourses of legitimation, such as “empowerment” and “ownership,” the notion of distributed leadership appears to incorporate democratic procedures. Woods addresses the danger of the notions of democratic leadership becoming colonized by distributed leadership discourses, stating that the two notions cannot be regarded as synonymous. Distributed leadership incorporates a degree of control and autonomy, within which there is the scope

for dispersed initiative and the boundaries of participation. Despite being distributed, leadership does not imply the lack of a pyramid as it varies along the continuum between control and the autonomy participants are allowed to exercise. This positioning of distributed leadership across the control/autonomy continuum determines whether autonomy and empowerment are extended or if constraint and control are exercised in novel ways. Democratic leadership runs the risk of being regarded as another way of denoting distributed leadership; however, the concept of democratic leadership simultaneously draws open and goes beyond that of distributed leadership. Whereas distributed leadership may obscure the deeper questions inherent in democratic leadership through its widening of leadership boundaries, democratic leadership attempts to make visible these deeper questions. Woods (2004) thus argues that distributed leadership promises a “hollow” democracy, further entailing a “democratic deficit,” which, according to Woods and Gronn (2009, p. 430), leads to its critical interrogation. Is it the leadership of one or the leadership of many?

Hartley (2007) argues that distributed leaders do not arrive at their position as the result of an election, but an appointment, with a “presumed harmony and consensus” about the whole affair. Hatcher (2005) and Storey (2004) think that “distribution” tends to underestimate the micropolitical aspects of leadership practice, while completely ignoring the “distribution” of wealth beyond the school and its causal relationship to attainment. However, leadership cannot survive without difference – this seems to be echoed by Harter, Ziolkowski, and Wyatt (2006) who argue that leadership dynamics are “unequal” in one way or another – power differentials exist despite the notion of distributed leadership. This notion emphasizes the inequality present within the discursive field of distributed leadership. Woods et al. (2004) propagate the existence of distributed leadership and strong senior leadership which allows for strong partnerships with the simultaneous power disparities between the partners. Watson (2013) draws on McMurry’s (1958, p. 82) notion of “benevolent autocracy” to show its particular relevance to school leadership, thus implying that distributed leadership practices are “only” possible “where an autocratic leader at the top ruthlessly ensures that participatory ideals are adhered to by those lower down the hierarchy” (p. 259).

Stohl and Cheney (2001, pp. 387–389) have revealed that even in situations where leadership is a matter of collective consideration, people’s attachment to the concept of “strong leaders” is sometimes still very heavily felt. Lingard et al. (2003) stress the necessity for leadership in schools, arguing that “schooling discourses locate authority in principals and defend their positional power because schools, as we know them, require leadership in order to function *as* schools” (p. 144, original emphasis). How can a school move forward without a leader at the “top” to steer its direction? Distributed leadership does not equate to no leadership, and does not mean that everyone has an equal say in every matter. It is this common conception (or misconception, rather) that creates a tension between the notions of distribution, democracy, and the concept of the network. These tensions reflect a battle among the discourses of heroic leadership, distributed leadership, and isolationism, via the distinct discourses of critical leadership, as interpreted via Foucault’s (1975) view of the world as discourse. Gunter, Hall, and Bragg (2013) regard the single leader as

central to distribution, in line with the reasoning of Harris (2007), “The paradox is that without stable, consistent leadership in schools distributed leadership will be incredibly vulnerable and ultimately fragile” (p. 322). Harris (2005) argues that distribution of leadership does not lead to the redundancy of the Head who has the critical role of providing empowerment to the would-be leaders through asymmetrically distributing the tasks.

Can distributed leadership and hierarchical leadership coexist? Leadership can be stretched over leaders in a school, but is not necessarily democratic – Spillane (2005) argues how a distributed leadership perspective may also give rise to autocracy. Is there a single distributor who “distributes” leadership? One must question *what* is being distributed, *how*, and *to whom*, as well as the way in which this distribution occurs.

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### **Challenges to the Implementation of Distributed Leadership: A Focus on the Multifarious Practices of Government**

Education practitioners and policymakers have been lured by the attractive notion of leadership distribution for various reasons. Mayrowetz (2008) explores the value of distributed leadership in a pragmatic sense, pointing out four benefits that can be generated through its practice. It may be regarded as a theoretical lens for exploring the leadership dynamics; as a means for furthering democracy (despite distributed leadership and democracy being very distinct, as outlined by Woods, 2004); as a way of improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness; and finally, as leading towards human capacity-building.

Notwithstanding the “perceived” advantages of distributed forms of leadership, Harris (2004) states that inevitable and inherent difficulties are associated with its implementation in schools – namely structural, cultural, and micro-political barriers in operation. This section thus outlines the challenges that are presented by the tensions revolving around the hierarchical structure, power, and autonomy; the notion of distribution and boundary spanning; and the level of control and autonomy. The “perceived” benefits of distributed leadership are internalized via Foucault’s (2002e) notion of subjectification through which the educational leaders, as subjects, are constituted through “practices of subjection” and multiple “practices of the self” (p. 331), mirrored in the changes that occur in their leadership conduct due to these novel distribution practices and discourses. They are thus woven into and out of discourse, the discourse of distributed leadership.

Schools as traditional hierarchies, with the demarcations of position and pay scale, may prove to be a barrier to a more fluid and distributed approach to leadership. Moore and Kelly (2009) claim that the nature of schools as traditionally hierarchical structures with the head teacher as the leader tends to conflict with the leadership style promoted in networks (p. 397). Hopkins and Jackson (2002) suggest that the “more hierarchical the management structure, the more the liberation of leadership capacity is likely to be stifled” (p. 11). Harris (2004) also states how distributed leadership may pose an inherent threat to the status quo, placing the head in a position of vulnerability due to a relinquishing of power to others, leading to a



lack of direct control over certain activities. Issues regarding loss of leadership power and autonomy may arise as school leaders struggle with the notion of delegating responsibility and accountability to network members. Earl and Katz (2005) explain how, "Establishing patterns of distributed leadership is a subtle dance of power and authority. Sharing leadership within schools and across the network can cause confusion, resentment and protection of position and power" (p. 71).

Harris (2004) shows concern that significant impediments to distributed leadership are presented by "top-down" approaches to leadership and the internal school structures. Another challenge is posed by "how to distribute" and "who distributes," ensuring that distributed leadership "is not simply misguided delegation" (ibid, p. 20), involving interdependency rather than dependency, with "the leadership function *stretched over* the interaction of *multiple leaders*" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, p. 24, emphasis added). Timperley (2005) writes about the potential problem of incoherence within an organization due to the different agendas circulating among those to whom leadership is distributed and the "official" leaders, especially where no boundary spanning is involved. Boundary-spanning leadership as defined by Miller (2007) has an important role to play in leadership distribution as it involves bridge-building with numerous points of contact, establishing collaborative environments, as well as carrying out information brokerage.

Jarvis (2012) describes how schools as organizations are "the loci for various forms of power and compliance relationships" (p. 489) due to their high level of complexity. Distributed leadership, according to Woods et al. (2004), may be both constraining and enabling, depending on the degree of control and autonomy in the organization, which turns out to be a major variable in this leadership practice. This concern raises the issue of the extent and limits of individual autonomy. Furthermore, they draw attention to the fact that where distributed leadership veers towards the autonomy pole of the control/autonomy continuum, one should not assume that nonnegotiable, "top-down" goals, values, and aims are always unsuitable, despite presenting a strong, directive steer. Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 384) identify an organizational paradox emanating from the tension around "empowerment and direction," where leaders are expected to enact their roles while following others' decisions in a "supposedly" distributed leadership setting. Consequently, Watson (2013) draws our attention to the paradox in relation to autonomy and collectivity, which produces tensions between belonging and performing, thus giving rise to the dichotomy between "collective" and "individual" identities. A plausible connection between the two sets of tensions identified above seems to exist in equating "empowerment" with autonomy, thus leading to individual identity, and "direction" which leads to the nurturing of "collective" identities due to enacting that which is "given." This is engendered by the push for distributed leadership within a scenario of networks, cooperation, and flatter hierarchies. Gronn (2009) states that little attention has been paid as to how it may be ideologically driven and political in nature.

Moreover, according to Sugrue (2009), distributed leadership can promote an excessive reliance on group-based leadership and understate the importance of the individual leader in organizational effectiveness. Gronn (2009) argues that "solo leaders continue to figure prominently in accounts that purport to be distributed and



that distributed leadership apologists have not adequately clarified the role and contribution of individuals as continuing sources of organizational influence within a distributed framework” (p. 383). In his view, distributed leadership fails to give an explanation of the different forms of leadership at work at any one time, from concentrated solo leaders to more dispersed forms of networks within the same organization.

Mifsud’s (2017c) study that addresses gaps in educational leadership literature in the areas of collegiality, relations of power, and leadership distribution practices (the latter being the main focus of this chapter) simultaneously undermines leadership theories through findings that contradict conventional, reputable concepts. Mifsud (2017c) addresses the “conceptual confusion and empirical reticence” indicated by Harris (2007, p. 315) and other researchers (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Storey, 2004) in the field of distributed leadership. The Maltese college (school network) undermines the very idea of “distribution,” due to its leadership practices revealing themselves as “direction,” “delegation,” “centralization,” “control,” “constraint,” and accountability. Furthermore, the theme of infantilization emerges very powerfully in the portrayed relationship between the College Principal and the Heads of School. A “concurrent double positioning and performance” is constructed “through the positioning of the Heads by the Principal and through the Heads’ acceptance and performance of this positioning” (Mifsud, 2017c, p. 209), thus showing the Heads subjecting themselves to this adult–child relationship.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Foucault’s concept of governmentality offers a divergent framework for an exploration of distributed leadership as presented in the literature narrative as an aspect of changing rationalities of government.

In the table below, the author portrays the regimes of government present in the distributed leadership literature narrative, according to the four modalities identified by Grimaldi (2020) (Table 2):

Niesche (2011, p. 139) commends researchers to cast a wider net “in terms of approaching, researching, theorizing, and analysing educational leadership.” Gunter (2010) argues that while theory does not immediately solve the dilemmas of what decisions can be made and implemented in a school leader’s work practices, it does allow possibilities for the generation of novel perspectives on this phenomenon we call leadership. This chapter may demonstrate the importance of the relationship between theory and practice which is sorely lacking in leadership studies.

The author also aims to highlight the usefulness of Foucault’s work in educational leadership, more specifically the discourses of distributed leadership. His themes are still relevant today, in fact, May (2005) argues that if we need to question the relevance of Foucault’s work for today, then we must become *more* Foucauldian rather than less. It is possible that a move towards distributed leadership will simply involve more complex “masks” being utilized. Foucault’s work helps me examine how leadership discourses operate to produce particular leader subjectivities and

**Table 2** Regimes of government practices within the distributed leadership literature narrative

Focus of the analytics of government	Presence of the regimes of government in distributed leadership
<i>Forms of rationality</i>	Distributed leadership as a feature in policy frameworks The motivation of the leadership distributors
<i>Fields of visibility</i>	The presentation of distributed leadership as an attractive mechanism for the “top-down” delivery of policies The diverse conceptualizations of the distributed leadership term
<i>Techne</i>	“Network governance,” that is, education reform via networking for school effectiveness and improvement Inequality in the distributor/distributee leadership hierarchy The notion of “benevolent autocracy”
<i>Identity formation</i>	The interdependent influence between followers and leaders as leadership coproducers The “everyone is a leader” notion The presentation of distributed leadership as an antidote to heroic leadership with promises of empowerment and collaboration The “distributed versus democratic” leadership distinction/divide The “autonomy–collectivity” paradox

how these, in turn, offer resistance to produce particular discursive positions – they are both *subjects to* and the *subjects of* particular leadership discourses.

This piece of writing can also serve as an inspiration for practicing leaders in present-day educational institutions in order for them to reflect on the multiple influences on their leadership experience and identity, on how they are “subjected” by both local and global forces, and how they in turn subjectify others, all the while moving down the leadership hierarchy. They can come to an understanding of the forces by which they are “subjectified” from above, in turn leading them to “subjectify” those beneath them, who in turn offer “resistance” in response to this subjectification. These forms of “subjectification” and “resistance” which are internalized by the various leaders as a “normalization,” “a regime of truth,” thus becoming a “technology of the self,” may therefore be viewed with skepticism and critiqued, rather than being accepted in an essentialist unproblematic way. The leaders’ subjectivities are a constantly shifting and flexible phenomenon rather than fixed as is constructed through policy documents – they are created through a range of particular discourses, power relations, and interactions. Educational leaders can take up Foucault’s (2000a) notion of critique as a “permanent” ethos in which they explore the nature of their existence but at the same time query the limits imposed upon them, while probing opportunities for increasing freedom (p. 118).

Niesche and Gowlett (2015) advocate a post-structuralist politics for educational leadership as it allows for a better understanding of leaders and their shifting subjectivities, where leadership practice is regarded “as a phenomenon that is contested and fluid, open to change, moving between different positionings, and disrupting the search for that essential human feature” (p. 382). Analyzing distributed leadership discourse through a Foucauldian governmentality perspective positions leadership as a locus of political struggle, thereby enabling school leaders to be open to

nontraditional ways of seeing the world. Moreover, this allows for “a rejection of imposed categories and identifies spaces of freedom for leaders’ actions rather than a closing down and erasing of difference lead[ing] to a productive (re)thinking of leadership practice as it occurs” (ibid, p. 383).

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## Tracing Historical Origins and Motives for Conflict and Discord

Barbara J. Hickman and Thomas R. Hughes

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### Abstract

Few issues before the courts have proven over time to be as compelling, divisive, or enduring as the principles of separation and how they have been outlined within the United States Constitution. Arguments have been steadily addressed and dispatched according to the various modes of constitutional interpretation from which legal scholars operate. While consideration of originalism or textualism and other popular methods of interpretation make their way into any legal discussion, the catalyst for addressing this chapter differed. Instead, this chapter examines the topic through a historical perspective that focuses on power and purpose as it traces the inherent motives behind visible shifts in Constitutional interpretations and leanings. Specifically, this chapter first engages in an examination of the ideals and arguments that were registered as the country was

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coming into being. It next moves from history and philosophy to foundational case arguments and rulings that followed. This evolves into the balancing act between science and the beliefs that underscored an evident emergence of political leanings making their continued presence felt. Finally, the chapter examines implications for educational leadership, including expected conflict, just ahead of providing an accounting of anticipated future imports for this topic regarding the next generation or two.

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**Keywords**

Conflict · Creation · Historical perspectives · Opposing ideology · Political motivation · Religious motivation · Moral reasoning · Originalism · Power · Pragmatism · Textualism

**The field of memory**

Clearly, the work of Thomas Jefferson and others was profoundly thoughtful and influential in creating the underlying ideals that became the United States. Also, just as clearly, there are and have always been motivations linked to the separation of church and state that should be studied from the perspective of constitutional rights, along with a historical accounting of social and political influence. Ultimately these interactions need to be traced through the years of conflict and discord and weighed against the impacts each has had on educational leadership. The relationship between religion and governance has a complicated history in the United States. Tales of the “Founding Fathers” highlight the principles and contributions of the dominant white male culture and their religious beliefs. Conveniently, the ensuing narrative often leaves out their hegemonic relationships with indigenous peoples and the oppressions that took place during the nation-building period. At times this innate contradiction is just accepted as the way things were – a sign of the times. Still, trouble emerges when that insouciant mentality reappears and fails to embrace the responsibilities that accompany the rights and ideals initially set out by the founding founders – while also creating a pathway for dismissive attitudes towards any number of sources of discord that may be inconvenient to contend with.

**The field of presence**

Educational leaders have an essential role to play in the protection of constitutional rights and need to have an understanding of the gradual erosion of those rights within the current cultural context. Although tremendous wisdom has been assigned to the Constitution and its underlying tenets, increasing complexity and cultural conflict (English, 2012; Hughes, 2019) continue to expose tears in the fabric of American society and civility. While there are those who inexorably assume the underlying philosophy that has girded American democracy for so long will continue to persevere, partisanship has replaced historical approaches to governing. The court system seems increasingly politicized or encased in procedural and precedential gridlock. Sound bites are created for maximum reaction, and conflicting points of

view are rationalized to the point that all sides in disputes represent themselves as marginalized victims. The idea of “taking sides” and the accusation of “but it’s not fair” are pervasive criticisms of both institutions and the people that lead them and schools are not exempt. Educational leaders must understand and take action to demonstrate that they know and believe in the careful balance between rights and responsibilities and how to protect and teach both of those critical aspects of democratic governance.

### **The field of concomitance**

Though the United States Constitution has influenced governments, customs, and norms for hundreds of years, numerous outside sources have impacted this topic in return. One of these influential sources is science. As Americans have increasingly come to express their faith in science, including archeology, chemistry, and medicine, there are members of faith-based and other communities who have taken issue with that point of view. Famously argued during the Scopes Monkey Trial, the reality of science versus religion powerfully revealed itself during the COVID-19 pandemic where science was sometimes ignored. Instead, remedies of faith were supported by the federal administration, who pushed the idea that the crisis would come to a miraculous end. On another front, the influences of traditional media and communications, including televangelism and more, as well as social media, has had a highly significant impact on the direction of this topic. Pieced together, these impacts have helped shape the trajectory of efforts to eliminate the wall of separation outright. They have also combined to sustain a long-term attack on public education, which is the single most remarkable institution in support of equity and democracy. Religion has been used as a justification for the privatization or chartering of public schools, however, it often takes the side of business, profit, and capitalism ahead of efforts to support equity through shared education.

### **Discontinuities and ruptures**

As referenced concerning the relationship between business and prominent religion, there is a glaring reality that is mostly overlooked and is perhaps even taboo to register in a severe look at this topic. Central religion has been fully mobilized within its alignment with a major political party, yet churches continue to enjoy tax-exempt status. Without going so far as to criticize the piety of churches and religion on any large scale, beyond tax status, some would suggest that capitalism is the largest denomination in the country, with Christianity absorbing and fully embracing that pairing. There are high stakes returns for both major political parties and elements of significant religion which stand to benefit immensely because they have adopted a doctrine of capitalism ahead of all else – and delivered a flock of the faithful to the hands of their allied party – regardless of issue or how troubling the character and competence of political leadership.

### **Critical assumptions or presuppositions**

Important assumptions guide the ideas expressed in this chapter and how they impact school leadership. Regardless of the day, the age or location, or the size of an

educational organization, leaders have regularly needed to balance the right of individuals with the community or “common” good. As matters become more complex (Hughes, 2019; Miller, 2018) conflict also increases in complexity and it is vital to have a better understanding of how issues reached their place of prominence in our social and legal settings. That understanding necessitates familiarity with the underlying philosophy driving as much as it requires a knowledge of the case history. This is because the political tides the nation goes through constantly reshape the boundaries surrounding the broad concepts as well as the comparably more minor details. Though the political and legal claims being made are intense, ultimately, the discussion always comes back to the philosophy associated with the concept. For this reason, this chapter explores the underlying philosophy first.

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## Introduction

This chapter examines the historical progression of church and state issues from the period within which the United States was organized, through to the present day. It traces critical issues through vantage points that emerged at critical junctures in American history to help shape the present-day realities concerning the separation between church and state.

More specifically, this chapter traces historical and philosophical underpinnings at the earliest stages of government development first. It then examines legal case-work surrounding the topic before jumping into the union of politics and separation ideology that showed more prominently throughout the twentieth Century. Finally, the chapter entertains implications for educational leadership ahead of offering commentary on the possible next incarnations of this topic in the foreseeable future.

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## Ye Old Deluder Satan

Long before the First Amendment of the United States constitution, with its political and linguistic construct of separation between church and state, the two were inexorably entwined. The unwinding yet continual interplay of these ideas may be influential in the controversies and legal battles that still rage today.

In 1647, the state of Massachusetts passed the Old Deluder Satan Act, which became the basis for public schools in the United States. The Puritans, religious immigrants themselves, felt that children should learn to read to prevent “ye old deluder, Satan” in his goal “to keep men from the knowledge of ye Scriptures” (Stillwaggon, 2012, p. 352). Although having a legal requirement for access to scripture may seem pious, there was also an attitude of intolerance prevalent in this belief system, as Hirschman (2004) describes the Puritans in Massachusetts as “hanging two Quakers who refused to quit their province” (p. 1213).

The Act required towns of 50 or more to “hire and maintain” a teacher for reading and writing, and cities with a population greater than 100 were required to use taxes to support a grammar school (Carleton, n.d., p. 1). In demanding that taxes be used to

pay for a typical school, this piece of legislation created the foundation of the property tax reliant school funding model still followed in most states today. In addition to mandating a specific funding scheme, Carleton (n.d.) writes that the Act:

Established several principles upon which public primary and secondary education continues to rest today: that basic knowledge is a public or community responsibility, that the state can require communities to raise and expend local funds for schools, that day-to-day responsibility for the operation of schools rests at the local level, and that schools are to be organized in levels separating elementary from secondary education (p. 1).

Public schools in the United States were configured because of religious convictions about the importance of reading and understanding scripture. Educational leaders may wish to consider how the Puritanical reasons for the importance of education may continue to inform both legal requirements and cultural expectations for schools, and if there are underlying currents or religious assumptions about behavior and belief systems that linger in institutions of public education. Nelson (2010) quotes Noddings as observing the particular “Deweyan ideal of a religious attitude—one inspired not by doctrine or dogma but by an energetic and faithful dedication to the worthy tasks at hand. Surely, this attitude can be legitimized in public schools.” Nelson goes on to describe this idea as “classically American,” with a priority on “doing and validating thought through action” (p. 335). The role that religion has in educational systems, intentionally or subliminally, warrants a more in-depth examination that follows historical background, involvement of the judicial system, cultural and political influences, and possible future impacts.

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## A Historical Wall of Separation

The Supreme Court adjudicates Constitutional law and their rulings on schools and religion have, in general, been based on each justice’s application of the First Amendment’s Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses, which read “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Notably, the two clauses do not include the phrase “separation of church and state”, nor is that phrase anywhere in the constitution. Despite this, it is referenced and even quoted so frequently in the context of religion in the public schools that a more in-depth discussion may be helpful.

The Danbury Letter (Little, 1976) was written by the newly elected President Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut and communicated that Jefferson was supportive of the rights of individuals to practice religion freely. Jefferson wrote:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between a man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence

that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ *thus building a wall of separation between Church and State*. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to handle all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties. (p. 59).

Kevin Welner succinctly wrote about Jefferson’s concerns with the entanglement of religion and politics, and that his “embrace of a wall of separation was to avoid government involvement that could corrupt-free religious practice, while also protecting the government against church influence” (Welner, 2018, p. 2).

As an example of various vectors of power and the careful balancing of them by leaders, however, Jefferson’s words should also be understood within the political context of the time in which he wrote them. Jefferson penned the letter in response to the Danbury Connecticut Baptist Association’s letter to him detailing their complaints about the influence that the more powerful Congregational church had on community, governmental and tax decisions. Perhaps more crucially, the message was written during a time of intense political debate and Jefferson’s concerns about a trend towards Federalism and away from the republic form of governing envisioned by Jefferson and his peers (Hutson & Jefferson, 1999, p. 777). Additionally, during the presidential campaign of 1800, The Federalist Party had labeled Jefferson an atheist (Hutson & Jefferson, 1999, p. 782), a serious charge that he needed to renounce by making some sort of public statement about the role of religion, and perhaps his own beliefs about the matter. The Danbury Letter provided him that opportunity. While Jefferson did believe what he so eloquently wrote, it also provided him with a much-needed platform from which to broadcast his ideas.

The idea of the separation between church and state has loomed large in the American consciousness, and cases involving how schools allow or don’t allow religious practices have been continually litigated. The Supreme Court has heard trials that range from how, when, and by whom prayer at school may be conducted (examples: *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963), *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000)), student release time for religious instruction (example: *McCollum v. Board of Education*, 1948), reading the Bible in school (example: *Murray v. Curlett* (1962) and the pledge of allegiance (example: *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, 2004)), in addition to other areas of litigation.

Lupa, Masci, and Tuttle (2019), in their report for the Pew Research Center, captured the cultural conflict that stems from those judicial decisions with this observation:

Some Americans are troubled by what they see as an effort on the part of federal courts and civil liberties advocates to exclude God and religious sentiment from public schools. Such an effort, these Americans believe, infringes on the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion.

Many civil libertarians and others, meanwhile, voice concern that conservative Christians and others are trying to impose their values on students. Federal courts, they point out,

consistently have interpreted the First Amendment's prohibition on the establishment of religion to forbid state sponsorship of prayer and most other religious activities in public schools (2019, p. 1).

An educational leader must understand the history along with intertwining of culture, political influence, and religion as well as how those relationships impact educational institutions and their communities. An excellent place to start that history is with the concepts of right and wrong and with the judicial system, and no court serves as a better example of that for this area of interest than the Supreme Court of the United States.

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## Legal Discussions on Matters of Church and State

A deconstructive definition of logocentrism, a concept, and term credited to Derrida, often includes the words truth, law, logic, and reason (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010) and identifies the binary aspects of human thought; man/woman, good/bad, inside/outside. In considering transgressions of church and state, an issue squarely rooted in the interpretation of human-created written law, a debate might be had on how to view the purported binary right and wrong of law and what is perceived as a search for "truth" in a situation, with the complex intersection of differing beliefs. Knowledge of the law may also serve as an external manifestation of power in rulemaking, judiciary resolutions, and decisions made by school administrators. Those same school leaders are tasked with using their skills and experience in school procedures and expectations to balance the rights and responsibilities of a school community.

James (2018) explained that for Foucault, the relationship between "truth," power, and competing claims was not negative, but rather that in considering the opposing sides of an argument, one might discover more insight than in simply looking for the "right" or "true" answers. For educational leaders, the search for the "right" answer is a familiar one that often arises around matters of freedom of speech and religious expression versus what is appropriate or permissible in a school setting. Educational leaders must explore their ideas about a "right" answer to the role that religion might play in the public-school system, and also consider if that "right" answer has changed over the years as the court system has evolved to reflect changes in national mores and administrations.

The relationship between church and state provides a compelling example of the complexities in finding a "right" answer, as in many cases involving the issue, each side will have a different perspective on what that answer should be. When transgressions of church and state end up in court, the arguments are wholly based in political and legal forms of power, and the resolution of disagreements uses written phrases and interpretation to build, enforce or bend a wall between an individual's beliefs and the community's public practice. It would be instructive to follow two cases related to church and state, examine the opposing sides, or "competing claims," and consider how the Court interpreted Constitutional law to make their decisions.

*Everson v Board of Education* (330 U.S. 1 1947) was decided by the Supreme Court in 1947 and continues to be influential on how the courts adjudicate church and state issues.

New Jersey had a state statute that allowed parents to be reimbursed for transportation costs if they chose to send their children to private schools, including church supported, religious private schools. The statute was challenged by *Everson*, a local taxpayer, who felt that using taxes to pay for religious school transport provided indirect aid to religion and therefore was a violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause. Ward (2009) detailed two essential points that were outlined by the Court as they debated and decided this case:

- The First Amendment could be applied to state constitutions, based on the 14th Amendment that requires due process. Before the *Everson* case, the Bill of Rights was considered only in cases involving the federal government.
- Justice Black, speaking for the majority, quoted Jefferson's Danbury letter, where the phrase "building a wall of separation between church and state" first appears. Black then added that the "Court believes that the wall must remain high and impregnable."

Somewhat surprisingly, given his statements on the importance of a wall, Black then argued that using public funds to cover religious school transportation did not violate the establishment clause, as the funds were also used for transportation to nonreligious private schools, that the state must be neutral towards religion, and that "no person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance" (Kauper, 1973, p. 313). Therefore, as long as taxpayer funds could be used for transportation to nonreligious private schools, the Court had to support the use for religious schools as well (Ward, 2009). In as much as the payments were made directly to parents and not to the religious school, the Court majority did not find that the program provided direct state aid to religion.

The justices who wrote the dissenting argument felt that parochial school was an integral part of the Catholic Church and "to render tax aid to its Church school is indistinguishable . . . from rendering the same aid to the Church itself." Their comments shed some light on the areas of disagreement in the judiciary on how to define and apply the "establishment" of religion in the context of government support or neutrality (Ward, 2009).

Chemerinsky and McDonald (2018, p. 1030) described what they consider to be one of the most important and precedent-setting impacts of the *Everson* case:

There is no doubt that when the Court inserted itself into church-state issues in *Everson* after they had been worked out at the colony and state levels for over 300 years, it departed from this historical understanding of free exercise rights.

In 2020, the Supreme Court decided a case that was based on a state statute similar to the one challenged in *Everson*. Despite the gap spanning 73 years and completely different justices, the decision echoed the majority from the earlier case.

On June 30, 2020, the Supreme Court ruled on *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, No. 18-1195. (Espinoza, U.S 591, 2020). A Montana state statute allowed for tax credits to be applied to scholarships for children who attended private schools. Still, the Montana Department of Revenue excluded religious schools specifically from that tax option based on the state constitution that barred aid to sectarian schools. Three mothers whose children attended a religious school in Kalispell, Montana, sued the state, challenging the exclusion of religious schools from the scholarship program as discriminatory. The initial decision was for the parents, but on appeal, the Department of Revenue argued that the scholarship program would be unconstitutional if it funded private religious schools. The Montana Supreme Court agreed and reversed the lower court's decision.

The Supreme Court thus considered the question, "Does a state law that allowed for funding for religious schools violate the Religion Clauses or the Equal Protection Clause of the federal Constitution? (Oyez, 2020).

The Montana Supreme court had invalidated the entire program over conflicting statutory regulations. Still, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote, overturned that lower court's ruling, finding for the parents with a statement that the statute "cuts off funding only to religious schools while allowing funding for other non-public schools, putting the school to a choice between being religious or receiving government benefits" (Van Oort & Nelson, 2020). The Court wrote that the Free Exercise Clause "protects religious observers against unequal treatment and against laws that impose special disabilities based on religious status and that the state statute banning aid to religious schools violated that clause" (Oyez, 2020).

These two cases show some continuity in how the Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment in finding a "right" legal answer for the specific issue of using public funds for religious school supports. Their rulings in these similar situations have favored and redefined the idea that the Court, and the state, must remain neutral in deciding matters of financial supports for public and private schools, be they secular or sectarian. These cases indicate that the Court may be interpreting neutral as the same treatment for all sides, not as keeping religion out of the public sphere.

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## The Marriage of Religion and Politics

It would be tempting to start a timeline of the deliberate yet still complicated relationship between religion and politics with the theatrical Scopes Trial of 1925 that pitted creationism against evolution as part of the school curriculum, or with the 1954 addition of the words "under God" to the pledge of allegiance as a reaction, some argue, to McCarthyism and communism, which was perceived as "godless." Those moments in history, and many more, might be used to illustrate the attempted encroachment of religion into the public sphere. For this chapter and the slow lowering of Jefferson's wall, the candidacy and presidency of Ronald Reagan provide a perfect place to begin.



Craig Smith (2017) made this bold statement:

Over the last fifty years, however, conservatives have migrated into the Republican Party, and liberals have migrated into the Democratic Party, creating the strongest ideological division in the parties since the days of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. One of the reasons for this shift was Ronald Reagan's ability to build a broad coalition around conservatism (p. 33).

During the presidential election of 1980, both the incumbent Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan utilized religion to appeal to potential voters. Hogue (2009, p. 2) described that both candidates "practiced the politics of religion, appealing to their strong religious values and Christin piety" as reasons why voters should want them as the next President. Reagan won that election, of course, and historians to this day puzzle about how "a divorced Hollywood star become the symbol of conservative Christianity's revitalization, as he trounced born-again Sunday school teacher Jimmy Carter" (Sutton, 2015, p. 205).

Of importance to this discussion was the emergence of a political alliance known as the Religious Right. Many of the social changes that occurred in the 1970's; the increase in women working out of the home, youth rebellion, Vietnam war protests, the Supreme Court's decision on *Roe v. Wade* that legalized abortion and the emergence of the gay rights movement all worked together to create an environment where more traditional, Christian families felt that their way of life was under attack (Sutton, 2015). Many of these issues also troubled political conservatives, albeit for different reasons. Enter Jerry Falwell.

Falwell was an influential preacher who lead a vast, evangelical church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and at the urging of conservative political operators, became a founder of the Moral Majority, the title of the Religious Right as a social and political entity, in June of 1979. The Moral Majority identified themselves as "pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, pro-Israel, and pro-strong national defense causes" (Sutton, 2015, p. 208). Briefly put, the Moral Majority found itself in closer alignment to Reagan than they did to Carter, and lodged their growing political power behind his success.

One of the Regan administration's lesser-known forays into the business of religion and educational institutions happened over the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University, (BJU), "a fundamentalist university in South Carolina that had denied admission to African Americans until 1971 and in 1975 still prohibited interracial dating" (Sutton, 2015, p. 213). The IRS, as a body of the U.S government, had determined that, based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, institutions that practiced segregation were not eligible for tax exemption. BJU and one other college sued the United States to regain their tax-exempt status. In 1982, The United States Treasury, backed by the White House, announced that the IRS did not have the authority to make that kind of decision and that the colleges in question would have their status restored. The Reagan administration may have underestimated the public's reaction to this turn of events, as the President received enormous criticism for his support of BJU. As Aaron Haberman (2005) wrote, this situation.

...forced the Reagan administration first to initiate Congressional action to revoke the newly restored tax exemptions and then to ask the Supreme Court to settle the matter once and for all. In May 1983, the Supreme Court ruled eight to one in favor of the IRS's authority to deny the tax exemptions (p. 234).

In that specific case, and despite pressure from the President, the Supreme Court upheld the Civil Rights Act and did not allow an institution, religious or not, to flagrantly ignore federal law and still reap the benefits of federal tax exemption. However, Reagan's appointments to the Supreme Court during his years in office reshaped how the Court rules on religion and education cases to this day. This reshaping of "the bench" mellowed in subsequent years as several justices became more neutral if not even liberal in their later years. However, in 2016, the need to solidify a conservative majority within the court system became a preeminent need and rally cry for the "right-leaning" and often "Christian" oriented voters across America. With efforts still underway to further strengthen the conservative majority in the courts, this orientation has established a stronghold that will influence the nation in general and educational leaders in particular for at least the next generation.

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## Implications for Educational Leadership

For educational leaders, awareness of their critical role in safeguarding the constitutional rights of the school community, including those that pertain to religious expression, may sometimes get lost in more immediate concerns about academic progress or school site safety. Or, perhaps more worryingly, because the subject matter under consideration is not within the mainstream beliefs and preferences of the school community. But protecting the idea of a democracy and the rights and responsibilities that come along with that form of government should be of utmost priority for school leaders. Balancing the common good; what actions or reactions will benefit the community as a whole, with the civil liberties of an individual, is a recurring theme in the work of administrators who are tasked with protecting the safety of the institution in which they serve, acknowledging and responding to local values, and supporting tenets of the governance of the United States.

To facilitate finding that balance, educational leaders might consider the separation of church and state in public schools within the broader context of the rights granted and protected by the Constitution and reflect on the often-difficult choices between honoring an individual's free speech and expression and concerns about maintaining an orderly school setting.

Administrators are not without resources as they navigate these nuanced decisions. *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), arguably the most well-known student free speech case ever decided by the Supreme Court, provides both the legal backbone and the language needed to prevent, stop or discipline students for speech or other forms of expression, including religious, that might be deemed a threat to a safe and secure environment.

As described by Chemerinsky (2000), in addition to delivering the famous statement “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate” (p. 530), Justice Fortas, speaking for the court majority, also gave administrators the power to decide if an expression of speech could be banned by a school as he stated:

In order for the state in the person of school officials to justify prohibition of a particular expression of opinion, it must be able to show that its action [is] . . . something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint. Certainly where there is no finding and no showing that engaging in of the forbidden conduct would “materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school,” the prohibition cannot be sustained. (Chemerinsky, 2000, p. 532)

For school leaders, however, great care should be taken to not overstate what material or substantial disruption might be in an effort to dissuade unpleasant or inconvenient speech. Clay Calvert offered an example of a student wearing a black armband to mourn the students killed in the Columbine shooting of 1999. The school’s response was to issue “a three-day suspension coupled with an order gagging her from speaking with members of the news media” (Calvert, 2000, p. 739). Calvert then raised the claim that in a post Columbine world, “administrators fraught with fears of similar violence at their own institutions, routinely sacrifice students’ rights to free expression” (p. 740).

Erwin Chemerinsky (2000) agreed, contending that since the Warren Court decided *Tinker*, and found for the free speech and expression rights of students, there have been no other cases that the Court has ruled on in favor of protecting the First Amendment rights of students in schools (p. 528).

For educational leaders then, part of their work might include guarding against and protecting from the coercive pressure that may be exerted on non-conforming students. Some legal scholars have voiced deep concern over trends in judicial decision-making and what they see as a slow curve away from students as citizens in their own right and towards the power of the institution of school and the educational leaders within that system, to act with impunity and sanctioned immunity towards the constitutional rights of their constituents. Supporting the idea of schools as having powerful coercive pressure, Calvert (2000) noted that.

The troubling lessons taught today’s youth are that free speech means very little when fear takes over and that conformity to the norm-not daring to speak out, not voicing one’s own opinion on issues, not engaging in creative writing or artwork-is the only way to avoid controversy, both inside and outside of school (p. 740).

Perhaps one could argue that students practicing a non-mainstream religion might also be included in Calvert’s list of behaviors for students to avoid if they wish to sidestep cultural controversy.

Björk, Browne-Ferrigno, & Potterton, (2019, p. 14) quoted Björk and Keedy (2001) in stating that “Superintendents clearly carry great power when considering

equity and justice in schools. Hence, to assure all children receive appropriate support for learning at their highest ability, district leaders must sometimes make decisions that may not align with majority perspectives.”

They expand upon the idea that organizational justice includes creating and enforcing “meaningful rules for distributive and procedural justice” (p. 14). While that quote may be most naturally directed at resource management and equity, the idea of procedural justice as part of a leader’s role in protecting constitutional rights is also relevant. Using an ethical framework such as organizational justice, along with a strong understanding of students’ constitutional rights, will help educational leaders with their difficult work in balancing what is good for the whole community and still protecting all students against the coercive nature of peer pressure and social norms.

### **Future Conflict Involving Religion and Public School**

Justin Driver (2018) described the Supreme Court’s recognition of the importance of maintaining a religiously neutral environment around issues of church and state in schools and highlighted the inherent power that resides in the institution of schools and its representatives. He wrote:

(The Court had) . . . an awareness both that the public school setting potentially imposes acute coercive pressure on students’ religious beliefs and that this religiously diverse nation must take special steps to forestall any notion that only receiving an education subjects students to proselytization (p. 362).

Driver also comments that “right-leaning” citizens continue to accuse the Court of bias against Christianity with undue restrictions on prayer at school events, while “left-leaning” citizens have “condemned the Court’s decision legitimizing vouchers” for religious schools (p. 364). He suggests that these opposing criticisms may indicate that the Court is broadly successful in achieving the neutrality that he believes is asked for in the Constitution.

Not everyone is as convinced about the Court’s neutrality in matters of religion. Welner (2018) said:

Today’s Supreme Court does not share Jefferson’s vision. In fact, the court has been sawing away at the high fence for decades. In cases posing challenges to state funding of religious institutions, the court has steadily permitted greater and greater financial entanglements (p. 4).

Chemerinsky and McDonald are even more direct in their warning about the increasing conservatism of the Court. They describe:

. . . a trend of decisions by the conservative wing of the Rehnquist and Roberts Courts to lower the church-state wall in a misguided way, one that will only be accelerated by the recent appointments of Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the Court-giving the conservatives a solid five-vote majority for years to come (p. 1015).

Kenneth Townsend (2016) wrote about the Court's current "shift away from viewing the Establishment Clause as a basis for creating secular public space and, instead, as simply a mandate for evenhanded treatment between religion and non-religion" (p. 370). He points to the difficulty that both the Court and greater society have had in defining neutrality in the context of public schools and in struggling with the essential question that asks if neutrality means secularism or if it means evenhandedness (p. 371). Townsend then elaborated on the work of Paul Kahn in explaining potential impacts when society begins to see public secularism as "one sort of viewpoint among others, rather than as perspectives that transcended difference and protected the public sphere from being overrun by any particular faith" (p. 372). He cautioned that:

As views expressed in the public sphere become increasingly understood as only expressions of private interest, the liberal public sphere itself will have more difficulty being understood as something that has independent, intrinsic worth (p. 373).

With the Court's recent emphasis on treating religious and non-religious organizations in the same manner and not maintaining the separation supported by previous Courts, new challenges have emerged for public schools. Perhaps the most impactful of those challenge will be how and when public funds will be used to support students' attendance at religious schools. It may be that the wall of separation will not be pushed over in a dramatic upheaval, but rather quietly dismantled, brick by brick, though changes in the foundational funding of schools. Cheuk and Quinn (2018) wrote:

Three spheres of influence — the courts, the executive branch, and public opinion — are now operating in concert to normalize such uses of public financing, and as a result, we are beginning to see a significant erosion of the wall separating church and state (p. 1).

Although *Espinoza v Montana*, (591, U.S. 2020) may be the most recent, the 2002 Supreme Court case of *Zelman v Simmons-Harris* (536 U.S. 639, 2002) provides some insight into the thinking that the court has used as they gradually change the definition of separation. The arguments of the case mirror those used in other cases and serve as an excellent example of the Court's majority position.

In 1995, the city of Cleveland established a voucher program for low income families as a way to provide parents some choice in improving their children's educational outcomes. In 1999, although a relatively small number of students, less than 1%, were participating, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued the district on the claim that the program was violating the Establishment Clause by allowing the vouchers to be used for attendance at religious schools. The Supreme Court was asked to decide if "Ohio's school voucher program violates the Establishment Clause?" (Oyez, n.d).

In a 5–4 vote, the Court determined that the use of vouchers for religious schools did not violate the Establishment clause. Chief Justice Rehnquist, speaking for the majority, declared that:

Government aid reaches religious institutions only by way of the deliberate choices of numerous individual recipients, and the incidental advancement of a religious mission, or any perceived endorsement, is reasonably attributable to the individual aid recipients not the government. ... The program is therefore a program of true private choice. (Oyez, n.d)

## Conclusions and Reflections

The use of the words “private choice” brings up a whole host of other concerns for many educational and legal commentators. Townsend (2016) termed this the “communitarian threat in which the interests of parents or other intimate communities constrain the goals of public education.” That definition sounds a lot like prioritizing the rights of the individual over the community good, a common thread of discussion in this chapter.

Chemerinsky and McDonald (2018) used the Zelman case (p. 1041) as a framework for discussing the Court’s decision in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia Inc. v. Comer* (2017) as they point out that the former case allowed that it was *permissible* to use public funds for religious school choice and that in *Trinity*, the Court has taken the additional step to “suggest that the government *must* allow those funds to be used for religious schools if they are also used for sectarian ones.” They then described the “disturbing trend” in the Court’s “unholy alliance” (p. 1053) between church and state.

As a summary comment, Chemerinsky and McDonald (2018) expressed their belief that the Court rulings that have blurred the lines between church and state now allow that the “government will have more constitutional latitude to support or promote religion should democratic majorities in various geopolitical communities choose to do so” (p. 1056). On its face, allowing the government to be a part of religion expression based on the preferences of the majority in any given geopolitical area may not create much local controversy. The Pew Research Center’s Religion and Public Life Project (2015), found that 70.6% of respondents identified as Christian and 6% as non-Christian faiths. However, those percentages may not be accurate for any given school or specific community, and educational leaders must be aware of the impact of allowing the majority religion to have a voice at any schools, but in particular, schools with religious diversity.

That said, the Constitution does not make distinction between geopolitical regions. In contrast, there is regionalism in court findings through the federal district courts, ultimately the appeal process reintegrates issues back into a more collective “national” scheme when matters are directed toward the Supreme Court of The United States. One may argue that prevailing local conditions should dictate convention in this matter. In the southwest, where there is a very strong Latter Day Saints contingent, it is often argued that this is already the case. To offer, however, that a practice of regional accommodation toward religious preference is a practical and effective end solution for conflict stemming from this topic, is likely misguided.

The immediate future appears to be shaping up as one where political and religious affiliations continue along the same lines that have been drawn for the past 40 plus years. Still, in America 2020, the multiple layers of wide-spread conflict currently in play would seem to foreshadow multiple seismic shifts in educational practice and subsequently educational policy. Christian leaders have been unified to this point, but recently faced splintering within their ranks. Similar to the reality of seeing numerous factions of conservative bodies challenging the current administration and incarnation of the Republican Party, multiple religious leaders have found fault with the alliances which have been built. Some have voiced distain for these

relationships and questioned the underlying morality and civility of condoning and supporting a government that practices anything but Christian beliefs on a daily basis.

The easy call would be to suggest that the future of this topic depends on the outcome of the 2020 Presidential Election. And to some extent there is no way of avoiding that reality. Still, there are some givens to consider regardless of the outcomes in the executive and legislative branches of government.

- The discord surrounding this topic will continue to escalate in part because that which was already “becoming” personal at times has blatantly been made to be personal as much as possible to further create division and separation between groups. It is working.
- The court system that oversees related issues at various levels continues to become increasingly partisan. This means it is not enough for school leaders to know their case histories. The outcomes are recorded will very likely be reversed at some level and at some point in time depending on the specifics.
- As important as it is to understand law, from a legal history standpoint, understanding of conflict resolution will also stand out as social media and growing discord bring related issues into schools more immediately and more directly.
- This issue will be pulled into other significant issues such as equity and social justice because of the growth in cultural conflict where advocates for equity are no longer limited only to barriers and resistance, but face deliberate efforts to repeal past progress (Hughes, 2019) and this is often mobilized along the lines of religious and political conservatism.

In as much as this broader topic has been with us for centuries and is steeped in traditions that are so well known, they can also almost be rendered invisible; it is an area that will continue to demand attention from educational leaders. The underlying philosophy, history, and political affiliations are important matters for administrators to attend to. This chapter has been developed to make introduction to these three elements, and contribute to the broader understanding of leaders from all vantage points.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Foucault’s Governmentality and Educational Leadership Discourses](#)

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# An Archaeology of Postcolonial Discursive Strategies: Studies in Governmentalities of Education

# 59

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## Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of the many forms of postcolonial critiques as they apply to educational administration and leadership, in part as a critique of neoliberalism and globalization, but also from the perspective of preserving and maintaining the integrity of identity, culture, knowledge traditions, and social institutions of non-Western states and indigenous communities that have been colonized during various periods in history and in the contemporary world. Using Foucault's concept of governmentality and enunciative dimensions of the archaeology of knowledge, the chapter explores memory, presence, and concomitance, as well as disruptions and ruptures that have produced the postcolonial critiques. This involves an examination of conceptions of education, its administration and leadership roles, curriculum and pedagogy, and the contextual factors of education as a social institution in society that differ significantly from Western countries. Emphasis is placed on the requirements of decolonizing educational organizations and the field of educational administration in order to restore

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teaching and research appropriate to the diversity of cultures and communities through a reconstruction that recognizes the human right, under UN resolutions to one's culture and belief systems, of an inclusivity of others' constitutional and legal systems, governance and administration practices, cultural structures and norms, and the way that social institutions are structured.

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**Keywords**

Postcolonialism · Decolonization · Subalternity · Epistemicide · Cultural security · Neocolonization · Globalization · Neoliberalism · Indigenous studies · Governmentality · Archaeology of knowledge

**The Field of Memory**

The field of memory in the postcolonial critiques of educational administration and leadership encompass both historical periods of imperialism, mostly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of many non-Western regions, territories and states, and the current globalization period since the 1980s during which primarily Anglo-American neoliberalism has been exported through curriculum, expatriate faculty and staff, and promoted through international organizations and agencies. There are a number of postcolonial critiques that have analyzed what forms and levels of colonization have been exercised and their impact, as well as promoted ways of decolonizing education in order for countries and cultures to recover their sovereignty and support and protection for their political systems, cultures, religions, language, and identities. These include the colonization of mind and identity, of knowledge and research, of roles and practices in organizations, and the policy regimes that exist as well as extending education back to its many roles and responsibilities in a society apart from its contribution to economic development. This applies to all levels of education from curriculum and pedagogy to role modeling, administering and fulfilling leadership roles in schools, universities, government departments and agencies, and research institutes and funding foundations.

**The Field of Presence**

The primary concepts, ideas, theories, and models are constructed out of the recognition and acceptance of principles of diversity globally as well as new UN resolutions and conventions that extend human rights to include the rights to one's religion and culture (United Nations, n.d.). This diversification is also referred to as the internationalization of and comparative approaches in many disciplines and fields in the last two decades to include many non-Western contexts and indigenous peoples. It has also produced more diverse and contextually appropriate and accurate research methods since the late 1990s expressed in some research ethics procedures where one has to take into account the laws, cultures, and social norms of the communities and countries in which one conducts research such as that appropriate in non-Western and indigenous contexts. The range of postcolonialisms includes the colonization of mind, the subaltern

identity, epistemicide, critiques of neocolonization (often through globalization), multiple modernities theory, cultural security, and decolonization among others.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

There are a number of disciplines and fields that have provided the foundational theories, models, and critiques for constructing a postcolonial and diverse educational administration and leadership, as they have for all other conceptual and theoretical foundations in the field. This includes both primary disciplines like history, philosophy (e.g., ethics and mind), sociology, political science, psychology, religious studies, anthropology and cultural studies, as well as applied fields like public administration and management studies. All of these have expanded in their scope for international and comparative studies as well as various forms of post-colonial critiques.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Some of the most important areas of educational administration and leadership have been affected by the increasing internationalization and cross-cultural critique that includes those produced by postcolonialism in contextual, identity, values, policy, organizational studies, and leadership. Contextual factors include the political, economic, cultural, and societal differences across countries and communities, in part due to historical forces that have shaped them and the current conditions including for many countries high levels of violence classified by the UN as “conflict zones.” Culture, religion, and social norms as well as intellectual and knowledge traditions also affect principles and values of conception and practice, including ethics and social justice. Additionally, the configuration of social institutions including the structures and practices of families and tribes also influence educational structures, and practices need to be taken into account in policy development, education, and research methods.

### **Critical Assumptions**

There are a number of assumptions one makes when engaging critically with colonization and constructively in decolonizing education to rebuild it. First, many negative stereotypes and false assumptions about knowledge, intelligence, skills, and how divergently societies function. In part this means rejecting convergence theory, neoliberal globalization precepts, conscious and unconscious assumptions about the superiority and universalizability of Western, mostly Anglo-American knowledge and practices, appropriate professional identities, roles and practices, and where leadership is located in the community. An additional assumption comes from Bourdieu on the nature of symbolic violence that applies to many countries where their indigenous or traditional bodies of knowledge, values, identities and roles, and forms of policy have had Western neoliberal influence and been damaged or destroyed. Accompanying this diversification and cultural sensitivity is also a movement in management studies that is applicable to many other fields to recognize that many cultures and belief systems also have a humanistic tradition, which allows for comparison and a common humanity on the

underlying and foundational value levels, although taking different forms of expression across cultures and countries.

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## Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of postcolonial perspectives that have formed since the mid-twentieth century that can be read as an archaeology of the field in Foucaultian terms, focused on the role of governmentalities of education and its administration and leadership that form the colonizing periods, from the early modern ones of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (although earlier periods of colonization existed) as well as the current globalization recolonization or neocolonization in curriculum and pedagogy in the field, and the postcolonial governmentalities that many scholars and some national policies have been putting into place as alternatives. Relevant here is the notion of “global monopolism” to describe the impact of globalization on many countries, described by Banerjee (2008) to produce a “necrocapitalism” that leads to social or culture death in the non-Western world where cultural and intellectual colonies composed of exported education and pedagogy threatens others’ cultures and commodifies the cultural sector through neoliberal practices and secularity (Dresch & Piscatori, 2013). Three of the main objections to globalization are that it reproduces foreign socio-cultural and educational structures, governance, responsibilities, roles, practices, etc.; it homogenizes societal structures and practices compromising sovereignty, personal and national identity, culture, and religion and other social institutions; and the emphasis on the individuals places their interests over that of community and society.

For Foucault, governmentality is a complex concept that denotes discourses and practices of knowledge and the power this produces form “regimes of truth” that become dominant (Lemke, 2016; Rose, O’Malley, & Valverde, 2009). Tikly (2003) was one of the early authors in educational administration who applied Foucault’s conception of governmentality to a postcolonial examination of education, as a way of thinking consisting of philosophies, disciplines, values, ideas, concepts, language, and forms of knowledge as sources of power that govern roles, identities, social relations, thinking, and actions in a given context. These form the technologies of governmentality – the policies, guidelines, procedures, programs, instruments, assessments and evaluations, professional norms and ethics, both as documents and social norms that govern thought, decisions, actions, and social relations that normalize and marginalize or assign deviance in any of these spheres (Inda, 2005). Colonization, as Inda (2005) argues, can also be read this way, including neoliberal regimes that operate from an economic perspective producing “homo oeconomicus” focused on individual self-interest, and using rational choice and market principles exclusively (Hamann, 2009), and the current neoliberal globalized colonization of education internationally grounded in the foreign systems originating in Western states that reshape other peoples’ worlds. For higher education this produces three main effects: translating all research, curriculum and

pedagogy, and their participants into commodified product form; reshaping academic activities into market-based competitive systems; and collapsing the difference between government and individuals and groups, effectively removing academic freedom (Davies & Bansel, 2010).

There are a number of developments across disciplines and fields that provide part of the foundation for postcolonial critiques and solutions. Internationalization and diversification through cross-cultural studies and an accompanying cultural competence literature (Deardorff, 2009), critiques in the international schools sector (Bates, 2011), problems in conflict zones (Paczyńska & Hirsch, 2019), policy transfer studies identifying modification and adaptations issues (Rapple, 2012), and the development of modernized school and higher education systems in many countries (Hickey & Hossain, 2019). Colonization problems exist also for many foreign students at Western universities where curriculum may be parochial or inadequately internationalized, reflecting the internationalization of fields that have been underway (González y González & Lincoln, 2006). The conception of “internationalizing” has transformed the field from almost exclusively Western (primarily Anglo-American) countries toward redefinitions that are more inclusive of non-Western countries, but while identified many years ago (e.g., Hughes, 1975) have only in the last two decades developed into a significant representative body of literature (e.g., Jarvis & Mok, 2019). There are also Western scholars pursuing a more diverse educational administration such as Dimmock and Walker (2005) and more diversified book series with publishers like Symposium, Routledge, and Springer.

The chapter will first provide an overview of the colonizing forms and influences from early historical periods including the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in many world regions, as well as the current globalization period, which, in governmentality terms, is exerting pressure on many countries to conform to particular Western theories, models, and standards. This involves examining the various ruptures and discontinuities in local and regional bodies of knowledge that colonizations have brought through oral and written practices in academia and through sociocultural forces that directly and indirectly affect knowledge conceptions and the construction of administration and leadership roles in education. These include through the archaeology of knowledge the “enunciative” operating through memory, presence, and concomitance as well as forms of governmentality (Foucault, 1972, 1979), that is, the various subjectivities from which approaches, techniques, and practices are derived, which these traditions exhibit. These dimensions of the enunciative are used to explore the historical phases culminating in the postcolonial.

The second section identifies a number of the postcolonial critiques and theories that have arisen in many parts of the world of particular interest to educational administration and leadership, reflecting local conditions and which are focused in different levels and dimensions of experience and knowledge that shape education. Many of them are not applicable to only one level or one dimension of professional experience and life, but they do tend to fall into major categories such as the colonization of mind (e.g., Thiong'o, 1987), and the subaltern identity (e.g., Spivak, 1988) as well as the destruction and reconstruction of knowledge through epistemicide (Hall & Tandon, 2017).

The final section examines the resistance to globalization that exports Western knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy, and the rise of internationalization and culturally inclusive/diverse literature read through changes in governmentality at all levels, from mind, through social relations to organizational and social institutional levels locally and internationally, through the three dimensions of Foucault's enunciative and its role in the reconstructions of governmentalities such as decolonization strategies. This is evident in the changes in educational administration and leadership curriculum, pedagogy and practices advised by postcolonial critiques, as well as in supervision of foreign students who particularly require broader perspectives in the field and who may be involved in indigenization or nationalization of education to restore and protect culture, religion, language, and their social institutions often in accordance with social justice and the human rights to culture and religion such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in September 2016 on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage that calls upon all States to respect, promote, and protect the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, including the ability to access and enjoy cultural heritage (see United Nations, [n.d.](#); Hafstein, 2014). The educational sector is critical for societies in maintaining identity, constitutions, laws, policy systems, and values, their economic systems, and social structures like family and tribe that vary considerably internationally.

The overall aim here is toward a decolonization of educational administration and leadership curriculum and research by examining the implications of the post-colonialisms established in a number of fields and advocating a recognition of diversity and an inclusiveness of many knowledge and educational traditions appropriate to countries and cultures. Various critical conceptual lenses are used to identify internationalizing principles in reconstructing the field on foundations that reflect a diversity of indigenous and non-Western societal institutions, values and identity construction, and knowledge traditions. This also requires a much greater and deeper use of contextualization such as historical forces, constitutional and legal systems, governance and administration practices, cultural structures and norms, and the way that social institutions are structured differently.

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## The Effects of Colonizations

There have been a number of colonizations throughout history, and also transmissions of knowledge that served as intellectual colonizations that have not necessarily been destructive such as the often overlooked or excluded period from the medieval to the enlightenment when scholarship from the Islamic world was transferred into Europe providing foundations, knowledge and research practices in all disciplines and applied fields now comprising a very large body of literature in English (e.g., Morgan, 2007; Saliba, 2007). Intellectual development in Europe also specifically referred to many of these scholars, sometimes using Latinized versions of their names like Averroes for Ibn Rushd and Avicenna for Ibn Sina. It was not only their findings in research that traveled to Europe, but also their research methods that

developed to very high intellectual levels such as the scientific research methods and apparatus (Mutahhari, 2002), and also the interpretive tradition and some forms of critical theory that then provided a foundation for European scholars. It is often forgotten that Europe's use of classical Greek scholars were first adopted in the Islamic world and built upon to a very large extent before transferring to Europe (Saliba, 2007) This was also a period when many intellectual traditions from India and China also were integrated into scholarship, initially in the Islamic world and then transferred to Europe. Of issue here for this chapter are Western colonizations of education, not including many that occurred in other regions like Asia where other states like China colonized regions around them (e.g., Herman, 2007).

A number of colonizations were carried out in early modern periods like Guaman Poma de Ayala in the sixteenth century (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), and continuing through to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in many world regions, consisting of not only control over political and economic systems, but also the cultural sector affecting schools and higher education. However, this is not only a phenomenon in the historical past, but has continued through contemporary history with the last four decades of globalization (see Nagy-Zekmi & Zabus, 2010). These caused ruptures and discontinuities in local and regional bodies of knowledge, including for many of them strong oral as well as written traditions through academic and sociocultural forces that directly and indirectly affected knowledge and the construction of administration and leadership roles in education. In many cases this included (and still includes in the current globalization period) covert, or "hidden" ideas, values, concepts, and theories similar to those described by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in their "hidden curriculum" construct. In these cases, authentic "knowledge" and "education" were assumed to originate only in colonizer countries, often in a use of concepts and knowledge content reflective of colonizer countries that the colonized may not understand (Bourdieu, Passeron, & de Saint Martin, 1994). In these cases the use of terminology of educational administration and leadership from a foreign culture does not relate well to other contexts since jurisdictional and cultural content differs. Through the archaeology of knowledge, colonizing knowledge and education can be analyzed through the "enunciative" operating through the three dimensions of memory, presence, and concomitance, as well as the forms of governmentality (Foucault, 1972, 1979). That is, the various subjectivities from which approaches, techniques, and practices are derived are shifted from a national and indigenous base to that of the colonizer. These processes and dynamics effectively negate or rendered valueless indigenous knowledges, values, identities, and roles.

For Mignolo (2000), gaining control over knowledge and education is a critical part of the colonizing process, making colonies dependent not only on colonizers markets, but also the knowledge and values they hold, but it also is used to socialize and acculturate the colonized into a position of dependence by asserting that colonizer knowledge is universal and that "there can be no others" (p. 59), thereby transforming knowledge from a cultural construction into a geopolitical space of power. It was this process, beginning in the fifteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that promulgated a false history of the origins of



knowledge and research linked to capitalistic ventures of many Western countries. The capture of a country's educational system and knowledge are the power instrument used to erode the sources of a community's own power by devaluing their own educational and knowledge traditions, religion, language, and cultural traditions upon which their society is built.

Colonization also occurs on a psychological level affecting many dimensions of one's life, analyzed by Oliver (2004) from an existential and psychoanalytic perspective to reshape self, identity, and social interaction through psychic processes like alienation, shame, sublimation, sense of agency, and idealization to reorient the individual toward an acceptance, submission to, and subjugation of colonizing structures and separating them from their own national and cultural values and norms.

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## An Overview of Postcolonial Critiques

This section explores a number of postcolonialisms as they relate to their critiques of the colonizing process that serves colonizing actors and forces, and what implications these have for educational administration and leadership. There are many types of postcolonialisms designed to address different levels of experience and knowledge, such as the individual, social interaction, the group and organizations, communities, and social institutions. This organization of the critiques is used to cluster them into discreet categories, although it is important to recognize that aspects of them overlap into other categories.

There are many instructive guidelines provided by postcolonial forms of critique that relate to educational administration and leadership, approached here as "diagnoses" of the problem. This includes psychological, social, cultural, and political approaches that have developed over many decades, with early writers like Freire (1954) who examined the colonizing effects of working in a foreign language, and Fanon (1965) who examined foreign education as indoctrination against which the colonized should refuse recognition to the colonial "masters." Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) critical theory exposes unconscious socialization through the hidden curriculum critique one can apply to many expatriate faculty's curriculum and pedagogy. Another foundational author is Edward Said (1978) whose "Orientalism" thesis examined how constructions of superiority and denigrations of others are formed by colonizing powers and their political, economic, and educational representatives in other countries. Termed "pedagogy of the other" by Burney (2012), Said's work laid the foundation for a praxis of research and pedagogy that addresses subjectification of many cultures to colonial power expressed through many different forms, creating "subalterns" who attach themselves to the goals and intent of the colonizer.

These authors raised many issues involved in principles of curricular development and content that derive not just from other knowledge traditions and critiques, which are not necessarily destructive, but when imposed to replace others' concepts and knowledge are determining in a hegemonic way what is regarded as legitimate,

valuable, and useful. This necessitates historical and sociocultural understanding of knowledges and how they operate within various institutional and cultural contexts in countries, and within multiculturalism, (Kymlicka, 2001) by legitimizing other cultures including minority groups in Western countries.

One way to organize the implications of critiques for a postcolonial reconstruction of educational administration and leadership is through levels of relevance from the individual, through social interaction groups, organizations, sectors and social institutions, national and cross-national levels that require education grounded in the world in which one lives, as well as the larger international world. Part of this context also are the historical forces that have influenced societies and cultures, and various historical periods or phases they have gone through including international trade and influences in knowledge as well as colonizing activities either as the colonizer or the colonized. It is important to remember that many countries colonized in recent and modern history had been colonizers themselves, sometimes the center of great empires each spawning periods of educational development and scholarship (e.g., see Burbank & Cooper, 2010).

It is through these levels that one can construct curricular and pedagogical content and principles of practice. The individual level consists primarily of the unconscious mind, personality, senses of self, character, and identity and values one internalizes as well as the various roles one constructs in social interaction that require embeddedness in one's own culture while learning about a broader world. This requires a curriculum from which students develop the rules and modes of ethics and behavior in their own societies and for instructors and supervisors to remove the power relations that often exist in cross-cultural teaching, an argument made by Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012). The sector and social institution level consists of structures that comprise a society such as family and tribe, health, social services, education, and governmental that takes on a number of forms depending on the type of society involved. This requires that professionals define their roles, responsibilities, and obligations within these, applying to many development contexts (McEwan, 2019). Professional education, like educational administration, also requires that the graduates operate within the constitutional, legal, and governmental systems of their own country and its participation in international organizations like the UN and regional bodies, necessitating that a large proportion of the curriculum reflect the local context while also covering international scholarship.

Perhaps most strongly, it is the many postcolonially oriented literatures that have the potential to transform the field from a Western hegemonic one into that of international scope and an inclusion of knowledges in other societies in a socially just way. Another side to the postcolonial is inclusivity of minorities Western countries in schools and higher education (Khalifa, 2018; Minthorn & Chávez, 2015).

## **Mind and Identity Formation**

On a fundamental level, there are postcolonial critiques that examine how mind and identity are affected by colonized education. One of the most important critiques

come from Thiong'o (1987) who regards the decolonization of mind from the literature and media sources (e.g., literature, film) that can be in part corrected by placing more emphasis on and incorporating indigenous sources at the center of a curriculum to correct for their marginalization or elimination by academics and journalists who are part of the "neocolonial establishment." Colonizing material is viewed as a "cultural bomb" that annihilates peoples' belief in their names, languages, values, capacities, and selves. For Dabashi (2015), colonization mind also takes the form of Western negative stereotypes of others as incapable of intellectual thought. Fanon (1965) also analyzes the socially conditioned inferiority complex inflicted onto colonized people through the imposition of an alien culture into the unconscious as an ego ideal and dissociation of people from their culture of origin.

Another point to note is that colonizing knowledge in other countries is often done unconsciously, referred to by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) as "hidden curriculum" that not only embeds preferred values but also can produce negative stereotypes and generalizations. Nandy (1983) advocates a psychological resistance necessary to liberation from colonization and colonizing, given the levels on which it operates: the first a physical conquest; and the second, relevant to globalized education, are the occupation of mind, senses of self, and culture. This is evident in the Western constructions of Occidental and Oriental, civilized and primitive, scientific and superstitious, and developed and developing (Prakash, 1995). The colonization of mind and body "releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps to generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds" (Nandy, 1983, p. xi).

## Knowledge Traditions/Curricular Content

There are a number of postcolonial scholars who have focused on knowledge, its construction, selection, marginalization, and even elimination. Some focus on the destruction of others' knowledge tradition, like Hall and Tandon (2017) and Gandhi (1998) who regard it as epistemicide, and Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) on intellectualism as symbolic power and violence. This kind of power emanates from cultural and intellectual capital, but used repressively through the reproduction of colonizing self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination, the shaping of politics and power structures through colonizing forces shaping the fields of activity and habitus.

Others have characterized it similarly as epistemic injustice (e.g., Fricker, 2007; Kidd, Medina, & Pohlhaus, 2017), cognitive injustice (e.g., de Sousa Santos, 2007), or cultural genocide (e.g., Bachman, 2019). In all cases, the marginalization of knowledge systems produces "a destruction of the sociocultural fabric" termed "cultural genocide" (Novic, 2016, p. 9), the very fabric that educational systems are supposed to protect as reservoirs of national cultures, but instead become the instruments of cultural imperialism (Naidoo, 2007). For Mignolo (2011), colonization is not only political and economic, but subjective and knowledge-based

requiring imagining others' worlds and countering this form of cultural imperialism, enforced through systems of foreign accreditation (Altbach, 2015).

It is also important to recognize that the research methods through which knowledge is constructed itself has to be modified to cultural appropriateness so that violations do not occur, more accurate data is collected, and social justice is achieved in research, issues raised, and methodological innovations presented by a number of authors over the last two decades (e.g., Chilisa, 2011; Smith, 1999; Xilem, Lee-Morgan, & De Santolo, 2019).

## **Social Interaction and Roles**

On a social interactional and role level, colonized education affects the construction of relationships people have as they form social groupings (e.g., seen in Western models of leadership that are taught), and the culture and social institutions formed through them. Several postcolonial authors have critiqued cultural imperialism on this level (e.g., Mignolo, 2011; Naidoo, 2007; Satterthwaite & Atkinson, 2005) as reproductions of foreign sociocultural and educational structures, governance systems, and one's responsibilities, roles, practices within them. Education is one means through which colonizers' discourse socially constructs the signifiers of a foreign society in another culture that silences other perspectives and experiences, enculturating colonial peoples into a social/professional language and value system that is foreign thereby separating them from their own culture, values, religion, and social norms. This sociocultural reproduction creates what Guha (1982) and Spivak (1988) call the hierarchically subservient "subaltern" personae and roles, or subaltern identity, through marginalization. All of this contributes to a colonizing of educational administration and leadership.

## **Organizational and Social Institution Levels**

On a larger scale, the formation of organizations and larger social institutions like the economy has been critiqued by postcolonial authors like Banerjee (2008) as "necrocapitalism," by Satterthwaite and Atkinson (2005), Mignolo (2011) and Naidoo (2007) "cultural imperialism," by Battiste (2014) from an indigenous perspective as a colonization of policy and practice, an as recolonization or neocolonization by Memmi (2003), Nkrumah (2009), and Quist (2001) to emphasize that the current globalization is a form of colonization, and the more recent cultural security critique bring other levels of postcolonialisms. The "postcolonial" literatures also include recolonization or neocolonization and cultural genocide (from a legal perspective) as approaches that can redress negative impacts. A recent approach, drawing from European constructivist security studies is the cultural security problem that colonizing education has produced, threatening traditional or conventional cultures on an existential level through a foreign culture replacing identity, values, roles, and practices (e.g., Samier, 2015).

## Decolonization

Decolonization authors have examined the implications of the postcolonialisms established in a number of fields advocating a decolonization of disciplines and professional practices, extending back historically in the early modern period to Guaman Poma de Ayala in the sixteenth century (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Here, their suggestions for decolonizing curriculum and research is examined through a critical conceptual lens identifying internationalizing principles in reconstructing the field on foundations that reflect a diversity of indigenous and non-Western societal institutions, values and identity construction, and knowledge traditions. This also requires a much greater and deeper use of contextualization such as historical forces, constitutional and legal systems, governance and administration practices, cultural structures and norms, and the way that social institutions are structured differently, such as Côté and Levine (2002) have argued, creating a multi-dimensional and level model inclusive of cultures that allows for one to establish the relationships from the individual, to the group, organizational, and societal levels that transfers well from one society to another that can be used to reconstruct educational systems and their administration. Indigenous and First Nations authors have also contributed to a culturally more just educational studies aiming at deconstructing colonizing education and reconstructing a culturally more just and sustainable education (Battiste, 2014; Frawley, Larkin, & Smith, 2017). Another decolonizing response has come from Eisenstadt (2000) in sociology whose work on “multiple modernities” as a recognition that countries can take their own paths in modernizing instead of replicating the process and structures used in Western countries has been adopted in a number of fields, but yet has to have much impact in education.

Decolonization has generally been seen as a knowledge issue, defined as “epistemic disobedience” by Mignolo (2011, pp. 122–123) or “epistemic reconstruction” (Quijano, 2007, p. 176), although Mignolo also suggests that “trans-modernity” may be more appropriate since it would incorporate other knowledge traditions rather than replacing Western modernity, although the implications for identity, social institutions, and culture are profound. In this sense, decolonization rejects the universality and domination of Western thought and calls for the creation of new curriculum that is derived from different traditions, histories, and cultures to correct a Western perspective resulting in a distortion of reality (Quijano, 2007). Decolonization aims to resist the increasing influence of globalization that attempts to develop a homogeneous culture through the distribution of Western secular values, knowledge, lifestyle, and products with no consideration to indigenous cultures, values, and life practices, what Cesari (2004, p. 80) calls “the MacDonalidization of the world.” The globalization of higher education has resulted in the uncritical borrowing of Western models and curricula that gives primacy to Western knowledge and experiences with little or no consideration of student traditional values, knowledge, history, academic competency, and styles of learning.

## Conclusion and Reflections

The indigenization movement in social sciences, Boroujerdi (2004) argues, was established by the 1970s, that non-Western countries need to be wary of Western-dominated theories, models, and research methodologies that have “colonized” other countries, where instead concepts and theories should reflect “indigenous intellectual traditions, historical experiences, and cultural practices” (pp. 30–31). This critique has also formed in foundational disciplines to educational administration, for example, in psychology (Bhatia, 2018; Gelberg, Poteet, Moore, & Coyhis, 2018), sociology (Rodriguez, Boatcă, & Costa, 2016), political science (Jones, 2006), and anthropology (Harrison, 1997) where problems of colonization through education, often historically alongside political and economic subjugation, form. They analyze a number of topics: the legacy of earlier colonizations; organizations that do not reflect local cultures; populations and social institutions; colonizing curricula and pedagogy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018); and remotely through accreditation and ranking systems that reflect Western values and standards (Altbach, 2015). Another form is the establishment of branch campuses, exporting curriculum and teachers (Spring, 2015). In other words, curriculum and pedagogy can be instruments of foreign policy in power-political, economic, and social terms, and as such foreign curricula can be viewed as existential and security threats to national cultures, social institutional structures, legal traditions, language, and religion (Samier, 2015; Thiong’o, 1987).

The arguments are multiple for reshaping the educational administration and leadership field, and thereby curriculum:

1. Moral, social, and cognitive justice arguments (de Sousa Santos, 2018) based on human rights principles, such as the epistemological injustice literature.
2. Valuing other knowledge traditions and using them in curriculum and research practices particularly in cultures where they would be appropriate.
3. Recognizing that despite differences that need to be used in education, there is a common humanity that is captured in various humanisms internationally with complexities and identity rights as they apply to administration and leadership.
4. Practice a respect for others’ cultures and heritage and fairness locally and internationally to students and colleagues through curriculum, pedagogy, and research activities.
5. Acknowledge that part of the sovereignty of nations is control over and ability to protect their cultures, values, and traditions.
6. Remove the primacy of the Western definition of curriculum as formal, objective, and separate from people, context, and pedagogy (a feature of bureaucratized modern societies) with definitions that are contextualized and include the informal and nonformal that characterize many societies that can be equally represented, supported, and protected.
7. Internationalize curriculum in Western universities not only for the many foreign students who study there and return to their countries, but also to educate Western students into a much broader and more inclusive world.

8. Consider securitizing cultures, societies, and knowledge traditions in the educational administration and leadership fields that allows for it to be recognized as under existential threat and requiring responses from government, universities, and faculty themselves.

Early postcolonial theorists like Edward Said (1978) explicitly drew on Foucault (1972, 1979) in focusing on the colonizing control over representational discourse in the reshaping and reconstruction of knowledge, roles, identities, and societal systems, although not without several criticisms (Nichols, 2010). These are complemented by new approaches in many disciplines that have internationalized knowledge, such as Eisenstadt's (2017) proposal of multiple modernities theory in sociology to release academic knowledge from mostly Anglo-American conceptions of modernization that is now influencing other fields like economics and political science. All of these are read through the lens of Foucault's governmentalities, each of the postcolonial approaches and alternatives demonstrating different levels of governmentality critique.

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# Centrism and the Policy Praxis of Modern Whitehall Mandarins

# 60

Peter Ribbins and Brian Sherratt

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## Abstract

Permanent secretaries, despite being the most senior, and most powerful of Whitehall mandarins, are under-researched and their role under-theorized. From a historically oriented, interview-based perspective, this chapter explores the extent to which, and how, the eight permanent secretaries who served at the Department for Education (DfE) from 1976 to 2011 sought to influence education policy for England. Drawing on an analytical model designed to interpret their praxis, it locates them on a spectrum of related yet distinct genres of “centrism” and an associated continuum of contingent descriptive styles. Sixteen centrist

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metapolitical practices are identified exemplifying a potential a posteriori relationship between the main constructs of the model. In what follows, having rehearsed the model in outline, the chapter reports on these policy practices in a series of illustrative vignettes. It concludes with some general thoughts on the implications of this analysis for the nature and character of the role of the mandarin in policy-making in education, and beyond, in England and perhaps elsewhere, and offers some suggestions for the direction of future research.

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**Keywords**

Permanent secretaries · Education policy · Consensus · Centrist praxis · Contingent styles · Illustrative vignettes of practice · Civil service reform · What next

**The Field of Memory**

Evers (► [Chap. 82, “The Search for Science and Scientific Standing”](#)) outlines a framework derived from Foucault (1972) to critique the history of thought associated with attempts to build a science of administration. An alternative Foucauldian framework based on the notion of modes of discourse (description, narration, exposition, and argumentation) would have been attractive. However, in setting what follows the chapter will begin, like Evers, with a note on fields of memory, presence, concomitance, discontinuities and ruptures, and critical assumptions. On fields of memory, for much of the postwar era ideas in educational administration, and to an extent in public administration, were dominated by positivistic and quantitative assumptions. On substantive issues, the agency of senior civil servants was largely assumed to be unproblematic and little studied. Mandarins, despite many attempts to reform the service, notably in the United Kingdom, it seemed, simply did what their job descriptions and terms of reference said they did.

**The Field of Presence**

The field of educational administration from the 1970s to 1990s was enlivened by fierce disputes (special editions of *Educational Management and Administration* “Philosophy and the Study of Educational Administration,” July 1993 and *Educational Administration Quarterly* “Postpositivist conceptions of science in educational administration,” August 1996) as the prevailing logical empiricist paradigm based on the “theory movement” came under attack from critics arguing the merits of a subjectivist philosophical standpoint and of qualitative research (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). Curiously, an associated field, “leadership studies escaped many of the more injurious lacerations and mortal wounds suffered by its disciplinary neighbours. The reasons for this successful immunity are not entirely clear. . .but whilst many fields of knowledge began tearing themselves apart in the 1980s, leadership underwent a massive resurgence following a period of stagnation in the 1970s” (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, 453). As part of this development, some field members began to take an interest in “intermediaries” in government. On this, for

Abbott, Genschel, Snidal, and Zhang (2021), the prevailing wisdom was that intermediaries were disposed to use their autonomy *opportunistically* in the pursuit of self-interest. This echoes the research and thinking of influential theorists, who in the 1970s and 1980s were proposing, for example, “public choice” and “bureau shaping” models.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

As Evers (► Chap. 82, “The Search for Science and Scientific Standing”) notes, external influences on all three fields (educational administration, policy administration, leadership) come from a variety of sources including philosophy and the philosophy of science along with ideas from Weberian social science. In addition, the influence of post-modernist thinking, notably of Foucault and Bourdieu, is playing a part in reshaping educational and public administration as fields of study and practice.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Discontinuities and ruptures in fields relevant to the chapter have taken various forms philosophically, methodologically, and substantively. On the first two it would seem all three fields have settled for a period relatively untroubled by major paradigm disputes in which a mix, if not necessarily mixed-methods, of research can take place. Substantively, ruptures in the form of competing theories and models seeking to describe and explain the motives and praxis of intermediaries, notably civil servants, remain to be resolved.

### **Critical Assumptions**

A critical assumption of this chapter is that the mandarin class, in whatever context, is far too important to be left largely unexamined. That in the conduct of such research, the study of their motivation, orientation, and praxis would be enhanced by a historical approach; one which asks them, inter alia, about what they do, why, with whom, and with what result. But although such research is necessary, for a fuller account of the work of the civil service to aspire to be sufficient it would also have to study officials at more junior levels and in doing so, demanding as this would be, to consider not just what is said but also what is done.

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## **Introduction**

Remarkably little is known about the mandarin class, notably permanent secretaries or their equivalent, in England or, for that matter, anywhere else. This notwithstanding, the range of powers they exercise and the extent of their bureaucratic span while extensive, can vary very considerably. Thus, for example, in 2021, the Department of Works and Pensions employs some 85,000 civil servants and the DfE only just over 8000. As for the nature of the responsibility exercised by permanent secretaries, this, according to David Normington reflecting on his experience of having led both the DfE and the Home Office, could vary very considerably from department to

department. In part this was due to significant difference in size – during his time there were some 70,000 directly employed staff in the Home Office but not many more than 3000 at the DfE. Important as this was, of equal significance, for him, were variations in the roles of the two Departments and what this meant for a permanent secretary. Having described the overall components (policy advice to ministers, leadership of the organization, working with external bodies) of the role, he argues “you do these jobs in completely different proportions according to where you go. In Education it felt as though the whole job was to try and shape the education system and to lead it to some extent. . . In the Home Office. . . you do some of this but. . . it is a constant struggle to see and set the longer-term direction. What is actually on your plate is usually a problem or a crisis. . . So the jobs feel completely different. I think most of my former colleagues would also say that. . . Although the components can be the same. . . they can be experienced in very different ways.”

This notwithstanding, unlike politicians, permanent secretaries rarely write of themselves and not much is written of them by others. What follows builds on work by Sherratt (2004) developed by Ribbins and Sherratt (2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2021) outlining an analytical model for interpreting the policy praxis of the Whitehall mandarin. As such, the chapter sets out for the first time an indicative summary of the range of the empirical evidence drawn from a longitudinal study of the eight permanent secretaries who served at the Department for Education (DfE) from 1976 to 2011 from which the model was drawn. The DfE (2021) is a ministerial department responsible for children’s services and education including early years, schools, and also higher and further education policy, apprenticeships, and wider skills in England. Over its long history the department has had many different remits and many names but for purposes of this chapter its current title will normally be applied. In what follows, the chapter explores aspects of the extent to which and how the eight have sought to play a role in policy-making, and in doing so locates them and their praxis across a spectrum of six related yet distinct genres of “centrism” and an associated continuum of five contingent descriptive styles. From this, 16 centrist metapolitical policy practices are identified and illustrated in case studies that exemplify a potential a posteriori relationship between the main constructs of the model. Having rehearsed the model and said something of the scope and method of the research from which it was derived, the chapter focuses on these practices and does so in a series of illustrative vignettes. Justified as a standalone study seeking to interrogate and understand specific questions within a particular national context, it can nevertheless claim to have potentially a wider international, sociopolitical, and methodological relevance.

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## Research and the Model

The research that underpins the chapter is informed in part by a historical approach. In a special edition of the journal *Educational Administration and History* (Ribbins, 2006), a case for a greater role for history in educational administration, broadly conceived, is made. This needed to be done, because as several contributors to the

special edition argue, as a field of study, it has tended to be ahistorical, even anti-historical, in nature. As Samier (2006) notes “History plays a small part. . . It is rarely taught in courses (including research courses) or included in programmes, apart from simplistic, and arbitrary treatment primarily for illustrative purposes” (125). But it is one thing to claim a greater role for history, another to suggest what this might mean in practice; an issue, one way or another, addressed by all contributors to the special edition. Of these, the paper by English (2006) identifying 12 forms of life-writing is, as noted elsewhere (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2016), most relevant to the research reported below. This had its origins in a portrait-based study of the seven Secretaries of State for Education who served during the Thatcher (May 1979–November 1990) and Major (November 1990–May 1997) years (Ribbins & Sherratt, 1997). To date, relatively little work of this kind has been published although Abbott (2015) has reported on a similar interview-based study of ten Education Secretaries from Shirley Williams to Michael Gove. This offers an illuminating report of their role in education policy and how this was shaped by their interaction with other key policy actors. However, while acknowledging “senior civil servants are highly influential in policy development” (335), no significant reference is made to the activity of any particular permanent secretary.

Following up the study of the seven Education Secretaries of the Thatcher/Major era, a wider view of policy-making and policy-makers was sought (Sherratt, 2004). This involved interviews with relevant others including, providentially, two permanent secretaries. On finding how little the work of senior officials had been researched, the project refocused on them leading to interviews with James Hamilton, David Hancock, John Caines, Geoffrey Holland, Timothy Lankester, Michael Bichard, David Normington, and David Bell. The first interview took place in 1997 (with Holland) and the last in 2012 (with Normington). Using an approach set out in Ribbins and Sherratt (2016), all were spoken to face-to-face (65–80 min) and, after a gap of at least several months and sometimes longer, by telephone (35–50 min). In addition, 40 interviews with 28 relevant others have been recorded including 14 Secretaries of State, 2 Chancellors, 5 Home Secretaries, 5 junior Ministers, 2 Chief Inspectors, 5 special advisers, and 3 permanent secretaries from other departments.

In interpreting this data and generalizing from it, an analytical model is relevant to the project. Central to this are the concepts of “consensus” and “centrism.” In the postwar era, it is possible to discern three main phases in the evolving story of the policy praxis of Ministers and senior officials. Phase 1 (1950s–1970s) was characterized by a broad national consensus between Labour and Conservative governments on key social, economic, and education policy (“Butskillism”) that might be labelled *proto-centrism*. In Phase 2, this unusual accommodation (Kogan, 1971, 29–30) began to break down in the late 1970s and 1980s largely as a consequence of the growing influence of the political ideology of the mid and late Thatcher years (“Thatcherism”). With the advent of a Labour government in the landslide election of 1997, the Thatcherite consensus began to fray. Phase 3 reached its zenith in the Blair administrations (“Blairism”) and arguably has survived substantially intact

since then. This has been distinguished by a kind of consensus built around the apparent espousal of middle ground positions, a *via media*. For the metapolitical class – senior civil servants who although not politicians must work closely with politicians and political ideas (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2015, 11–14) – this constitutes a political milieu likely to provide policy continuity and equilibrium. However, while vestiges of the kind of *proto-centrism* characteristic of Phase 1 survive, it has been largely superseded by new, if not entirely unrelated, forms of centrism.

This “new centrism,” refracted through the prism of metapolitical practice of Whitehall bureaucratic convention, produces a spectrum of reactions notably from senior civil servants and to an extent also from their political masters. To date, five related yet distinct genres of centrism have been identified (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2015, 17–19) and characterized as follows. *Pragma-centrism* by an apparent reasonableness with currency beyond party politics and as such likely to produce policy continuity; *retro-centrism* by a desire for a stable policy *milieu* which promotes not only continuity of particular policies across successive administrations but also a longitudinal policy equilibrium in which direction is sustained despite Cabinet re-shuffles and general election outcomes; *ideo-centrism* by a civil service reaction to policies officials perceive to be starkly ideologically predicated or an expression by them of an alternative ideology, sometimes leading to conflict with Ministers; *meta-centrism* by a commitment to the *via media* which transcends ideology and consensual *proto-centrism* and in doing so provides a *milieu* within which Ministerial political will and civil service “impartiality” are most likely to coalesce; and, *exo-centrism* by a reaction to a perceived need in recent times, via the recruitment of “outsider” experts from the wider public sector or the private sector, to improve the ability of Whitehall to manage programs and deliver objectives defined by Ministers. *Proto-centrism* is not included in this set since it is viewed as antecedent to, rather than as a type of, “new centrism.” Having noted these centrist genres, five descriptive categories of practice (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013a, 32–35, 2015, 19–24) will now be outlined and their link with centrism examined.

These categories were also mostly identified inductively from field work data. They vary on a continuum according to how far permanent secretaries lead or are led in the determination of policy. Each category constitutes a type of centrist metapolitical practice; these and the metapolitical identities involved are specified as follows. They are a *maker (iterative)* of policy when the policy is primarily their idea; a *resister (evasive)* when, justifiably or otherwise, they seek to circumvent/prevent a Ministerial policy intention and do so using counter-iterative arguments or delaying and blocking tactics; a *sharer (collaborative)* when there is concurrence on a policy idea in which they strive to cooperate with the Minister in producing and implementing the policy; a *shaper (reiterative)* when they seek to present policy options to their Minister in line with a previously articulated purpose; and a *taker (performative)* when, whether or not they approve personally of the stated policy, they seek to perform according to the classic convention of the mandarin in which an official strives as best they can to realize the Minister’s wishes. Theorizing on centrist genres, descriptive practices and the relationships between them can be summarized as in Fig. 1.



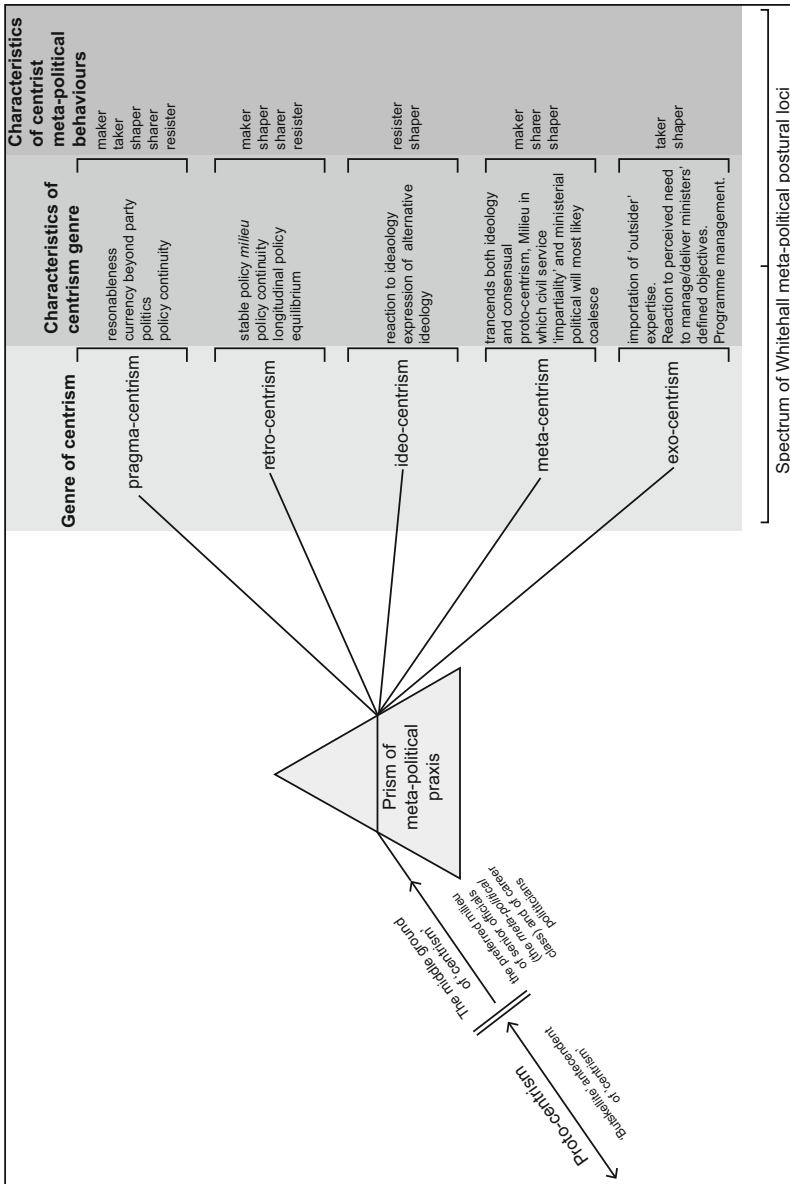


Fig. 1 Centrism genres and their associated observable metapolitical practice patterns

As the figure illustrates, to date, 16 practices have been identified with the number varying between genres suggesting some generate more types than do others. A possible explanation is in part deductive – for example, a permanent secretary recruited from outside (*exo-centrist*) for a particular expertise or a specific purpose is arguably *prima facie* more likely to be a *taker* or *shaper* than a *resister*. In what follows, vignettes reported in earlier publications (1, 6, 10, 12, 15) are noted briefly; the rest are more fully discussed.

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## Illustrative Vignettes

### Pragma-Centrism

This is the only genre for which all five metapolitical practices could be identified. To illustrate these, selected examples from the praxis of Hamilton, Caines, and Lankester are set out. However, it should be noted that the *pragma-centrist* impulse was common to the habitual practice of all the permanent secretaries studied.

#### 1. Hamilton as *maker* of the “Yellow Book” and *shaper* of the Ruskin policy

Hamilton’s praxis in the creation of the Yellow Paper, the source of the Ruskin College Speech initiating the “Great Debate” of the Callaghan administration, is a classic case of mandarin *pragma-centrism*. For Hamilton, the Paper did “nothing but present some obvious truths about education.” Arguably, he was not only very much the *maker* of the Yellow Paper but also played a major role as a *shaper* of the Ruskin policy that followed which led to a significant reconfiguration of power relationships between central and local government in favour of the DfE (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013a, 35–44, 2015, 24).

#### 2. Caines as *taker* of the Ofsted policy

Caines’ *modus operandi*, as much as any of the eight, was typified by *pragma-centrism* (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013b, 113–120), a claim illustrated in cases of his praxis as a *taker* and *sharer*. On this, if for some Ministers the DfE was ruled by “big beasts” pursuing an idiosyncratic (*ideo-centrist*) agenda, Caines cannot be so labelled. Defining his approach, he said: “You will hear a Minister say ‘This lot is trying to tell me what to do.’ Actually, what we were trying to do was say ‘Look. Your predecessor but one-or-two wanted to do this for the following reasons. These were thought valid...’ gently reminding a Minister his own party had different views and in Education particularly time horizons are rather long.” *Pragma-centrist* insofar as its motivation is to ensure Ministers are equipped to make policy decisions, promotes policy continuity (obviating unravelling work by officials) within and across governments. As such, a *pragma-centrist* impulse permeated his style, avoiding any hint of a personal agenda; “You have to be seen to be your Secretary of State’s man.”

The reconstitution of HMI as OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) as a result of the Education (Schools) Act of 1992 can be taken as a case in point. The background to the Act was a growing concern in Conservative political

circles and to some extent beyond, that as constituted at the time HMI lacked the capacity to undertake a full and regular program of inspections. This meant that schools and other educational institutions were experiencing long gaps since they had been visited by inspectors for this purpose. To enable such a program, the remedy proposed was to add sufficient numbers of mainly part-time inspectors to the core group of full-time HMIs. In addition, it was resolved that inspection reports should no longer be deemed departmental documents but would be made publicly available. Both proposals were at the time widely regarded as controversial. As an example of his reaction to the resolve of his Minister, Kenneth Clarke, Caines recalls “we advised him he would not get sufficient private sector inspectors, he would not be able to achieve the four-year cycle of inspections, he would be left with egg on his face. We said, ‘These are the risks down the road that we foresee. . .’ He said, ‘Fine, I see those risks. I’m prepared to take them.’ Then we made it happen. We had to disband HMI (the national education inspectorate). There were difficult personnel issues. . . We managed our way through. OFSTED is up and running.” Caines ensured that all issues were aired. Clarke “wasn’t going to be surprised by something that cropped up later as he tried to implement it.”

Not all were persuaded. Eric Bolton, HMI’s Senior Chief Inspector, characterizes Caines as having a classical career “in which the civil service view was you did the deciding about what went to the politicians.” In contrast, Bolton felt that whereas Caines’ predecessor, David Hancock, was “wholly cognisant of just how dependent the Department was on HMI. . . to be sure-footed in its policy advice. . . Caines didn’t really appreciate that. He seemed to find it irritating there was this body of people between him and. . . Ministers. . .” It could be this frustration originated from his *pragma-centric taker* stance. He did seek to acquaint his Minister with the risks of disbanding HMI but the final decision was Clarke’s who believed the Department could liaise effectively with OFSTED. Others, such as Lankester, doubted this: “I think it meant advice to Ministers was not as well based as it should have been.” Even so, if OFSTED was not of Caines’ making, it was a policy, once Clarke’s intention was clear, on which he saw his role performatively – he identified with it, took it up, followed it through.

### 3. Caines as *sharer* of the grant-maintained policy

When Caines arrived at the Department, the grant-maintained concept was “an ongoing piece of policy that was already established. . . Reports coming out of the system suggested that it was having beneficial effects.” Characteristically, he denies involvement in *shaping* the policy but accepts he was a *sharer* (collaborative). His positive assessment might have been one reason why more schools became GM in Clarke’s time than under any other Minister. Caines was matter-of-fact about the momentum of the policy: “If it becomes clear schools are doing better as a result of GM you will get others wanting to follow suite.” If Caines regarded as “irrelevant” any personal view which, as permanent secretary, he might have held on the policy, he nevertheless acknowledges his “general pre-disposition for delegating responsibility and decision-making down as far as you can.” If others at the DfE were unsupportive of the policy, this was not true

of him. However, he did accept that officials can be apprehensive if they foresee themselves directly responsible for what happens in schools. Certainly, he expressed concern on how his duties as Accounting Officer could be reconciled with this: “It becomes very difficult indeed because the permanent secretary could be hung, drawn and quartered before the Public Accounts Committee.”

However, despite potential pitfalls in the GM policy, Caines maintained that there were not many of a financial nature. Even so, as he observes, it was the duty of civil servants to point out that Ministers would themselves become answerable in Parliament on matters relating to individual schools. In pointing that out, he recognized that a Minister might conclude: “Ah, you’re opposed to my policy!” Alternatively, a Minister might say, “They drew my attention to some risks I had not thought of.” In summary, Caines made it clear that, in the context of GM policy, civil servants and Ministers were troubled by problems relating to the relationship between central and local government which, to his mind, had never been thought through: “It will always be an uneasy compromise.” Even so his personal engagement in seeking to resolve problems in rolling out the policy was considerable. In doing so, with regard to GM, he did not just take policy but shared notably in its development. Explaining this he concluded “it was a very important area of policy for Ministers, so I was involved with it.” On his (Caines) contribution to this, and generally, Clarke was full of praise: “he helped me to avoid a lot of trouble. . . as my permanent secretary, he accepted I was Secretary of State and that the Department should deliver what I wanted, and in his very quiet, avuncular way, I think he oiled the wheels and made sure that clashes did not arise between me and parts of the Department.”

#### 4. Lankester as *shaper* of a merger of departments

If Caines offers a paradigm example of *pragma-centrism*, among the eight permanent secretaries Lankester ran him, if for very different reasons, a close second. In discussing his policy praxis, Lankester’s conduct as a *shaper* and *resister* (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2016, 6–10) is examined focusing on what was involved in these practices and in what sense they were *pragma-centric*.

The possibility of a merger between the DfE and DoE (Department of Employment) into a Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) had been long mooted (Aldrich, Crook, & Watson, 2000) but the merger, when it happened, did so with little warning. In July 1995, “Bichard (the new permanent secretary at the DoE) and I were called in on a Wednesday morning and informed the announcement would take place that afternoon. . . Bichard and I were asked to implement the merger.” Lankester recalled that he had “promoted it” on visits to the Cabinet Secretary and also in “a note stating the advantages of a merger.” In doing so, he stressed the logical, economic, common sense, and pragmatic argument for this, and in the wake of its announcement played an active role in its implementation. He and Bichard were invited to work in tandem (as joint permanent secretaries) for a year with both soon concluding that such a “bicephalous” arrangement was not in the Department’s interest. Given his advocacy of the merger and productive collaboration with Bichard in making it happen, Lankester is justified in regarding himself as instrumental in bringing the

departments together: “I think I was a *shaper* (our emphasis) of the merger. I feel proud I played that part in it. Michael did very well too. He was extremely good, but we worked very closely together.” Bichard (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2021) largely agreed.

#### 5. Lankester as a *resister* of the Pergau aid policy

The Civil Service Code sets high expectations regarding the neutrality required of officials in performing their role. Even so, the *resister* (*evasive*) mode can be legitimate for entirely *pragma-centrist* reasons. Attempts to resist a Ministerial initiative based on relevant information and presented impartially without fear or favor can be justified and indeed can be the duty of civil servants (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2015, 33–34). Such was the case of Lankester and the Pergau Dam project which, following two parliamentary enquiries and a landmark High Court legal judgment, was declared unlawful. It was the most perplexing problem he encountered as permanent secretary at the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) and among the most controversial in the history of British aid. Unusually for an official involved in a divisive policy issue, Lankester (2012) has published an account of events. *The Economist* (2012) notes “in contravention of international agreements, and Britain’s stated policy, aid for the project was linked to unrelated orders Malaysia placed for British Defence equipment” (1). As Lankester recalled, “the decision to finance the project was taken in the face of strongly negative appraisal by (the) ODA.” This led him to “require a formal direction before authorising expenditure. Such a direction is rare. . . It placed on record that the decision had been taken against the advice of the civil service and that Ministers alone had taken responsibility for it” (2). Even so he regrets not pursuing his doubts about the project’s legality: “I was advised that it was lawful and I accepted this. I should not have.” Had he sought fuller legal advice, this might have halted the project. *The Economist* (2012) largely exonerates him noting “his dissent on the project may have cost him his career.” However, his promotion shortly after to the DfE in 1994 does not support this view but political memories can be long: and in the competition for the DfEE post in 1995, he did lose out to (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2021).

## Retro-Centrism

This genre also seemed to be all but ubiquitous in the praxis of every one of the eight senior officials. Although it implies caution in endeavoring to maintain, where possible, policy equilibrium, it also offers some scope for entrepreneurialism. The one metapolitical practice that could not be identified from our field research was that of “active” *taker* of policy as described above.

#### 6. Hancock as a *sharer* and *shaper* of policy on the National Curriculum

This can be illustrated drawing on the part Hancock played in the initiation of the National Curriculum in which he proved himself a master of policy continuity (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2012, 551–555, 2015, 24). With Kenneth Baker, his

Secretary of State, building on the work of his predecessor, Hamilton, he exercised a key *sharing* and *shaping* role, facing a great deal of opposition, in establishing a stable policy *milieu* and longitudinal policy equilibrium – thus England still has a national school curriculum.

7. Holland as a *maker* in managing a stand-off between teachers and Government on testing

With one exception, Holland did not see himself as exercising a major influence over DfE policy. “Determined, a priori, highly ideological,” for him, the drive came from “the No. 10 Policy Unit.” DfE officials could critique, analyze, or present options, but never in the “driving seat.” Given such impotence, he could only be a (performative) policy *taker*: “it is extremely demoralising for a Department to have some other outfit over which it has absolutely no control, with which it has very few links and cannot have a serious discussion, dictating from outside what shall happen. You are reduced to a ‘taker’ of the policy, to pushing it forward as best you can and trying to prevent the worst excesses.” Such feelings were intensified by working for a Secretary of State (John Patten) who: “from our point of view, had few thoughts of his own but having thoughts, ideas and indeed decisions shaped for him by others elsewhere.” This could be said to constitute a form of taking, but does not fulfil the requirement of *taking* as defined in our model since, for Holland, there was no obvious sense in which the wishes of the Minister were being carried out – in this case because he had few discernible personal policy purposes, acceding mainly to requirements originating elsewhere.

The exception to such a sense of powerlessness among senior officials had its origins in a stand-off between teachers and Government on pupil testing: Holland seized the initiative to *make* policy and reestablish a sense of *retro-centrist* equilibrium. He and three of his senior colleagues felt the alliance between teachers and parents could not be defeated: “We thought it right, and our professional duty. . .to compose a paper on options the Government might or might not adopt. All. . .involved, in one way or another, Government backing off. . .I signed it on behalf of the four of us, and put it to Patten.” Holland can be seen as presenting his Minister with a *retro-centrist* set of alternatives designed to avoid strike action and in doing so maintaining a semblance of policy equilibrium. Although he came to accept one of the options, Patten was “absolutely furious and said ‘I am the person who makes policy. It is for you to carry it out. I regard this as stepping over the mark.’” Holland saw this (iterative) solution differently: “I regard it as the professional duty of a civil servant. I don’t know any other Secretary of State I have worked for who would have said that about that piece of paper. . . As the stand-off escalated. . .my one individual contribution of a proactive kind was to go and persuade Ron Dearing. . .to take on the job of reviewing the situation for Ministers.”

The impasse over testing was problematic for the Government and for Holland and his senior colleagues. For the former because no solution had been advocated at Ministerial level and because of Patten’s reaction to his officials’ attempts at solution-seeking; for the latter because of how they perceived their

responsibilities. Holland sought a solution that involved the intervention of someone independent, whom Patten trusted: “We knew there was every chance of success if we presented Ron to Patten as somebody who could and would do it, but we weren’t certain we could get Ron in a frame of mind (to) acquiesce.” Holland therefore sounded Dearing out over lunch: “he said ‘yes.’ We said ‘Just stash it away, Ron. . . We’ll let you know.’” Holland put it to Patten, now “in a slightly more emollient frame of mind,” “that he, Patten, should persuade Dearing to do the job” pointing out: “it’s an outside chance. We did not let on we’d had lunch. . . that the outcome was likely to be a foregone conclusion. . . to put it crudely, we appealed to the Minister’s ego. Patten took great credit for it.”

8. Normington as a *shaper* of the Academies policy

The idea of the school academy had its origins during Blunkett’s time as Secretary of State but was not launched as a policy until after 2001 (Adonis, 2012). Academies are state schools which receive their funding from central government and not via a local authority. They are governed by a charitable body known as a trust. As such, they are said to have more freedom than schools run by local authorities. Currently, 2075 out of 3381 secondary schools and 2440 out of 16,766 primary schools in England are academies. On this Adonis (as Head of the No. 10 Policy Unit and then a DfE Minister from May 2005 to October 2008) claims the lead: “From the outset, inside and outside government, the policy was associated with me personally. This happened not only because it was ‘true’ but also because no one else much wanted to ‘own’ such a controversial and high-risk idea” (63). He is not complementary, with some exceptions, about the support he received from DfE civil servants: “inadequate leadership, drive and support for academies within the Whitehall machine was to dog the academies programme throughout its life” (72). He acknowledges the role of two Secretaries of State, Blunkett and Balls, but notes of the other junior ministers only that they were “all engaged to some extent.” Similarly, of senior officials, only “a few were. . . animated by academies” (73). One, not named as such, and indeed not referred to in the book, was Normington who was permanent secretary between May 2001 and December 2005. This suggests Adonis believed Normington was at best lukewarm on the policy and therefore he (Adonis) felt he had to make most of the running.

However, from the perspective of the model and from what he told us, Normington can be depicted as having displayed a degree of (reiterative) *retro-centrist* caution in respect of academies and in doing so to have been motivated by the desire to *shape* the policy in accordance with Ministerial intention. As such, for him, “The Department for Education I presided over had a series of Ministers who were cautious and to some degree sceptical about academies and therefore I too was cautious because my job was to ensure it was their policies that were implemented.” Furthermore, the backdrop to the policy was complicated by the fact that its origins were seen to be located in No 10 and with Adonis and thus “to an extent had to be sold to Secretaries of State in the education department.” In other words, if the policy was to appeal to the DfE, it had to be *shaped* to the departmental mindset and obviate tensions with No 10 “about how far and how fast the policy on academies should go.”

In retrospect, Normington concedes the policy “became a really important tool in changing the education system and Andrew had the vision to see that; the rest of us took a bit longer.” For him, a key issue was Adonis wanted to expand the program much faster and more widely than envisaged in the DfE: “If Andrew had had his way early on, as Michael Gove seems to be doing, he would have made all schools academies. Or at least...increased the numbers far more rapidly – good schools, bad schools.” But Normington believed Blunkett and most of his successors were keen on the policy insofar as it focused on transforming failing schools in deprived areas. This also appealed to DfE officials who were “strongly in favour of academies as a tool for school improvement and transformation in deprived areas.” From Normington’s perspective, academies were seen as expensive and *retro-centrist* caution was thus required. This meant *shaping* the policy so (a) expenditure was limited to investment in deprived and failing areas; (b) it did not inhibit the plans the DfE had for raising standards in other schools; and (c) it did not dilute the original intention behind the policy by creating many academies: this last “did mean we looked like a brake on Number 10’s ambitions.” In summary, he saw his job as supporting his Secretary of State and therefore “we were often in argument with Andrew about how fast we should go. . . I am rather keen on academies. . . but doubtful about a policy which seeks to make all schools academies because I thought it was, and should be, a tool for school improvement. . . Once you universalise that I am not sure it will be as powerful a tool for transformation as it was at the beginning.”

9. Hancock as *resister* of the CTC and GM policies

Hancock can be depicted as the “principal project manager” of the 1988 Education Reform Act (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2012). But if his zeal for aspects of the Act was plain, such as the National Curriculum, it was far less so for others, notably City Technology Colleges (CTCs) and Grant Maintained Schools (GMS). Kenneth Baker, his Secretary of State (Ribbins & Sherratt, 1997, 101–105), believed Margaret Thatcher was far too enthusiastic on GMS wanting every school to be required to “opt” for this. For Baker (1993): “CTCs were key in the process of reform because they were the first element to be announced, and incorporated many of the changes I wanted to introduce into the whole system – parental choice, per capita funding, local managerial control, independence from the LEA” (188). More recently he claims to have fathered the academies concept since CTCs “were (their) forerunners” (Baker, 2016, 16). Similarly, responding to an announcement, subsequently qualified, that all schools would be required by 2020 to become academies, he echoed his warning on the GMS policy of the risks of attempting to go too quickly. Regarding his CTC policy, he wanted to get this up and running to illustrate its practical benefits and only then initiate more radical reform (Ribbins & Sherratt, 1997, 103): “I chose CTCs because they crystallized nearly all the other issues. What was to be taught. . . who was to own them; how were they going to be funded.” For Hancock, this policy evolved because Baker was “fed up with hearing industrialists complaining about the schools’ system – it was a challenge to them to create their own schools and put up the money.” Given his Treasury background, Hancock was skeptical about the



financial calculations that had been made and soon came to feel his doubts were justified: “Unfortunately, although they (industrialists) did put in some money it was not nearly enough. . . It cost £10m to build a secondary school. He (Baker) never got more than a million from industry and the Department had to find the rest. This caused considerable distortion in the budget because large sums of money that might have improved schools nationwide went into a few CTCs.” Hancock also doubted their success: “The early reports by HMI on CTCs were not particularly favourable.”

Unsurprisingly, Hancock and his colleagues were unenthusiastic about developing the policy and not above dragging their feet on implementing it. This was how it was seen by some of Baker’s political colleagues. Referring to a number of meetings he had organized to formulate the CTC policy as a challenge to the monopoly of the LEAs, Baker (1993, 179) recalled his Special Adviser, Tony Kerpel, warning “that DES officials (presumably led by Hancock) were hijacking the CTC initiative and imposing their version, which simply represented a rehash of the very comprehensive schools we felt had failed.” If Hancock was skeptical about the merits of CTCs, he did not attempt to camouflage his disdain for the GM policy of opting out of local authority control: “It was part of the sort of general hatred of local authorities that was conspicuous at this phase of the Conservative Government.” He believed the New Labour Government was “right to channel all finance through local authorities again,” because under Baker’s successors, “the (Tory) government finished up. . . bribing schools to break free from local government. . . I don’t myself see the point of that.” Whereas Thatcher saw GM as the ideal for all schools, this was not a view shared by Hancock or, it seems, Baker. As Hancock put it: “the difference of view with the Prime Minister was that she wanted to make them more or less obligatory, whereas he (Baker) would only create a GM school if the parents voted for it. I think he recognised that there were some Local Authorities who did a good job.” This suggests that if Hancock was generally willing to assume the traditional Whitehall role of offering impartial advice and implementing his Minister’s wishes, on CTCs and GM schools there was not the meeting of minds that shaped, for example, his alliance with Baker on the National Curriculum, but rather an evasive *retro-centrist* resistance.

## Ideo-Centrism

Given the extent to which pragmatism and common sense are valued in British politics, it is not so surprising that we were able from field data to identify in this category only *shaping* or *resisting*. What seems likely is that further research will enable the detection of one or more of the other forms of metapolitical practice.

### 10. Lankester as a *resister* of further erosion of relationships between the DfE and LEAs

Lankester’s attempt to *resist* further erosion of the relationship between the DfE and local education authorities represents an exemplary case of mandarin *ideo-*

*centrism* (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2015, 24, also 2016). Implicit in opposing Government policy, the *metier* of the *ideo-centrist*, can be the desire to restore a status quo to its previous configuration. In such cases where dialogue between a Secretary of State and a permanent secretary had broken down (as occurred between John Patten and Lankester), then the official might be inclined to *circumvent* the wishes of his Minister and in doing so to seek circuitous ways of influence.

11. Hamilton as *shaper* of the context in which Keith Joseph gave up on voucherization

Hamilton is perhaps the most unusual mandarin studied (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013a). He was a formidably gifted *shaper* (sometimes as a *resister*) of Ministerial will and in the above paper we discuss two such cases. One deals with his initiation of a policy that was to lead to a centralizing of curriculum control conflicting with the will of three of his four Secretaries of State. As such, he can be judged a *maker*, even “grandfather,” of the National Curriculum (41–44). The second considers his attitude (36–41) to “voucherisation”: a policy he did not favor despite knowing it was strongly advocated by Keith Joseph and his political advisers (Stuart Sexton and Oliver Letwin). According to Sexton “Letwin and I were invited by Joseph to formulate a voucher scheme. However, Keith said Mr. Hamilton and his colleagues were against a voucher scheme and he wanted us to discuss it with Mr. Ulrich first.” From this it is clear that Hamilton had reservations about the policy but decided not to seem to take the lead but rather to leave it to his formidable Deputy Secretary, Walter Ulrich, to “progress.” Sexton recalls many meetings at which he and Letwin endlessly debated vouchers with Ulrich which amounted to little more than a series of stalling tactics. For Hamilton: “I wandered through all the arguments. . .with the best people in the Department working on it.” For Sexton and Letwin these “‘best people’ were working against it.”

The final decision was delayed until Hamilton had retired, but he recalls: “A good deal of my last year and. . .the Department’s effort in 1982-1983 was spent on vouchers.” Political will was tempered in the context of Ministerial debate with officials, especially with Ulrich. For his part Hamilton, a pragmatist and a centrist, was openly *ideo-centrist*. As he saw it, “Keith was very clear on political grounds the Party wanted him to introduce vouchers, and certainly the Prime Minister did.” In contrast, discussion in the Department turned mainly on issues of practicability. Hamilton describes the vouchers debate as “Joseph and Ulrich head on” but insists officials were intellectually unconvinced, fearful the Secretary of State was “digging a hole for himself” and not “just being awkward.” On Ulrich’s stance, Hamilton was ambivalent: “In many ways he was not a good choice: he was very aggressive. On the other hand, he was a good choice because he was determined the Secretary of State should see the error of his ways.” For Sexton, Ulrich, supported by Hamilton, “put up a series of Aunt Sallies for us (with Letwin) to knock down. . .when we’d reckon we had solved his objection, he’d think of another. We played this game for several months until Keith got fed up.” In conclusion, it seems clear that Hamilton did share Ulrich’s hostility to the policy and revealed this in various ways – how else can

his comment about enabling Joseph to “see the error of his ways” be interpreted? Furthermore, if he had serious reservations about what Ulrich was doing, he could have replaced him but chose not to do so. As such, in *shaping* the ongoing debate between officials and Ministers by a judicious mixture of delay and counter-iterative argument, Hamilton effectively resisted (employing evasive tactics) the vouchers policy.

## Meta-Centrism

*Meta-centrism* characterizes the context in which the disposition of civil servants and political will of Ministers are most likely to correspond and policy *sharing* and agreement on remedies of a nonideological kind are manifest. As such, the three most likely metapolitical practices relevant to it are *making*, *shaping*, and *sharing*.

### 12. Bichard as *sharer* and *shaper* of the Learning and Skills Council Policy

This was evident in the praxis of Bichard who shared with David Blunkett, his Secretary of State, arguably the closest and most productive working relationship between mandarin and Minister in our study. Pre-occupied with “substance” not “politics,” both were impatient with notions of “left” and “right.” Such is the apolitical *via media* that led us to depict him, in collaboration with Blunkett, as a *meta-centrist co-maker, sharer* and *shaper* of key policies such as setting up the Learning and Skills Council (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013b, 2015, 25).

### 13. Normington as a *sharer* in the academies’ context

An earlier vignette (8) explored Normington’s role as a *retro-centrist shaper* of the policy on academies. In what follows his praxis on this is examined, largely as he himself saw it, from a *meta-centrist* perspective as *sharer* in its development. Although he had reservations about universalizing the academies program, he did support devolving power from local authorities to schools: “If it was all about creating more autonomy for more and more schools, which I am strongly in favour of, the question is whether you needed to make them all academies.” Locating this view in historical context, he conceded that the initial drive for devolving autonomy stemmed from the Conservative GMS (Grant Maintained Schools) policy which released schools from the local authority system. But the incoming “Labour government...abolished grant-maintained schools which were the forerunner of independent schools in the state system...and brought them back into the local authority system and that was the prevailing political view that David Blunkett presided over.” This said, he then drew attention to the evolution, under Adonis, of the idea of the autonomous academy as central to New Labour’s school improvement program, a process that took 10 years and for which Adonis “was lauded in Labour and Conservative circles” – perhaps especially the latter insofar as one influential Conservative Secretary of State, Michael Gove, declared “We are on the same page as Andrew Adonis.”

From such a perspective, Normington saw grant-maintained schools, foundation schools, and academies as all “part of the same broad idea.” In a revealing display of his *meta-centrist* credentials, he recalled a conversation in which Adonis said: “‘It was a mistake, wasn’t it, for us to have abolished the grant-maintained schools?’ I said, ‘Yes it was.’ Since it was a Conservative idea and you wanted to get rid of that you should have evolved this, rather than try and put them back into the maintained sector. But that is politics in a way, isn’t it?” Such views demonstrate a position neither to the right nor the left but one which is nevertheless supportive of a policy whereby autonomy was devolved. This is indicative of a neutrality, or *meta-centrist* predisposition, that any government department would wish to discern in its meta-political officials in sharing and facilitating their policy ambitions. As Ruth Kelly, one of the nine Secretaries of State Normington worked with during 10 years as a permanent secretary, observed of him: “he had been around for such a long time, he had seen so many policies come and go, be developed, be delivered, that he knew what worked and what did not work.” In *sharing* departmental policy (collaborative) with Ministers at the DfE Normington acted independently of any right or left predisposition thus transcending, in the maelstrom of Blairite reform, any hint of a political orientation: “my job was to ensure that it was their policies that were implemented.”

#### 14. Caines as *shaper* of an interdepartmental context

A “big beast” in Caines’ Whitehall jungle of the time was the permanent secretary at the Department of Employment (DoE), Geoffrey Holland. Caines described the relations between the DfE and DoE as “disastrous.” It worried him that with overlapping responsibilities for 16–19 education policy they had very different purposes (caricatured as “education” or “training”). “They were not talking to each other. . . trying to bounce each other. . . fighting for turf.” He depicted the antipathy between officials as “disdain from DoE and distrust from DfE.” From this gloomy backdrop, he had hoped to aid collaboration and can be labelled as a reiterative *meta-centrist* who set out to *shape* a departmental disposition that enabled a coalescence of civil service preference and Ministerial political will. He tried to work closely with Holland: “Geoffrey and I regularly had lunch together. We had regular meetings of our top officials with an agenda that ‘we do not surprise each other’ . . . We got rid of one or two people who were not very helpful to the relationship. . . I was very keen that this relationship should work and that Geoffrey should succeed me” preferably in a DoEE. Caines: “liked (Holland’s) active style. . . a lot of drive, a lot of energy. I thought it would be better that the two ideas [education and training] should be pursued in an educational framework rather than against it.”

This sentiment is *meta-centrist*. It transcends ideology or consensus, suggesting the pursuit of a *shaping* influence in which conflicting policy conceptions decoupled by the existence of split departments, might be harmonized. He wished to achieve this “above board in co-operation rather than bouncing people behind the scenes – suddenly finding the Secretary of State for Employment had come out with some speech to do with educational matters.” However, he was adamant, he was managing “a relationship rather than promoting a

merger.” Even so, he was active behind the scenes. So, when Robin Butler (Head of the Civil Service) held meetings with senior officials on the machinery of government, the merger of the DfE and DoE was on the agenda: “I was involved in those, but don’t regard it (the merger) as my achievement. It just seemed a rather desirable way of breaking out of the dichotomy between vocational and academic, between competence and learning. . .” In summary, his *meta-centrist* impartiality in promoting Ministerial will prompted a desire to reshape a suboptimum state of affairs by providing “an environment within which policy initiatives can be taken forward, pursued and succeed. If you saw road blocks along the way your job was to get rid of them.”

## Exo-Centrism

This genre derives from a relatively recent reaction to a perceived need for civil servants to manage policy programs and deliver Ministerial objectives with greater commitment and effect. This has led to the recruitment of a growing number of “outsiders” who were thought to have the relevant skills, knowledge, and experience. Bichard was one, Bell another.

### 15. Bell as *taker* of the policy wishes of his Ministers

On the promotion of the academies policy, Adonis (2012) is critical of the level and quality of support from civil servants. He named Bell as among the few exceptions and seems to believe this was explainable, in part, by Bell’s “real” background in education which made him “deeply knowledgeable and supportive” in a way true of few civil servants. Unlike Bell: “They mostly possess superficial subject-specific knowledge and front-line experience. . .Barely any senior Education Department officials had taught in a school, let alone managed one. . .as likely as not they hadn’t visited a school since they attended one. Project management skills were in especially short supply. . .” (77). But if few would question his status as an “educationist,” Bell himself saw his role as mainly to do with department and project management, focusing on policy implementation rather than policy development which he saw as the domain of the Minister. Despite this, his appointment reflected a growing political demand for the kind of experience, expertise, and commitment he offered. Even so Bell, unlike Bichard, described his role in essentially performative terms; that is with *taking* and implementing the policy wishes of his Ministers (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2015, 25).

### 16. Bichard as a *shaper* of departmental culture

Bichard, like Bell, was an “outsider” (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2021). Both had excellent records of experience in management elsewhere and both served “apprenticeships” leading civil service agencies (Bell as Chief Inspector of Ofsted). Bichard was even more untypical as a mandarin than Bell, being evidently *exo-centrist* in background, capabilities, attitudes, and style: “I was a grammar school boy. . .My father was a docker, and thereafter a school caretaker.” His career

trajectory was also atypical, starting in: “a county borough, went on to a county, then into London, initially Lambeth, then Brent, as Chief Executive. . . Then I went to Gloucestershire. . . and then into the civil service via the Benefits Agency (as Chief Executive).” Nearing the end of his contract he “applied for the Employment job to see if I had a future in the civil service. No one really had encouraged me to.” Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State, insisted the post be advertised and Bichard believes this was significant as was the fact “they appointed someone who wasn’t traditional.” Despite his success, Bichard never took to Whitehall. Not setting out to be different, he realized, as did others, that he was; “I don’t think I ever felt I was going to be part of it. Some would say I deliberately kept myself apart. . . Whitehall traditionally has been something of a club. . . most people there were at university together. Some were at school together. . . I can’t say I didn’t feel a bit on the outside.” Refusing to be “captured by the culture of an organisation,” he set out to create a new culture for the DfEE, defining him as “a dynamic, driving leader.”

Blunkett, his Secretary of State, stressed that Bichard was the first non-professional career civil servant to be appointed permanent secretary: “It isn’t unusual now but it was then.” Reflecting on their close and productive relationship, Blunkett went out of his way to acknowledge Bichard’s commitment to shaping and delivering what he (Blunkett) wanted and to his ability to deliver because, as a manager, he understood the impact of policy. For Blunkett, like other external recruits, he brought to Whitehall the program management skills and leadership capabilities needed to inspire and drive people to deliver: “You need to be able to bring people in to do a particular job and reward them well.” Exemplifying how Bichard helped him succeed, Blunkett cited recruiting Michael Barber. Another “outsider” he had been a school teacher, worked in the Education Department of the National Union of Teachers, and served as Chair of Education of a London Borough before being recruited to be Chief Adviser to Blunkett. There was a “joint agreement before the election that [Bichard] and I, with Tony Blair’s support, were able to push through, against enormous resistance from Robin Butler (Cabinet Secretary), setting up the Standards and Effectiveness Unit. . . We put Barber in on day 2 of the government. . . This was ‘the biggest, most profound change’ in re-shaping departmental culture and creating momentum at the DfEE. Predicated on the concept of standards not structure,” the knock-on was “others saw the writing on the wall, and recognised this was a moment to take ‘gardening leave’” (a term widely used to describe a period when an employee on notice of termination of contract by the employer or of resignation by the employee, and are not permitted to come into their place of work during the period of notice). The Unit accelerated the rise of the “expert” in policy-making, pulling in “people active at the front line – head teachers, advisers within local authorities, academics. . . people who had recent experience and sufficient clout, standing and stature.” No wonder Blunkett accepted our description of Bichard as a “un-*mandarin* like *mandarin*”; “your phrase sums it up. That’s why, regrettably, he wasn’t given the nod he would become the next Secretary to the Cabinet.”

## Conclusions and Reflections

Given the significance attached to them, permanent secretaries have been under-researched and under-theorized. In recent years, a growing number of studies relating to the service in England have been published but the authors know of only three from one department over an extended time period. These are Neilson and Otte (2012) on the 12 at the Foreign Office between 1984 and 1946, and Abbot (2015) (1976–2014) and Ribbins and Sherratt (1976–2011) on the DfE. Against this backdrop, this chapter and earlier papers have sought to describe the policy practice of eight permanent secretaries. Drawing on interview-based field research this has led to the development of an analytical model that locates and interprets their praxis across a spectrum of genres of “centrism” and related descriptive practices. What then of the wider implications of such findings?

On this, among the criticisms most often made of the activities and influence of the mandarin class, historically in Britain and elsewhere, has been that they have too often acted as a drag on the identification and implementation of radical policies in accordance with the will of their political masters. Certainly, as has been argued elsewhere, they have in England been effective in resisting some of the more far-reaching attempts at civil service reform in general and the role of the mandarin class in particular (see Ribbins & Sherratt, 2014). It is challenging to see how a centrist disposition, in whatever form and whatever its merits, can be readily compatible with a committed and active pursuit of policies that represent major reversals of the status quo? But it is possible to overstate such a conclusion. Thus, among those Ribbins and Sherratt studied, there are examples in which permanent secretaries have been major agents of radical change. Two examples must suffice. In the first, the policies being pursued were very much aligned with the political will of the Secretary of State as with Bichard working closely with Blunkett on a raft of major and controversial policy initiatives (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2021). In the second, Hamilton actively and determinedly pursued a policy in favor of a national curriculum for schools despite “serving” Secretaries of State – two Labour and one Conservative – who were, as was arguably the general political will at the time, opposed to the idea (Ribbins & Sherratt, 2013a). A fourth, Mark Carlisle, was tentatively supportive but with a very light touch in mind – “headmasters should have a great deal of flexibility” – and felt that the National Curriculum (introduced in the wake of the 1988 Act) was “much too restrictive and prescriptive” (Ribbins & Sherratt, 1997, 76). Insofar as a significant gap exists between civil service disposition and ministerial political will, how might this be diminished?

The merits of various remedies have been advocated. These include making the service, and especially its senior members, more representative, and in doing so better reflect the characteristics and aspirations of the society it purports to serve. Thus, for example, in Susan Acland-Hood, the DfE has, since its origins in 1899, only just (2020) appointed its second woman permanent secretary. Currently 7 of 23 ministerial departments are headed by a woman and there has never been a woman Cabinet Secretary. Socioeconomically, like most of her predecessors in the DfE, and the Service as a whole, Acland-Hood was educated at an independent

school (59%) and Oxbridge (39%). High Court Judges only have higher percentages than permanent secretaries. Similarly, the case for recruiting at senior levels more outsiders with relevant experience of other public and private sector work has been advocated by some. A version of this approach is to encourage more senior civil servants to spend part of their careers in post outside the service. On this Normington (2013) has warned on behalf of the Civil Service Commission “We don’t believe the answer to all the Civil Service’s problems is to recruit at a senior level from outside” (2). Similarly, O’Donnell, a former Cabinet Secretary, recalls “I tried to bring in more people from outside and on the whole they did slightly worse than other civil servants” (Cameron, 2012, 25).

However, of the remedies canvassed, arguably the most influential might be described as the politicization of the civil service. In some countries, notably the United States, “vast swathes of the executive ranks are removed with each change of president. Incoming administrations can make around 4000 political appointments, including top positions in departments” (Nickson, 2020, 1). However, “whilst this gives an incoming president a huge degree of control over their administration, it also leads to a loss of institutional memory and expertise. Finding suitable candidates, and having them approved by congress takes time, and jobs often go unfilled for lengthy periods” (1). Insofar as this approach puts a high premium on the perceived merits of political commitment its guiding principles are very different from the notion of political impartiality long said to be a defining feature of the English civil service and other broadly similar systems. Any significant attempt to move from this in the direction of an “American” approach would entail a “seismic cultural and logistical change” (not to mention potentially highly significant cost-effectiveness issues). While there are those in England who would espouse this, or something like it (see Ribbins & Sherratt, 2014), this is not a view that would currently command much support within the dominant political classes. But, as Nickson (2020) points out, there has been a “gradual slide” towards such politicization in the practices of countries hitherto informed by UK-type assumptions. In Australia and Canada, there is “greater prime ministerial control over top civil service jobs and a greater tendency towards political appointments” (2).

In the case of the United Kingdom, in a rare but authoritative account of the politicization of the civil service, Richards (1997), having argued that the making of such senior appointments had been “largely shrouded in secrecy” (2), traces this development to the influence of the Conservative governments, especially under Thatcher, of the 1980s and 1990s. Although the idea that the appointment of permanent secretaries should be made directly by Secretaries of State has been resisted, their role now includes “agreeing the job description and person specification; agreeing the composition of the recruitment panel; meeting the shortlisted candidates; suggesting lines of questioning. . .” (Normington, 2013, 2). Currently the selection panel presents a short list of candidates “deemed appointable” to the Prime Minister who makes the formal appointment. This said, “the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act of 2010 requires all such appointments must be ‘on merit on the basis of fair and open competition’ meaning that appointments should not be political choices” (Haddon, 2020, 1). To determine authoritatively how far



this has, or has not, been honored would require a follow-up study of the kind that Richards (1997) reported in *Whitehall's Political Poodles?* The case of Secretaries of State is simpler – appointed by the prime minister they remain in post at the prime minister's discretion.

With respect to mandarins, there is, arguably, some evidence in recent times of the kind of political creep in England that Nickson (2020) reported from Canada and Australia. This can be exemplified by the real or perceived reasons for the departures of three permanent secretaries (Mark Sedwill from Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, Philip Rutnam from the Home Office and Jonathan Slater from the DfE) at, it seems, the behest of the Prime Minister in the cases of Sedwill and Slater and the Home Secretary in the case of Rutnam. Apparently forced out, none were technically sacked although Rutnam claimed a constructive dismissal. There is also the case of the appointment of David Frost, a non-civil servant, who replaced Sedwill as National Security Adviser. This perhaps signals the shape of things to come in terms of civil servant independence and neutrality. Over time “political sackings can become accepted practice” (2). As a permanent secretary who actually was dismissed in Australia put it “the more often it happens the easier it becomes” (2).

Such developments would seem likely to have implications for the motivations of senior civil servants and this is a theme on which a number of more or less competing theories have been advanced. This chapter proposes that a “centrist disposition” is the norm among British mandarins. Other theories postulate “public choice” and “bureau shaping” models. Briefly, the former claims that rationally self-interested officials seek to increase the scope, power, and budget of their departments (Niskanen, 1971). The latter argues that welfare maximizing civil servants in policy ranks are concerned primarily with providing themselves with a congenial work environment and, as such, do not wish “to head up heavily staffed, large budget, but routine, conflictual and low status agencies” (Dunleavy, 1991, 202). More recently Abbott et al. (2021), exploring relations between governors and their intermediaries, identify four ideal type loyalties among the latter: *Opportunists* to self-interest, *Vassals* to a leader, *Zealots* to a policy or ideology, and *mandarins* to their institutions – with the British civil service taken to be the paradigm case. Applying these ideal types, perhaps in a modified form, might well be worth attempting as also would exploring what the implications might be for the motivations of mandarins of a shift from a British to an American system.

These and related issues surely warrant further empirical and theoretic examination. In this chapter, suggestions are offered as to how this might be done. Further data interrogation could lead to refinements of the genres of centrism and types of action discussed above. It might also enable identification of the missing meta-political practices for which no compelling evidence has to date been found. In addition, the scope of the research could be widened. Thus, although the model was derived from a study of permanent secretaries from one department, preliminary work in another, the Home Office, in the form of interviews with permanent secretaries and Home Secretaries, suggests it has a wider applicability. This could be so both in Whitehall and in other countries with services modelled on the British system and even in those that are not. But even if the model, and its “centrist”

findings, are found to have limited international applicability, the approach to field research advocated in the chapter might still be relevant. After all, if the role of senior civil servants in the development and implementation of policy, and in all else they are purported to do, is to be better understood then one way would be to ask them and relevant others about this? Of course, if such an approach constitutes a necessary condition for such an appreciation, it would not be sufficient. For this, other methods will surely be necessary.

This would include research exploring what permanent secretaries say in terms of what they actually do. To achieve this, a researcher would need to collect relevant documentary evidence on specific permanent secretaries in particular departments; observe them as they enact their praxis in relevant situations; discuss with them what they were trying to do and why; set this against the views, and actions, of significant others; and, in producing a final account, compare and contrast all the available evidence. On this Rhodes (2005) makes a persuasive case for ethnographically orientated inquiry. To illustrate its possibilities, he reports on a study of “three middle ranking service ministries” (5). Groundbreaking and illuminating as this is, it is relatively modest in scope. Even so the merits of his account make it regrettable that as of now there are no full-scale, in-depth, published ethnographies of any Whitehall department. Not least because such research would have the potential much to advance understanding of policy-making in particular and government in general. This notwithstanding it is hard to overestimate how difficult such a study would be in terms of securing access, maintaining ownership, and negotiating reporting. Furthermore, over the last couple of decades, the rules and regulations governing such research have become far more prescriptive, even restrictive. Given this, persuading contemporary university research ethics committees and research funding bodies to accept such research could well be challenging. In conclusion, while critical observations on the model and field work approach on which the findings reported above rest would be welcome, it is hoped the chapter will stimulate further historical and other forms of research into government departments of all kinds and into the policy praxis of senior and other civil servants in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

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# Confronting Forms of Sexual Violence in Schools: De-Constructing Policy Paradoxes

# 61

Melinda Lemke and Katelyn Rogers

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## Abstract

Empirical research evidences that teen dating violence (TDV) disproportionately affects females, and in particular those within BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and LGBTQ+ demographic groups. Key to current and evolving leadership discourse concerning TDV is a clear understanding of how the sexual politics of education shape policies concerning TDV, as well as awareness of how the normative values attributed to schooling practices can influence public understanding of TDV and the extent to which adolescent relationships can be supported to develop prosocial behaviors that challenge rape culture. This chapter outlines the experience of TDV and the role that policy-makers and educational personnel play in the role of violence prevention. It explores current policies for dating violence across state and federal legislation, draws parallels between bullying and TDV, and discusses how bullying policy can inform more relevant policy on TDV. It also examines violence prevention and reporting barriers

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identified through inconsistent state policies, inaccessible reporting resources, and lack of training for educators (i.e., leaders, teachers, counselors, and support staff). To address violence disclosure and prevention, recommendations are offered in the form of culturally responsive trauma-informed policies and practices (TIPP) and systemwide approaches such as bystander and comprehensive sexual education programming.

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**Keywords**

Adolescent norms · Bullying · Bystander prevention · Child abuse · Comprehensive sex education · Educational leadership · Educational policy · Feminist critical and Women of Color policy analyses · Heteronormativity · Teen dating violence (TDV) · Politics of education · Prosocial adolescent behavior · State policy · Title IX · Trauma-informed policy and practice (TIPP)

**The Field of Memory**

The idea that US public schools are safe spaces for students. The idea that sexual violence does not occur on school grounds or at school-related functions. The idea that sexual violence is a private concern and does not need to be addressed in the public sphere or by public policy. The idea that females and other historically underserved student groups who are sexually victimized are to blame for the event (s). The idea that once enacted, multilevel policies, practices, and programming can address and ameliorate entrenched sexual violence and the normative culture that has allowed it to exist.

The idea that discussing sexual behavior, sexuality, and sexual violence in school is inappropriate and/or not connected to classed, colonial, gendered, and raced dynamics of US history. The idea that abstinence-only sexual education programming has been effective at curbing rates of sexual activity, including sexual violence, among teens. The idea that abstinence-only messaging about teen sexuality does not contribute to normative school cultures wherein adolescent sexual violence is ignored, misunderstood, and thus unreported. The idea that this culture is not linked to broader societal normalization, which champions the position that (white, middle-class, and heterosexual) “boys will be boys” when suspected of sexual violence. The idea that beginning in adolescence and continuing to adulthood, these normalizing effects do not contribute to females being blamed and disciplined for sexual violence perpetrated against them.

The idea that normatively biased views about females and teen sexuality more broadly are not maintained through rape culture ideation and myths that include: if a teen female wore revealing clothing or behaved provocatively, then she “asked for it;” if a teen female is drunk at a party and is sexually assaulted, then she should have been more responsible; and if a teen female exercises her voice and agency, it is perceived as tension-inducing and abrasive, yet if a female victim does not fight back, it cannot be considered rape. The idea that longstanding Western-centric myths related to race and national origin do not drive how the public and its educators

(i.e., leaders, teachers, counselors, and support staff) normatively view BIPOC adolescent sexuality and related violence. The idea that heteronormative sexual violence only happens in a male and female binary and does not contribute to wider social instances of violence perpetrated against queer and gender non-conforming teens.

### **The Field of Presence**

In the 1970s, major international, national, and 50 state policy reform occurred to address sexual violence within multiple areas of public and private life, including education. Additionally, feminist critical and Women of Color feminist analyses of educational policies and processes identified how both reproduce inequality and violence against the female body, with the goal of transformative change in normative and political schooling structures. Still, where violence against women and girls is concerned, scholarship argued that the core causes of feminism, including violence prevention, are centered within policy in ways that actually regulate, silence, and undermine the intended aims of those policies and shore up structural factors driving violence. Furthermore, where policy and activism intersect, the unique contributions of feminism often are absorbed into other aspects of the general fight for basic human rights.

Though these analyses have differently influenced US K-12 and higher education policy, practice, and programming concerning gender violence, to a wide extent, contemporary researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers have an awareness of basic causes and effects of adolescent sexual violence, and that schools have a responsibility to prevent that violence. This understanding is derived in part from international, federal, and state policies and protocols. At the federal level, this includes legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act ((VAWA), 1994) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the latter of which specifically aims to prevent discrimination in education on the basis of gender, and outlines reporting procedures for educators to assist students who experience gender-based discrimination (including sexual violence). Across the 50 states, sexuality education legislation and programming vary significantly from minimal to extensive coverage, with a range of anti-bullying and anti-harassment laws in existence.

Due to these laws and the shifts in normative culture that led to their enactment, a stronger emphasis on consent for all parties in adolescent sexual activities now plays a role in K-12 sexuality education. In particular, the concept of “yes means yes” outweighs “no means no,” both legally and colloquially. Educational leaders have turned to trauma-informed policies and practices (TIPP) for teachers, counselors, and support staff, which highlight the causes and effects of trauma (including sexual), and in the best instances, cultural responsiveness and sensitivity toward BIPOC and gender diverse students as well. Bystander intervention strategies for violence prevention also have been embraced by K-12 school districts. In partnership with local community entities, including rape crisis centers that have worked on sexual violence prevention programming for over a half century, districts also aim to deliver evidence-based K-12 curriculum that is focused on healthy relationships, consent, peer influence, and social norms toward the end of sexual violence prevention.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Political and social science research on sexual violence is vast. Critically minded researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers work to further infuse a culturally responsive trauma-informed approaches to responding to adolescent sexual violence, and in particular violence that occurs between teens. To address teen dating violence (TDV), it has been suggested that districts and schools adapt frameworks from cultural studies, community rape crisis centers, gender studies, school counseling and psychology, and social work best practices. Feminist analyses in particular, which aim to challenge and reconceptualize individual human interactions up to policy level decisions, could inform a K-12 gender violence prevention framework utilized in evidence-based training and curricula.

Yet, while federal and state policy on sexual violence increase in magnitude and narrow in focus, rates of sexual violence perpetrated against female youth have not declined. Despite copious empirical research and established best practices for directly naming those classed, gendered, and raced factors that contribute to US rape culture, K-12 climates remain normatively contested terrains in terms of implementing comprehensive and sex positive educator training and adolescent sexuality curricula. Where clear policy and actor will to address sexual violence does exist, educational leaders operating in these terrains are left to their own devices to identify, measure, and address major concerns, demonstrating ongoing gaps between policy and implementation in practice. Furthermore, longstanding bipartisan legislation concerning sexual and gender-based violence prevention (e.g., Title IX, VAWA, Trafficking Victims Protection Act, (TVPA, 2001)) have been politicized in ways that not only reproduce existent inequality but create new forms of violence at individual and institutional levels.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

With the onset of the #MeToo Movement (founded in 2006 and revived in 2017), cultural norms within public and private sectors were disrupted as a new collective consciousness emerged regarding the rates of and cultural factors contributing to sexual violence in the United States. and globally. K-12 educational leadership was not exempt from this shift in awareness. As previously discussed, policies have sought to promote gender equality. At least within international and federal policy intent, and dependent upon state objectives, this included a shift away from “victim blaming” toward victim-centered approaches. It involved emphasis on increased resources related to sexual harassment prevention, sexual assault victim needs, and community-based responses such as bystander intervention training. Finally, bullying laws and trainings have focused on identifying and addressing the root causes of violent behaviors, which manifest in children and adolescents in public spaces such as schools.

Yet, where implementation is concerned, feminist and other critical educational research documents major gaps between policy and practice. This, in part, is tied to the maintenance of white, able-bodied, heteropatriarchal, middle-class values in public sector systems, including education and law, which do not center conversations that affect survivors and thus often exclude them from informing future policy,

research, and related leadership action. This also is despite empirical evidence that sexual violence affects BIPOC and gender diverse youth at disproportionate rates than their white counterparts. Finally, recent changes at the federal level and within less progressive state contexts have sought to de-emphasize Title IX benefits for schools, as well as VAWA and the Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act (TVPRA, 2017) benefits for victims, which threatens to undermine policy progress to date.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Educators still wittingly and unwittingly enforce harmful ability status, classed, gendered, and raced norms and discourses in their classrooms, schools, and districts – which ultimately contribute to the high rates of sexual violence in the United States. This is in part due to inadequate teacher and leader program preparation and appropriate continuing professional development training. This includes, for example, culturally responsive TIPP that help educators to sensitively navigate disclosures of violence and/or address violence when it occurs on school grounds. This also is due to the need for such programming and training to take up the dual responsibility of uncovering and disrupting the presence of axiological, epistemic, and ontological dynamics of white, heteropatriarchal, settler colonialism. Where well-intentioned and empirically grounded policies do exist, they often are ill-enforced and poorly communicated, to both educators and students, who themselves cannot identify proper protocols and available resources. Thus, there is a need for comprehensive TIPP in schools that outline connections between child abuse, bullying, and TDV, in a manner that does not flatten complex relations along ability status, gender, nationality, sex, and race. To this end, leadership discourse might help undo those neoliberal conditions that contribute to “additive” problem-solving within schools that delimit the identities, behavior, and agency of girls, BIPOC, and gender diverse youth.

Feminist critical policy analysis and Women of Color feminist frameworks are mechanisms, which provide deep insight into these conditions where gender violence is concerned. Leadership discourse rearticulated through these lenses might open up educational spaces in ways that tangibly counter forms of historic, material, and epistemological violence, which often is perpetuated along interdependent and intersectional lines of ability, class, gender, nationality, race, and sexuality. So too, policy might be deconstructed and reenvisioned in a manner that eliminates doctrines, which support the agenda of power, silence, and pathology, as well as narrows long-standing gaps between equity-centered, gender violence prevention policy that supports prosocial adolescent behavior and implementation in practice.

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## **Introduction**

Documented to disproportionately affect females, the primary sites of sexual and gender-based violence remain the family, community, and state. Where youth are concerned, in the United States one in three teenagers reports experiencing some



form of abuse in their dating relationships, yet teens often fail to report dating violence incidences, including to school personnel, and thus episodes of violence go widely unreported (Noonan & Charles, 2009). We know that girls continue to face disproportionate rates of violence and in particular sexual harassment within public places, including on school grounds (Hill & Kearl, 2011), with 15 being the average age of forced or coerced sexual initiation among females (Hawks et al., 2019). Disproportionate rates of sexual violence also are reported for Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ girls (Patrick & Chaudhry, 2017), girls with disabilities (Caldas & Bensy, 2014), and immigrant females (Decker et al., 2007). Yet, limited educational leadership research focuses on adolescent female sexual violence and relevant K-12 responses. The recent movement to institute trauma-informed policies and practices (TIPP) in schools could be one avenue to address such forms of violence – or is it?

Most recently, it was found that the role of educators is under-examined in research on trauma-informed practices (Thomas et al., 2019) and where protocols for sexual violence do exist, educators report needing more training (Lemke et al., 2021). A comprehensive literature review also found multiple limitations in terms of how school systems address the intersection of student race and trauma, as well as within research and intervention on behalf of those same students (Alvarez, 2020). This means that while educational policy and practice conversations have shifted, it seemingly is easier to talk about trauma-informed approaches than to operationalize them within educational settings.

In short, it could be argued that policies and practices are meaningless without the will and capacity to address in schools, more complex issues such as sexual violence, including dynamics of capitalist heteropatriarchy and white settler colonialism – aspects of the power structure tasked with implementing those policies designed to eliminate sexual and other forms of violence. As communities have not been “impacted by white supremacy in the same way” (Smith, 2016, p. 1), there is an ever-present need to push policy and related processes to account for specific forms of gender violence against BIPOC and gender diverse bodies. Educational leaders bear the responsibility to promote the prevention of violence, as well as understand their role in proper response and reporting when violence does occur. This chapter discusses how TIPP on sexual violence, which are representative of diverse student populations, and comprehensive sexual education curricula can work in tandem to address issues of sexual violence among youth in K-12 public education.

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## Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence (TDV) is defined as: a range of abusive behaviors that preteens, adolescents, and young adults experience in the context of a past or present romantic or dating relationship. The behaviors include physical and sexual violence, stalking, and psychological abuse, which includes control or coercion. Abuse may be experienced in person or via technology. (Mulford & Blachman-Demner, 2013, p. 756)

The exact etiology of TDV remains elusive, but a correlation exists between the attitudinal and cultural acceptance of violence in relationships generally, and teens' involvement in dating violence in their own relationships (Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). Children who are exposed to domestic or sexual violence in the home, as well as violence within their communities, can normalize violence as an appropriate method of conflict resolution into adulthood (Felitti et al., 2019; Spriggs et al., 2009). As such, teens who experience violent crime outside of their relationships also tend to experience violence within their relationships, and are at higher risk of relationship violence into adulthood. This normalization of violence not only was found in dating relationships among adolescents but also was connected with violent interpersonal relationships and bullying. Teens who had peer groups that promoted aggressive norms and accepted bullying in platonic relationships were found to engage more regularly in perpetration of dating violence in their romantic relationships as well (Miller et al., 2013).

One in three teens have reported some form of dating violence in their relationships (Noonan & Charles, 2009), with some research finding significantly underreported TDV incidences arising from a lack of trust in authorities, specifically parents, teachers, and the police (Hébert et al., 2014). Adolescents reported concerns that the adults in their lives would marginalize their experiences of violence, or inversely that those adults would create a chain reaction of reporting with which the individual was not comfortable (Hébert et al., 2014). Furthermore, research evidenced that adolescents frequently did not recognize relationship abuse as harmful, nor did they identify it as such because their peers were experiencing the same behavior in their own relationships (Foshee et al., 2013). This “echo chamber” of problematic behavior has been argued to normalize TDV – reinforcing the negative behavior and concomitant lack of reporting or help-seeking behavior (Reeves & Orpinas, 2012).

In recent years, TDV was found to occur more frequently in digital spaces, as adolescents increasingly use cell phones and various online social modalities to communicate (Madigan et al., 2018). In multiple studies, this violence occurred most often in the form of coercive texts, with one member of the relationship pressuring the other to send nude or provocative photos against their will, or within the context of cyberbullying or revenge porn (Choi et al., 2016; Kernsmith et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2018). Abusive behavior online also was found to be predictive of offline dating violence (Kernsmith et al., 2018), and again, adolescents were frequently unaware that the behavior they experienced was abusive due to the prevalence of coercive sexting and cyberbullying among their peer groups that normalized the behavior (Wolak et al., 2018). Furthermore, much of the legality surrounding sexting relies on child pornography laws, which can create punitive systems for students that fail to support prosocial sexting behaviors among teens (Lemke & Rogers, 2020). Thus, adolescents reported reticence in disclosing the practice to their teachers, particularly in the capacity of relaying concerns they might have surrounding coercive sexting or safety (Albury et al., 2010).

Importantly, TDV does not impact all adolescents equally. TDV in the form of psychological or emotional abuse affects teens across all genders and race/

ethnicities, but the more aggressive expressions of abuse – physical and sexual violence – impact females (particularly Black females) and transgender and gender diverse youth disproportionately (Storer et al., 2019). Research found that 20.9% of females, and nearly 30% of gender diverse youth, compared to 10.4% of males, reported the experience of either physical or sexual violence in their adolescent dating relationships (Miller et al., 2018; Storer et al., 2019). While females reported perpetration of psychological abuse and even some forms of physical abuse toward their boyfriends, they were far more likely to become victims of serious injury due to physical aggression from their boyfriends, and significantly more likely to report sexual violence from their male dating partners (Foshee et al., 1998; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). It is noteworthy that much of TDV research has focused on white, heterosexual demographics, and utilized heteronormative gender roles and cultural norms to inform violence education and prevention mechanisms. This framing could unintentionally misinform educator audiences and marginalize nonwhite, non-heteronormative subgroups, particularly gender diverse, immigrant, and refugee youth who subscribe to different cultural and social norms.

Many school district policies, along with several state and federal laws, place emphasis on anti-bullying policies, but often do not hold the same regulations for dating violence, or make regulations transparent (Grant et al., 2019). As educators, recognizing the parallels between bullying and TDV can be useful in mitigating how violence is normalized among teens, and help to prevent bullying behavior from escalating into violent relationships (Debnam et al., 2014). This is a critical step as TDV is a strong predictor of continued intimate partner violence (IPV) into adulthood. TDV also carries heavy immediate and long-term health consequences, including increased risk for physical injury, sexually transmitted infection (e.g., HIV), unwanted pregnancy, substance use disorders, depression, suicidality, and being involved in a violent relationship into adulthood (Madkour et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2018).

Adolescence is the time when teens begin to explore their sexuality and individuality, and normative beliefs play a critical role in that exploration (Reyes et al., 2016). When aggressive, controlling gender norms are established, power imbalances develop and violence perpetration is likely to be more accepted (Reyes et al., 2016). Since these gender norms intensify in early adolescence, it makes the teen years a critical point to intervene and provide education for violence prevention (DeMeyer et al., 2017). This requires educational leaders and staff, as well as advocates and policy-makers to understand the scope of risk factors and complexities that lead to TDV, along with the protective factors and prosocial norms that can work to prevent it (Lemke & Rogers, 2020).

## **Social Norms and TDV**

Norms are deeply ingrained in communities. They indicate appropriate and accepted behavior, and motivate specific behaviors through consequences and social disciplining for those behaviors that are deemed not compliant

(Reyes et al., 2016). Defined by Reeves and Orpinas (2012) as “cultural phenomena that prescribe and proscribe behavior and are partly responsible for regulating social behavior” (p. 1679), injunctive norms vary by culture and dictate what is and is not socially acceptable for individuals and communities. For teens, there is an intersection of social norms and peer pressure that poises them to be uniquely influenced by the behavior of others, for better or worse (Foshee et al., 2013). In particular, social connection (or lack thereof) plays a major role in TDV. Teens reported lower levels of perpetration and victimization of violence when they had prosocial networks of friends (Foshee et al., 2013). Inversely, higher levels of violence (i.e., victimization and perpetration) were reported as social status increased, particularly for girls. This fluctuation indicates that teens are impressionable and that their peer group values are predictive of their own personal values and behaviors (Foshee et al., 2013).

Gender norms that reinforce femininity as inferior to masculinity create power imbalances and a sense of male entitlement that can lead to controlling and violent relationships (DeMeyer et al., 2017). When traditional gender role scripts are applied to relationships, they can inhibit healthy relationship dynamics and exacerbate gender stereotypes (Noonan & Charles, 2009). Males who viewed dating violence and traditional gender roles (e.g., male aggression and decision-making as a mechanism of control) as acceptable in a relationship were associated with increased rates of TDV (Reyes et al., 2016). Importantly, social norms supportive of multiple partners and high levels of sexual activity for boys also were associated with gender inequality and violent sexual beliefs held by those boys, including rationalizing abuse in the form of rape (Silverman et al., 2006).

Teen attitudes, norms, and behaviors are influenced by the interactions they observe in their social environments (Storer et al., 2019). If dating violence is the norm, that behavior is less likely to be viewed as problematic, and therefore teens may be more accepting of violence because there are less social consequences to this behavior (Reyes et al., 2016). This means that adolescents tend to be more accepting of controlling behaviors like cyber-stalking and power imbalances such as controlling and demeaning communication, and they are less likely to recognize emotional abuse overall. When seen through the lens of gender role conformity, teens also might view sexual coercion as a normative relationship obligation (Storer et al., 2019). Thus, injunctive norms and gender role attitudes work together to increase the risk of TDV (Reyes et al., 2016). Conversely, addressing teen injunctive norms has the capacity to decrease TDV incidences, since gender norms are negotiated based on regular peer influence (Gupta et al., 2019).

It is critical for educational leaders, staff, and others working on educational issues not only to understand the influence that norms have on adolescent behavior but also recognize the role their biases play in directing the norms, attitudes, and beliefs of their students. If an institution’s culture serves to reinforce problematic able-bodied, classed, raced, and gendered student identities, and if the district’s policies reflect outdated or nonexistent mechanisms for resolving sexual harassment, or fail to understand TDV as a separate issue, school administrators are complicit in a culture that allows violence perpetration to manifest (Grant et al., 2019). Thus,

school and district policies and leadership practices must depart from the reinforcement of such roles and provide educators with the resources to understand, identify, and address TDV at individual and system levels.

## **Teen Bullying, Harassment, and TDV**

Anti-bullying legislation has been adopted in 49 out of 50 states (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Parent and advocate calls for legal reform also eventuated in restorative justice focused bullying prevention programs within K-12 institutions (Lemke, 2016). Policies designed to explicitly address bullying perpetration, along with mandatory educator training to recognize the warning signs of bullying and provide resources for bullying victims underscores recognition of the short- and long-term negative effects on adolescent health (Yerger & Gehret, 2011).

Similar to overlap between bullying and maltreatment such as harassment, there are parallels to between TDV and bullying. Victims of both share similar long- and short-term health outcomes including anxiety, depression, drug use, risky sexual behavior, and suicidality (Madkour et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2018; Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Adolescents who bully their peers are more likely to become abusive in their relationships as they age into adulthood, and similar to health outcomes, bullying risk factors mirror those of TDV (Yerger & Gehret, 2011) – meaning, children who witness violence as an appropriate method of conflict resolution can normalize that violence in their own interactions and relationships as they grow (Felitti et al., 1998). Research has suggested that adolescents are uniquely positioned to experience dating violence and bullying concurrently, as they simultaneously explore their sexuality, solidify views of injunctive norms, and gauge their behavior with peers – with male adolescents being most likely to perpetrate sexual violence in their dating relationships as well (Miller et al., 2013). Specific to the social hierarchy of adolescents, this behavior either is reinforced by the peer group if the individual has strong social capital or shunned if they do not (Foshee et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2013).

These overlaps illustrate two things – that bullying prevention policy, programs, and educator training can be informative in developing comprehensive TDV policies and practices. Furthermore, recognizing bullying behavior in younger students may help to prevent TDV. Still, while legislation such as Title IX, designed to help prevent gender-based discrimination such as harassment in educational settings, captures under it the concept of TDV prevention, the lack of accessibility and awareness of this legislation for both students and educators is in stark contrast with the emphasis on bullying prevention in K-12 settings (Lichty et al., 2008). Thus, while there are distinctions between bullying, harassment, and TDV, it would behoove policy-makers and educational leaders to connect these behavior intersections so to more comprehensively address their root causes. This means going beyond student-to-student behavior to interrogate structural inequalities, such as the ways educators are complicit in bullying and harassing students and one another – each of which helps to normalize violence within school settings (Lemke, 2016). This also will take an understanding of the strong influence that peers have on

adolescent social norms, and require a trauma-informed framework that includes a holistic view of the teens themselves (Blitz et al., 2020).

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## **Policies, Practices, and Resources**

Laws exist at federal and state levels to protect students from bullying, harassment, and various forms of gender-based discrimination. Violence prevention programs across the K-12 spectrum focus on engaging students as positive bystanders to create safer communities for their peers (Coker et al., 2020). Currently, there is limited training for educators to reinforce these prevention programs, and confusion among educators as to what actions fall under the mandated reporting law, and what differentiates aspects of child abuse from TDV. If educators are to provide leadership in this arena, for students and their peers, it is essential that they have a strong baseline understanding of policies and resources meant to mitigate TDV. To navigate and stay current with the ever-changing landscape of violence prevention, they also must have administrative support to participate in relevant and culturally informed professional development.

## **Title IX**

The enactment of Title IX affirmed that, “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Education Amendments of, 1972, Title IX, Pub. Law 92–318). Because TDV falls under the umbrella of sexual harassment, which court rulings determined a form of sex discrimination (Lichty et al., 2008), Title IX is a critical component to addressing TDV. The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education mandated that all educational institutions, in order to be in compliance with Title IX regulations, must publish and make accessible to the public the following: a policy opposing sex discrimination; a grievance procedure for complainants; and procedures to ensure efficient and equitable resolution of complaints (Lemke, 2020; Lichty et al., 2008).

While each educational institution that receives federal funding is mandated to make their Title IX policy publicly available, vast inconsistencies across policy inclusion and accessibility remain across educational systems (Jackson et al., 2014; Lichty et al., 2008). When first introduced, Title IX’s limited technical and financial components (Marshall, 1999; Stromquist, 2013) also signaled it as token legislation that did not countenance interventions to alter the patterns in schooling that reproduce inequitable gender relations. Recent political opposition has further complicated Title IX monitoring and enforcement efforts (Lemke, 2020).

Importantly, while copious research literature exists on the history and implementation of Title IX, and particularly at the higher education level, there is a dearth of research on connections between Title IX enforcement and TDV, and particularly

at the K-12 level. Existent research has found, for example, that fewer than 14% of Title IX policies were available online within Midwest secondary school contexts (Lichty et al., 2008). Another study found that the majority of educators interviewed were unaware of district policies and procedures surrounding Title IX at all, rendering them ineffective in providing reporting to the district or resources to the student (Grant et al., 2019). Such inaccessibility and lack of awareness have been argued as contributing to the persistent, disproportionate rates of TDV perpetrated against adolescent females, particularly Black and transgender girls (Lichty et al., 2008), and the continued lack of reporting and provision of resources to students in the wake of dating violence (Grant et al., 2019). While research has examined Title IX implementation when a teacher has sexually harassed a student, or when teachers experience harassment from their colleagues, little involves the effectiveness of Title IX on a student-to-student level. Given that TDV falls under the purview of sexual discrimination in much the same way that abuse from teachers to students is covered in this legislation (Jackson et al., 2014), additional research in this area is needed.

### **State- and Local-Level Mechanisms to Address TDV**

Appropriate policy formation and resource allocation for TDV relies on effective school district and school building leadership. If a school policy is not comprehensive and/or transparent, educators are left to their own devices to provide assistance to students following a violence disclosure. When educational policy-makers and leaders prioritize TDV identification and prevention in their districts, there is a trickle-down effect to teachers and students, and in a manner that shapes school culture.

Still, more cohesive educational policy across federal and state legislation is needed, as the laws regulating bullying and harassment vary from state to state with some states taking a stronger stand on both than others. For example, education laws enacted by New York State (NYS) to address bullying and harassment may be informative in the future of TDV regulations for schools. In NYS, students are protected from being subject to harassment, bullying, or discrimination by employees or fellow students on school property or at functions (NYS Law, 2012). NYS also required that the board of education for each district create guidelines to inform trainings that discourage bullying and harassment and make educators aware of the effects of the same (NYS Education Law, 2010). While the term “harassment” is broad, and incorporates the prohibition of discrimination based on sex, there currently is a lack of application of these laws to TDV. Expanding these laws to include training for educators about TDV warning signs and risk factors, as well as providing students with the full knowledge of their rights and responsibilities through comprehensive violence prevention education, could be helpful in both response to and prevention of dating violence (Lemke & Rogers, 2020).

Second, harm caused by gender-based discrimination and violence is addressed by other key pieces of federal legislation and Supreme Court precedent. Thus, individuals can sue school districts for compensatory and punitive damages resulting



from sexual harassment, and educational leaders also can be held liable if they fail to address harassment of students by employees and/or other students (Laible, 1997). The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (1990) and Violence Against Women Act (1994) both sought to increase campus accountability by requiring crime and missing person's data be reported, and through oversight mechanisms like fines, student aid suspension, and resource reallocation (Wies, 2015). The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009) expanded federal hate-crime law to include crimes committed because of a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. It also added "gender" and "gender identity" to the Hate Crimes Statistics Act (1990) (Lemke, 2020). Finally, in *Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board* (2017), a US district court held that Title IX and the Fourteenth Amendment applied to transgender students (Lemke, 2020). Akin to calls to broaden bullying legislation, expanding legislation in this area to address linkages with TDV and connections between TDV and continued violence in adulthood covered under their purview, could be helpful in response to and prevention of TDV.

Third, though considered mandatory reporters by state law, educators often lack professional development, receive prescriptive information, and/or have limited access to service referral information to fulfill this legal obligation (Lemke, 2019a, 2019b). Mandated reporter training requires educators to report confirmed or suspected cases of child abuse, including multiple forms of sexual violence, to social services. What mandated reporting does not require is that educators inform students' parents about the disclosure of TDV between peers, or that educators report dating violence to child welfare services. This confusion comes from inconsistent or nonexistent policies surrounding TDV for schools. The lack of differentiation between child abuse and TDV responses can drive mistrust of students who disclose concerns of dating violence to a trusted teacher or counselor, only to have those concerns divulged to other district authorities, parents, or even the police, against the will of the victim (Hébert et al., 2014). Thus, there is a need to address in educational research, policy, and practice how educators can unwittingly re-traumatize the victim and reinforce adolescents' lack of trust in the authority figures in their lives. Educators also need to receive comprehensive and ongoing training to reinforce their understanding of Title IX versus mandated reporting, and how they can appropriately support students in the wake of varying disclosures of violence.

Finally, though potentially inapplicable to other demographics, TDV prevention curriculum administered at district and school levels among primarily white, heterosexual adolescents has been shown to reduce rates of sexual violence among adolescents who have received the training (Coker et al., 2020). Often partnered with local rape crisis agencies, which have a lengthy history of proactively addressing violence against women within local communities and on college campuses, bystander intervention models focus on peer hierarchy, social capital, and injunctive norms to prevent sexual violence; they also aim to engage teens in violence prevention at an individual level in order to make their communities safer at the population level (Coker et al., 2020; Foshee et al., 1998). Programs like, "Bringing in the Bystander High School Curriculum," place heavy emphasis on



healthy relationships among peers and within romantic relationships; they also positively reinforce prosocial relationship behaviors, as well as identify relationship red flags and how to prevent them from manifesting to violence. Programming that addresses bystander behavior through building prosocial behaviors among students (Edwards et al., 2015) have shown positive results among students, but these programs often lack an evaluation component concerning the reinforcement of learning among educators (Coker et al., 2020).

Still, research has found that educators often not only are ill-equipped and under-qualified to have conversations about adolescent sexuality (Starker, 2017), but that state-level policy designed to prevent sexual violence and/or train educators about relative dynamics are normatively prescriptive (Lemke, 2019a, 2019b). As such, historic, institutionalized, and policy-driven violence is maintained through the perpetuation of rape myths about raced and colonized bodies (Davis, 1981; Smith, 2005). In the same vein, where information about LGBTQ+ youth sexuality is censored or misinformation allowed, heteronormative violence continues (Mayo, 2014; Pascoe, 2007; Sears, 1992). Simply put, even equity-minded educators have implicit biases that risk perpetuating racist and heteronormative gender roles, and injunctive norms that normalize rape culture (Starker, 2017) – all of which should be accounted for within state and local policy efforts. One way to do so is through feminist critical (Marshall, 1999) and Women of Color (Pillow, 2016) policy approaches to the implementation of comprehensive sexual violence prevention education and training in schools (Lemke & Rogers, 2020).

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## **Best Practice in TDV Prevention: Recommendations for Leadership**

Policies, practices, and programs exist to address sexual violence in schools, as well as to create reporting and resource structures concerned with violent behavior. Yet, there remains a paucity of support for both educators and students, barriers to accessibility of rights, and an underutilization of comprehensive prevention curricula and training. For educational leaders and staff, as well as policy-makers to truly understand the scope of TDV and have the resources to combat it, the following steps are recommended.

To begin, educators require proper training on culturally responsive TIPP in order to address their students as whole beings. For example, cultural awareness and humility in shaping trauma response has been found to be beneficial to refugee student development (Isakson et al., 2015) and will be important in cultivating a truly holistic response to each student who experiences violence. Trauma-informed responses to students of concern aim to augment knowledge on student vulnerability, signs of distress (including within behavior), and ways to avoid triggering memories that can prompt re-traumatization (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014).

This depth of training would allow educators to address disparities (including recognition of students who might be more vulnerable to TDV) and promote

resiliency in each student based on their individual backgrounds (Blitz et al., 2016). Yet, such a trauma-informed framework was found to be unavailable to educators, leaving them underprepared to handle disclosures of violence in a trauma-informed capacity (Blitz et al., 2016; Grant et al., 2019). Research also has identified a range of educational limitations in addressing trauma where race is concerned (Alvarez, 2020) and schools that aim to enforce culturally responsive TIPP still lack uniform staff awareness about standard operating procedures for identifying and reporting sexual violence (Lemke et al., 2021). As discussed previously, educator training to delineate the difference between child sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, and TDV is a critical component to bridging this gap. Appropriate and thorough TIPP to student experiences of violence require in-depth understanding of particular student subpopulations, along with the trauma-informed theory for disclosure of trauma. This training also can provide resources for students who are victims of trauma, but more importantly, it will allow educators to understand the drastically different support systems that each unique experience of trauma requires.

Another major step needed involves comprehensive school policies to address rape culture and social norms at district- and school-wide levels. These policies can work in tandem with already existing anti-bullying and harassment protocols, as many risk and protective factors are shared between these and TDV. Where policies already exist, greater emphasis should be placed on frequent and mandatory training for practitioners to empower them with inclusive resources for students who experience sexual violence, and that clearly delineate the differences between child sexual abuse, harassment, and TDV, and the reporting structures therein. Consistent sexual violence disclosure protocols must exist across districts and this protocol should be accessible to educators and students alike, with culturally responsive TIPP that recognize the multifaceted ways that adolescents present to the world.

Comprehensive sexual education, and policies to enforce it, also could also serve as a sexual violence prevention tool for adolescents. Research found that while teens did garner much of their knowledge about sex and relationships from the media (particularly pornography) and their peers, formal sexual education programs still were critical sources of information about sex for adolescents (Starker, 2017). Currently, only 24 states and Washington, D.C. mandate sexual education at all, and as previously discussed, much of that curriculum assumes a heteronormative lens that fails to comprehensively address gender diversity, digital sexual modalities, and/or sexual violence (Starker, 2017). Using the rape crisis model of bystander intervention as part of a comprehensive sexual education curriculum would provide adolescents with the foundations of healthy sexuality. Reinforcement of prosocial norms, gender equity, and protective factors to promote healthy relationships within this curriculum would allow adolescents to identify unhealthy patterns in relationships, both their own and their peers', and stop the normalization of control and coercion in dating relationships (Coker et al., 2020). Policies that require comprehensive sexual education programs to address sexual violence and student responsibility for one another not only would be a gain for individual student well-being, but for overall school and district culture.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Despite progress made to address gender-based violence among adolescent youth, and in particular female teens, systemic structures that impede these efforts remain. Heteronormative values are institutionalized in schools and reflected in district policies, curricula, and school culture (Grant et al., 2019). District protocols exist to prevent and address violence, but students and practitioners often lack awareness or the resources for appropriate access (Grant et al., 2019; Lemke et al., 2021; Lichty et al., 2008). Punitive responses to disclosure of TDV for victims fail to embrace the complexity of risk factors and tend to disproportionately negatively affect already underserved subpopulations, putting them at higher risk for sexual violence victimization and perpetration when already disproportionately affected (Storer et al., 2019). The dilemma of addressing violence at the implementation stage is compounded by a victim-blaming culture that invalidates victim experience particularly if the person is gender nonconforming and/or a female of color (Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017). Finally, inappropriate responses to TDV disclosure can garner mistrust in an already tenuous relationship between adolescents and adults, further isolating the victim (Foshee et al., 1998; Hébert et al., 2014).

Schools and institutions bear a strong responsibility for the well-being of their students, both in and outside of the classroom. Structural sexism, racism, nativism, and classism have long limited the protection of students labeled “different” or “other,” and often times those systems that are intended to help, including educational research or the lack thereof, create a ripple effect of more harm for already disadvantaged populations. Feminist critical and Women of Color analyses are by design intended to empower educators, challenge institutions, and progress educational research to be transformed through thought and action beyond implicitly biased, normatively distorted, and politically constrained modes of the past (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003; Childers-McKee & Hytten, 2015; Lemke, 2019a, 2019b; Marshall, 1999; Pillow, 2003, 2016). In particular, they remind us that class, gender, and race are constitutive to enacted policy, reform efforts, and any substantive understanding of educational politics. When brought to bare on leadership practices and needed research, such analyses can help illuminate ways individual actions prevent TDV victims from seeking help and norms that shore up gender-based violence. Furthermore, they provide examples for how educational policies and schooling practices can dismantle gender and racial hierarchies and engender a more egalitarian approach to educational leadership, teaching, and learning.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Examining the Limits of What Schools Can Do to Reduce Peer Cyberbullying](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQ+ Communities and US K-12 Schools](#)
- ▶ [The Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Education on Black Girls in K-12 Schools](#)

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**Part VIII**

**Leadership and Social Justice**





# The Politics of Distance Education: A Tangled *Web* of Values

# 62

Jonathan Becker

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## Abstract

Politics is about the authoritative distribution of values, and the discourse around distance education, at all levels, is laden with value statements. This starts with a failure to recognize that distance education or online learning is not a monolith. Furthermore, efforts to try to define these and related terms are fruitless, and reflect values related to a need to count things rather than educational values such as growth and human potential. Nevertheless, advocates explicitly argue that distance education can make schooling more accessible both in terms of reach and cost, without sacrificing quality. This value proposition represents the

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prevailing institutional logic of distance education. Yet, if we could psychoanalyze educational policymakers and stakeholders who advocate for distance education, we would see a different set of values. These values, or institutional *illogics*, go largely unstated, though they ultimately emerge as disavowed assumptions and shared fantasies. These values include neoliberalism, technological solutionism, and credentialism. This tangled web of values causes discontinuity in the discourse resulting in value conflicts and a political quagmire. This, in the end, prevents us from moving forward and considering the affordances of the modern internet for achieving our shared educational values.

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**Keywords**

Distance education · Online learning · Politics · Values · Logics · Illogics

**The Field of Memory**

Distance education or online learning is not a monolithic entity. Efforts to try to define these and related terms are fruitless, and reflect values related to a need to count things rather than educational values such as growth and human potential.

**The Field of Presence**

The field of distance education is buoyed by stated values such as access, quality, and cost. That is, advocates explicitly argue that distance education can make schooling more accessible both in terms of reach and cost, without sacrificing quality. This value proposition represents the prevailing institutional logic of distance education. Individual parts of that value proposition may be truthful on their own, but it is not clear that, at scale, distance education can be more accessible, lower cost, and high quality all at once.

**The Field of Concomitance**

If we could psychoanalyze educational policymakers and stakeholders who advocate for distance education, we would see a different set of values. These values, or institutional illogics, go largely unstated, though they ultimately emerge as disavowed assumptions and shared fantasies. These values include neoliberalism, technological solutionism, and credentialism.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The major discontinuity or rupture in the politics of distance education occurs between stated and unstated values. Educational policymakers and stakeholders make assertions or value statements about distance education that dominate the policy discourse, while unconsciously they are driven by a set of shared fantasies. This tangled web of values causes a discontinuity in the discourse and policy communities resulting in value conflicts and a political quagmire. This, in the end, prevents us from moving forward and considering the affordances of the modern internet for achieving our shared values.

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### Critical Assumptions

This, of course, assumes that we have shared values around education.

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## Introduction: Politics as Values and Value Conflicts

Like all aspects of education, the politics of distance education are complex. To write about those politics, though, first requires some definitional work. That is, it is important to clarify, to the degree possible, some terminology before moving forward.

Politics, believe it or not, may be the simplest term to define for the purposes of this chapter. According to López (López, 2003), the study of educational politics has focused on questions of who gets what and how; the “authoritative allocation of values” (Easton, 1965).

López (2003) cites Stout, Tallerico, and Scribner, who, in the first chapter of the 1994 Politics of Education Association Yearbook, assert that we can understand the politics of education as a field by examining divergent values and belief systems, and the areas of schooling most vulnerable to value conflicts. They do this by citing Easton’s (1965) definition of a political system as:

... patterns of interaction through which values are allocated for a society and these allocations are accepted as authoritative by most persons in the society most of the time. It is through the presence of activities that fulfill these two basic functions that a society can commit the resources and energies of its members in the settlement of differences that cannot be autonomously resolved. (p. 57)

In other words, the claim is that in education, at least, politics is about values, value conflicts, and their influence on political processes.

The purpose of this chapter is to apply that conceptualization of politics to distance education. The question underlying the chapter is, *if* politics is about values and value tensions, what are the values and value tensions underlying distance education? The short answer to that question lies in the claim that educational policymakers and stakeholders have a set of stated values (or logics) that are largely unsupported by evidence, and are unconsciously driven by a different set of values. The result, if you will forgive the pun, is that the politics of education involve a complex, tangled *web* of values.

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## The Field of Memory: The Monolith of Distance Education

As we consider the discourse on politics and distance education, the very concept or definition of “distance education” is contested, at best. In Foucauldian terms, we can leave behind the idea that “distance education” is a monolithic entity. And, this conceptual or definitional uncertainty has significant implications when we consider

the politics of education as “patterns of interaction through which values are allocated” in education.

In modern discourse, “online learning” is used interchangeably and now more frequently than “distance education” or “distance learning.” Figure 1 below shows the change in usage of those terms over time via Google’s NGram Viewer. The latter terms, though, tend to be the language used in policy documents and discourse, largely because most definitions emphasize the physical separation or distance between the instructor and the students.

In higher education, institutions are required to report distance education enrollment data to the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS), which defines distance education as:

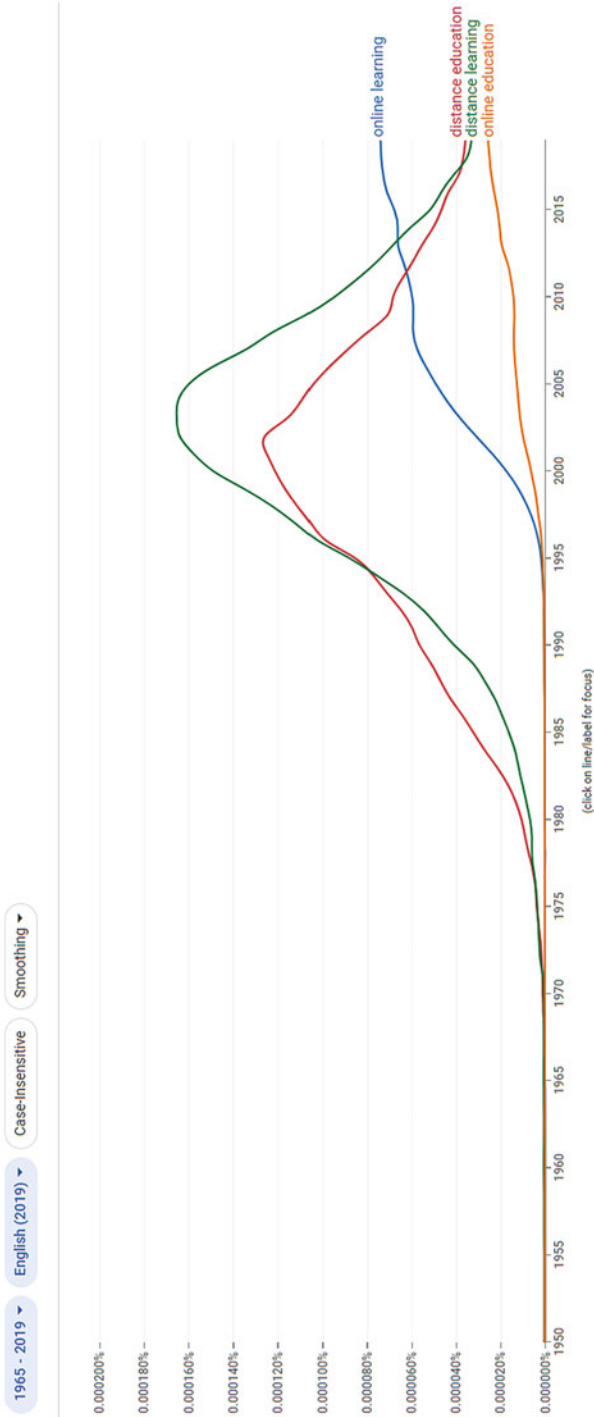
...education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and video cassette, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

This definition is consistent with what Singh and Thurman (2019) found in a systematic review of definitions of online learning. Across 46 definitions from 37 sources, the common themes were: technology, time (synchronous-asynchronous), interactivity, and physical distance.

One problem with the IPEDS definition, though, is around the idea of time and students being separated from the instructor for any given course or program of study. IPEDS defines a distance education course as: “A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education.” So, per IPEDS, even when taking a distance education course, students might still be required to come to campus for an orientation or testing.

In the K-12 realm, in 2011, The Aurora Institute (then iNACOL) undertook *The Online Learning Definitions Project* “to provide states, districts, online programs, and other organizations with a set of definitions related to online and blended learning in order to develop policy, practice, and an understanding of and within the field.” That project yielded separate definitions for “distance education” and “online learning” and “blended learning.”

- *Distance education* – General term for any type of educational activity in which the participants are at a distance from each other – in other words, are separated in space. They may or may not be separated in time (asynchronous vs. synchronous).
- *Online learning* – Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the internet. The term does not include printed-based [sic]



**Fig. 1** Usage of online/distance learning/education phrasology over time.

correspondence education, broadcast television or radio, videocassettes, and stand-alone educational software programs that do not have a significant internet-based instructional component (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2010); used interchangeably with virtual learning, cyber learning, and e-learning.

- *Blended learning* – Blended learning is any time a student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; often used synonymously with hybrid learning.

Here, too, notice the language of “primarily.” Also, for the definition of “distance education,” who are the participants and what counts as “at a distance from each other?” And, do students and teachers have to be at a distance from each other for the duration of the course or class to be considered “distance education?” Imagine a high school computer lab where students show up for one period per day to work on internet-based coursework delivered by a statewide virtual school. If a teacher shows up once per week to provide additional instructional support and help answer questions, is this distance education or online learning?

The point here is that distance education, online learning, and blended learning are conceptually very difficult to define, particularly as newer technologies are developed. There is no monolithic thing called “online learning” or “distance education.” And, frankly, this matters exactly because of the politics of distance education. If politics is about the authoritative allocation of values, consider just the values around costs when we cannot neatly define what it is for which we are trying to understand costs. For example, in the K-12 world, we might be able to figure out the costs of running a full-time, statewide virtual school. But, those costs are not comparable to the costs of, say, one school district contracting with a university to offer an online course to the students. They are not comparable to the costs of a school district paying a statewide virtual school so that students can have access to, say, a handful of online courses. And, one school’s blended learning program could look very different from another school’s blended learning program given the range of what is possible with blended learning technologies. That makes cost comparisons near impossible rendering the allocation of values difficult.

In a moment of skepticism, one might find themselves wondering things like: *If formal schooling had existed in the United States when Gutenberg invented the printing press, would there have been lots of discussion and hand-wringing about the inevitable move towards print-based learning? Would formal learning organizations have created new units and positions around print-based learning?* From there, it is easy to imagine that, someday, we will look back upon the present time and laugh at the idea that we used terms like “online learning” and/or “blended learning.”

There is no better time than the present to move the discourse away from labels and related efforts at bean counting. We should move the discourse beyond simplistic ideas and, more so, we should embrace the ambiguity that modern technologies

bring to the educational policy discourse. We should consider what our *real* values are in education and consider the affordances of modern technologies, including the internet, towards those goals. We need a discursive break, though, to be able to do that. The longer we spend tilting at windmills over definitions, the longer it will take us to achieve any agreed upon ends in education.

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## **The Field of Presence: Values, Value Conflicts, and Institutional Logics of Distance Education**

To Foucault, the “field of presence” consists of those statements, understandings, concepts, practices, ideas which are considered to be truthful “involving exact descriptions, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presuppositions.” The previous section noted how efforts to develop exact descriptions in the field of distance education are complicated, at best, and how that should encourage us to move beyond simplistic ideas and even embrace the ambiguity. The distance education policy arena and the politics of distance education are also rife with a set of value statements that are considered to be truthful. Those value statements might be better understood as institutional logics. That is, in organizational theory terms, in the distance education space, we might think of the field of presence as institutional logics of distance education.

Friedland and Alford (1991) stated that institutional logics are the “organizing principles” that organizations use to guide decisions within a particular area (p. 248). Similarly, Scott, Ruef, Mendel, and Caronna (2000) referred to institutional logics as “belief systems and associated practices that predominate in an organizational field” (p. 170). These organizing principles crystallize at certain periods of time in ways that both enable certain kinds of actions while also constraining the set of options available to an institution or organization. Logics enable individuals and organizations to make sense of environmental ambiguities by prescribing and proscribing actions that reenact institutional logics and make them durable. Institutional logics embody both the symbolic (culture and cognitive structure) and the material (practices and processes) that form into taken-for-granted rules and organizing principles.

Rigby (2014) has argued that within institutions or organizations, there is a generally accepted and practiced set of beliefs called the “prevailing logic.” Similarly, Bastedo (2009) says that institutional logics become “convergent” when they gain legitimacy among different types of actors within a field or an organization.

Convergent institutional logics convey the idea that there may be a single dominant principle, idea, or approach to policymaking. But logics are also a template for action, a set of characteristics that define the theory of action to be used in policy development. They embody the concept of an archetype. . . . An archetype is an array of multiple, interrelated features that need to cohere to provide direction for organizational action. An archetype is a representation of a contested whole, the result of a process where advantaged individuals and groups have consolidated their political position and gained control over organizational resources. (p. 211)

So, what are the convergent institutional logics of distance education? In a 2018 article (Smith) about how the nonprofit National University System was purchasing the for-profit Northcentral University in order to grow their capacity to offer online graduate programs, Michael Cunningham, chancellor of the National University System, is quoted as saying:

This is very mission-driven for us when we think about affordable, accessible, quality education to the masses. Our mission is about giving folks an opportunity to increase their station in life and to meet them where they need to be met at a cost affordable to them and their family.

Affordable. Accessible. Quality. Those sorts of statements about distance education from higher education leaders and stakeholders have been pervasive over the last decade or so. In other words, this has been the prevailing institutional logic, or at least the stated and explicit institutional logic, the archetype around which policy decisions have been made regarding distance education.

In 1999, Daniel, Kanwar, and Uvalić-Trumbić wrote about “Breaking Higher Education’s Iron Triangle” (2009). In that article, the authors write about burgeoning demand for higher education in a knowledge economy. To meet this demand, without sacrificing on cost or quality, they propose a system that looks to outcomes and external examinations as a driver of quality. They conclude the article by stating:

... perceptions of quality are changing, and the growing emphasis on outcomes and standards heralds the possibility of a model of higher education that could achieve the ministerial aims—one that centers on examinations and allows students to choose different ways of preparing for them. **Although this type of system has a long history, contemporary technologies such as eLearning and open educational resources promise to make it even more cost-effective today.** (p. 35)

These beliefs about distance education, or eLearning in Daniels’ terms, have been persistent ever since. When Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) came on the scene, they were touted as free and available to anyone. Furthermore, much of the higher education industry media suggested that since they were being offered by the “top” or “elite” universities, they must also be, therefore, high-quality learning experiences.

The truthfulness of these individual values (access, cost, quality), though, is unclear. That institutions could realize all three values simultaneously, is less clear.

## **Distance Education and Access to Education as an Institutional Logic or Political Value**

For K-12 education, the issue is not so much about access to schooling as it is choice and opportunity. That is, the goal of virtual schooling at the K-12 level is not to capture some unserved segment of the population; there is always a free public school available to any family that wants it. However, virtual schooling, particularly full-time, fully virtual or blended schools, offer additional schooling choices for families and additional coursework options for many students. According to Miron



and Elgeberi (2019), in 2017–2018, 501 full-time virtual schools enrolled 297,712 students, and 300 blended schools enrolled 132,960 students. This represented increases of about 2,000 and 16,000 students, respectively, from the prior year. Also, as of 2018, 39 states had either virtual or blended schools. In many states, those virtual schools offer students in traditional public schools the opportunity to take coursework that would not otherwise be available. For example, a statewide virtual school might offer online foreign language courses to students in schools that are unable to hire a teacher to teach that language. Thus, in the K-12 sector, distance education does expand choices for schooling and access to additional coursework.

With respect to access in higher education, at first glance, the numbers about enrollments in distance education in higher education would appear to suggest that distance education has, in fact, made higher education more accessible. According to a 2018 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017, the number of all students who took at least one course online grew by 5.7%. Additionally, the number of students who were enrolled exclusively online went up over one-half of a percent. Yet, during this same time period, overall postsecondary enrollment dropped almost one-half of a percentage point. From 2010 to 2017, undergraduate enrollment decreased by 7%. And, whereas enrollment in postbaccalaureate degree programs increased by 36% over the first decade of the twenty-first century, enrollment in those programs only increased by 2% from 2010 to 2017 (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2018). Thus, distance education enrollments are growing while overall postsecondary enrollment is dropping or plateauing. At best, then, distance education is countering declines in overall postsecondary enrollment.

## **Distance Education and Educational Quality as an Institutional Logic or Political Value**

In the early days of efficacy research on distance education, much of the work went into simple comparisons between online and face-to-face sections of the same course, sometimes even taught by the same instructor. In general, the research showed that online courses were at least as good as face-to-face classes. A 2013 meta-analysis by Means et al. concluded similarly and even found that blended learning (a mix of face-to-face and online within the same course or program) was the most effective modality. For a while, for the most part, this became the prevailing understanding of the efficacy research in the field of distance education. In fact, among those who studied distance education in higher education, the “no significant difference” phenomenon became a prevailing belief memorialized by databases documenting the phenomenon.

These days, those doing research in distance education in higher education have largely moved on from efficacy research and turned their focus to understanding specific practices that are related to student success in distance education. This is an important research, particularly as it allows stakeholders to get a glimpse inside the black boxes of online courses to see what best practices need to be disseminated to practitioners. However, the “no significant difference” phenomenon still

needs some unpacking. Aggregate claims of effectiveness gloss over some nuances and inequities that need additional empirical understanding. For example, there is growing evidence that distance education is not particularly effective for low-income students and/or for community college students. Additionally, there is a body of research that says that self-regulated learners are the most likely to succeed in online courses. In other words, those students who are best able to do the things that the most successful students do are the most likely to succeed in online courses. Yet, these days, distance education is particularly seen as a way to reach “non-traditional” students, those adults who have not been in school in a long time and, therefore, the least likely to be self-regulated learners. Thus, while distance education can be at least as effective as face-to-face education, there is a real concern that distance education could reinforce, and perhaps exacerbate, inequities in student success.

In the K-12 sector, the research consistently shows negative outcomes for distance education. Cavanaugh (2001) found a positive effect in favor of the K-12 distance education students. Just 3 years later, though, Cavanaugh, Gillan, Kromrey, Hess, and Blomeyer (2004) conducted another meta-analysis and found a negative effect for the K-12 distance education students. Since then, the research has been consistent. In a 2012 National Educational Policy Center (NEPC) examination of virtual schools, Miron and Urschel concluded that the percentage of virtual schools that achieved adequate yearly progress was approximately half that of public schools (i.e., 27.4% of virtual schools vs. ~52% of public schools). Subsequently, NEPC has conducted annual reports on virtual schools and has reached the same consistent conclusion. The 2019 review reported that the 4-year graduation rate for students attending virtual schools was significantly lower than the national average. It is rare to find the kinds of consistent results in any area of educational research as we have seen in the body of research on K-12 virtual learning.

## **Distance Education and Educational Costs as an Institutional Logic or Political Value**

The cost issue is equally if not more tricky. Does it cost less to offer courses and programs from a distance? At first blush, the answer would seem to be an obvious “yes.” Facilities and maintenance costs would essentially be eliminated because physical classrooms are eliminated from the cost equation. That alone should result in lower costs. But, the limited available research and reporting that exists on the costs of distance education show great variation in costs. Despite eliminating costs for classroom space, to ramp up the delivery of online courses and programs, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education have had to invest in other areas including instructional design, marketing, and technological infrastructure.

There have been efforts to track the costs of providing distance learning in the K-12 sector, but they are few and far between and methodologically debatable. In 2006, Anderson, Augenblick, DeCesare, and Conrad (2006) concluded that “...the

operating costs of online programs are about the same as the costs of operating brick-and-mortar schools.” In 2012, associates of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation found the costs of full-time secondary offerings to range from about \$5,100 per pupil to \$7,700 per pupil which they then compared to a national average figure for brick-and-mortar per pupil expenditures of approximately \$10,000. However, as King Rice (2012) suggested in a comprehensive critique of that report, the methodology was fraught with problems. Baker and Bathon (2012) try to tackle some of the methodological challenges of calculating the costs of providing education from a distance, but they note that costs vary tremendously depending on factors such as size and geography.

In higher education, too, there have been mixed conclusions about the cost of distance education. Poulin and Straut (2017) produced a report of their study on the costs of distance education in higher education. They conducted a survey of 197 institutions of higher education and followed up the survey with interviews of key stakeholders. They found that almost two-thirds (66.4%) of the survey respondents reported that distance education costs are higher than face-to-face costs. For their study, they “. . . did not ask for actual cost figures, which would be difficult to compare due to different methodologies used.” These differences in cost methodologies across institutions is a real challenge for understanding the costs associated with distance education.

A 2018 report from the Boston Consulting Group in partnership with Arizona State University found that the cost savings for online courses ranged from \$12 to \$66 per credit hour. That study, though, was focused more on the “return on investment” than straight costs, and the six institutions involved had large-scale and mature distance education operations, making it difficult to generalize to institutions more newly come to distance education. The authors state that “[d]igital learning can help institutions reduce costs and pass along savings to students through three primary mechanisms: raising student-to-instructor ratios, drawing on a broader network of adjunct faculty, and avoiding additional operational costs.” (Bailey, Vaduganathan, Henry, Laverdiere, & Pugliese, 2018, p. 3).

That conclusion points to the interconnected nature of these issues. In other words, costs for distance education can be lower by offering larger classes taught by contingent faculty members. This is true, though, of face-to-face classes, too, and is a common cost-cutting strategy by higher education administrators. The difference, of course, is that, online, there are no constraints on the degree to which class size is increased. But, does increasing the enrollment in a given online course negatively impact the quality of the course? Again, it depends, but there is a significant body of research that concludes that there are negative effects of using contingent faculty members to teach courses in higher education.

Thus, distance education can make education more accessible. Distance education can be high quality education, at least in the postsecondary market. And, distance education can be less costly to deliver. Distance education can almost assuredly be two of the three simultaneously. But, can distance education break the iron triangle and increase access, lower costs, and be high quality education all at once? Decades into the growth of distance education in higher education, the answer is unclear at best. It may be that distance education can break the iron triangle in

distinct disciplines for distinct groups of students. But, at scale, the evidence suggests that, for the most part, the dominant institutional logic of distance education as a means to break the iron triangle is more myth than reality. In other words, discursive value statements around access, quality and cost could individually be truthful, to use Foucault's term, but it is not clear that all three value statements can be true at the same time.

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## **The Field of Concomitance: The Institutional *Illogics* of Distance Education**

What, then, continues to power the train that is distance education? Again, turning to Foucault, if the field of concomitance is, in part, about considering ideas which have originated in other disciplines, how might we look outside the field of education or leadership studies to understand the politics of distance education? Asked differently, using the language of the politics of education, are there perhaps other values that might explain the relentless pursuit of growth in distance education? For this, we return to institutional logics and then, a new framework that combines organizational theory with psychoanalytic theory.

Lewis (2019) writes about technology change through the lens of institutional logics. "Technology change is an external force that can jolt an institutionalized field into a state of flux or destabilization. These jolts are difficult to anticipate and can threaten an organization's viability." (Lewis, 2019, p. 142). The World Wide Web is a technology that, as an external force, has changed higher education. Unlike most industries, though, the Web was not so much of a jolt to higher education as it was a nudge. Despite the theorizing of some who saw the relationship between the World Wide Web through the framework of "disruptive innovation," the Web has not disrupted higher education so much as it has caused higher education to slowly come to grips with its affordances. Distance education is a good example here as the Web has afforded new opportunities for schooling and education and some institutions have been able to successfully take advantage of those affordances and opportunities.

In times of change, where external forces threaten stability and institutional order, institutions must make sense of the change and respond with their own innovations or adaptations. With these innovations or adaptations, institutions try to remain competitive and stave off irrelevancy or, in the worst case, failure. This convergence towards the new order or "new normal" could be seen as a shift away from the prevailing institutional logics towards a new dominant institutional logic. Or, it could be seen as a turn towards less explicit or less publicly stated values.

Vince (2019) developed institutional illogics as a conceptual framework "...that can help scholars of organizations and institutions to deepen analysis and understanding of how people's organizational lives can be shaped by dynamics that are beyond reason, as well as how such dynamics are embedded in social structures" (p. 953). Tying psychoanalytic theory to institutional theory, institutional illogics as

a conceptual framework is defined as “[u]nconscious dynamics that have both structuring and unsettling effects on the rules of the game. Underlying assumptions can be defensive, illusory or irrational despite also feeling natural or normal” (p. 955). Vince (2019) adds, “Illogics are never fully revealed, but can emerge through language slips, projective relations and irrational practices. They are manifested in social defences, disavowed assumptions and shared fantasies that can become persistent aspects of ‘living institutions’” (Lok, 2010).

With respect to distance education, the prevailing or dominant institutional illogics involve a set of disavowed assumptions and shared fantasies. Like the broken iron triangle, this institutional illogic is tripartite; it is a tangled web of at least three sets of -isms: neoliberalism/academic capitalism, technological solutionism, and credentialism.

## Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and Distance Education

Rowe, Lubienski, Skourdoumbis, Gerrard, and Hursh (2019) wrote about how “[n]eoliberalism as a concept, ideology, or theoretical lens has emerged in the last couple of decades as a monolithic presence in education research” (p. 150). They also point out how neoliberalism is “over-utilised but also under-examined as an explanatory or descriptive theoretical lens for studying education reform” (p. 151). In pointing out that many scholars capitalize the N in neoliberalism, they offer Ong’s (2007) explanation, which also serves as a useful framing of the term for this section of this chapter:

Neoliberalism is cast as an entity, a unified state apparatus totally dedicated to the interests of unregulated markets. There is a suggestion of a standard neoliberal state, one that combines neoliberal institutions and liberal democracy . . . These are models of serial repetition based on comparing units of equivalents . . . Neoliberalism is viewed as a dominant structural condition that projects totalizing social change across a nation (another big N concept). (Ong, 2007, p. 4)

Thus, neoliberalism, at least as a keyword, signifies, at least, privatization, commercialization, etc., or a “market-driven policy assemblage” (Rowe et al., 2019, p. 156).

There is now a fairly deep pool of literature on the expansion of market logics in education. The market logic is an ideal type of the logic related to the market institutional order (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Characteristics of this logic include a strategic interest in increasing efficiency and profit and legitimacy derived from value obtained through return on investment (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). In 1999, Thornton and Ocasio mapped market logics to publishing in higher education. Slaughter and Rhoades’ foundational text on *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy* was first published in 2004. Many studies since then have been framed in the context of market logics and academic capitalism.

Jessop (2018) suggests that there are five “analytically distinct and potentially overlapping stages” in the growth of academic capitalism. The very first stage is what Jessop calls the commercialization stage where education and research are produced for sale.

Examples include private tuition, fee-paying universities, distance learning, and commercial research. This stage involves various forms of simple commodity production that are not yet subject to the competitive pressures of profit-oriented, market-mediated capitalist production to reduce the socially necessary labor time for production and the turnover time of capital. Even in this early stage, students become sought-after mobile customers, knowledge and creativity are commodified, and intellectual property rights are claimed and then retained or traded. (p. 105)

In other words, commercialization co-opts the ideal of education for the public good. In the distance education space, as Jessop suggests, courses and programs become commodities and potential students become sought-after mobile consumers. And, there are a host of other ways that the neoliberal values drive the distance education train. Core educational functions are outsourced to private, for-profit entities under the guise of “public-private partnerships.” We see this in the K-12 sector when local education agencies partner with private entities such as K-12, Inc. to run full-time virtual schools. In their study of blended learning (BL), Grimaldi and Ball (2019) “. . . show how BL and digital technologies are being enacted as part of an assemblage that crystalizes the conditions of possibility for the neoliberalisation of the experience of education” (p. 18). This assemblage “remakes the world of education, and learning specifically, in the form of an economic game, mediating and softening neoliberalism” (Grimaldi & Ball, 2019) in a way that purports to be about care and agency, but “. . . which looks, ultimately to the market for its answers” (Mitchell & Lizotte, 2014, 89).

In higher education, universities partner with for-profit online program management (OPM) companies for a range of services including marketing and instructional design, resulting in what Carey (2019) refers to as “the creeping capitalist takeover of higher education.” Also in higher education, fully online programs are often built on the back of contingent labor in order to cut costs. And, universities craft intellectual property policies that frame online courses and the artifacts contained within them as commodities that are packaged and transferrable between instructors. As university administrators ask the question of who “owns” an online course, they invoke the language of neoliberalism and commercialization. This is the kind of “language slip” indicative of institutional illogics.

## **Technological Solutionism and Distance Education**

Nicoll (2016) points out how, in the field of distance education, neoliberal values overlap with shared fantasies about technology as a means to solve big societal problems.

The common thread throughout these studies is the relationship between the growth of the market logic and field-level change. Supporters of online education are advocating for change because of their desire to bring efficiency to teaching, what they perceive as a very inefficient institution as seen through the lens of the market logic. The benefit of framing their arguments for online education in this way is that the market logic aligns

with other, related societal beliefs, such as technology as the means of solving society's problems . . . This helps administrators and external stakeholders, already in a privileged position of power, to appeal to broader society as evaluators of legitimacy. (Nicoll, 2016, p. 100)

Morozov (2013) coined the term “technological solutionism” to refer to the tendency to see technology as a simple answer to questions that have not even been fully asked. Morozov refers to a number of examples, including the use of analytics and the quantified self-movement. He does not use any education-specific examples, but it is not a stretch to see how “internet centrism” and “solutionism” have individually and collectively permeated the policy ecology of education across the lifespan. There is a strong argument to be made that the internet has, in fact, transformed a significant number of aspects of education.

The solutionism part of Morozov's argument, though, is where the educational system, and the educational technology community, is most guilty. Solutionism argues that focusing on solutions constrains our ability to think critically about the nature of the problems they are supposed to solve. Anyone who has worked in the educational technology space for any length of time has experienced the barrage of emails, promotions, advertisements, etc. from vendors all pushing a solution, often to a problem that is not even a problem. Riffing on the old saying about hammers and nails, to an educational technology solution-provider, everything looks like a problem.

Distance education is, too often, viewed by educational policymakers as an internet-centric solution to a problem or set of problems that are not always so clear. Where the state disinvests in public higher education, individual institutions look to fill those revenue gaps by pursuing new tuition dollars from new students who may not have seen higher education as an option before. In other words, the problem is one of lower state support, but instead of advocacy and making the case for at least stemming the tide in disinvestment, the internet, or distance education, is seen as one of many solutions to the problem.

Even within the field and practice of distance education, there is a tendency towards technological solutionism. For example, email listserv discussions, conferences, and meetings dedicated to distance education are sometimes dominated by discussions around issues like student authentication and cheating. One oft-asked question in the field of distance education is: “How do we know who is submitting the work or taking tests when we do not see or know our students?” The solution is almost always some form of technology. Learning management systems (LMS) in which online courseware resides now have “lockdown” browser functions that purport to prevent students from doing anything else in the Web browser while a student is taking an exam. Also, vendors offer proctoring solutions that include software that works with webcams so that students taking exams are automatically watched and/or recorded. The artificial-intelligence powered chatbot as an automated student service provider is another contemporary effort to use technology to solve what is really a human problem. This kind of offloading of solutions to technology is at the heart of technological solutionism and is very



much a shared fantasy among those advocating for the scaling of distance education in higher education.

## Credentialism and Distance Education

In the same way that educational policymakers increasingly choose to offload core teaching and learning functions to Web-based technologies, we see an increasing offloading of the cost burden of education to students. This is part of what Cottom (2017) writes about with respect to the for-profit education sector. We have long been told and convinced that we must have a credential for quality work. That credential, that signaling mechanism, is very often some kind of formal degree from a formal institution of higher education. However, the idea that employees must bear the burden of financing that education is now prevalent and “a historical peculiarity.” “To be competitive we are all told that we have to pursue and pay for credentials over our entire working careers.” This is credentialism.

Bills and Brown (2011) suggest that there are at least three conceptions of credentialism. Credentialist hiring is about an occupational hierarchy built around educational qualifications. Credential inflation is where the expectations for educational requirements for jobs continually and unexplainably rise. Finally, there is “credentialism as non-linear wage returns to schooling;” the idea that “given levels of schooling are rewarded beyond their contribution to marginal productivity” (p. 2).

One of the foundational assumptions of education is formal degrees as exclusive or ideal signaling mechanisms to employers. Furthermore, this assumption very much undergirds efforts to expand distance education. The thinking goes that higher education is inextricably linked to the workforce and if more people had more degrees, then our workforce and economy would be strengthened. And, distance education is a means to advance the degree completion agenda.

But what happens if and when credentialist hiring and credential inflation go away? What happens if we enter an era of credential deflation? What if, to be an expert in high-demand areas such as cybersecurity does not mean one needs a graduate degree, or even an undergraduate degree for that matter? What happens when a critical mass of employers decide that they can train employees on their own, in-house? What happens when, as a society, we disavow ourselves of the assumptions underlying credentialism?

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## Conclusion and Reflections

... conflicts which escalate into realignment of coalitions and a redirection of policies, are reflections of ‘intrinsically unresolvable issues about... fundamental tensions inherent in American society’, Because continued political conflicts about such issues are likely to destroy a society, a substitution of conflicts takes place around a different mix of issues which promises a future solution to the problems posed by irreconcilable tensions. But precisely because they are irreconcilable, at least within the limits of their current



circumstances and technology, the new mix of issues and related ideas provides an illusion of solving the old conflicts. (Iannaccone, 1988, p. 58)

Within the policy arena of distance education, at all levels of education, conflicting values have caused coalitions to form and align. Thus, we can say that this reflects “intrinsically unresolvable issues about. . . fundamental tensions inherent in American society.” In the case of distance education, these tensions are as fundamental as the very purpose of education and questions over who should be served by the public educational system. As a result, we get a substitution of conflicts around a different set of issues which promise a future solution to those fundamental tensions. But, per Iannaccone (1988), the new mix of issues and related ideas provides an illusion of solving the old conflicts.

As part of her confirmation process, Betsy DeVos, the current United States Secretary of Education, wrote to Senator Patty Murray “High quality virtual charter schools provide valuable options to families, particularly those who live in rural areas where brick-and-mortar schools might not have the capacity to provide the range of courses or other educational experiences for students.” In other words, in response to a conflict over how to better serve schoolchildren in certain parts of the country, DeVos looked to distance education, despite the mounting and consistent evidence that distance education does not serve K-12 students well. Thus, we might say that DeVos’ valued solution would provide an illusion of solving an old conflict (inequitable educational resource distribution in poor, rural areas).

Like DeVos, educational policymakers and stakeholders at all levels make illusory assertions or value statements about distance education that dominate the policy discourse; statements about access, cost, and quality. Unconsciously, though, they are driven by a set of shared fantasies related to neoliberalism, technological solutionism, and credentialism. This tangled web of values causes a discontinuity in the discourse and policy communities resulting in value conflicts and a political quagmire. This, in the end, prevents us from moving forward and considering the affordances of the modern internet for achieving our shared values.

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## **Coda: Remote Learning and the Covid-19 Pandemic**

This chapter was written during the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when students at all levels of education across the globe were forced into emergency virtual learning experiences. In the United States, 6–8 months into the pandemic, some students returned to face-to-face learning, but most are still learning from a distance. The near- and long-term effects of these virtual learning experiences are still to be determined, but early returns indicate that opinions are forming around prior biases and values. That is, while some educators and students have come to see the value of distance education, confirmation bias has shown its strength.

It may be that new, additional distance education opportunities emerge post-pandemic in both K-12 and higher education. The likelihood of that happening is not clear. What is clear, though, is that the necessary pivot to remote teaching and

learning has shined a bright light in significant inequities in our society and our education system. For example, too many students lack sufficient computer and internet access to be able to meaningfully participate in distance education. Policymakers and school leaders have worked hard to bridge some of these gaps, purchasing laptops and WiFi devices for students in need. Additionally, the national dialogue about treating broadband internet access as a right or even a public utility has reemerged in the wake of the pivot to remote teaching and learning. In other words, the policy arena and policy dialogue are dominated by fixes to the problem of digital inequity.

However, it is not clear that we have properly framed the problem that many people see only as an access problem.

Neither digital education nor broadband access alone can promote a more equitable society. Rather, it is the critical engagement by and with individuals and groups on issues of social importance and worth... and the role of new information technologies in fostering this critical engagement and mobilization that can lead to concrete changes that improve the lives and working conditions of marginalized individuals and communities. (Bach, Wolfson, & Crowell, 2018, p. 36)

Our political discourse around distance education should be focused on the root causes of any digital inequity or access issues. Our discourse should be laden with value statements focused on improving the lives of marginalized people beyond just providing computers and internet access.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Issues and Decision Points with Online Leadership Preparation](#)
- ▶ [Neoliberalism, Education Policy, and Leadership Observations](#)
- ▶ [Towards Ubiquitous Learning in a Transnational Educational System](#)

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# Social Justice Leadership: Disrupting Power, Oppression, and Uplifting Marginalized Communities

63

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## Abstract

This analysis uncovers the roots of social justice leadership in the field of educational leadership. Social justice leadership intentionally seeks to disrupt power and systemic inequities rooted in oppression, discrimination, and prejudice. Specific attention is placed on understanding key terms, such as social justice, power, and oppression. Prominent theories and frameworks to social justice are also explained, such as intersectionality, critical theory, critical race theory, anti-racism, feminist theory, and queer theory. The chapter concludes with reflections on social justice and implications for the future of educational leadership for social justice.

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**Keywords**

Social justice leadership · Educational leadership · Power · Oppression · Intersectionality

**The Field of Memory**

Social justice is primarily attributed to early religious thought (Burke, 2010), and as Bogotch (2000) reminds readers, the “context of social justice” has been discussed for over 2000 years. Plato, Aristotle, Marx, Locke, and Aquinas all worked to untangle notions of justice (Turhan, 2010). These early thinkers focused on a communitarian approach to social justice, which focused on “principles of deserve (e.g., what is deserved), need (e.g., what is required), and equality (e.g., what is equivalent)” (Turhan, 2010, p. 1358). The field of education moves away from these early conceptualizations of social justice to center justice and equity for all students. In particular, those who are historically marginalized (e.g., People of Color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary [LGBTQ+]; students with disabilities; immigrant and undocumented students; emergent bilinguals; students of low-socio-economic backgrounds; and religious minorities; among others).

Traditionally, educational leadership for social justice is driven by notions of fairness, equality, and democracy. Social justice theories in education draw from the thoughts of John Dewey (1859–1952) and John Rawls (1921–2002). In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey focused on equality of opportunity in a democratic society and the opportunity for the “pursuit of happiness” (Weitz, 1993). Rawls (1971) *A Theory of Justice* focuses on equality of opportunity and redistribution of resources. Weitz (1993) untangles the works of Dewey (1916) and Rawls (1971) to contextualize equality and liberty within the field of education. According to Weitz (1993), fairness and justice were contemplated in the eighteenth century, within the frame of fairness. At that time, it was revolutionary to believe that “all do not have the same quality of freedom when some are advantaged, while others are encumbered at birth merely by virtue of their social class” (Weitz, 1993, p. 422). Liberty and equality were foundational to a democratic society and meant that one could pursue their destinies regardless of social class. Dewey furthers this notion of democracy and equality in education. For Dewey, equality means that all individuals equally have the opportunity for self-fulfillment. Young (1990) builds on democracy and social justice and posits that “democracy is both an element and condition of social justice” (p. 91). Rawls (1971) Theory of Justice is heavily focused on the distribution of goods and individual natural abilities. Rawls justice as fairness has been critiqued to be limited (Papastephanou, 2005), yet its contributions to understanding justice and fairness are evident.

**The Field of Presence**

Theories of social justice are undergirded by the notions of equality put forth by Dewey and Rawls. Social justice in educational leadership or social justice leadership moves beyond fairness to consider how educators can advocate for equity and justice while interrogating resources and power distributions. It is

often assumed that equality provides for equal opportunity to achieve one's goals. Social justice leadership challenges that assumption and argues that equality does not consider how power dynamics influence opportunity or advocate for forms of inclusion. More so, the hope for an equal society drives social justice leaders to question, why is it that in a society that claims "equal opportunity," injustices continue to be practiced? In educational leadership, social justice theories exist because society is unequal, and access to equitable educational opportunities for historically marginalized communities is limited. Inequities persist in systemic ways through schooling and policy. Educational leadership for social justice commits to disrupting inequality in practice and policy and advocating for justice, equity, and social change for all students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities.

Literature in social justice leadership exemplifies that at the heart of social justice is an emphasis on moral values, justice, respect, care, and equity (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Social justice leadership can be embodied by individual leaders (Theoharris, 2008) or be a system-wide approach that aims for a cultural shift in school-wide/district-wide changes using a social justice framework (Capper & Young, 2014). Capper and Young (2014) highlight the importance of social justice leadership as a system-wide approach instead of having a single individual do social justice work. While the individual might be effective in advancing social justice, only having one individual promoting equity and justice might not be a sustainable practice for systemic change. Social justice leadership is coupled with action and advocating for historically marginalized communities by linking theory to practice and tackling structural inequities.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The theory of social justice is derived from theology and philosophy (Burke, 2010) and developed into many other fields. Educational leadership for social justice is often coupled with several theories that originated in other disciplines. Scholars note that social justice leadership works well with several theories. Social justice issues are rooted in historical, social, and political factors and target intersecting identity markers, such as race, gender, class, dis/ability, immigration status, language, and many more. Literature highlights that educational leadership for social justice is often accompanied by other theories and frameworks such as Critical Race Theory (CRT; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Parker & Stovall, 2004) or Queer Theory (Duarte, 2020; Lugg, 2006), and anti-racist educational leadership and policy (Diem & Welton, 2020).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

There have been several discontinuities and ruptures over time in the field of educational leadership for social justice. North (2006) builds on the conceptualization put forth by Sturman (1997), which warns that the term social justice, increasingly used in the field of educational leadership, has become a "catchphrase" that often ignores the social, cultural, economic, and political backdrops to the meaning of social justice. Dantley and Green (2015) argue that "a diluted and homogenized rendition of social justice has seeped into the discourse and practice, thus positioning

social justice leadership to be reradicalized” (p. 820). Dantley and Green urge the field and educational leadership preparation programs to be radical about social justice and prepare leaders to promote social justice in their practice and research.

During her acceptance speech for the Social Justice in Education Award at the American Education Research Association (AERA) conference, Ladson-Billings shares that the term social justice does not fully embrace all the injustices that manifest within the world, the nation, and the field of education:

I fear that social justice has become a kind of buzzword that we use to suggest that we are serious about confronting disparity, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of human asymmetry and the lack of equity and equality (2015).

She adds to the argument that the term social justice has become an empty buzzword that lacks depth and clarity of what it stands for. Scholars like Dantley and Green (2015), Ladson-Billings (2015), and North (2006) push the field to be aware of how social justice has, over time, lost its radical meaning. Historically, the meaning for the term seeped in care, respect, fairness, equality, and equity for all communities, including those with marginalized intersecting identities. It is critical to move beyond social justice leadership as a “catchphrase” and exercise its once-radical roots to challenge social, historical, and political oppressions toward historically marginalized communities. To move away from social justice as an empty buzzword, social justice must be coupled with action; one must do social justice to uphold equity and justice for all communities.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Social justice leaders focus on reducing or eradicating social, political, educational, and economic inequities perpetuated through schooling or policy by focusing on institutional policies and practices (Tillman, 2002). Social justice leadership “investigates and poses solutions for issues that generate and reproduce societal inequities” (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). The critical assumptions outline that while social justice leadership is always evolving and is a continuous struggle, with commitment, social justice leaders can implement strategies to disrupt social injustice. To achieve this, educators must understand the social, historical, and political roots of social injustices and how they intersect in historically marginalized students’ lives. Therefore, another assumption is that educational leaders for social justice understand intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and how identity intersects with power structures and disproportionately marginalizes specific communities through systemic oppression.

Another critical assumption is that Bogotch (2002) acknowledges that educational leadership cannot be separated from social justice. Social justice – as an educational intervention – he argues, “is a continuously relevant topic for every era” (p. 3). With this in mind, one concrete definition of social justice cannot exist as social justice issues are consistently developing. As time moves forward and our society changes, various social issues become more prevalent, pushing the need to reevaluate and reposition social justice efforts and connect them with other theories and frameworks to uncover manifestations of injustice.



Another critical assumption is that educational leadership preparation programs take on training and sustaining leaders for social justice. To show a commitment to the theme of social justice, it must thread through all courses, programming, and research and practice of faculty to help future leaders grapple with notions of power and privilege (Dantley & Green, 2015). While preparation programs often interweave social justice in courses and programming, it should not only be relegated to a few courses but rather be discussed in each course as social justice issues exist in multiple educational arenas.

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## Introduction

This chapter explores the conceptualization of educational leadership for social justice and essential terms and theories that are frequently coupled with the theory and practice. Terms explored include power, discrimination, and oppression. Several critical theories inform social justice efforts. These theories and frameworks are discussed in this chapter: intersectionality, critical race theory, anti-racism, feminism, and queer theory.

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## Social Justice in Education

Social justice in education intentionally seeks to disrupt power and inequities rooted in oppression, discrimination, and prejudice (Marshall, Gerstl-Pepin, & Johnson, 2020). Conceptualizing educational leadership for social justice is complex, as it embraces multiple theories and frameworks and is consistently evolving. Many do not specifically utilize the term “social justice,” yet are categorized as part of a social justice agenda due to their commitment to critical dialogue and diverse theoretical perspectives (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). A social justice agenda acknowledges that inequities are prominent in institutions structured to maintain the status quo and systemically disadvantaged students of historically marginalized backgrounds. Social justice leaders would argue that educational systems uphold systemic inequities through policy, practices, curriculum, and more.

An ideological belief in US democracy is that equality and justice exist and that rewards are attributed to individuals through their own merit. The myth of meritocracy posits that as long as one works hard, they will succeed. This is considered a myth as it ignores the social, historical, and political structures that systematically creates barriers and widens opportunity gaps for historically marginalized communities. This belief is so ingrained in US ideologies that learning about social justice issues which uncover inequality and disrupt power and privilege is often faced with resistance (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Marshall and Oliva (2010) state that it is difficult to understand that institutions, such as schools, continue to perpetuate injustices, albeit unconsciously. Learning about these concepts is often perceived as a direct challenge to an inherent ideology that the United States is the land of equal opportunity. Indeed, social justice is a contested topic (Kretchmar, 2019; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Being an educational leader for social justice comes from resistance to

dominant ideologies and power structures that sustain oppression and discount social justice efforts. To be an educational leader for social justice, one must understand systemic, historical, social, and political practices that undergird institutional and individual oppressions in educational settings.

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## Critical Theory, Power, Discrimination, and Oppression

Social justice is grounded in critical theory, which deconstructs social stratification, power, and oppression. Rooted in critical theory is the questioning and critiquing of social inequalities, with the inherent belief that society should work towards equality. Critical theory argues that society remains stratified, institutions perpetuate marginalization of specific communities and maintained through the distribution of resources and power structures (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Critical theory began in the early twentieth century. This work is referred to as “The Frankfurt School,” as initial conceptualizations of critical theory began in the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Similar to the Frankfurt School, critical theories also began increasing in France around the same period. In the United States, critical theory movements can be understood as beginning in the 1960s, with the civil rights movements, which began the mainstream attention towards naming individual and systemic nature of power and oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Young, 1990).

Nonetheless, understanding the fluidity of where and how systemic power and oppression persist in education continues to perplex educational researchers and leaders today – especially since schools are where equality is understood to exist. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) write, “[t]he paradox of educational inequality is that schools remain among the few institutions that produce opportunities to contest structural inequalities” (p. 43). Having a foundational understanding of critical theory and systemic inequities is crucial for social justice leaders to provide the tools necessary to see where inequities exist and combat them.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) provide useful ways for thinking about concepts, such as power, discrimination, and oppression. Sensoy and DiAngelo draw from Foucault’s (1977) theory of power and its reproduction in a prison panopticon to describe power. Foucault describes a prison panopticon as a central tower that would allow a guard to observe the prisoners. However, the prisoners could not see when the guard was observing – knowing that the guard could potentially be observing spurred the prisoners to behave in ways that would not cause any penalty. Foucault uses this metaphor as an example of how power is “transmitted, normalized, and internalized through social institutions... and how these institutions socialize us into compliance with norms that serve controlling group interests” (p. 76). The decisions behind the panopticon design were made by people who held power and wanted to enforce their power over the prisoners. In this way, they held institutional and political power and could enforce that power unto others. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) explain further that Foucault describes power as not fixed and as a function that could be negotiated or challenged to create more equitable societies.

Young (1990) describes that power, oppression, and domination are all structural phenomenon and are systematically reproduced in economic, political, and cultural institutions. Young (1990) also draws from Foucault (1977). She writes:

...to understand the meaning and operation of power in modern society we must look beyond the model of power as “sovereignty,” a dyadic relation of ruler and subject, and instead analyze the exercise of power as the effect of often liberal and “humane” practices of education, bureaucratic administration, production and distribution of consumer goods, and so on. The conscious actions of many individuals daily contribute to maintaining and reproducing oppression (p. 41–42).

Understanding how power is exercised within systems and structures can unfold how individual actors might maintain and reproduce oppression. There might be times the practice of power that creates a reproduction of oppression might be unbeknownst to the actor but only visible to the oppressed. Delpit (1988) writes, “those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often aware of its existence” (p. 282). Discrimination, prejudice, power, and oppression have become normalized and invisible. Without a critical approach to deconstructing marginalization or understanding how oppression and power permeate institutional structures, these dominant ideologies are replicated by educators, even well-intentioned educators.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) define oppression as “the prejudice and discrimination of one social group to another backed by institutional power” (p. 62). They further describe that oppression can occur because of its connections to historical, social, economic, political, and institutional power. Oppression can manifest as ableism, anti-Blackness, anti-Semitism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, racism, sexism, Sinophobia, and xenophobia, among others. They clarify that the difference between prejudice and discrimination from oppression is that prejudice and discrimination are a phenomenon that happen without the backing of power. In comparison, oppression has the backing of “legal authority, and historical, social and institutional power” (p. 62). This is not to say that discrimination and prejudice are not hurtful and do not have implications on social justice efforts. As noted by Young (1990), individual actions of prejudice and discrimination can contribute to systemic oppression, even when these actions are unconscious or by well-meaning actors.

Critical theory functions to disrupt systemic forms of power, oppression, prejudice, and discrimination. With a theoretical understanding of power, oppression, prejudice, and discrimination, educational leaders for social justice can apply it to their practice to uncover injustices and engage in practices and scholarship that lead classrooms, schools, and communities toward a more just educational experience.

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## Conceptualizing Educational Leadership for Social Justice

The concept of educational leadership for social justice has expanded over time. Whereas educational leaders compose of school leaders and administrators, and faculty in educational leadership programs, social justice leaders are educational

leaders who uphold a social justice agenda in research and practice. Marshall et al. (2020) describe that social justice in education is both a process and a goal. There is a process to be social justice oriented, which includes action to achieve social justice agendas' goals. Social justice leaders are action-oriented by asking critical questions that center historically marginalized communities and disrupt the status quo by working toward equity and justice. Lewis (2016) describes three forms of justice. First, there is distributive justice, which focuses on economic distribution. There is also a cultural distribution that emphasizes respect for all and associational justice, which hones in on members of historically marginalized communities. Lewis writes that social justice in education moves beyond these previous conceptualized visions of justice and includes the sociohistorical and sociopolitical influences on identity. This approach allows for social justice leaders to examine areas of oppression, their root causes, and how these disproportionately affect communities.

Social justice in education comprises three key aspects: leadership for social justice, moral transformative leadership, and social justice praxis (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Dantley and Tillman (2010) assert that leadership for social justice "interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness" (p. 19). Moral transformative leadership, which derives from critical theory, deconstructs power and abuses of power in institutional settings; it also brings forward how school leaders' practices can cause and reproduce inequities. Lastly, social justice praxis can be used to enhance the field of social justice with conference presentations, scholarly articles, pedagogical methods, and more (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). With these three key components of social justice in education, the authors bring together principles of democracy and equity so that the social justice agenda becomes part of everyday practice for school leaders.

This conceptualization of leadership for social justice highlight how ultimately, "leaders for social justice take the moral position to critically deconstruct as well as to reconstruct schools in a fashion that demands schools be sites for the equitable treatment of all students" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 27). In this way, it takes a commitment to practice social justice to create schools as sites for equity and opportunity for all students, particularly students of historically marginalized backgrounds, amid policies and practices that perpetuate oppression and other disadvantages that undergird school systems.

Definitions of educational leadership for social justice vary across scholars and have multiple operationalizations from theory to practice. While social justice focuses on equity, inclusion, and cultural diversity, it primarily seeks to rectify "the deep roots of injustice emanating from competitive market forces, economic policies, political practices, and traditions that maintain elite privilege" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 5). Theoharris (2007, 2008) conceptualizes leadership amid individual actors to focus on how individuals can inform larger social justice efforts in school and leadership settings. Theoharris (2008) defines social justice leaders as principals who "advocate, lead, and keep the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalized and currently marginalized conditions in

the United States” (p. 5). Social justice leaders are faced with challenges ingrained into systems and structures.

For social justice to be advanced, systemic culture shifts need to happen among those in power (Marshall et al., 2020). Therefore if only one person is advancing a social justice agenda, systemic change is unlikely as inequity is still an ingrained cultural practice. Collaboration and the co-creation of equitable, just, and inclusive practices can help implement and sustain social justice leadership (Capper & Young, 2014; Theoharris & Causton, 2014). It is essential also to be mindful of the efforts, dedication, and resistance it takes to contribute to social justice agendas. In light of the systemic nature of power and oppression and contradicting educational policies that further disenfranchise students, advancing social justice leadership can be exhausting and feel never-ending. To uphold social justice as a leader is to engage in efforts that emphasize justice, inclusion, equity, moral values, care, and respect (Dantley & Tillman, 2010), for all groups, including historically marginalized communities, while disrupting power structures.

Educational leaders for social justice play important roles in leadership and policy. Power and values undergird educational policy and politics and uphold the status quo (Marshall et al., 2020). Marshall et al. (2020) argue that educational leaders for social justice can make schools more equitable by centering justice to influence schools’ politics and policies. According to Marshall et al. (2020), social justice centered approaches to policy “suggests that conceptions of educational politics require an understanding of how inequitable outcomes, processes, and power relations manifest and operate” (p. 5). As leaders for social justice, educators need to be critical of how power structures unfold and marginalize students’ policy and politics. Policies and practices that are rooted in the free-market enterprise have influenced educational policy and standards. Advocates for social justice in education uncover how such ideologies and practices contradict social justice efforts and, in many ways, continue to perpetuate injustice (Diem & Welton, 2020). Some argue that amidst neoliberal or market-driven education policies, as well as contradictory policies, it becomes exceedingly difficult to advance a social justice agenda (Capper & Young, 2014; Marshall et al., 2020).

The responsibility of preparing social justice leaders to work among contradictory policies and practices while upholding a social justice agenda falls onto preparation programs that support educational leaders in the field. Preparation programs must move beyond social justice rhetoric and interweave social justice in all class curriculum to equip leaders “to disrupt inequitable power relations and privilege in wise, strategic, and community-building ways” (Dantley & Green, 2015, p. 832). Additionally, Dantley and Green (2015) urge preparation programs to be accountable to their students and the communities they serve. They recommend having professional development opportunities, having one-on-one follow-ups with graduates, and collaborating on school and community projects that center social justice. Educational leadership must continuously heed the warnings from Dantley and Green (2015) and North (2006) – without commitment and intentionality, social justice efforts can be dismissed as a buzzword.

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## Privilege and Positionality in Educational Leadership for Social Justice

An important aspect of educational leadership for social justice is understanding one's privilege and positionality. To practice social justice is to center the community, students, and families to create more equitable educational opportunities. It is critical to be mindful of one's privilege and positionality, as these inform practice, how one's leadership is perceived, and how leaders understand the students' and families' experiences. Educational leadership research points to the fact that educational leaders and administrators often come from very different backgrounds in the communities they serve. Whereas the demographics of schools are becoming increasingly racially diverse (Diem & Welton, 2020), school leaders and administrators' demographics remain predominantly white and male (Marshall et al., 2020). In the call to action to be a social justice leader, one must also reflect on their positionality and interrogate their privileges, biases, and misconceptions (Marshall et al., 2020) to understand their power dynamics in relation to the community they serve and the structural educational system.

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## Intersectionality and Social Justice

In 1989 Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality. She argued that in race discrimination cases, Black women are "theoretically erased" as the law only accounts for discrimination based on race or sex, ignoring the intersection of minoritized identities. Drawing from critical race theory and Black feminist theories and initially introduced in law, the term is now in several academic fields. As a theory, intersectionality breaks down how identities mutually shape each other and how they connect to sociohistorical and sociopolitical power relations and structures of domination (Harris & Patton, 2019). When not used correctly, intersectionality, like social justice, becomes a buzzword and can easily undo its foundational social justice agenda. Harris and Patton (2019) advocate that a pivotal aspect of using intersectionality to advance social justice agendas is to ensure that the definition of the theory embraces its original roots and pays attention to intersections of identity with sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural structural forms of domination.

Collins and Bilge (2016) explain how intersectionality as an analytical tool can address the complexities of educational equity. They write that "social inequality lies neither solely in school structures nor in the cultural attributes of students, but rather in the interaction between the two" (p. 164). Educational leadership for social justice embraces that issues of social justice are not singular or isolated issues. As noted throughout this chapter, social justice issues often target people of historically marginalized backgrounds. Harris and Patton (2019) remind us that intersectionality moves beyond identity. To maintain social justice and intersectionality's radical roots, we must account for power structures that maintain and uphold systemic injustices. Historically marginalized students' identities and lived experiences do not exist in solitude and are embedded within sociohistorical, sociocultural, and

sociopolitical forms of power and oppression. Social justice agendas must account for how identities and structures of power and domination overlap and intersect to inform how systemic inequities persist in historically marginalized students' educational experiences.

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## Social Justice Leadership and Complimenting Fields

Given that educational leadership for social justice is broad and focuses on intersecting identities and forms of power and marginalization, it is often coupled with other theories or frameworks for analysis. Some of the frameworks that supplement a social justice agenda are anti-racist theories, critical race theory (CRT), feminist theories, and queer theories. Using these frameworks provides social justice leaders and researchers further tools to draw from as they analyze cases, research, and engage in the practice.

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## Anti-racist Theories in Education

Anti-racism has an explicit focus on dismantling racism and challenging the field of education to be actively anti-racist in pedagogy practice (Kishimoto, 2018), leadership (Diem, Carpenter, & Lewis-Durham, 2019; Gooden & Dantley, 2012), and policy (Diem & Welton, 2020). Drawing from Blakeney (2005) and Bonnet (2000), Diem and Welton (2020) describe anti-racism as “the system of thoughts and practices that aim to confront and eradicate racism as well as ideologies and practices that promote equality for racial and ethnic groups” (p. 3). In scholarship in education, anti-racism is mostly centered on teacher education with limited studies in educational leadership and policy (Diem & Welton, 2020). Studies in anti-racism in educational leadership and policy are increasing, with attention to leader preparation programs and engagement in anti-racist efforts (Diem & Welton, 2020).

Important to anti-racist research in education is having a working definition of whiteness and anti-Blackness. Whereas whiteness is a racial identity, it exists within a sociohistorical and sociopolitical context that makes it a privileged and dominant racial identity (Ansley, 1997). Whiteness and white supremacy are often used interchangeably. The definitions of whiteness also bring forward the systemic nature of whiteness as superior, thereby maintaining social, economic, and political power among white communities (Ansley, 1997; DiAngelo, 2011). The concept of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) highlights that when whiteness and white supremacy are interrogated as systems of power, white individuals often feel victimized and might respond emotionally, defensive, and angry. Whiteness and white supremacy as institutional power structures focus on systems, not individual people, that does not take away from the influence of white privilege. There continues to be contention when whiteness, white supremacy, or white fragility are studied, as there is resistance to recognizing and accepting its influence on systemic structures, in part, due to the notions of meritocracy, individualism, equality.



Critical understandings of how historical racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy have manifested to maintain one group as socially, economically, and politically superior to others validates the need for social justice and anti-racist work that interrupts anti-Blackness. Anti-Blackness strategically deconstructs racialized inequities and violence toward Black communities (Dumas & Ross, 2016). Dumas and Ross (2016) posit the necessity to theorize Blackness and “the specificity of anti-blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived-experience of social suffering and resistance” (p. 416) and how Blackness is despised and “in opposition to all that is pure, human(e), and White” (p. 417). Anti-racist educational leaders for social justice are in positions to respond and contest anti-Black school policies and practices (Diem & Welton, 2020). Both CRT and anti-racism are necessary lenses for analysis and praxis when engaging in social justice work. In particular, at the time of this writing, in 2020, the Black Lives Matter Movement and attention toward dismantling institutional racism and anti-racism have crucial implications for the field of education and educational leadership for social justice.

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## Critical Race Theory

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced Critical Race Theory to the field of education. Since then, it has been used as a toolkit to analyze access, curriculum, opportunity, pedagogy and practice, and policy, among others (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). CRT’s roots are in the legal field and explored by scholars, such as Bell (1980), Crenshaw (1989), Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993), and many more. Drawing from the legal field, ethnic studies, and sociology, CRT offers a conceptual and analytical toolbox to uncover racism in systems, laws, and policies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006). More so, it disrupts power structures and dominant ideologies that uphold white supremacy (Ansley, 1997) and how racism permeates educational institutions and policies (Gillborn, 2005). CRT brings forward the experiential knowledge of Communities of Color in educational settings and challenges dominant ideologies such as color-evasiveness (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2012), meritocracy (Park & Liu, 2014; Viesca, Schoepner Torres, Barnatt, & Piazza, 2013), and white supremacy (Gillborn, 2005).

CRT disentangles how racism in education continues to marginalize Students of Color and how white supremacy as a dominant ideology undergirds curriculum and policy practice (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). In CRT, white supremacy is understood as a set of political, economic, and cultural structures that sustain power and distribution of wealth and resources amongst one group (Ansley, 1997). This dominant ideology informs conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement in institutional, social, and political settings (Ansley, 1997).

CRT has multiple branches to analyze the experiences of racial and ethnic groups and how race and ethnicity intersect with other marginalized identities. Branches of CRT include AsianCrit (Museus & Ikitikar, 2013), BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016), LatCrit (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), and TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005). CRT



also informs Critical Race Feminism (Delgado Bernal, 2002), Critical Race Praxis (Lynn & Parker, 2006), and Disability Critical Race Theory or DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2012).

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## Feminist Theories

Feminist theories in education deconstruct the overlap of power, gender, and sex and the implications that constructed gendered identities have on educational policies, systems, and leadership (Marshall et al., 2020). Feminist theories, in particular, feminist theories written by Women of Color, bring forward the intersections of race, gender, power, and class (Collins, 1991; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983). These theories highlight how the marginalization, silencing, and erasure of Women of Color throughout history in various institutions, including academia, and in scholarship (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Sanders-Lawson, Smith-Campbell, & Benham, 2006). Before the 1970s, scholarship on educational leadership primarily excluded women and People of Color (Sanders-Lawson et al., 2006; Skrla & Young, 2003). Literature about women leaders was written by men and often through a gender-free position (Sanders-Lawson et al., 2006).

When analyzing early foundations or theorizations of social justice, the primary thinkers were white men (e.g., Plato, Dewey, Rawls, among others). Historically the voices and experiences of women, in particular Women of Color, have been excluded from the scholarship on educational leadership. Nevertheless, they have made and will continue to make invaluable contributions to social justice and education.

Feminist theories, such as Borderlands theory (Anzaldúa, 1987), acknowledge that oppressions are not singular; they are “fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on the context” (Cantú & Hurtado, 2012). Borderlands theory highlights multiple forms of oppression in social worlds (e.g., class, language, sexualities, cultures, and colonization) rooted in contradictory social systems. However, there is also resistance to these oppressions (Cantú & Hurtado, 2012). Borderlands theory brings forward the contradictions of what it means to navigate and live in “the borderlands,” or at the intersections of multiple social worlds and marginalized identities, particularly in a monolithic, monocultural, and monolingual culture. Some feminist theories include borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1991; hooks 1989; King, 1988), and Chicana Feminist Thought (Delgado Bernal, 1998; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Méndez-Morse, 2003), among others. Using feminist theories and Women of Color feminist theories can contribute to center gender, sex, race, class, disability, and more as units of analysis to “uncover institutional and cultural forms of gender discrimination and patriarchy” (Marshall et al., 2020, p. 19).

Feminist research in educational leadership has uncovered inequities toward women students and inequitable treatment toward women in leadership positions (Skrla & Young, 2003). There remains a need to utilize feminist methods in social

justice research and practice to continue working toward dismantling oppressions and its various manifestations. In 2020, gender is understood as a social construct, performed on a spectrum, and sex and gender are not synonymous (Marshall et al., 2020). It is crucial to use gendered and queer epistemologies or frameworks to illuminate how oppression rooted in gender, sex, and sexuality and other intersecting identities are prevalent in educational leadership.

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## Queer Theory

Heterosexism and heteronormativity function as power structures that sustain power among people perceived to be heterosexual. Heterosexism and heteronormativity are the belief that heterosexuality is normal or natural (Habarth, 2014). Heterosexism and heteronormativity exist in individual prejudices and structural laws, policies, and social practices that stigmatize and deny social membership and maintain privileges for people whose identity performance upholds heterosexual norms (Habarth, 2014). Heterosexism and heteronormativity are reinforced by homophobia and harassment toward LGBTQ+ individuals (Mayo, 2014).

There is no doubt that heteronormativity, heterosexism, transphobia, homophobia, and queer erasure continue to plague educational institutions. Students, staff, faculty and who are members of LGBTQ+ communities, or who identify as gender non-conforming, are marginalized and targeted (Koschorek & Slattery, 2010). Several scholars (Duarte, 2020; Lugg, 2006; Mayo, 2008; Rottman, 2006) unearth how students and educators from LGBTQ+ communities are targeted by sodomy laws (Lugg, 2006) and traditional practices in schools and educational policies that normalize heterosexism (Duarte, 2020) inadvertently erasing and silencing queer identities and the experiences of LGBTQ+ communities. In addition, scholarship shines a light on harassment, bullying, and other forms of prejudice and oppression faced by LGBTQ+ students (Koschorek & Slattery, 2010; Mayo, 2014). Despite the vast research unpacking the need to address LGBTQ+ issues, they are often left out of social justice professional developments (Jennings, 2012; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; O'Malley & Capper, 2015). Research highlights how some school leaders even show resistance toward no-cost LGBTQ+ focused professional development for fear of how the training will be perceived by the community, school board, and school personnel (Payne & Smith, 2018).

To address injustices that members of the LGBTQ+ community face, educational researchers point to educational leadership for social justice. “[S]exual orientation and gender identity is part of the responsibility of a social justice leader and reflection on one’s personal location within cis/heteronormativity and heterosexism may be a useful tool for school leaders to address the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals” (Duarte, 2020). This work should not only be advanced by LGBTQ+ individuals (Duarte, 2020; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006). Instead, disrupting heterosexism, heteronormativity, homophobia, transphobia, and more belongs to all educational leaders for social justice.

## Conclusion and Reflections

Issues of social justice and equity have always been timely and urgent. Yet, only recently are they at the forefront of academic, media, and political concerns. In the current era, proponents of social justice are facing juxtaposed climates. On the one hand, movements across the country have been calling for anti-racism, dismantling anti-Blackness and white supremacy. On the other hand, educators operate within a set of policies and ideologies that often contradict or minimize social justice agendas (Capper & Young, 2014; Marshall et al., 2020). Historically, social justice concerns have been addressed by band-aid policies and practices that do not eradicate the root cause of the issue, allowing the pervasiveness of oppression to continue. To achieve social justice, one must pay attention to and work toward eradicating the root causes of inequities, which are grounded in power, oppression, and white supremacy. Bogotch (2000) highlights the social justice agenda is always evolving, and contemporary issues arise as systems, structures, policy, and practice are reevaluated.

Educational leadership for social justice embraces several critical theories that center on overlapping oppressions, which allow for social justice agendas to address multiple injustices and unpack power structures. The field of educational leadership for social justice continues to develop and challenge power structures amidst national movements calling for anti-racism and a redistribution of funds into education, health care, and other social services. The Black Lives Matter Movement and the global pandemic of COVID-19 highlight the urgency of social justice in education to work toward equity, democracy, and social justice. The year 2020 will provide significant data points and justifications to continue growing the field and scaffolding emerging educational leaders for social justice.

Indeed, now is an impeccable time to reflect on ways that social justice leaders can be mindful of how the global pandemic affects the lives of historically marginalized communities. Educational leaders for social justice should lead with authenticity and intentionality to prevent what several scholars warn about social justice, that it can become an empty, de-radicalized, buzzword (Dantley & Green, 2015; North, 2006). In their book, Marshall et al. (2020) describe tools that educational leaders can use when centering justice in policy, yet their recommendations also fit all social justice leaders. They state that educational leaders who center on justice “work with the system but also attack it” (Marshall et al., 2020, p. 193). In this way, social justice leaders can leverage the tools available to them and work within the system. At the same time, be critical of the system as it replicates systemic injustices and oppression. Social justice leaders reject the status quo and are reflexive of how their own practices might unintentionally replicate marginalization. To be reflexive and mindful of one’s positionality and practice means moving away from comfort zones and challenging oneself to critique their own policies and practices. In a time like now where inequalities are reaping throughout the educational systems, embracing social justice leadership is a commitment to take action toward eradicating inequity and center historically marginalized communities.

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## Equity-Based Community Engagement and Service-Learning

Christine M. Cress and Stephanie T. Stokamer

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### Abstract

Connecting schools and colleges with the community through forms of civic engagement and service-learning is a strategy for leveraging learning, developing informed citizen-leaders, and creating locally empowered change. Educationally, outcomes include increased cognitive knowledge and affective skills, and correlate with student retention and graduation rates. Organizationally, teachers and faculty demonstrate increased teaching efficacy and scholarly productivity. Concurrent, partnering community agencies demonstrate increased capacity and outreach effectiveness in assisting vulnerable populations and addressing plaguing social, economic, educational, and environmental issues. However, inattention to sound pedagogical methodologies

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and ill-construed charity-minded approaches can miseducate students, undermine community assets, and reinforce systemic inequities and stereotypes. This chapter traces historical foundations, terminology, participation rates, research outcomes, high-impact educational practices, and contemporary challenges of community engagement and service-learning including critical reciprocity and solidarity. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the need for equity-based principles in guiding curricular and co-curricular community engagement pedagogy, policies, and programs in helping to realize social justice.

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**Keywords**

Civic responsibility · Community engagement · Active participation in public life · Volunteerism · Service-learning · Community service-learning · Community-based learning · Community-based research · Engaged scholarship · Equity-centered engagement

**The Field of Memory**

Historically, forms of community engagement and service-learning were based on notions of charity both individually and organizationally. Individually, beliefs and motivations were guided by helping others, rescuing others, doing good for those less fortunate, and saving those who cannot help themselves. Organizationally, schools and colleges extended their resources (fiscal and human resources) to nonprofit and social service agencies as gestures of goodwill from the haves to the have-nots and as representations of power and privilege.

**The Field of Presence**

Whether co-curricular in nature (such as volunteer programs) or curricular in format (such as intentional integration of service-learning into an academic course), community engagement at schools and colleges – and their respective teachers and faculty – tend to embrace concepts of community reciprocity and educational solidarity that rely upon mutually defined goals, collectively articulated programs and processes, and iterative practices that integrate constructive reflection, communication, feedback, assessment, and revision.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Community engagement and service-learning is a merging of organizational leadership theory and educational psychology. Leaders and educators in schools and colleges are influenced and motivated to try new teaching and learning approaches dependent upon organizational cultural norms, human resource interactions, and symbolic and real rewards and benefits. Additionally, there are crossover influences from management, fiscal resources, and adaptive change theories both individually and organizationally including the disciplinary fields of school and administrative leadership and higher education leadership (inclusive of the student services

profession). Educationally, theories such as constructivism, epistemology (learning styles and multiple intelligences), critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, and specific academic discipline theory (in the case of integrating service-learning into particular courses) influence pedagogy (teaching strategies) including forms of assessment and scholarship.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Historical notions of charity as motivating the purpose of community engagement and service-learning have been replaced by concepts of solidarity that value communities as sources of knowledge, power, creativity, and capacity that should be partnered with in critical reciprocity in collectively attempting to realize mutual benefit. Community engagement and service-learning as a form of experiential learning has continued to be viewed as a novel educational approach for attending to multiple modalities of epistemological processing that advance understanding and empowerment. However, equitably inclusive pedagogical methods including intercultural preparation, critical reflection, epistemic justice, and community-centered assessment are key contemporary instructional design and educational engagement practices.

### **Critical Assumptions and Presuppositions**

The collective well-being of individuals and communities locally, nationally, and internationally is dependent upon mutually defined educational initiatives that engage teachers, faculty, and students cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally with the real challenges of contemporary life that demand expansive problem-solving and committed action within locally contextualized community solidarity, inclusivity, equity, and justice.

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## **Introduction**

Forms of community engagement and service-learning have been conducted for decades at schools and colleges as a democratically focused pedagogy for teaching civically related knowledge and skills through collaborative efforts to improve communities. The research outcomes of such experiences are quite substantial across student learning, community enhancement, and expansion of community-based disciplinary scholarship.

However, inattention to service-learning design and facilitation, lack of intercultural preparation, and failure to deconstruct systemic privilege imbalances have led to interactions that can denigrate community members, perpetuate power inequities, and prevent individuals and communities from capacity-building. As Baker-Boosamra, Guevara, and Balfour (2006) assert, “Educators must address the pitfalls of privilege that often go unexamined in relationships between groups of affluent university students and the underprivileged populations that service-learning programs traditionally seek to serve” (p. 479).

Scholars at the Creative Reaction Lab (2018) argue that societies – and thereby organizations, systems, policies, and programs – are a product of individual

decisions and designs. As such, if oppression, inequalities, and inequities are designed, then they can be redesigned. Thus, teachers, educators, and community leaders need to recognize their roles and common purposes as educational designers who can disrupt power and privilege and design for economic opportunity and cultural solidarity. Moreover, they have a responsibility to collaboratively co-create with others (especially those in the community) as “design allies” since their perspectives on inequities are key to identifying innovations that address equitable common purposes (Creative Reaction Lab, 2019).

Comparably, Astin (2016) argues that within schools and colleges, “smartness” all too often emphasizes academic excellence as the capacity for passing standardized tests rather than measuring and elevating one’s interpersonal capacities and emotional intelligence skills for effectively contributing to our communities. Astin (1999) has long asserted that educators should dispense with obsessing over grade point averages and instead cultivate and develop students’ “talents” through educational involvement such as service-learning and community engagement (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000).

This chapter traces historical foundations, terminology, participation rates, research outcomes, high-impact educational practices, and contemporary challenges of community engagement and service-learning including critical reciprocity and solidarity. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the need for equity-based principles in guiding curricular and co-curricular community engagement pedagogy, policies, and programs in helping to realize social justice.

## Foundations of Engagement and Service-Learning

John Dewey (1916) is perhaps the best-known early educator who argued that schools and colleges should connect educational content to the community in order for learning to have individual and collective relevance. Dewey believed the point of education to be the “intellectual, moral, and emotional growth of the individual and, consequently, the evolution of a democratic society” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845). As Giles and Eyler (1994) highlight, “For Dewey, pedagogy and epistemology were related – his theory of knowledge was related to and derived from his notions of citizenship and democracy” (p. 78).

From a similar perspective, Bowen (1977, p. 49) contended that “higher education should equip students to discover what is right in society as well as what is wrong” in order to become intellectually connected to their communities and to develop the skills and abilities to engage in positive social change. Bowen articulated civic competence as a primary goal of education.

## Definitions and Terminology

Civic engagement is “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation

to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes” (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). While not universal, countries in Europe, North America, and South America tend to hold inevitable that a thriving pluralist democratic society depends upon active participation of its citizens, characterized by informed deliberation and collaboration to address public problems and work toward common goals (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007).

The origin of the term civic is derived from the Latin *civicus* relating to city or town and *civis* meaning citizen. Likewise, Gottlieb and Robinson (2002) define the attitudinal precursor to civic engagement as having a sense of civic responsibility which is “active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good” (p. 16). Similarly, although not necessarily couched in democratic terminology, many countries in Africa and Asia tend to adhere to the corresponding belief that the inclusion of multiple voices in decision-making and problem-solving leads to thriving communities.

As well, most nations seem to understand that citizen participation alone is not sufficient for collective success. Rather, prosperous societies require citizens competent enough to engage effectively in the tasks of maintaining civil society and government (Dahl, 1992; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Thus, civic engagement of individuals requires knowledgeable as well as active participation in the affairs of community and concomitant attitudinal dedication toward socially-beneficial public purposes and outcomes.

Civic engagement as a concept is an overarching learning process and outcome that encompasses multiple forms including: volunteerism (which may also be called community service); service-learning classes (course-based civic engagement); community-based learning (including experiential activities and internships); and community-based research or engaged scholarship (undertaken by students as well as faculty) (Cress, Stokamer, & Kaufman, 2015).

Each of these educational methods usually begins initially as pedagogical approaches, teaching strategies, and inquiry paradigms for examining community issues. However, over time, teachers and students alike usually evolve their perspectives into more complex cognitive, affective, and behavioral avenues for critically understanding and addressing community challenges through experiences that intentionally examine, integrate, and reflect upon the symbiotic relationship between individual and community with respect to quality of life issues (Cress Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013). Therefore, the ultimate aim of civic engagement (no matter the instructional or research mode) is to bolster the socioeconomic, environmental, political, and physical health of individuals and groups within communities (local, national, and global).

Importantly, the phrase “learning through serving” is perhaps more educationally representative than service-learning in capturing the intents and purposes of such efforts, but the terminology is rather wieldy as a course designation. As such, both in the USA and internationally, service-learning is still the most frequently used and recognized phrase for course-based integrated community engagement.

Although not yet highly popular, some colleges have adopted the term community-engaged learning as a way to rectify any confusion over the term “service.”

Advocates for this terminology assert that the phraseology implies a more contextualized relationship with the community by engaging them in and with learning; as compared to notions of service that often connote charity work.

## **Civic Engagement and Education**

Education has long played a part in developing the civic competence needed to effectively engage in democratic processes (Dewey, 1916; Galston, 2001). Cogan (1999) argued that civic competencies “do not just occur naturally in people. They must be taught consciously through schooling to each new generation” (p. 52). Though the relative importance of the civic mission of educational institutions varies across institutional type and geographic region, preparing graduates for personal and professional lives as citizens has been the historical mission and goal of most schools, colleges, and universities.

Respectively, Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins (2002) remarked, “Engaged citizens are made, not born” (p. 28). As well, Harkavy (2006) highlights the central role of schools and colleges “to educate students for democratic citizenship, and help create a fair, decent, and just society” (p. 9). Moreover, Astin et al. (2000), Battistoni (1997), Ehrlich (2000), Colby et al. (2003), Boyte (2008), and Saltmarsh (2005) are among the many scholars who have affirmed the community, national, and global necessity of education in developing students’ civic competencies through community engagement.

Beyond facilitating students’ capacities for making informed decisions about and involving themselves in political processes, civic engagement is the ethos, advocacy, and action for collaboratively transforming community (Cress, 2011; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Not to be confused with civic education, the teaching about city, state, and national policies and procedures as a part of democratic citizenship (primarily voting behavior), civic engagement requires not just knowing about, but actually connecting the self to community activities for broader societal gain.

## **Pedagogical Approaches**

Colby et al. (2003) defined pedagogy as “all the things teachers do and ask their students to do to support students’ learning” (p. 141). Given the complexity of issues facing cities, nations, and the globe, the future livelihood of communities depends upon the ability of graduates to make headway on even the most perplexing problems. Civic engagement connects and intersects learning and living in efforts toward leveraging more equitable communities.

Examples of civic engagement, particularly in the form of service-learning, are found in virtually every academic discipline. A sociology instructor, for instance, might assign students to work in a homeless shelter to illuminate concepts such as social inequality or classism. In the sciences, a course in biology might analyze

stream samples for an anti-pollution program. Or, an accounting program might send undergraduates to help low-income high school families prepare their financial aid forms for college admission. In each case, the civic engagement experience is accompanied by reflection that deepens students' understanding of the academic concepts as exemplified in actual community contexts.

Further, Howard (1998) described forms of civic engagement such as community-based learning as a “counter-normative pedagogy” (p. 21) because of the numerous ways in which it diverges from traditional classroom instruction. Civic engagement learning varies from traditional pedagogy in terms of epistemology, goals, degree of faculty control, learning processes, student contributions to their own learning, and critical reciprocity shared with community partners (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Cress et al., 2013; Gottlieb and Robinson, 2002).

Another pedagogical complication of community-based learning is whether social justice or social change is an intended outcome. Einfield and Collins (2008) asserted, “an ideal democratic society is a socially just society” (p. 105). The social change perspective in community-based learning means that reflection leads to action on the problem addressed by service (Mitchell, 2008).

Similarly, a social justice approach uses community-based learning to empower students with the tools to question social structures and power dynamics to create a more just and equitable society, emphasizing the importance of learning for the purposes of taking action (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2003; Wang and Jackson, 2005). The alternative is what may be deemed the “charitable approach” in which students strive to meet an immediate need without necessarily seeking to understand or eradicate its root causes (Lewis, 2004; Moely, Furco, & Reed, 2008).

## High Impact Practices

Research evidence points to high impact pedagogical and programmatic practices in the community engagement and community service-learning field (Cress Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010; Finley, 2012; Hurtado and DeAngelo, 2012; Kuh, 2008; Prentice and Robinson, 2010; Stokamer, 2011). Namely, these high impact strategies include the following:

### 1. **Intentional Campus, Community, and Conceptual Connections**

Whether curricular or co-curricular, activities are purposefully constructed to support serving and learning. Community engagement objectives are mutually defined by campus and community partners, aligned with students' service and reflection experiences, and assessed for future iterative improvement.

### 2. **Collaborative Learning Relationships between Instructors, Students, and Community Participants**

Effective partnerships encourage and cultivate culturally considerate interactions that foster personal and community empowerment. Instead of directing expertise solely from the campus to the community, roles and responsibilities are instead crafted as shared learning opportunities for all.

### 3. Integration into Educational Expectations and Organizational Performance

Institutional proclamations regarding civic preparation of students are realized through multiple opportunities for engagement. Infrastructures facilitate long-term, reciprocal campus–community partnerships and the development of civically engaged courses across disciplines. Promotion and advancement policies stimulate and honor wide-ranging student, administrator, and faculty involvement.

These three overarching principles are proven approaches across the globe for creating a culture of community service-learning that benefits students, faculty, and communities alike.

For example, in Ireland, at the National University, Galway, the *Community Knowledge Initiative* encompasses volunteer and classroom-connected community service for linking academe with the social fabric of Irish life. As a multifaceted approach, the Irish initiative includes college service-learning courses across dozens of academic disciplines and professions; EPIC (Engaging Public in Communities) to facilitate community-based research and knowledge exchange; and the Youth Academy to support primary school children’s development. See: <https://cki.nuigalway.ie/>

In India, at Lady Doak College in Madurai, the college president and faculty have adopted community service-learning as its signature pedagogy for producing civically and socially committed women leaders. Referred to as the Life Frontier Engagement (*LiFE*) Programme, students use interdisciplinary community-based applied research, reflection, and active engagement to investigate societal and industrial problems, sharpen insights about how to leverage academic learning in the community, and gain a deeper understanding of one’s role in civic responsibilities. See: [https://www.ladydoakcollege.edu.in/Life\\_lfe.html](https://www.ladydoakcollege.edu.in/Life_lfe.html)

In Illinois (United States), the State Board of Education has created an online service-learning resource guide as part of its kindergarten through postsecondary education initiative to increase school attendance, academic learning, and personal and social responsibility. See: [https://www.isbe.net/Documents/service\\_learning\\_resources.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/service_learning_resources.pdf)

As well, some higher education institutions, like Portland State University, now offer Master’s degree specializations and Graduate Certificates in service-learning and community-based learning for those pursuing a professional career in the community engagement field as a teacher, researcher, or administrator (see: <http://pdx.edu/elp/service-learning>). In addition, undergraduate minors in civic leadership and community engagement have burgeoned across the United States from Penn State University in the East to the University of California, Irvine in the West.

## Participation Rates

Colleges, schools, and communities across the globe participate in various forms of civic engagement; those that are solely local or domestically focused as well as those that involve international collaborations and partnerships. For instance, the

UNESCO group in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education has partners in Africa, Arab states, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Likewise, the Talloires Network is an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. Specifically, their goal is to expand higher education civic engagement programs through teaching, research, and public service and includes such organizations as AsiaEngage, Arab University Alliance, Engagement Australia, and Service Learning Asia Network. Related, the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) boasts members from over 35 nations.

In the United States, estimates vary as to the number or percentage of higher education students participating in civic engagement learning. According to Campus Compact's annual survey – now reaching nearly 1200 campuses – approximately one third of students participated in service, community-based learning, and civic engagement activities at their campuses (Cress et al., 2010). Largent and Horinek (2008) reported that 80% of community colleges offer community-based learning, and Musil (2003) claimed that 78% of students participate in a service experience as part of undergraduate education.

Furthermore, statistics reveal that at both the K-12 school and higher education levels, students who participate in service-learning and community engagement experiences (either as facilitators or receivers of the service) are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and become future volunteers in their communities (Cress et al., 2010).

Moreover, such service-learning had a significantly positive effect on the educational achievement and aspirations of first-generation and low-income students (Plaut, Cress, Ikeda, & McGinley, 2013).

## Research-Based Outcomes

Civic engagement has been consistently characterized as having modest, but positive effects on students' academic, personal, and civic development (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999). A steady stream of scholarship has associated various civic engagement approaches with student engagement, academic achievement, intercultural competence, and other outcomes (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Furthermore, civic engagement improves grade point averages and academic skills, such as critical thinking and writing (Cress, 2004).

Gallini and Moely (2003) reported that community-based learning students demonstrated more engagement with academic content, greater interpersonal and community connection, and increased likelihood of persisting in school than their peers. Organizationally, teachers and faculty demonstrate increased teaching efficacy and scholarly productivity. Concurrent, partnering community agencies demonstrate increased capacity and outreach effectiveness in assisting vulnerable populations and addressing plaguing social, economic, educational, and environmental issues (Cress et al., 2010).



Specifically, research indicates that students improve their abilities to think critically, problem-solve, negotiate, and participate in democratic deliberation. The civic goal is more than simply learning how to express themselves verbally and in writing. Students are challenged to listen to a range of voices, to empathize with people different from themselves, and to compromise with others in the name of a common good that is often contested and tentative (Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Ward and Wolf –Wendel, 2000).

In sum, service-learning promotes students making connections between coursework and community issues, seeing themselves as having community leadership capacity, and identifying themselves as future agents of positive community change – key skills that are critical to the success of neighborhoods and communities around the globe (Battistoni, 1997; Cress, Yamashita, Duarte, & Burns, 2010; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Stokamer, 2011).

## Liberal Education Versus Neoliberalism

Daloz Parks (2000) suggests that this intersection of individual, education, and community is a new “commons.” She asserts that this “commons” is both global in scope and personal in impact requiring educational cultivation in the formation of “citizen-leaders.” This pragmatic outcome of community engagement and service-learning (citizenship preparation) is a unifying theme of the principles of liberal education (Cress & Donahue, 2011). Of course, a “Liberal Education” is not a specific political affiliation or social position. Rather, the term Liberal Education refers to a teaching and learning approach (often codified within the context of community engagement and service-learning) that empowers students and prepares them to deal with the complexity, diversity, and constant change of the modern world.

Liberal education should not be confused with neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the resurgence of ideas of laissez-faire economic liberalism and free market capitalism. Neoliberalism is characterized by deregulation, privatization, and the shift away from state welfare provision. Indeed, neoliberalism emphasizes the commodification of education and undermines the purpose of liberal education that is to enable students to live more alertly, more responsibly, and more fully (Deresiewicz, 2014).

In response, Quaye et al. (2018) assert that policies, practices, and curriculum in schools and colleges have too often contributed to, exacerbated, and profited from intersectional systems of exclusion and dehumanization. They and other scholars argue that educators must transition from laudable organizational statements and “fast-track” the journey toward justice by partnering with our communities and neighborhoods in curricular collaborations that have as a common purpose reshaping our policies and institutions (Reese, 2020).

## Contemporary Challenges

While some students are intrinsically motivated to involve themselves in community service activities (usually because of cultural, religious, and familial experiences

with providing service and trying to “make a difference” in the world), others explicitly question “why” they have to be bothered with involving themselves with non-school issues. In fact, some students openly object to service-learning course requirements and ask skeptically why they are being “forced to volunteer in the community” (Sylvester, 2011).

Having a comprehensive understanding of the broader historical foundations of civic education and the field of community-engaged learning can help contextualize responses to resistant students, skeptical colleagues, and unsupportive leaders in the common purposes of the why and how of community engagement. In addition, this knowledge base provides educators with the language and research evidence for what is individually and collectively gained by connecting classrooms with communities. Indeed, Reese (2020) and others (Perron, 2018) call for teachers to engage in “exceptional exegesis” with the community – to draw out their wisdom and collaboratively seek innovations that will lead to equity for individuals and communities.

Local communities, individual countries, and the world need educators’ energy, passion, compassion, drive, creativity, and innovation. Indeed, issues of racial injustice, health crises, educational inequities, economic unfairness, and environmental degradation demand that teachers be academically audacious (Salomon-Fernández, 2020). It is an audacious curricular act to go beyond traditional education boundaries by connecting classes to the community. It is an audacious scholarly act to see the community as a source of learning, expertise, and wisdom that can conjoin with professional disciplines. It is an audacious personal act to collaboratively address the most vexing and complex challenges of societies, neighborhoods, and communities. To that end, Quaye et al. (2018) assert that educators must engage boldly forward in strategizing for decolonization and racial justice and be commonly emboldened in their capacities to effect change in a world that has been impacted by turmoil, pain, and social injustice.

Unfortunately, service-learning performed from a notion of charity assumes a “savior” mentality where privileged college students come to “save” the community from their own “self-inflicted evils” (Cress et al., 2015, p. 41). Lupton (2015) termed this form of service-learning as “toxic charity.” He argued that good intentions, passion, and hard work of those “providing service” are not enough to prevent the demoralization of individuals and communities of those “receiving service.” Likewise, Mitchell (2008) articulated the distinction between traditional service-learning and critical service-learning that intentionally promotes socially justice.

In other words, simply learning through serving is insufficient since service itself is “a concept steeped in issues of identity and privilege which must be wrestled with for students to be effective” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 55). Instead, service-learning courses must be framed as collective efforts of solidarity. Heldman (2011) explains that service-learning as a form of solidarity seeks social justice through collaborative empowerment of individuals and communities that interrupts patterns of privilege. Indeed, teachers and educators must guard against perpetuating service-learning as a “pedagogy of whiteness” (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012). Instead, the contemporary challenge is to redesign and reformulate community engagement as educational empowerment for collective gain.

## Conclusion and Future Actions

The equity work of Gonzales and Griffin (2020) compels educators to consider how individuals, groups, and communities are situated within the contexts of privilege, power, and inclusion. They admonish administrators, teachers, and faculty as having the obligation to rectify such inequities through revisions in policies, programs, and the curriculum.

By extracting high impact strategies from the critical service-learning research literature (evidence-based) and uniting these key educational elements with equity-centered solidarity concepts (equity-principles), what emerges is a reimagined delineation of community engagement and service-learning. Namely, “Equity-Centered Engagement” (Cress, Stokamer, Van Cleave, & Kaufman, 2021).

Service-learning courses and community engagement activities should not just send students out into the community to do “good works.” Rather, equity-centered engagement is a specific epistemological and pedagogical stance. This approach is not learning “about” the community. This approach is not learning “from” the community. Equity-centered engagement is about instructionally solidifying how students learn “with” the community.

Learning with the community requires critical pedagogical construction of service-learning and engagement experiences. The relative merits of course construction include decisions about academic content, educational resources, instructional activities, service tasks and responsibilities, and assessment methods. To wit, in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1971) scrutinizes what “counts” as learning and knowledge. He asserts that viewpoints and perspectives are fluid, dynamic, and influenced by social and political forces that validate and invalidate ways of knowing. Likewise, he argues that the reasons for the dominance of some ideas, theories, and concepts are often hidden. He urges educators to investigate, expose, and discuss the implications of hidden logic that rationalizes certain types of knowledge.

Equally, critical theorists including postmodern critical theorists, feminist critical theorists, and critical race theorists challenge the notion that ideas and knowledge are neutral and subjectively free (Kutten, 2020; Rendón, 2014; Walpole, 2008). Rather, they assert that educational “canons of knowledge” upon which many classical education ideals are founded actually perpetuate systemic oppression and exclude equitable participation in educational and community capacity-building.

In other words, equity-based community engagement and service-learning is dependent upon carefully orchestrating student connections to the course, to each other, and the community as a model of democratic processes. Indeed, for critically, reflective and responsive educators, the future action imperative is to counter educational processes that delegitimize ways of knowing and to engage in strategies that value the assets of each individual and the contributions that everyone can make to the collective (Loggins, Nayve, & Plaxton-Moore, 2020). Equity-centered community engagement validates the epistemological experiences of students and community alike and offers empowering opportunities to contribute that knowledge for the common good (Cress et al., 2021).

## Cross-References

- ▶ [A Foucauldian Analysis of Culturally Relevant Educational Leadership for Refugees as Newcomers](#)
- ▶ [An Archaeology of Postcolonial Discursive Strategies: Studies in Governmentalities of Education](#)
- ▶ [Social Justice Leadership: Disrupting Power, Oppression, and Uplifting Marginalized Communities](#)
- ▶ [The Emergence of Culturally Responsive Leadership](#)
- ▶ [The Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Education on Black Girls in K-12 Schools](#)

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# Racial Inequality in K-12 Schools and Implications for Educational Leadership

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Kadia Hylton-Fraser and Floyd Beachum

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## Abstract

The American education system has been marked by racial inequality, segregation, and systemic racism. These realities are symbolic of a past built on the enslavement of Blacks and the marginalization of people of color. These themes are therefore central to education as they have invariably created a framework for its development and the practice of educational leadership. This chapter utilizes a Foucauldian approach by including his three enunciative fields: the field of memory, presence, and concomitance. In the field of memory, this chapter demonstrates how the legal and political institutions were the genesis of inequality for people of color, while in the field of presence, education and educational leadership have evolved as theories around race and social justice have emerged to address issues of oppression. Finally, in the field of concomitance, the chapter interrogates how fields such as scientific management, legal studies, and science influence the current practice of educational leadership. Importantly, through this approach, this chapter provides insight into what is required for the future practice of educational leadership to tackle the inequality that remains a feature of the US K-12 education system.

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**Keywords**

Desegregation · Critical consciousness · Culturally relevant leadership · Educational leadership · K-12 education · Oppression · Racial inequality · Segregation · Systemic racism · Social justice

**The field of memory**

Race and racism have been instrumental in shaping the narrative of the experiences of people of color in the USA. From the practice of eugenics to intelligence testing, the implication for education has been reflected in the deficit ideology surrounding the ability of students of color.

**The field of presence**

The historic *Brown v. Board* (1954) ruling led to shifts in the education system for students of color. Although the “separate but equal” rule was overturned, there remains a disproportionate application of disciplinary sanctions and availability of equal academic opportunities for students of color.

**The field of concomitance**

Racial inequality in the US education system has been influenced by history, legal studies, management, and business, among others, which have impacted the practice of educational leadership.

**Discontinuities and ruptures which form the different viewpoints of this area or field**

Social justice, the agitation of various movements, and the creation of critical theories have created shifts in the educational landscape as well as the leadership discourse that place race and racism at the center of the US experience for people of color.

**Critical assumptions or presupposition**

Race and racism are essential parts of US history which cannot be overlooked since those elements manifest in the education system, thus requiring educational leaders who are aware of this phenomenon and lead in ways to systematically address it.

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**Introduction**

Trends within the current K-12 education system indicate that schools have increasingly become segregated (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Orfield & Yun, 1999; Thompson Dorsey, 2013; Wells, Keener, Cabral, & Cordova-Cobo, 2019). This is a break from the spirit enshrined in the historic ruling of *Brown v. Board* (1954) which overturned the “separate but equal” judgment of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Furthermore, it is a greater undoing of the strides made to create equality between Whites and people of color, not only within the educational system but also within

the larger society as that court decision was the framework for “dismantling state supported racial segregation in education, housing and other important areas of life” (Schofield & Hausmann, 2004, p. 83).

More recently, protests over the killing of Blacks at the hands of law enforcement have turned the lens once again on the systems of inequity that continue to define the society within which we currently exist – a system which is grounded in segregation, redlining, Jim Crow laws, inequitable distribution of resources, considerable gaps in wealth and income (Dettling, Hsu, Jacobs, Moore, & Thompson, 2017; Kochhar & Fry, 2014; Petrella, 2017; Rothstein, 2017), and a general “othering” of people of color based largely on socially created identities (Harro, 2018; Johnson, 2018). This is the same system that influences the ways in which education is administered and the concomitant negative outcomes, particularly, for Black and Brown children.

For example, research has indicated that de jure or government-sanctioned segregation has had a psychological impact on those belonging to the segregated group and those enforcing segregation. Specifically, Blacks from a lower socioeconomic background developed feelings of inferiority and self-hatred and rejected their blackness, whereas Blacks who originated from the middle and upper echelons of the society tended to be submissive, withdrawn, or conformed to the expectations and standards of the dominant group (Cook, 1984). Conversely, Whites developed feelings of superiority (Clark, Chein, & Cook, 2004) due to the value society attributed to being White, which the research suggested was an “unrealistic basis for self-evaluation” (Cook, 1984, p. 820). Consequently, Whites became hostile and aggressive toward Blacks. A gradual shift in society’s attitudes and concurrent judicial decisions, however, reduced interest in desegregation research, which has eventually led to the increased resegregation of schools (Horsford, 2010).

Therefore, the chapter aims to frame the trajectory of racial inequality in K-12 schools and its implications for educational leadership. More specifically, it examines this inequality from a Foucauldian framework, tracing the history of racial inequality within K-12 schools throughout the last 100 years, and explores the antecedents which have shaped the current education system. Foucault (1972), in his seminal piece *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, espouses that the way in which concepts develop within a specific discipline is due in part to developments in other fields which contribute to an overall understanding within that specific discipline or field. In this case, we argue that the development of educational leadership has been shaped by the shifting discourse, not only in education but also in other fields such as sociology, psychology, and management.

According to Foucault, there are moments of rupture which create a kind of discontinuity, but inherent in that discontinuity is a utility that assists in the progression of a discipline. In other words, discontinuity is to be embraced rather than ignored or eliminated. Subsequently, we frame our discussion on the basis that the various ruptures, conflicts, and discontinuities that have occurred in the last 100 years in the USA have been fundamental in creating and buttressing racism that is systemic. Additionally, we argue that systemic racism through the country’s economic, political, and social institutions continues to influence educational decisions, policies, and outcomes (Beachum, 2011, 2020).

## Foucault's Methodology

In order to preface this discussion, this chapter references Foucault's (1972) approach to knowledge and its development. In his text, he focuses on how a particular set of ideas and concepts which are prominent during one period eventually change over time. These ideas are what he refers to as discourse or a group of statements that are historically bound and determine, in large measure, what societies know and accept as current and valid. Importantly, Foucault's approach to this history of knowledge rejects the methods historians adopted, who traditionally advocated for a linear approach to unfolding events. Instead, Foucault embraces the "phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" (p. 4) Therefore, instead of an inclination to examine historical events or the development of knowledge within the framework of identifying patterns or "linear successions," Foucault suggests that there is greater value inherent in "the interplay of transmissions, resumptions, disappearances, and repetitions" (p. 5). By his own admission, however, he indicates that it is not a precedence of one approach over another, but rather an acknowledgment that there is a dynamic interplay between the development of knowledge and power.

According to Foucault, there is a framework within which this knowledge evolves, those being the field of memory, the field of presence, and the field of concomitance. Foucault refers to these as "enunciative fields in a discipline" (p. 57) and indicates that these fields are susceptible to change. Furthermore, he highlights the interaction and inherent dependence among these three enunciative fields as knowledge develops and changes throughout history. Combined, these enunciative fields help to contextualize the discussion which will ensue in this chapter. The field of memory represents "statements that are no longer accepted or discussed" (p. 58) but whose impact still resonates in contemporary discourse. Additionally, the field of memory includes those concepts, statements, and ideas which are no longer considered to be factual. Foucault's argument in the field of memory lends credence to the statement that "discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history that does not refer it back to the laws of an alien development" (p. 127). It is critical, then, to examine the development of the field of education, not only from the perspective of what is current but also from the thoughts and ideas which previously existed and the discontinuity that created a shift in those ideas.

The field of presence, on the other hand, includes "all statements. . .acknowledged to be truthful, involving exact descriptions, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presuppositions" (p. 57). Interestingly, the field of presence also consists of those concepts which are considered factual but which may also be critiqued or repudiated. However, the field of presence is indicative of those statements which have exerted significant influence throughout a field's discourse and are identified as having authority. By contrast, the field of concomitance reflects the statements, ideas, and concepts from other fields which resonate within the field under discussion, that of education. Foucault's method of archaeology reveals that "discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity

with himself may be determined” (p. 60). In other words, attention must be paid to the way in which humans discuss historical events as it reveals insight into a larger social order and the underlying assumptions. Foucault is less interested in a singular individual’s pronouncements on a concept, but rather in the discourse itself as well as the gaps within the discourse. There is also the tacit acceptance that the development of discourse is far from linear and more so fraught with contention.

In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault challenges the description of history, or discourse, confined to a document and instead seeks to uncover the layers of human understanding that have developed over time as humans have tried to interpret the world in which they exist. Subsequently, Foucault approaches discourse as “monument” (pp. 137–138) and further indicates that these monuments uncover “discourse as practices” (p. 131). Therefore, the central ideas of change within the field of education as well as the embedded practices of its discourse form the basis of this chapter’s discussion. Moreover, the chapter discusses the implications of those practices for educational leadership.

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## The Field of Memory

As Johnson (2018) states in his explanation of James Baldwin, “race and all its categories have no significance outside systems of privilege and oppression in which they are created in the first place” (p. 16). It would therefore seem pointless to consider the tiered and unequal K-12 education system without tracing the history of its development. Taking into account Foucault’s ideation behind discourse development, it is important to understand how education is presently experienced in the USA and how educational leadership is enacted, as a consequence.

Foucault’s (1972) field of memory points to the ways in which society has come to understand those events and occurrences around which there is no universal consensus. However, it is these events that are critical to framing the future trajectory of a specific field or discipline – in this case education and educational leadership – and how knowledge within that discipline is to be understood and accepted. Furthermore, Foucault’s interpretation of ruptures and discontinuities is essential to establishing the development of discourse. Therefore, this section will interrogate how racism as a construct developed, the systems that came into existence as a consequence, and how those systems continue to manifest in education and by extension, educational leadership.

The current functioning of the US K-12 education system did not develop within a vacuum. The ruptures in time can be attributed to events which have been fundamental to creating a legacy of segregation and racism that appear difficult to undo. More specifically, issues such as student tracking, the “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) between White students and students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), the disparity in student discipline (Civil Rights Data Collection on School Climate and Safety, 2018), and the school-to-prison pipeline (Wacquant, 2001) have all been shaped by past events. It is critical to understand “the historical roots of the policies that drive the practices of adults and

the experiences of students” (Jones, 2019, p. 1). Firstly, the impact of slavery on the US education system is undeniable. Although slavery was legally abolished in 1865, the imposition of Jim Crow laws subsequent to the end of slavery persisted to extend the servitude of Blacks and segregate them from Whites. Furthermore, these laws significantly disenfranchised Blacks and created separation in the use of public facilities, from restrooms, drinking fountains, and public transportation.

Moreover, the inability to vote, be elected for public office, or serve on juries further marginalized Blacks from the US political process. Essentially, “within a decade of disenfranchisement, the white supremacy campaign had erased the image of the black middle class from the minds of white North Carolinians” (Pildes, 2000, p. 12). The reduction in that black middle class also had implications for schools that were established in those Southern states. There was a conspicuous distinction between schools for Black and White students regarding resources, quality of facilities, and available books (Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1934). Within that same period, although there were attempts through the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to guarantee rights to persons regardless of race or creed or former status of servitude, the Supreme Court ruled the Act unconstitutional in 1883.

Following the Supreme Court decision in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896, which upheld the “separate but equal” doctrine, segregation became more widespread, especially in Southern states already marked by an era of Jim Crow laws which separated Whites from Blacks in every facet of society. The *Plessy* decision essentially sanctioned legal segregation against Blacks, converting them to “second-class citizenship” (McKanders, 2010) since they were excluded socially, economically, and politically. The combination of segregated facilities, little to no voting rights, and inferior schools wrought an education system for Blacks that was bound to be problematic. Historians and researchers alike have indicated that such segregated schools, which typically reflected significant variation in poverty between Whites and Blacks, are most significantly correlated to the achievement gap between the two sets of students (Reardon, 2016). Evidently, segregation was a deliberate act to undermine the participation and self-worth of Blacks (Wacquant, 2001). Moreover, segregation was considered “a device of economy” (Myrdal, 1944, p. 169) which was intent on perpetuating harmful stereotypes and negative attitudes toward members of the segregated group (McClung Lee & Humphrey, 1943).

This device has precipitated an education debt, which Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests is as a consequence of the twinning of the political and economic systems to exclude Black students from the education system. Additionally, this led to the perception that Black students were academically inferior and therefore incapable of making academic progress. However, this perception was reminiscent of a period during which psychologists and medical science advocated eugenics – a practice lauded as scientific which theorized that Whites were genetically superior to their non-White counterparts who were described as having less desirable characteristics. Eugenics surfaced as a response to the threat of racial decline of Whites (Stoskopf, 2002, p. 74) and thereby focused on “better breeding” of persons most suited for American society over those considered less so (Black, 2003).

Additionally, the spread of eugenics was further enhanced via mass media as journalists, scientists, and medical practitioners widely published works, crafted as opinion pieces and results of research, which served to perpetuate this dominant and harmful ideology. The premise of eugenics which espoused the superiority of one race over another based on genetics became identified as “scientific racism” as an ode to a set of indisputable “facts” around the inferiority of a certain breed of persons. Incidentally, these facts often originated from so-called experts (scientists, anthropologists, medical practitioners, for example) who were White, elite males whose authority was neither questioned nor opposed (Schwartz & Schlenoff, 2020).

Moreover, scientific racism was a precursor of Social Darwinism that advocated “the survival of the fittest” (Spencer, 1874). Spencer extended Darwin’s theory on the evolution of animal species by asserting that it could also be applied to humans in a similar way. According to Spencer, inferior breeding was a natural occurrence which led to conflict between races. This racial conflict, Spencer opined, was essential to progress as it included “a continuous over-running of the less powerful or less adapted by the more powerful or more adapted, a driving of inferior varieties into undesirable habitats, and occasionally, an extermination of inferior varieties” (p. 85). This philosophy essentially suggested that only those of true and proper breeding were able to survive harsh or difficult circumstances. In other words, science was repeatedly utilized to justify, “propose, project and enact racist social policies” (Dennis, 1995, p. 243). Subsequent to the use of Social Darwinism, there was further scientific propagation of the measure of human intelligence based on race. Sadly, these “scientific facts” were largely based on social preconditioning connected to deeply biased assumptions and attitudes, what Whitten (2019) refers to as the “social embeddedness of science.”

Gould (1978, 1981) takes a similar view in his critique of Morton (renowned for collecting and measuring human crania), noting that “unconscious or dimly perceived finagling is probably endemic in science, since scientists are human beings rooted in cultural contexts, not automations directed toward external truth” (1978, p. 503). Similarly, Roberts (2011) opines that these biased preconceptions often resulted in the misuse of science to confirm an already flawed reality. Incidentally, Samuel Morton’s work (Morton, 1839, 1844) on measuring the brain’s “internal capacity” is often touted as the genesis of scientific racism. As he collected and studied crania from different parts of the world, his measurements were used to classify and rank intelligence based on race, to confirm White superiority, and to justify slavery (Mitchell, 2018). Furthermore, Morton is considered the father of physical anthropology, and his work has been critical to framing the work of other polygenists within and external to the scientific field who, like Morton, believed that Black and White people descended from separate species (Biewen & Kumanyika, 2020).

Eventually, scientific racism as the underlying theory of eugenics was weaponized in Nazi Germany, leading to the widespread slaughter of Jews and non-Aryans. Consequently, the ideology that formed the basis of racial, mental, and physical superiority began to decline. However, not before it had already infiltrated the US society in other ways. There seemed to be a “perfect fit” in education for the

reproduction of these beliefs (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007). This belief became evident in intelligence testing from Binet to Goddard, the latter who built on Binet's procedures to test the "feeble-minded" as a way to explain differences in capabilities based on race. Hundreds of educators were then trained to administer these tests, the results of which were used to segregate the "morons" from the "normal" students. Furthermore, prominent psychologist, himself a eugenicist, Edward Thorndike (1927) who was instrumental in shaping school curriculum based on notions of inherited intelligence suggested, "Men are born unequal in intellect, character, and skill. It is impossible and undesirable to make them equal by education. The proper work of education is to improve all men according to their several possibilities, in ways consistent with the welfare of all" (para. 5).

Later, Terman, another psychologist and eugenicist, would apply Binet's intelligence tests in the context of American schools, later referred to as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. He believed that schools should rank students in society according to their academic prowess, which was largely founded on race and intelligence testing. Commenting on the ideal of "fitness of mind," Terman (1916) said:

No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters or capable citizens in the true sense of the word. . . The fact that one meets this type of frequency among Indians, Mexicans, and [N]egroes suggest quite forcibly that the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods. . . Children of this group should be segregated in special classes and be given instruction that is concrete and practical. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers, able to look out for themselves. There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should be allowed to reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding. (pp. 91–92)

Psychology has not been the only field in which problematic practices have influenced and shaped education. The management literature is replete with examples of efficiency and effectiveness which have been fundamental to the development of educational leadership. Taylor's (1911) principles of scientific management and the factory model have shaped how policymakers and educational leaders have treated schools and students as products for improvement (Rury, 2005) without fair consideration of their contexts, historical, sociopolitical, and otherwise. First, intelligence testing and eventually standardized testing are based broadly on the belief that all students can and should meet a standard which is historically based on measures of middle-upper class whiteness (Winfield, 2012). The focus on efficiency has been instrumental in perpetuating the belief that students and schools that did not match these expectations were somehow unfit or defective.

Within the practice of educational leadership, the wrongs that have been perpetuated against Black students and, by extension, students of color cannot be addressed in a systematic way unless there is an admission of those wrongs. Although Jim Crow laws have been disbanded and the practice of eugenics has "disappeared" from education's lexicon, the current policies and practices within the education system continue to be shaped by those beliefs, attitudes, and actions (Winfield, 2012). The "continued ignorance of the knowledge that educational



theory, philosophy, and practice were developed both within and as a mandate of this atmosphere” (Winfield, 2007, p. 105) is inherently problematic.

As Foucault indicates, the discourse of scientific racism and eugenics, though no longer accepted as valid, continue to shape the present field. Standardized testing, tracking, and unfair disciplinary practices that favor White students create an atmosphere in which students of color continue to pay a heavy price. This disproportionality will persist if educational leaders within and external to educational institutions do not agitate to disrupt the problematic policies and practices purported as “educational reform” within the system. As Cuban (1990) asserts, “Reforms return because policymakers fail to diagnose problems and promote correct solutions. Reforms return because policymakers use poor historical analogies and pick the wrong lessons from the past” (p. 6).

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## The Field of Presence

The field of presence, according to the Foucauldian framework, embodies those ideas and practices, those statements which are representative of what is acceptable within a specific field or discourse. Importantly, this is not limited to those concepts which are included, but also extend to that which has been excluded from the discourse. This is critical to consider as Foucault recognizes that discontinuity is essential to a field’s development. Race-based tracking (Domina, Penner, & Penner, 2017), unequal disciplinary measures (Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez, 2013; Payne & Welch, 2010), unequal school funding and resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Horsford, 2011; Reardon, 2016), and dropout rates (Carter, 2009) brought about by systemic political and economic injustices (Kozol, 2005; Selden, 1999) and a curriculum that is largely irrelevant and culturally biased (Sleeter & Grant, 2011) have served to further marginalize students of color in general and Black students in particular.

The legacy of segregated schools, which has seen a resurgence in the last 30 years (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997; Orfield & Monfort, 1992; Orfield & Yun, 1999), continues to impact the educational outcomes for students of color (Frankenberg, 2009; Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2005). Much of this resurgence is partially due to the court ruling in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) which disallowed desegregation efforts across school districts. Moreover, research into desegregation explains how students’ racial interaction in their formative years influences their adolescence as segregation tends to be repeated “across the stages of the life cycle and across institutions when individuals have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life” (McPartland & Braddock, 1981, p. 149). A return to school stratification, therefore, based on race and ethnicity carries broader implications for educational leadership practice and policy against the background of an increase in racial and ethnic diversity (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Stroub & Richards, 2013). However, school resegregation, albeit contrary to the former “separate but equal” doctrine, underscores what Foucault (1972) articulates as repetitions in discourse development and the lack of linearity which pervades.



After the *Brown* ruling, desegregation efforts within the American public education system began earnestly and were a precursor to the Civil Rights movement, a period during which activists agitated for the protection of the civil and political rights of Blacks. Although de jure segregation had purportedly ended, de facto segregation was harder to eliminate since people were less inclined to suddenly change their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors concerning Black individuals. There was great opposition to desegregation efforts with the sole purpose of avoiding desegregation at all cost (Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Donner, 2005). Whites moved from desegregated districts in what is known as “white flight” to suburban areas, opening private schools for Whites only. In some instances, school boards, through their local authorities, implemented legislation which permitted districts to close schools and grant tuition vouchers to Whites only who would then use the vouchers to attend schools which had no Black students (Horsford, 2011).

Following President Barack Obama’s election in 2008, there was the assertion that America’s political system had now transformed beyond seeing race as a predictor of success – a so-called era of “post-racialism” (Carter, 2009). However, the deficit ideology concerning Black students and students of color continues to pervade education as researchers advocate the notion of either their “inappropriate” behavior or lack of academic success on the foundation of inherited or socialized traits (Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver, & Barnes, 2014). Furthermore, Alexander (2011) maintains that there is now a new racial caste system in place through “the mass incarceration of poor people of color in the United States. . . one specifically tailored to the political, economic, and social challenges of our time” (p. 7). In defining this caste system as the “*New Jim Crow*,” Alexander (2010) asserts that:

Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it. (p. 2)

A noted disruption of that deficit ideology, though, has come in the form of multicultural education (Banks, 1989; Nieto, 1992). Its common goal is to ensure that students from diverse racial, ethnic, social, and cultural identities are the recipients of educational equality, favorable outcomes, and progress (Klein, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1982). This multifaceted goal is achieved through the use of culturally relevant examples, building student awareness of how knowledge is constructed as well as strengthening teacher capacity to facilitate students’ academic success, regardless of background (Banks, 1993). Fundamental to multicultural education is the reduction of negative racial attitudes in students and a school culture that is democratic and empowering. Teacher preparation programs, national organizations, and various journals advanced the work of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Simultaneously, students from marginalized groups were the

beneficiaries as layers of oppression were being identified and challenged (Linton, 1998; MacGillivray, 2000).

On the other hand, the neoliberal context within which education exists serves to disrupt the goals of multiculturalism as it appears to demand a more “palatable” approach that does not create discomfort for White individuals (Case & Ngo, 2017). Consequently, multiculturalism’s goal to tackle racism was perceived unfavorably as an unnecessary challenge to market-driven forces (Kymlicka, 2013) and soon was co-opted by neoliberal theorists and practitioners to reflect the ideal of “some cosmopolitan market actor who can compete effectively across state boundaries” (p. 111). The status in classrooms of most faculty being White created another disruption to multicultural education as efforts to create a common understanding and application of the concept proved to be problematic (Sleeter, 2018; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). This led Gay (1995) to comment that there was now a fundamental difference in the theory and practice of multicultural education, the result of which was a “brand” of multiculturalism that focused more broadly on diversity, rather than ways in which to confront racism within education.

Multiculturalism preceded other concepts such as culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive leadership, and social justice as educators of color functioned as shapers of curriculum, social activists, and intellectuals on leadership discourse (Gooden, 2010; Johnson, 2006). Santamaria (2014) notes that though a leadership approach to achieve equity in schools while supporting staff could be perceived as utopian, “innovation, activism and empowerment” (p. 354) are essential to effecting educational change. Educational leadership practices grounded in experiences of marginalization, oppression, and systemic racism add texture to leadership discourse, which is evident in the development of the field (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Gooden, 2010). As Foucault (1972) notes, it is the inherent ruptures in the field that are precursors to the unfolding of theory and the resultant change in practice.

Though the rules and laws of racism have morphed, the resegregation of schools and communities has become more apparent, and the change in the US demographics has become more evident, education’s current state is a clarion call for research-based practices that will encourage positive educational outcomes for all students.

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## The Field of Concomitance

Foucault’s (1972) final enunciative field, the field of concomitance, addresses the influence exerted by external fields and includes statements and ideas which have shaped educational leadership and its continued development. The discourse happening in other fields and thereby transferring into education and educational leadership supports Foucault’s prior assertion that discourse development does not exist within a vacuum but instead is “always given through some material medium, even if that medium is concealed” (p. 100). From *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board*, and *Milliken v. Bradley*, the education landscape is replete with examples of struggles occurring in the court which directly or indirectly have either hampered or encouraged progress within the education system.

As previously highlighted, race and racism have been linchpins in shaping US history and sociopolitical and economic discourse (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Lopez & Parker, 2003; Yosso, 2005) and continue to be the case. This history also highlights how the US legal system has conspired to keep people of color on the fringes of American society. The Civil Rights movement was defined by a struggle for freedom, citizenship, and equality under the law for Blacks (Horsford, 2019). Through the Civil Rights Act (1964) and later the Voting Rights Act (1965), Blacks began to actively protest against institutionalized racial control (Alexander, 2010; Reed, 2004). Additionally, Blacks were now able to access traditionally occupied White spaces and experienced a shift in resource allocation for schools, although not to the extent of their White counterparts (Kozol, 2005).

A seminal influence in education has also been Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which emerged as a critique to the ways in which the US legal system had been used to sanction and create inequality in the society. According to Mezey (1994), “by making the legal maintenance of the social order look neutral, natural and even just, law helps convince subordinated classes that the state is the best option for protecting their interests” (p. 1838). Consequently, these subordinated classes become complicit in their own oppression.

The apparent lack of attention in CLS to how race and racism have shaped the rights of marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998), however, drew significant criticism from critical race and feminist theories, which are amalgams of ethnic and women studies, law, history, and sociology (Yosso, 2005). Critical Race Theory (CRT) initially focused on those yet achieved goals of the Civil Rights movement, which was grounded in the struggle between Black and White individuals (Bell, 1986). Therefore, women and other people of color challenged CRT’s focus as they felt their various identities rooted in gender, class, and immigration and language status were not being sufficiently addressed (Espinoza & Harris, 1998). Furthermore, these intersecting identities result in a “unique compoundedness” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 150) in the way these groups experience oppression.

Other branches of CRT have emerged such as FemCrit, LatCrit, WhiteCrit, and AsianCrit theories as ways in which to center the oppression experienced by those particular group members. However, as Moraga (1983) suggests, it is not about creating a hierarchy of oppression but rather about “naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us” (p. 53). Within education, these theories emphasize the centrality of race and racism in understanding how the US society operates (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992) and have influenced the interrogation of knowledge construction and ideologies of dominant groups based on flawed concepts such as meritocracy and colorblindness (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000) as well as neutral or unbiased inquiry. Importantly, however, CRT and its accompanying branches have also shaped educational leadership in terms of its focus on social justice as a way to “liberate students to make social changes. . .and nurture participatory, equitable, and just relationships” (Sernak, 2008, p. 115).

On the other hand, influences from the fields of business and management have created a sort of tension for educational leaders. This tension is inherent in the

expectation to balance the effective management of programs and services in schools (DeMatthews, 2015; Sernak, 2008) with the need to identify and address inequity experienced by the “underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated” (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 23). Principles of scientific management based on efficiency and productivity (McGregor, 1960; Taylor, 1911) dictated that educational leaders created schools which were high-performing, results-driven, and data-oriented (Cunningham, 1985). These leaders would also possess the necessary skills and competencies such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), strategic vision, and purpose to lead, manage, and develop staff and students (Bolman & Deal, 1994; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Invariably, educational leaders were required to be agile thinkers who could respond to change within and external to their educational institution based on empirical evidence (Collin & Porras, 1994).

The work of Senge (2006) in the field of science and engineering has also created a framework for educational leadership. Leaders are encouraged to apply a systematic approach to viewing organizations not only from the sum of their parts but also how each part affects the whole. This “systems thinking” allows leaders to evaluate the connections between entities and devise solutions that address the “right” problems (Åström & Murray, 2008). Educational leaders, principals in particular, were encouraged to use systems thinking to develop more effective skills at managing and interpreting data for school improvement (Kensler, Reames, Murray, & Patrick, 2011), implementing and sustaining educational reform (Fullan, 2005), and raising education outcomes (Daly & Finnigan, 2016). Such principals were perceived as more effective at accomplishing school goals, creating a learning environment, and encouraging staff commitment to school goals (Pang & Pisapia, 2012a, 2012b).

More recently, globalization and neoliberalism have impacted the structure and focus of education systems worldwide. Neoliberalism is a nod to scientific management as aspects of the market are encouraged to frame school choice and societal advancement. Politicians and policymakers increasingly view education as a solution to social and economic woes (Lubienski, 2009; OECD, 2014; World Bank, 1995). Therefore, educational leaders are expected to be properly prepared to respond appropriately to diverse student problems while also ensuring students gain optimal educational experiences and attain outcomes which may afford them a greater level of economic autonomy (Brighouse, 2006; Rivera-Batiz, 2007; Schultz, 1963) in a highly competitive global economy.

Besides, students’ economic autonomy reinforces Bordieu’s (1986) concept of social capital as instrumental to social mobility. However, the US education system’s racialized history perpetuates the deficit ideology that somehow students of color experience lower academic outcomes as a consequence of their family background and community origins – which are invariably tied to systemic racism. Importantly, this ideology, which is reminiscent of scientific racism and eugenics, highlights yet again Foucault’s argument that there is a dynamic between the history of knowledge development and power. It is this history which educational leaders must understand in order to create necessary ruptures in the education system, especially on behalf of students of color.

## Conclusion and Reflections

Research has shown that leadership is second only to instruction regarding its impact on student achievement which is indicative of the role that school leaders must play to drive school success (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012) and prepare students for a “turbulent” future (Cunningham, 1985). Moreover, as Foucault (1989) notes, “behind the visible façade of the system, one posits the rich uncertainty of disorder” (p. 84). Therefore, educational leaders must work explicitly to connect schools and communities from which students of color originate to encourage increased engagement in the educational process while also prefacing the “broader social-cultural and historic roots of blacks, as a people” (Irvine & Irvine, 1983, p. 412). As Miller (2016) opines, effective leadership must be “in place, and in sync” (p. 1).

Importantly, the ruptures that have occurred along the continuum of the US education system that have created entrenched racist attitudes, policies, and legal and economic roadblocks are stark reminders that the work of educational leaders must include social justice and equity. This work, Frattura and Capper (2007) note, is important to prevent educational leaders from interpreting “federal or state policy. . . in ways that result in further segregation and perpetuation of low achievement among traditionally marginalized students” (p. 41). Moreover, social justice’s application in the education system is not limited to a vague interpretation of the redistribution of resources and opportunities, but must also extend to the ways in which educational leaders are willing to upend all forms of oppression and engage staff, students, and parents around actions to end those injustices (Theoharis, 2009).

This chapter has highlighted the development of racial inequality in the US K-12 system, its impact on the educational experiences of Black students in particular, and the implications for educational leadership. Through tracing the history of the field of education and the ideas and concepts which have invariably created racial inequality, there is a need for continued critical consciousness that seeks to disrupt systems of oppression and inequality. The onset of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) signals another disruptor within the continuum of education and educational leadership and has highlighted the disparities between White communities and communities of color as the latter has been disproportionately impacted by the virus (Laster Pirtle, 2020).

American presidential elections in 2016 and 2020 were marked by overt expressions of anti-Blackness, racism, anti-immigrant sentiments, and a general strategy to divide and sow discord among people who are different from the White middle-upper class norm (Winfield, 2012). However, that period has also been a watershed moment for greater awareness of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and an awakening of the collective conscience of the society. Educational leaders have been forced to adopt creative strategies to address students of color through the provision of devices and learning materials as they manage a hybrid or totally remote instructional delivery.

Furthermore, the more recent proclamation of cessation in funding for diversity training and critical race theory as anti-American (Schwartz, 2020) is suggestive of how political and economic institutions are leveraged to reflect and perpetuate

dominant group ideology. It therefore means that educational leaders' demanding and intricate role (Jacobson, McCarthy, & Pounder, 2015; Pilton, 2015) must necessarily extend beyond previous management principles to prevent a situation in which teaching and learning are further damaged (Blasé & Blasé, 2004, p. 245; Hutton, 2011). Culturally relevant leadership (CRL, Beachum, 2020) is required to contextualize the historical, institutional, and sociocultural experiences of students of color.

Through the combined application of liberatory consciousness, equitable insight, and reflexive practice, educational leaders will be poised to raise awareness of diversity as they challenge biases, prejudice, and stereotypes. Simultaneously, educational leaders should seek to honor and acknowledge the intersecting identities and experiences (Crenshaw, 1989) of students and staff which are then used to dismantle deficit ideologies and create high academic expectations for students. The ability to identify and take steps to end oppression is embedded in Freire's (1972) concept of *conscientização* or critical consciousness. Through reflexive practice, leaders constantly challenge biases and practices and leverage data to make equitable decisions for enhanced "student success." Ultimately, as the US education system prepares for another series of ruptures, its leaders must be ready to transform schools into spaces which embody the "values of liberty, justice and equality . . ." and "where students have an opportunity to reach their full potential" (Beachum, 2020, n.p.).

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# LGBTQ+ Communities and US K-12 Schools **66**

Christa Boske

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## Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extant literature on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) communities in the United States and the role inclusive laws, policies, and practices play in the lives of K-12 students, educators, social activists, researchers, and sociologists have addressed the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ youth. However, despite nearly three decades of creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive schools across the country, heteronormativity remains the dominant narrative in schools. This chapter begins with a brief overview of contemporary issues facing LGBTQ+ communities, queer theory, and influence of historical events. In conclusion, the author suggests K-12 schools remain part of the solution to creating alliances, culturally responsive language/administrative policies, and historical contexts throughout student learning. The author encourages schools to actively address complicit practices/beliefs/attitudes/policies that often stigmatize LGBTQ+ communities. The author provides a conceptual model to shift from perpetuating anti-LGBTQ+ curricula, policies, and practices to an authentically inclusive LGBTQ+ curriculum in which students learn within a socially just learning community.

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**Keywords**

LGBTQ+ · Educational leadership · Teachers · Queer theory · US schools · Social justice

**The Field of Memory**

Although California, New Jersey, Colorado, Oregon, and counties in Virginia and Maryland led the charge to integrate LGBTQ+ history in schools, states such as Alabama, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi continue to pass policy prohibiting educators to teach about LGBTQ+ communities. Anti-LGBTQ+ community laws are often referred to as *no promo homo* laws, because they forbid educators from conversing with students about LGBTQ+ communities in a positive light, if at all. This legislation fostered unsafe and unwelcoming school environments. Some K-12 schools require schools to discuss negative perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community in schools. The influence of *no promo homo* laws on LGBTQ+ school communities further influences the promotion of oppressive practices and stigmatizes LGBTQ+ students by perpetuating disinformation, misinformation, and misleading information.

**The Field of Presence**

The implementation of a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum depends on individual school districts because school community members have the power and privilege to determine how they will meet educational standards as well as the extent the students will experience a culturally inclusive curriculum. The 2021 Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, an individual's sexual orientation, as well as gender identity. The legislation may encourage educators to introduce appropriate language, diverse voices, counter narratives, and LGBTQ+ history that accurately represents an inclusive curriculum. The safeguard protection for educators, school leaders, families, and/or students who identify as LGBTQ+ may empower this community.

**The Field of Concomitance**

For much of this century, identifying as LGBTQ+ was perceived as natural and biologically based. In other words, people were seen as being born heterosexual or LGBTQ+. People who identify as LGBTQ+ have existed throughout history with diverse responses from societies around the world. In 2011, California attempted to pass policy and become the first state to require K-12 public schools to teach LGBTQ+ history. However, conservative groups, families, and some state officials attempted to pushback this legislation.

Mary MacIntosh (1968) approached homosexuality as a social role due to some societies identifying people as homosexual and others not establishing homosexuality as a part of someone's identity. MacIntosh focused on the responses of being accepted or not accepted for their sexuality. When a society defines homosexuality as abnormal, deviant, or immoral, then individuals who identify as heterosexual

becomes the accepted societal norm or ideal sexuality. Jeffrey Weeks (1991) emphasized the role the health and scientific fields played in creating a medical or psychological view of people who identified as homosexual. These two historical approaches to deepen understanding focused on the microsocial dynamics of an individual's sexual identity formation. Since the 1980s, the sociology of sexual identity developed into two perspectives: (a) diverse homosexual identities and (b) sexual identity is shaped by societal factors.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Queer theorists focus on broadening the lived experiences of sexual life when freed from state and institutional control. The major breakthrough in the 1970s and 1980s stimulated a national gay rights movement. Around the world, in cities and town ranging from England, Denmark, the United States, France, Holland, and Australia, the LGBTQ+ community began to create subcultures. These subcultures included, but were not limited to social clubs, political organizations, and community centers. The institutionalization of LGBTQ+ communities encouraged people who identified as LGBTQ+. This identity created safe havens for LGBTQ+ populations because they became members of a group, had the capacity to participate in social events, and engage in political movements. These subcultures not only created safe spaces for people to openly participate in the LGBTQ+ community, but also provided positive spaces, which was in contrast to feeling excluded or isolated from society.

In contemporary Western societies, sexuality may be understood as a private and personal matter. A more common view emerged in the twentieth century contending sex was biologically determined, not by society. Marcuse (1970) and Reich (1962) contend there is a need for sexual freedom and sexual expression. However, in order to achieve this level of sexual freedom, society needs to be radically reformed. This suggests a shift from how states dictate what they deem appropriate or not appropriate to inquiring about what assumptions are made about an individual's sexuality. This wave of theorizing centers on the construction of sexuality as being normalized versus ostracized (see Richardson, 1996, 2000). Understanding homosexuality as a social institution can be better understood when considering the institution of marriage. Marriage, which identified distinct roles for men and women, suggests the institution was between a man and a woman. Therefore, those who were afforded the privilege to engage in the institution of marriage were afforded social inclusion, full citizen rights, and all of the privileges afforded to married couples (e.g., medical care, benefits, insurance, taxes, retirement). Feminist and queer theory emphasized the need to challenge heteronormative assumptions. For example, to what extent do these heteronormative assumptions influence how society understands an individual's health (i.e., physical, social, emotional), laws, educational attainment, employment, financial stability, family, citizenship, and/or human rights?

### **Critical Assumptions**

The academic study of LGBTQ+ communities has produced a body of research and theories to deepen understanding of key debates, positions, and future directions for research. Before researchers developed a sociology for LGBTQ+ populations,



medical models of homosexuality seems to achieve considerable social influence. Over a century ago, medical communities proposed homosexuality was an inherited or learned identity or a form of sexual deviance. By the mid-twentieth century, anyone who identified as LGBTQ+ was identified as abnormal, deviant, and/or dangerous. The 1950s contributed to heightened discrimination and harassment for the LGBTQ+ community. As LGBTQ+ communities made themselves more visible, states and institutions decided to criminalize and repress a person's sexuality. As a means to interrupt these oppressive assumptions about people who identified as LGBTQ+, community members advocated for human rights, justice, and equity. For example, the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society (see <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/mattachine-society-daughters-of-bilitis-offices/>) established chapters in cities across the United States to broaden society's knowledge of LGBTQ+ history, contributions, and positive influence on this nation. Some aimed to reverse the medical model that identified homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder. The proposal suggested homosexuals were normal people like heterosexuals. During this time, the beginnings of a sociological approach aimed to identify homosexuals as a victimized minority.

In the 1960s and 70s, women and gay liberation movements proposed new insights to homosexuality. At that time, homosexuality was considered a social and political identity. For example, women who identified as lesbian suggesting being a lesbian was both a political act as well as challenging the norms of heterosexuality and men's dominance. At that time, to choose to identify as a lesbian encouraged women to live apart from men and establish their own social and personal lives.

Sociologists began developing a social approach to sexuality. Some sociologists identified homosexuality as normal or abnormal. They suggested homosexuals created their own identities and subcultures within a hostile Western society. Scholars like Howard Becker (1963), Edwin Schur (1965), Kenneth Plummer (1975), John Gagnon and William Simon (1973) were among theorists who emphasized that individuals were born with homosexual thoughts, feelings, and desires. The challenge ahead centered on homosexuals learning to navigate a hostile and unaccepting society. In the mid-1970s, sociologists and feminists developed a sociological perspective. The way in which homosexuals identified their social role in society was determined by the way in which communities responded to them. Therefore, because homosexuality was not a social problem, but an opportunity for society to learn to respond to the discrimination, prejudice, and inequities these communities faced. Furthermore, sociologists no longer questioned why someone identified as homosexual. They questioned the myriad of responses toward individuals in different societies who identified as homosexual. Scholars (i.e., Foucault, 1980; Katz, 1976; Smith-Rosenberg, 1975; Trumbach, 1977; Weeks, 1991) proposed the social construction of someone identifying as homosexual. This new approach to understanding homosexuality attempted to explain social meaning, its origin, and changing forms of sexuality (see D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1981).



In a social environment in which gay and feminist movements existed, a new theory emerged: queer theory. Queer theorists (e.g., Michel Foucault, Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Butler) however, contend there are a myriad of ways to being gay due to an individual's intersectionality of their identity. Specifically, a person's sexual identity cannot be separated due to one's race, class, native language, religion/faith/beliefs, age, nationality, gender, educational attainment, and/or social/emotional/physical/cognitive abilities. They argued that not all homosexuals behaved, thought, valued, or engaged in the same ways of life. Queer people recognized and valued multiple meanings attached to what it meant to identify as gay or lesbian. Furthermore, because queer people are often marginalized in Western society, queer perspectives shifted away from thinking LGBTQ+ people were a separate minority. Rather, these theorists focused on a larger system of sexuality. Therefore, queer theorists emphasized the societal norms, policies, laws, practices, and regulations that control everyone's sexuality.

In the 1980s, social movements around the world created spaces for the LGBTQ+ community to gain visibility. Throughout major cities, LGBTQ+ communities created clubs, support groups, organizations, and institutions to support social and political advancements. Despite the opposition, LGBTQ+ communities made great strides toward the promotion of human rights. This period in LGBTQ+ history is considered a time of social and political advancement as well as the rise of social constructionist perspectives in LGBTQ+ studies. A new wave of thinkers and activists sought to deepen a positive social view of homosexuality. Specifically, constructivist perspectives contend homosexuality always existed throughout civilizations. Therefore, if homosexuality always existed, identifying and living as LGBTQ+ should be considered normal and natural. Michel Foucault (1980), Jeffrey Weeks (1991), Jonathan Katz (1976), Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1975), and Randolph Trumbach (1977) also proposed the social construction of homosexuality. These scholars explained a new way to understand sexuality with categories such as lesbian and other subcultures associated with an individual's homosexual identity.

Over the last 60 years, LGBTQ communities formed organizations and groups to address the need for engagement and political action. Highly radical or militant LGBTQ+ activists were highly criticized for politically organizing, speaking of protests, revolution, and mobilization. In the 1990s, a new queer perspective suggested the need for LGBTQ+ populations to understand that heterosexuals were placed at the center of privilege. Those who identified as LGBTQ+ were often marginalized. Assimilation into mainstream heterosexual society demanded Western society be accepting of sexual diversity (see Bawer, 1993; Sullivan, 1996). During the 1990s, gay and lesbian studies had grown immensely, changing directions and encouraging pioneering work. Judith Butler (1990) set a new agenda that questioned how people's sexual desires were separated into two camps: (a) homosexuality and (b) heterosexuality. For example, dating, attending prom, family, and/or marriage often place people who identify as heterosexual above or superior to those who identify as LGBTQ+. The artificiality of the heterosexual and homosexual divisions is examined.

Queer theory encourages the need to deepen understanding of the silences, gaps, and absences which suggest the denial of same-sex desires. Theorists provided insights revealing the extent identifying as homosexual was utilized as a method by which heterosexuals used family and heterosexuality as a means to assure superiority, similar to racism and White people claiming superiority to Black and Brown people. Queer theory envisioned the recapturing of a radical movement, celebrating boundary crossers such as people who identified as bisexual and transgender (see Pottie, 1997).

These theorists recognized queer theory did not come without a myriad of challenges including, but not limited to the following: (1) the inclusion of gender (see Walters, 1996) and (2) understanding the role of race (see Samuels, 1999). Although deconstructing heterosexuality may be a primary challenge facing queer scholarship, it seems queer identities remained vulnerable and easy to ridicule. These LGBTQ+ identities were often compared to heterosexual ideologies reassuring that romances, as seen on television and in movies, between a man and a woman were normal, natural, biological, and in many ways, unquestionable. Queer theorists strive to move from reducing identification of being queer as a need to desire to understanding difficult struggles the LGBTQ+ communities face. There was a need for greater diversity, possibilities, self-realization, hope, and assurances (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993; Painter & Young, 1996; Zimmer & McNaron, 1996).

Human rights are not dictated by nature. Legislation is contextualized, depending on ever-changing social relations and circumstances. Although the USA is witnessing more rights for LGBTQ+ communities, sexual rights, practices, identities, privileges, employment, housing, and relationships are still challenged. According to the Center for American Progress (2020), the LGBTQ+ community identified the following concerns:

1. 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ Americans faced discrimination, which included more than 3 out of 5 Americans who identify as transgender.
2. Discrimination toward LGBTQ+ Americans negatively affects their economic well-being as well as their mental health.
3. More than 50% of LGBTQ+ Americans chose to hide their personal relationships.
4. For LGBTQ+ Americans attempting to receive medical care, 30% shared they had difficulty accessing necessary medical care due to high costs.
5. Approximately, 15% of LGBTQ+ Americans postponed or avoided their medical treatment due to discrimination.
6. One in three transgender Americans reported obstacles to receiving health care, which included discussions with physicians about their lived experiences as transgender.
7. LGBTQ+ individuals experienced mental health concerns related to the pandemic.

## Introduction

Although scholarly resources focus on LGBTQ+ working with gay or lesbian students (see Fisher & Komosa-Hawkins, 2013; MacGillivray, 2004); creating Gay Straight Alliances (see MacGillivray, 2007; Mayo, 2017; Miceli, 2005); implementing an LGBTQ+ curriculum (see Campos, 2005; Lehman et al., 2019); or addressing challenges facing LGBTQ+ youth (see Peterson & Panfil, 2013; Robinson, 2020; Savin-Williams, 2005), this chapter provides important guidance to school community members navigating how to work and learn with students.

To deepen understanding of the current state of LGBTQ+ political and cultural visibility, educators and school leaders may want to investigate the development of the social movement that promoted this visibility. According to Sidney Tarrow (1994), a social movement encompasses a sustained collective challenge against political dominant elites and authorities, which is led by communities with a common purpose and often do not have access to existing political institutions. As school leaders and educators reflect upon the practices, policies, and rights of those who identify as LGBTQ+, seeking why people participate in movements, how they engage, and when they choose to participate provides school communities with opportunities to develop authentic collectives to facilitate authentic change to mobilize and empower this disenfranchised minority. Endorsing human rights provides a new sense of efficacy and agential power within the school community. A historical analysis of the LGBTQ+ movement may encourage school communities to consider the following: What are the lived experiences of children, families, community members, and/or educators within the school community? To what extent do members of the LGBTQ+ community experience liberation? To what extent do organizations, networks, and/or agencies identify LGBTQ+ experiences in school as a social movement? What responses do practices, policies, and procedures elicit from school community members to support the LGBTQ+ community? What factors, if any, have influenced changes?

The 1970s ushered a new stage for gay and lesbian rights. Gay liberation, in part, resurrected from a victim empowered agent at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village (D'Emilio, 1983). The struggle for gay and lesbian rights in the 1970s unfolded in cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Miami, New York, Minneapolis St. Paul, Eugene, and others. Activists such as Jim Owles, Craig Rodwell, Marty Robinson, Barbara Gittings, Steve Endean, Jean O'Leary, and a host of countless others attracted national attention. For several politicians, gay and lesbian rights attracted people such as Marion Barry, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Jerry Brown, Diane Feinstein, Edward Kennedy, and others. The decade ended with the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979. The march attracted an estimated 250,000 participants (see Clendinen & Nagourney, 1999). The use of the words such as "gay" versus "homosexual" suggested a radical shift in self-perception. Phrases such as "gay power" embodied anti-war movements, student movements, Black power, and the feminist movement. The goal shifted from discrimination and structural oppression to the goal of liberation and self-determination (D'Emilio, 1983).

These movements encompassed a new blend of politics and culture. As a means to combat structural oppression, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) sought to achieve civil rights legislation and worked alongside other oppressed minorities such as employees, Black and Brown people, and women in hope of meaningful social change (see Marotta, 1981). The GLF followed the lead of radical feminists, who raised the consciousness of communities by bridging communities. Together, they shared lived experiences and discovered commonalities. Furthermore, these efforts fostered uncovering that their similarities existed within an oppressive system (see Adam, 1995). Radicals intentionally chose to denounce the term “homosexual,” which was often imposed on gay men and women by the medical community as a term associated with mental illness (Marotta, 1981). In turn, radicals chose the word “gay,” which symbolized self-definition and internal power.

The term “coming out” emerged from this social movement. Gay liberationists transformed the understanding of self-identification of an individual acknowledging themselves as gay in an effort to symbolize the rejection and negative association society often inflicted on this community. Coming out was no longer perceived as a one-time act, but as affirming one’s identity (see D’Emilio & Freedman, 1988; Griffith & Heble, 2002). By acknowledging one’s sexual orientation, individuals also brought the discrimination they often faced to the forefront (i.e., physical assault and verbal abuse). Although the GLF collapsed in 1973, the redefinition of coming out influenced the lives of gay men and women throughout the United States. The process of coming out transformed the individual experience from being regarded as a victim to a source of pride to celebrate oneself (see D’Emilio, 1983).

Despite such strides, a wave of political conservatism made its way across the United States. The Christian right began to interfere with the gay and lesbian movement and fostered a massive counter-movement. The Christian right focused their efforts to remove educators who identified as gay or lesbian from schools; Harvey Milk was assassinated; and the movement to “Save Our Children,” Florida legislation to appeal gay rights was spearheaded (see Clendinen & Nagourney, 1999). By the early 1980s, gay and lesbian rights were debated within all government levels from civil rights to privacy to the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic. In 1981, five gay men acquired a rare cancer, and within 19 years of its discovery, over 300,000 Americans died from AIDS, including 210,000 gay men (see Vaid, 1995). The AIDS epidemic grew rapidly and was a seemingly unstoppable disease. The onset of AIDS encouraged the number of people who willingly came out. However, the lack of response from politicians, such as Reagan and Bush, felt abandoned by their government. The Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) emerged (Cruishank, 1992).

Demonstrations to support the AIDS movement led to the creation of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, which gave essential media attention. The movement shed light on the urgency of this epidemic; provided universal awareness and hope to the gay and lesbian community; and encouraged political leverage. As the AIDS epidemic expanded media attention, political attention at local/state/national levels, the New Right utilized this epidemic as a weapon to interrupt the achievements of the 1970s. Traditional heteronormative values, beliefs, and attitudes often returned to

the forefront. For example, although identifying as gay or lesbian was no longer listed as a mental illness, the New Right correlated AIDS as a gay disease and suggested nature was enacting retribution toward gays and lesbians (see Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 1996).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the gay and lesbian struggle focused predominantly on White males. In the 1990s, gay Black, Pacific Islanders, Asians, created sexual minority rights organizations revealing the extent AIDS organizations failed to recognize their lived experiences. The Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO), the Native American AIDS Task Force, the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership forum, and the National Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Network were established (see Vaid, 1995). Furthermore, efforts were made to bridge groups within the gay and lesbian community. Queer Nation was born. The organization sought to unite lesbian, gay, bisexual, and the transgender communities under one term: Queer (see Berlant & Freeman, 1993). This unitary identity promoted the struggle of being queer and unifying as a sexual minority, transforming the derogatory term into a statement of pride. Although such efforts may have been promoted to empower communities to unite under one term, such efforts suppressed differences within these groups, including racial and gender identities to preserve cohesion (Seidman, 1993).

Furthermore, efforts such as President Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy intended to maintain gay visibility in the military. However, silencing queer people illustrated the potential threat of queer politics (see Bersani, 1995). The Clinton administration underestimated the increasing power of the religious right. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) lobbied to protect the queer community (Rayside, 1998). The movement was at a crossroads. The movement did not achieve dismantling institutionalized homophobia or national civil rights legislation.

Supreme court decisions to end employment discrimination, legislation such as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and more recently, Supreme Court decisions to support LGBTQ+ issues help the community achieve politico-cultural freedom. For example (see Issenberg, 2021), in 2000, Vermont legalized civil unions between same-sex couples; the Texas Supreme Court ruled in 2002 that sodomy laws were unconstitutional; Massachusetts legalized gay marriage in 2004; the Logo cable channel facilitated a presidential forum in 2007 focused on LGBT issues including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama; California's Proposition 8 was passed making same-sex marriage possible in 2008; President Barack Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum in 2008 affording federal employees with same-sex partners to receive some benefits; Congress passed the Matthew Shepard Act, a young man who was murdered and tortured for his perceived sexual orientation, which furthered the 1969 US Federal Hate Crime Law in 2009 to include crimes motivated by a victim's perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity or ability; a San Francisco federal judge in 2010 contends LGBT people have the constitutional right to marry; the US Senate repeals the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy affording gays and lesbians to serve openly in the United States military (Belkin & Bateman, 2003); President

Barack Obama demonstrated his support to eliminate the Defense of Marriage Act in 2011, which prohibited same-sex marriage; gay marriage was legalized in New York in 2011 and passed the Marriage Equity Act (see Mezy, 2017); the US Supreme Court decided in 2015 to declare same-sex marriage across all 50 states (see Mezy, 2017); and in 2020, the US Supreme Court ruled workers cannot be fired for being LGBT+ (Esseks, 2020).

Overall, the LGBT+ movements demonstrate a developmental history including cognitive liberation, shifting from imposed victim status from heteronormative society to an empowered agent, and transforming political acts to legislatively shape queer liberation. However, although the movement continues to expand, attaining new allies, and encouraging national long-term human rights legislation, LGBTQ youth and culture continue to face challenges in schools (see Aston, 2001). The next section focuses on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ groups in US schools.

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## Windows v. Mirrors

Although the US Supreme Court was established in 1789, rulings regarding the LGBTQ+ community were not established until nearly 170 years later. Today, the nation's highest federal court has reviewed and weighed-in on several cases regarding LGBTQ+ rights influencing the lives of Americans, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+. For too long, students who identify as LGBTQ+ have confronted more windows than mirrors, which is similar to Students and Communities of Color, people living in poverty, first-generation US students, and girls. Although this may be changing in many places across the .SA, there still exists schools who prohibit educators from discussing same-sex attraction (see Alabama State Code, 16-40A-2(c)(8) and North Carolina Code 59-32-30(5)), inclusive bathroom use, and culturally relevant curriculum (e.g., Ohio HB-322) (see <https://ohiohouse.gov/members/don-jones/news/jones-introduces-bill-to-prohibit-critical-race-theory-in-k-12-education-106451>). This legislation fosters unsafe and unwelcoming schools. These stigmatizing laws are not supported by most educators and students; however, teachers who teach in states that do not support LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula less likely to teach in a positive way about LGBTQ+ topics or provide LGBTQ-related resources. There is a need to provide K-12 students with windows to look out and view unfamiliar lived experiences as well as mirrors to afford students with opportunities to reflect on their own lives.

What would happen if youth in K-12 schools were afforded opportunities to deepen their understanding of LGBTQ+ communities, their history, marginalization, and contributions to society? What happens when students learn about human rights? What are possible learning outcomes for youth who are encouraged to advocate for LGBTQ+ communities? What are the consequences of integrating a culturally authentic curriculum to create spaces for youth to show up as their full selves?

## Teaching LGBTQ+ History

In 2011, California attempted to pass policy and become the first state to require K-12 public schools to teach LGBTQ+ history. However, conservative groups, families, and some state officials attempted to pushback this legislation. As a result, California did not approve the first LGBTQ+ inclusive textbooks until the 2017 school year (see Bay Area Reporter:: Slow rollout for LGBT textbooks ([ebar.com](http://ebar.com))). Two years later in 2019, New Jersey became the second state (see <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2019/02/01/nj-schools-teach-lgbt-history-new-law/2743028002/>) and Colorado became the third state (see [Inclusion Of American Minorities In Teaching Civil Government | Colorado General Assembly](#)) to join California requiring schools to expand their definitions of US history, civil rights, and advocacy groups. And throughout the passing of these house bills, while Christian Fuscarino, the executive director of Garden State Equality (see <https://www.gardenstateequality.org/>), promoted this work, Alfonso Cirulli, a public school leader (see [Barnegat mayor: Requiring LGBT history in school is “absurdity” \(app.com\)](#)), announced the government was promoting immorality by requiring schools to engage students in learning about LGBTQ+ history.

In 2019, the Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker announced that his state would be the fourth state to require public schools to teach LGBTQ+ history passing HB0246 (see <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=10100HB0246&GA=101&SessionId=108&DocTypeId=HB&LegID=114183&DocNum=0246&GAID=15&Session=>). He promoted this work, along with Senator Heather Steans (see <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/illinois-mandates-schools-teach-lgbt-history-to-overcome-intolerance>), to provide students with opportunities to navigate discriminatory practices and policies as well as examining the roles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people under the Illinois Humans Rights Act. In 2020, schools were allotted funds to purchase textbooks to promote the inclusion of all people. However, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum depends on individual school districts because school community members have the power and privilege to determine how they will meet educational standards as well as the extent the students will experience a culturally inclusive curriculum. Furthermore, in 2020, Arizona’s lawmakers voted to overturn a decades-old law prohibiting schools from providing students who identified as LGBTQ+ from receiving accurate health information in school (e.g., HIV, AIDS) (see <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/11/us/arizona-repeals-anti-LGBTQ-law-trnd/index.html>).

Although California, New Jersey, Colorado, Oregon, and counties in Virginia and Maryland led the charge to integrate LGBTQ+ history in schools, states such as Alabama, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi continue to pass policy prohibiting educators to teach about LGBTQ+ communities. Anti-LGBTQ+ community laws are often referred to as *no promo homo* laws, because they forbid educators from conversing with students about LGBTQ+ communities in a positive light, if at all. This legislation fostered unsafe and unwelcoming school



environments. According to the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (see <https://www.glsen.org/activity/no-promo-homo-laws>), some K-12 schools require schools to discuss negative perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community in schools. In GLSEN's research brief (see <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/GLSEN-Research-Laws-that-Prohibit-Promotion-of-Homosexuality-Implications.pdf>), the organization examined the influence of *no promo homo* laws on LGBTQ+ school communities. They conclude the influence of oppressive practices further stigmatizes LGBTQ+ students by perpetuating disinformation, misinformation, and misleading information.

According to GLSEN's 2019 Culture and Climate survey findings (see <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/California-Snapshot-2019.pdf>), U.S. K-12 public schools are not embracing an inclusive LGBTQ+ curriculum. Advocates believed the house bill would inspire equitable and inclusive learning environments, encouraging schools to integrate LGBTQ+ contributions, history, and accomplishments. However, the Education Act faced several roadblocks. Less than 20% of educators integrated LGBTQ+ history and did not utilize the largest repository of LGBTQ+ resources in the world (see <https://one.usc.edu/collections/conducting-research>). LGBTQ+ history should be considered an integral part of U.S. history. In order to promote authentically inclusive curriculum, there is a need for schools to create spaces for teaching multiple historical perspectives.

Unfortunately, across the U.S., only 19.4% of public schools promote positive LGBTQ+ representations including events, history, and people. For example, in California, a state that passed LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum legislation, only 31% of students reported being taught about this specific history in 2019. Some teachers may have lacked support at the local level to promote this inclusive curriculum. Pushback from school leadership, school boards, and families could promote negative consequences to those who embrace counter narratives and histories of disenfranchised populations.

In February of 2021, Congress passed H.R.5, the Equality Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, an individual's sexual orientation, as well as gender identity (see <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5>). This legislation may influence what may be taught in K-12 public schools. The Equality Act has the potential to enable protections for school communities, specifically, implementing LGBTQ+ history. The Equality Act may encourage educators to introduce appropriate language, diverse voices, counter narratives, and LGBTQ+ history that accurately represents an inclusive curriculum. The safeguard protection for educators, school leaders, families, and/or students who identify as LGBTQ+ may also empower this community. For LGBTQ+ students, promoting an inclusive curriculum is essential to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Students learn about histories that may have been silenced, overlooked, and/or altered by the dominant cultural narratives; and in this case, by heteronormativity. GLSEN's climate studies suggest the implementation of an inclusive curriculum influences how often LGBTQ+ students experience bullying and harassment in school (see [The 2015 National School Climate Survey | GLSEN](#)).



The findings also contend that LGBTQ+ history and narratives affect all students positively. Students may have an opportunity to engage in gender-inclusive curriculum, which may support and validate students' lived experiences. For example, 82% of students were more likely to accept LGBTQ+ peers while engaging in a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculums (see [The 2015 National School Climate Survey | GLSEN](#)). And, in the 2019 GLSEN survey, approximately one third of LGBTQ+ youth considered dropping out of school due to hostile school climates, policies, and practices.

In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 19–1192 (see <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/1192commission>), which concerned themselves with teaching the inclusion of matters aligned with American minorities. The Commission made recommendations to the State Board of Education to review and revise their history curriculum regarding culture, social contributions, and civil government. In 2021, the 1192 Commission (see <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/1192commissionmeetingsummary11421>) encouraged culturally inclusive curriculum. Concerns regarding the inclusion of American minorities in teaching civil government in schools, educators are encouraged to include the culture, social contributions, and history of Latinx, American Indians, Asian Americans, African Americans, and LGBTQ+ individuals, and those who face religious persecution, as well as the intersectionality of social and cultural features within these communities. Current legislation (i.e., HB 19–1192) requires school communities to reconvene at least once every 10 years and forums to be held every six years to ensure these educational standards are being met.

In 2021, The Trevor Project, a U.S. national organization focused on suicide prevention for LGBTQ+ youth (see <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>), conducted a 2021 survey to shed light on the lived experiences of 34,759 youth ages 13–24. LGBTQ youth, who gained access to safe spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation, reported lower rates of suicide attempts than those who did not. Furthermore, the role of social media played both a positive and negative affect on LGBTQ youth with 88% identifying that it played a negative role in their social-emotional well-being. For those who identify as LGBTQ, youth discovered gender-affirming spaces online (69%), at school (50%), and at home (34%). LGBTQ-affirming spaces Transgender and nonbinary youth identified gender-affirming spaces online (71%), in school (47%), and at home (33%).

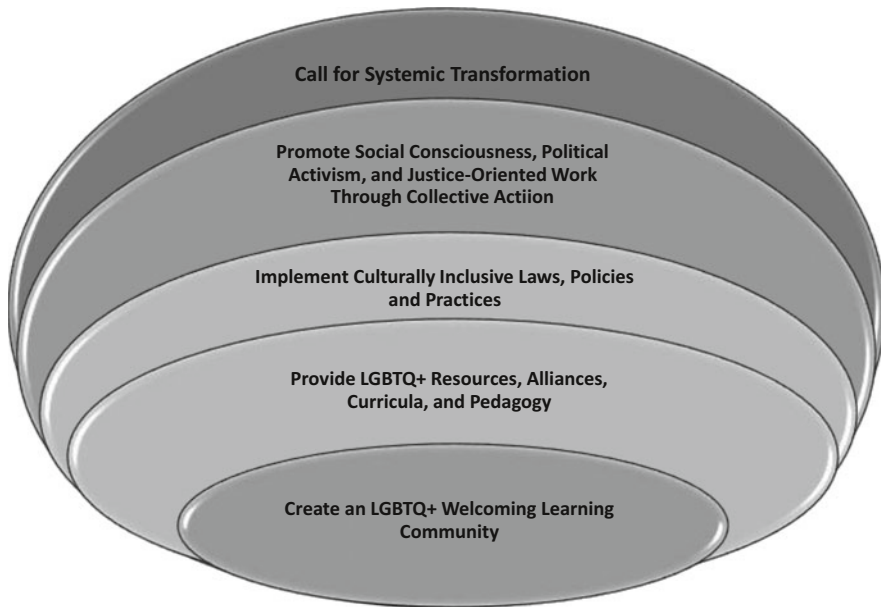
Queer America, an educational podcast released by the Southern Poverty Law Center's Learning for Justice (LFJ), showcases Leila Rupp and John D'Emilio. Together, these historians created podcasts focused on sexual and gender identity in the United States. Queer America provides a resource to educators interested in LGBTQ+ history. Leila and John present curriculum, critical conversations, resources, and activities to integrate LGBTQ histories (see <https://www.learningforjustice.org/podcasts/queer-america/welcome-to-queer-america>). The 13-episode podcast is aligned with Learning for Justice (see <https://www.learningforjustice.org/about>). The organization identifies as a catalyst to advance human rights for all communities.

## Conclusions and Reflections

Discussing sexual and gender identity with students may be emotional, complex, and exhausting. Discovering the history of Queer America, incorporating queer history in curriculum, and creating sacred safe spaces for this work in schools plays a significant role in navigating possible challenges K-12 school communities may face. Beyond a child's home, US schools may be considered primary spaces for educating, socializing, and providing essential services for youth. Schools, however, can be challenging environments for students, especially for youth who often feel unwelcomed for identifying as LGBTQ+ (see Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, 2021). Laws prohibiting discussion about LGBTQ+ communities may forbid educators from discussing LGBTQ+ people, topics, or historical events. Furthermore, some school communities may encourage educators to speak of LGBTQ+ communities in a negative or inaccurate way, or possibly, not at all (see Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, 2021). For many of these students, social pressures are unfortunately part of the K-12 school experience regardless of a child's gender identity or sexual orientation. However, for those who identify as LGBTQ+, they may experience more challenges due to lack of support from family and friends; social isolation from the community-at-large; exclusion and/or demonization from religious/faith-based institutions; and negative messaging about LGBTQ+ people at school, social media, and community.

Focusing on the social and lived realities of sexual minorities suggests political, social, and educational systems critically examine the extent each contributes to the perpetuation of an inequitable educational system that privileges heterosexual identities, heteronormativity, and dominant knowledge/power/narratives. Should students know what led to the Stonewall uprising (see Sanders, 2019) of 1969? Do learners know about Jean O'Leary's legacy as a gay rights activist (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USWWUVEFLUU>)? Or the literary genius and contributions of James Baldwin (see Brim, 2017)? Should students understand the LGBTQ+ movement (see Adam, 1995), casualties on the community, human rights for public health, and/or prevailing heteronormative gender dynamics (see D'Emilio, 1983)? How many school community members know about the murders of Matthew Shepard (see <https://www.matthewshepard.org/>) and Billy Jack Gaither (see <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/billyjack/>) who inspired journalists, filmmakers, activists, school leaders, teachers, and policymakers morally concerned about acts of violence toward LGBTQ+ people to focus on gay-bashing in the United States?

A conceptual model (see Fig. 1) provides a means to strengthen efforts to create a more just educational system. The model encourages communities to examine how they understand the larger heteronormative system; to recognize the extent educators/youth/families participate in the interruption of a heteronormative social organization; the need to develop strategies to interrupt heteronormative thinking/curricula/practices; and creating an inclusive learning environment through systemic institutional changes.



**Fig. 1** Conceptual model for creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive learning community

When comparing how often LGBTQ+ communities and legacies are discussed throughout the curriculum, sexual orientation does not seem to receive much attention (see Harris & Bliss, 1997; Mayo, 2014; O’Conor, 1995; Smith, 1998). A lack of policies, curriculum, and practices that support and affirm LGBTQ+ youth suggests schools have failed to implement protections. Therefore, students who identify as LGBTQ may face harassment, bullying, hostile learning environments, and isolation, which may place LGBTQ+ youth in unsafe physical and psychological educational spaces and possibly limit their education. Exposure to negative effects includes violence as well as health-related disparities between LGBTQ+ youth and their heterosexual counterparts (see Bouris, Everett, Health, Elsaesser, & Neilands, 2016; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011). For example, LGBTQ+ youth are 140% more likely not to attend school at least one day out of 30 days. With LGBTQ+ students having more attendance concerns, lower school performance, and decreased graduation rates may have lifelong consequences for these students. According to Kann et al. (2016), LGBTQ+ youth experience more violence, immunodeficiency virus infections, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), pregnancy, stigma, social rejection, and family disapproval. Furthermore, these complex combinations also raise concerns for LGBTQ+ youth regarding higher risks for depression, anxiety, suicide, drug abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. Nearly 29% of LGBTQ+ students attempted suicide at least one time the year before in comparison to 6% of heterosexual youth. Furthermore, in 2014, LGBTQ+ men accounted for 8 out of 10 HIV total diagnoses among young people (Coker, Austin, & Schuster, 2010).

Youth may not be in positions to improve their school climate, propose LGBTQ+ related policies, or supporting school practices to make meaningful connections with their school communities. The outcomes of LGBTQ-bias are often associated with negative outcomes such as lower daily attendance, health concerns, not feeling connected with school, and lower grade point averages (GPA) (see Center for Disease Control, 2021; O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Russell et al., 2011). LGBTQ+ students need learning environments that are safe, supportive, and caring. Creating positive communities provides opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth to achieve, develop/maintain/sustain good physical and mental health.

Although schools and lawmakers may recognize LGBTQ+ youth as a vulnerable and marginalized population in school communities, there is a need to create, design, implement, integrate, and ensure all students feel safe and welcomed in school. Legislation has the capacity to ensure US K-12 schools provide culturally comprehensive and accurate teaching of history. Furthermore, legislation also affirms the contributions, dignity, and civil rights movements that shape society.

In some states, students and teachers may not have as many protections as other states. For example, silencing LGBTQ+ history, narratives, and lived experiences may be exacerbated by state laws (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Montana, Tennessee, and Texas) due to antiquated legislation that restricts discussions of LGBTQ+ communities in schools (see Ronan, 2021). Protections may not exist, be inadequate, and/or not enforced. In 2015, 15 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were enacted into law in the United States. In April of 2021, eight anti-LGBTQ+ bills were enacted into law with 10 more proposals awaiting governors' signatures. Furthermore, more than 250 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in 2021 with additional bills waiting to be presented before the end of legislative sessions (Ronan, 2021). Although more than 80 US corporations have opposed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation (e.g., American Express, Google, Pfizer, American Airlines, Apple, Verizon, Uber, and Facebook), as a nation, we are approaching a crisis with a need for schools and businesses to play a significant role in taking action against anti-LGBTQ state bills.

As LGBTQ+ youth and educators become more visible, states and schools may need to reconsider the extent they have ignored their needs as well as the extent schools did not provide the same academic and social emotional safeguards as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, exclusion from curricula and resources; restrictions for LGBTQ+ youth organizations/clubs/groups; and discrimination and bigotry from school community members. These broad concerns provide starting points for school community leaders and policymakers to ensure the rights of people who identify as LGBTQ+ are respected and protected in K-12 US schools. In order to support K-12 school communities, educators may need support to transform their curricula, practices, and policies in fear of possible community protest. This support may disrupt these constraints and provide educators and youth with innovative instructional approaches, inclusive curriculum, and opportunities to address lived realities facing LGBTQ+ communities across the United States.

Integrating LGBTQ+ history throughout K-12 curriculum is not about attending to covering ever historical figure, body of literature, or historical event. Rather, addressing historical work affords learning communities opportunities to pay closer attention to historically situated populations. Learners are encouraged to ask questions, inquire about counter narratives, and uncover what may have been suppressed. The intersection between sexuality and gender, issues of racial justice, the role of capitalism, social justice, human rights, mental health, equity, and civil rights movements may shape K-12 learning environments. This authentic inquiry may energize pedagogical approaches and consider the extent new ways of thinking and responding provide a springboard for discussions, debates, and new ways of knowing.

Recommendations for promoting authentic action are complex. Awareness may be the first step; however, the historical heteronormative social structures that discriminate, ostracize, and stigmatize sexual minorities must be addressed to promoting authentic change. Some school communities may be proponents of civil rights, sexual minority histories/narratives/contributions, and culturally responsive learning spaces. However, most K-12 schools are not examining the influence anti-LGBTQ+ policies, laws, and activities play within learning communities. In order to address the lived realities facing LGBTQ+ communities, each school community member may need to look within, reflect on one's capacity and responsibility to eliminate LGBTQ+ discriminatory laws/policies/practices, and authentically promote inclusive systemic changes that may eliminate injustice in K-12 schools.

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## How Racial Categorization Obscures Histories of Intraethnic Inequities

Bach-Mai Dolly Nguyen and Andrés Castro Samayoa

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### Abstract

This chapter interrogates how the process of constructing Asian Americans as a monolithic racial category within data collection practices undermines the clarity with which educators can identify inequitable educational outcomes across the plurality of ethnic groups contained by the broader Asian American category. Following a Foucauldian tradition of contesting the underlying assumptions informing contemporary educational practices, the chapter outlines the limits of racial categorization. It illustrates the current issues of Asian Americans’ persistence representation as model minorities and a political wedge in the pursuit of educational equity by focusing on data disaggregation efforts within Washington State.

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**Keywords**

Asian American · Model minority · Categorization · Achievement · Affirmative action

**The Field of Memory**

Asian Americans have a long history of unassimilable representation within United States (U.S.) history, often depicted as a foreign threat. From the Chinese Exclusion Act in the late nineteenth century to Japanese internment camps during World War II, peoples of East Asian heritage within U.S. soils have experienced fraught relationships within a state that has sponsored exclusionary practices (Kurashige, 2016, Lew-Williams, 2018; Takaki, 1998). The latter part of the twentieth century, however, forged a distinct narrative for Asian Americans: one where their perceived social, educational, and financial mobility crystallized a new narrative of exemplar assimilation within the nation-state.

**The Field of Presence**

Examining the historical construction of Asian Americans as a racial category offers insights into the narratives that position Asian Americans as a mythical model minority in the U. S. These durable perspectives have been mobilized to integrate Asian Americans within an assimilationist framework of respectability politics. Contrasting with this perspective, Asian American scholars have disrupted these claims by mobilizing efforts to disaggregate racial data to both demystify the model minority narrative and avoid casting Asian Americans as a political wedge in current debates on educational attainment amongst minoritized racial groups.

**The Field of Concomitance**

The contemporary moment offers multiple examples of efforts to disaggregate educational data by enhancing the ethnoracial granularity with which data are produced and disseminated. This is one contemporary strategy seeking to undermine the mythical status of Asian Americans as model minorities. This is the result of important activism in analog fields, such as public health.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Current attempts to mobilize Asian Americans as a political wedge within discourses of educational inequality in US postsecondary education embody the persistent ambivalence of representation of Asian Americans within contemporary educational scholarship.

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**Introduction**

This chapter examines how racial categorization operates as a naturalized process within educational administration. First, the distinction between “Asian” and “Asian American” is discussed to illustrate how practices of categorical differentiation

across racial groups render Asian Americans as simultaneously foreign and model minorities. A brief history of the shifts in the production of Asian American as a racial category in the U. S. outlines how the multiple experiences, circumstances, and outcomes seldom examine the assumptions undergirding the empirical claims that educational leaders use to allocate resources for racial groups within educational environments. It is concluded that Asian American heterogeneity must be viewed beyond categories, questioning the basis upon which claims of empirical truth about racial distinctions for Asian Americans are made within the educational realm.

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## Who Counts as “Asian American”?

The U.S. Census Bureau defines “Asian” as:

A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)

As the nation’s most comprehensive source of demographic information, and self-defined “leading provider of quality data about its people” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), the U.S. Census is largely considered a factual repository from which researchers construct knowledge about the nation’s populace and legislators allocate resources, including educational appropriations. The Census has been a critical source in wide-reaching legal verdicts ranging from exclusionary laws (Prewitt, 2016) to redistricting policies (Persily, 2000). And though a cadre of historians and sociologists have amassed extensive empirical evidence nuancing how we come to believe in the technologies of racial categorization within instruments like the Census as scientific truths, these racial checkboxes continue to define both the sociocultural and national boundaries of who counts as Asian and to whom the category’s associated characteristics apply (Anderson, 2015). Thus, when the Pew Research Center reported that Asians are the highest-earning, best-educated, and most satisfied Americans (2012), it reinforced the presumption that such a claim could equally apply to all peoples of origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.

The notion of origins, in and of itself, however must be carefully scrutinized. Changing borders of nation-states and claims to land aside, origins presume the beginnings of any given individual in relation to a specific place. Most obviously, this discounts the viability of claims to group identities, such as Hmong, for whom relationships with land have been nomadic due to forced migration (Vang, 2010). Additionally, this view of spatial origins undermines the inextricable articulations of individuals’ self-identification in relation to geographies. The distinction between “Asian” and “Asian American,” for example, illustrates this point. Consider how an individual may have origins in Japan because a blood relative from five generations prior was born in the city of Mitaka, thus rendering this person’s self-identification

as Asian per the Census' definition. The individual's identification, however, may further modify this categorization as Asian *American*, given their own birth within the boundaries of the U.S. While subtle, the additional modifier is of particular importance: Asians in the U.S. view their social realities differently than Asians born or living in Asia (Pew Research Center, 2012; Teng, 2013). Therefore, symbolic boundaries – “lines that include and define some people, groups, and things while excluding others [based on]. . .normative interdictions (taboos), cultural attitudes and practices, and patterns of likes and dislikes” (Lamont, Pendergrass, & Pachucki, 2015, p. 850) – could be more accurate referents for determining who counts as Asian, and at minimum, should be considered when drawing conclusions about the racial group.

The attachment to origins as the foundation for race is of particular significance for Asians because of the historical contingencies upon which contemporary practices render Asians as perpetual foreigners. In doing so, these narratives advance the belief that Asians are wholly unassimilable (Wu, 2002), and therefore, never fully American. The addition of “American” to the racial group label does little to counter decades of media representations (Lee, Wong, & Alvarez, 2009), news reports (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007), and everyday exchanges (Ruiz, Horowitz, & Tamir, 2020) that cements the viability of casting aspersions against Asian Americans to “go back to your country” as consistent with the untenability of Asian peoples. The naming of instances when Asians are attacked, called, or viewed as un-American or “forever foreigner” (Tuan, 1998) casts light to an unexamined assumption within scholarly discourses on Asian Americans. Beyond literary conceptions is the presence of real-life exchanges that are reported as discrimination, whether based on foreignness or not, that should be also be acknowledged as valid. Both viewpoints require attention when considering how to characterize Asian Americans.

There is a third perspective that also deserves attention and that is an equally dominant belief: that Asian Americans neither endure racism nor discrimination. This perspective can stem from the denial of racism in all forms toward all groups (Russonello, 2020) or the opinion that racism does not exist for Asian Americans, specifically. The latter has been theorized by scholars as the “model minority myth” (Takagi, 1992), or the misconception of universal and unparalleled success achieved by Asian Americans. Given life in *The New York Times* by sociologist William Petersen (1966), the model minority was first used in writings that portrayed Japanese Americans as an exemplary group for overcoming discrimination and achieving a measure of educational and financial success deemed laudable by policymakers and media alike. Retrospective accounts of this moment in the late 1960s included the framing of the model minority as a mythical depiction, challenging Petersen's conception, and giving a new vantage point from which to understand the intraethnic heterogeneity of Asian Americans. Based on the extension of the model minority as a myth, individuals within the group could be considered more variable and undefinable by a single characterization.

Collectively, the multiple and contrasting ideas and concepts related to Asian Americans that are considered viable point out one conclusion: the basis of who Asian Americans are is predicated on the sustenance of incoherent assumptions that stitch together disparate groups. Accordingly, documenting the experiences,

circumstances, and outcomes of the racial group – within and beyond education – must acknowledge the presuppositions not of the group, but of the category itself.

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## Limits of Categorization

Scholars in the social sciences, for the most part, concur that race is a social construct (Omi & Winant, 2015). The broad contributions of humanists and social scientists grounding racial constructs within historical contingencies have dethroned perspectives that argued for a biological basis of racial differentiation. The processual scripts wherein ideals of who counts as Asian American and how specific practices delimit the contours of Asian American-ness are sedimented through quotidian aspects: from food to linguistic practices, to attitudes towards family and education. The history of how social scientists created the boundaries for an Asian checkbox underscores how these empirical practices tangoed with the sociopolitical zeitgeist of their moment. As Kenneth Prewitt (2016) – former Director of the U.S. Census Bureau – documents, Chinese, Japanese, and “Hindoo” all received their own racial categorizations in the late 1800s, which were a direct response to the growth of these groups’ immigration to the U. S. Creating these categories based on nationality had a key aim: “Asians were counted in so they could be counted out” from the apportioning of federal resources (Prewitt, 2016). The shifting nature of who is included within the proverbial Asian checkbox has, at times, included Pacific Islanders. Their inclusion within the Asian category has unfolded like a pendulum – starting separately in Blumenbach’s taxonomy, conjoined by the Census, and detached again by the Office of Management and Budget in 1997 (Prewitt, 2016). As Perez (2002) noted in his exploration of identity formation within the context of US nation-building efforts, the construction of homogenizing ethnic labels (such as “Asian Pacific Islander”) is part of a “nation that romanticises [*sic*] its immigrant history; Pacific Islander experiences are often watered down by these binarism” (p. 457). These practices of selective (in/ex)clusion in the construction of racial categories are the grounds upon which broader narratives of educational opportunities and outcomes are framed across educational discourses.

There are instances, however, when one’s categorization misses the mark entirely. Maghbouleh (2017) documents this phenomena in her book on Iranian Americans who “sit, categorically, at the outer limits of whiteness, and [...] possess social experiences that reflect the outer boundaries and limitations of what ‘official’ whiteness can achieve or mobilize” (p. 9). While categorization as a social practice serves as a process by which material social conditions are both articulated and materialized, the construction of boundaries that delimit the contours of the racial categories also obscures the lives of individuals inhabiting the liminal spaces of the categories. Accordingly, not only must conclusions about Asian Americans, and their outcomes and life circumstances, be carefully considered given the faulty grounds upon which the Census has defined them, but the inevitability of these categories’ changes over time offer a cautionary tale. Ethnoracial categories are bound to temporal shifts and, thus, must be used with caution when aspiring to offer a portrayal of the complex cacophony of lived experiences that these categories aspire to apprehend. For Asian

Americans, racial categories as a basis of truthful representation must be contested by social scientists, educational policymakers, and educators.

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## Asian Americans in Education

There is no shortage of scholarship admonishing Asian American's representation in educational scholarship as constrained through the enduring tropes of the perpetual foreigner and the model minority (Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2016). Asian American researchers have rightly critiqued prior scholarship for advancing a narrative of Asian American success as indicative of assimilation into the white norms of the U. S.' schooling systems (Teranishi, 2010). Earlier scholarship in the field lamented how targeted policies to enhance educational access (such as affirmative action) had resulted in the exclusion of Asian Americans (Hsia, 1987) despite the growing compositional shifts among the broader Asian American community (Hsia, 1988). Thirty years later, lawsuits against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Harvard University by the Students For Fair Admissions (a lobbying group funded by conservative legal strategist Edward Blum) have embodied the most recent iteration of scrutinizing Asian Americans' treatment in selective access to postsecondary education in the U. S. (Garcés & Poon, 2018; Hartocollis, 2018).

Asian Americans have often figured as "interlopers" in educational scholarship as they "rarely gain visibility and voice as racial minorities" (Ng et al., 2007, p. 96). Thus, perceptions of Asian Americans' success in educational outcomes have bolstered broader claims about their assimilation into "honorific whiteness" despite empirical evidence demonstrating the centrality of their racialized othering within educational spaces and across multiple social settings. As Lee and Kye (2016) suggest, understanding Asian Americans' integration across educational, economic, and social spheres in the U. S. is better framed through the concept of "racialized assimilation," as way to "to move past binary frameworks of assimilation or racialization as mutually exclusive outcomes" (p. 266). From this perspective, Asian migrants' educational trajectories and achievements as evidenced through researchers' traditional markers of acculturation processes (e.g., intermarriage rates) must also recognize how Asian migrants and Asian Americans "must confront the challenge of their nonwhite racial status, which – unlike the more soluble nature of ethnicity – persists through the years and even generations in a country fundamentally defined by the perception of race" (Lee & Kye, 2006, p. 255).

Understanding Asian Americans' educational trajectories must extend beyond the recognition of their ethnoracially minoritized status. As Espiritu (1997) has previously asserted, contesting the validity of the model minority myth is one strategy by which researchers and educators can fend off the "ideological assaults," on Asian American representation while recognizing the centrality of race. Scholars can also extend this critique further by contesting the imperatives for racial categorization that curtail deeper understandings of intracategorical heterogeneity. Scholarship responsive to this kaleidoscopic representation of Asian American experiences, thus, often relies on the ethnonational and regional differentiations of Asian migrants in the U. S., with some

attention to the trajectories of Asian identity development over time (Chhuon & Hudley, 2011; Shah, 2012; Tang, 2015). This body of work has enabled policymakers, educators, and scholars to develop a more refined understanding of the opportunities and challenges that help to contest broad claims about Asian Americans.

For example, the establishment of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) through the College Cost Reduction & Access Act in 2007 represents one of the most notable changes to federal educational policymaking in the late twentieth century targeted at enhancing support for Asian Americans' educational achievement in higher education (Kurland et al., 2019). Through the apportioning of targeted (competitive) federal fiscal resources to institutions enrolling a higher proportion of financially needy Asian American and Pacific Islander students, the establishment of AANAPISIs signals an important moment in the rhetorical shift mainstreaming a disaggregated understanding of Asian American educational success. This type of federal change in educational appropriations was the result of longstanding civic and social advocacy mobilized by both grassroots activists and elected representatives (Park & Teranishi, 2008). Indeed, the flourishing of scholarship and policies geared at transforming monolithic understandings of the "model minority" have largely benefitted from concerted efforts to foreground the kaleidoscope of experiences subsumed in the Asian American category through data disaggregation efforts.

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## Heterogeneity Beyond Categories

Efforts to interrogate racial categories have been advanced through calls to disaggregate racial group data into subgroups. These efforts have been particularly effective within educational scholarship (Teranishi, Nguyen, Alcantar, & Curammeng, 2020). For Asian Americans, the subgrouping has been constructed largely along lines of differentiated nationality, echoing the Census' original conceptualization of Asian Americanness as distinct from other racial groups given its use of geographic origin in lieu of skin color (e.g., white and Black) and culture (e.g., Native American) as the primary differentiator (Prewitt, 2016). It would seem, then, that the answer to obscurity in racial categories – data disaggregation – hinges on nationality, the very basis of "taxonomic confusion over who belonged to the Asian race" (p. 65) in the first place. This critique does not discount that disaggregated data could and sometimes does offer a more precise view of particular groups (Nguyen, Noguera, Adkins, & Teranishi, 2019), revealing hidden forms of inequality otherwise unseen. However, to be true to Foucault's persistent questioning of knowledge and truth, one must also consider how establishing different boundaries for categorizing Asian Americans is more meaningful or productive than those that presently exist, such that capturing discontinuities and divergences veiled by aggregation remain at bay. An ethnically Chinese individual, raised in Vietnam, for example, falls into an abstraction between categorical boundaries based on nationality. How, then, might education leaders more fully understand the educational experiences and outcomes of Asian Americans?

Educational leaders must view Asian American heterogeneity beyond categorical domains. This perspective does not advocate for the wholesale dismissal of racial categories – this is an implausible and ill-advised strategy. Indeed, the only way to understand persistent educational inequality is by constructing robust data that can trace the durability of inequitable educational outcomes. Rather, there must be an ongoing effort and commitment to critiquing the very basis of knowledge from which “truths” about Asian Americans are drawn by scrutinizing who are included and, also, excluded from the category itself. In doing so, the conclusions made about the racial group – their patterns of academic, economic, and social successes (Pew Research Center, 2012) – can be properly contextualized and scrutinized.

Ignoring the intracategorical disparities of Asian American based on overarching generalizations founded on an incoherent process of categorization has ensured that the specific educational inequalities faced by ethnic subgroups are rendered invisible (Pang, 2006). The lack of representation of Asian American sub-groups within discourses has perpetuated the enduring gaps faced by those who are at the margins of their racial grouping (Pang, Han, & Pang, 2011). To counter these patterns, education leaders must be unwavering in their commitment to carefully understand how racial categories shift over time within their specific geographical contexts. In these moments of racial reckoning, leaders must question the very foundations upon which they execute their decisions to apportion resources to specific groups of students, particularly when doing so on the basis of racial differentiation. Legislative changes in the state of Washington, as described below, illustrate some of the practices that can both facilitate and hinder efforts to advance educational leaders’ responsiveness to shifting racial categories.

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### **Case Study: Categorical Shifts in Washington State**

The consideration of ethnoracial categories has been a topic at the forefront of education in Washington State for over a decade, with its legislative debut beginning in 2007 (S.B. 5843, 2007). In the years following, two parallel mandates were executed that initiated the persistent effort to add ethnic subgroup categories to demographic forms. The first was the directive for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to produce a “feasibility” report, which in addition to a number of other priorities, investigated the feasibility of expanding race and ethnicity codes (Willhoft, Munson, & Tamayo, 2008). In the report, OSPI recommended that a reasonable change to data collection would include the collection of subgroup categories for Asian Americans, alongside other racial minority groups except Black/African American. In the same year that the feasibility report was released, legislative appropriation was directed toward ethnic commissions in the state, including the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs to “conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap” (H.B. 2687, 2007, p. 55) for their respective student populations. The funding produced reports, such as Hune and Takeuchi’s (2008) *Asian Americans in Washington State: Closing Their Hidden Achievement Gaps*, wherein they demonstrate the racial achievement gaps that are present in education among



Asian Americans and affirm the need for disaggregated subgroup data to better represent the full range of outcomes within the racial group.

Collectively, the reports converged to serve as the justification for the two major changes to come. The first of the changes came in 2010, which included the addition of subgroups of Asian Americans (National Forum on Education Statistics, 2016). These data were first used by the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) in 2015, highlighting the wide disparities between Asian American subgroups that were newly collected by the state, and other organizations such as Seattle Public Schools – the largest district in Washington State. The second change was the creation of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), which became central to the advocacy for the first legislative bill to include a data disaggregation stipulation as a mechanism to address educational gaps (H.B. 1680). It failed in both the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 legislative sessions, but a version passed in the 2015–2016 session as H.B. 1541 and catalyzed the first mandated disaggregated data changes in all K-12 public schools across Washington State (see OSPI Race & Ethnicity Student Data Task Force, 2017, pp. 10–16). In addition to the 26 groupings under the Asian categorization, the task force recommended reconvening 3–5 years after data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of ethnoracial categories. It is this recommendation that reflects Washington State’s understanding of the shifting nature of racial categorization and commitment to rendering it continually suspect to ensure racial groups are well represented.

This commitment is held accountable by several intersecting constituents in Washington State. In addition to legislative mandates, the EOGOAC – now a state-appointed committee that is responsible for providing recommendations related to educational gaps – has prioritized data disaggregation efforts since its inception. Additionally, Washington State benefits from robust participation from community-based organizations (CBOs), many of whom are invested in efforts for better representation through data and have published reports, opinion pieces, and blogs to garner support and bring attention to its significance (Cooley, 2016; Lee & Nguyen, 2019). These CBOs have a direct line of communication to the EOGOAC and are further fortified by ethnic commissions who center their voices. The collective and overlapping legislative-, policy-, and community-based efforts hold the state accountable to forefronting racial categories, continually revisiting its relevance and effectiveness, and to applying the knowledge that emerges from changing categorization to addressing otherwise concealed educational gaps for Asian Americans, and for all marginalized groups.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The plight of equitable representation to the stratification of opportunities for Asian American subgroups within the U. S. has most recently surfaced within post-secondary education. The ongoing threat to the constitutional validity of affirmative action in selective admissions processes reifies the assumption of the model minority that requires particular scrutiny from educational administrators and leaders. As Poon and Segoshi (2018) have previously argued, the representation of Asian



Americans as a “racial mascot,” within affirmative action litigation, casts a shadow on the work of educators. Asian Americans are, once again, discursively produced as a mythically homogenous group. In doing so, the possibility of intracategorical nuance outlined in this chapter is undermined. Similarly, these depictions of Asian Americans have also limited the possibilities of intercategorical political coalitions between Asian Americans and other ethnoracial groups by being mobilized as a political wedge between other racially minoritized groups. The disavowal of Asian American heterogeneity, thus, reaffirms the specter of white supremacy that continues to define much of the educational environments within the U. S.

These concerns have only been exacerbated by the global uncertainty stoked by the rapacious SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus. The advent of a global pandemic has unleashed a social reordering that, in just a few months, has exacerbated both chronic global inequities while deepening the divide across racial categories. In the U. S., the rise of virulent anti-Asian sentiment has further underscored Asian Americans’ precarious racialization (Chen, Trinh, & Yang, 2020). These experiences of racist hatred are hardly unprecedented (Coates, 2020). Rather, they serve as a(n) (un) necessary clarion call to reorient scholarship on racial categorizations with more definitive disruptions into our current frameworks.

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# The Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Education on Black Girls in K-12 Schools

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Tawannah G. Allen and Patricia Hilliard

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## Abstract

In 2016, the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reported that Black girls were overrepresented among students who face discipline that excluded or criminalized them. Although Black girls constituted only 8% of K-12 students nationwide, 14% had received one or more out-of-school suspensions. Out-of-school suspensions often lead to interactions with the criminal legal system, increasing the likelihood of imprisonment and often beginning the school-to-prison pipeline for the most vulnerable youth. Data from 2011 to 2012 showed that Black females constituted 31% of public-school girls who were referred to law enforcement but represented a staggering 43% of those arrested on school grounds for school disciplinary reasons. These trends are paralleled in the

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criminal legal system. It is thus imperative to explore why the basis of Black girls' discipline is less on their behavior and more on how they are portrayed in society. In this presentation, we use the theoretical frameworks of racial and gender identity, along with Critical Race Feminism, to explain the disproportionality in suspension and expulsion rates for Black girls.

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**Keywords**

Racial identity · Critical race feminism · Black girls · Suspension rates ·  
Adultification

**The field of memory**

Racial identity refers to the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that an individual holds about his or her racial group in relation to the majority racial group (Arroyo & Zigler, 1991). Children's racial identity affects their school experiences and behavioral outcomes.

Research on the racial awareness in African American children can be traced back to the early 1900s. The theoretical perspectives of Allport (1937), Cooley (1908), Lewin (1935), and Mead (1934) emphasized that the key to understanding how individuals develop a sense of personal uniqueness was understanding the process of self-development. "This line of research broadened the scientific discourse on psychological processes, although it was not applied directly to research on African American children, this research was the impetus of Clark & Clark's." "Clark and Clark (1939, 1947) and Clark (1982) who pioneered the incorporation of racial identity into theoretical perspectives for empirically examining self-identification among African American preschool children." Their research focused on the emerging awareness of the self as it relates to one's racial membership.

Identity formation is the primary psychosocial goal of adolescence. Prior to meeting this psychosocial challenge, children must develop a sense of their competence. Competence has both cognitive and contextual aspects. To attain competence, children must gain the ability to (1) initiate action and direct behavior within given environmental constraints and (2) recognize that different roles are required in different contexts and demonstrate behavior that incorporates expectations (Anderson & Messick, 1974). The latter is commonly known as code switching.

Whaley (1993) suggested that the development of African American children's competence integrates interactions among their social experiences, cultural factors, and cognitive development. African American children's racial identity process thus involves basic developmental processes along with the child's gender and situational context. Until school leaders understand children's racial awareness and the importance of affording them time to develop their identity, the disconnect between the school's culture and these children's backgrounds – particularly for Black children – will continue to produce behaviors that are misinterpreted as defiant. For Black girls especially, these misinterpretations can truncate childhood through a process of adultification.

### **The field of presence**

We contend that two central theories explain why Black females frequently face punitive consequences for their behavior. First, and inarguably, today's school discipline issues are rooted in racial discrimination. The differential treatment of children based on race can be documented as far back as the beginning of slavery, when Black children were often put to work as young as 2 and 3 years of age. Often dehumanized and subjected to much of the same treatment Black adults, enslaved Black children were rarely perceived as innocent or worthy of playtime and were often severely punished for exhibiting normal child-like behaviors (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). They thus enjoyed fewer of the basic human protections afforded to their non-Black peers; in fact, the category "children" was itself regarded as less essential for Black people (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014).

The perception that Black boys were older than they were and more likely to be guilty justified harsher treatment compared with what their White counterparts received. Black girls were also subjected to these perceptions, in a process known as adultification. Epstein, Blake, and González (2017) posited:

The assignment of more adult-like characteristics to the expression of young Black girls is a form of age compression. Black girls are likened more to adults than to children and are treated as if they are willfully engaging in behaviors typically expected of Black women. (pg. 4)

The assignment of adult-like characteristics to young Black females is based on stereotypes about their presumed behavior including: mature behavior in social settings, being loud, lacking control (Morris, 2007b), and even aggression and domination (Morris, 2007a). Physical growth and development, defined by the onset of puberty, may also play a role in the adultification of Black girls (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Such misleading attributions help account for the disparate exclusionary discipline Black girls are subjected to. They also explain how African American females' status and social position within the school system makes them more vulnerable to disciplinary action.

When coupled with adultification, the tenets of critical race feminism (CRF) are particularly suited for understanding the experiences of women of color. CRF focuses on systematic, social justice-oriented change efforts pertaining to race, class, and gender in ways that interact with students' identities in an educational context. CRF also takes an interdisciplinary and multinational approach to social inequality, offering counternarratives to the deficit-based mainstream perspectives commonly associated with Black females.

CRF is particularly useful as a lens for considering the need for school reform from the perspective of Black females. First, CRF identifies areas where larger systemic and structural forces affect historically impoverished and marginalized communities. It also focuses on the dialogue, collaboration, and partnerships to provide a deeper analysis of why the status quo and reproductive schools need to be disrupted (Childers-McKee & Hytten, 2015). Third, CRF changes the stories told about students of color and the economically disadvantaged (Thompson, 2004).

Each of these aspects of CRF is instrumental in changing the narratives of Black female students.

### **The field of concomitance**

Zero-tolerance policies emanated from a policing theory first espoused by academics Kelling and Wilson (1982) called “Broken Windows” (Pelet Del Toro, 2018). Kelling and Wilson asserted that trivial, relatively innocent behaviors signaled that more serious crimes would eventually overtake the community and thus should not be tolerated; they argued such crimes should instead be penalized to deter future crimes (p. 58). From Broken Windows came zero-tolerance policing along with the hyperaggressive policing that emerged during President Reagan’s 1986 “War on Drugs.”

During President Clinton’s administration, the zero-tolerance rhetoric slowly began to infiltrate America’s schools under the guise of making schools safer and reducing gun violence. In 1994, Clinton’s Safe School Act allocated \$3 million to schools that complied with its mandate to formalize punitive procedures with legal authorities (Casella, 2001), incentivizing schools to promote safety and be tougher on disruption and crime which evolved to over-scrutinizing to reap additional school funding.

With the passing of the Gun Free Zones Act, schools were required to expel students who brought weapons to campus. The Columbine Massacre soon after the Act’s passage prompted a call for even greater hyper-surveillance to provide safe learning environments.

While zero-tolerance policies were established to discourage criminal behavior, they somehow increased student suspensions and expulsions for a broad array of school code violations – from violent behavior to truancy and dress code violations (Losen & Skiba, 2010, p. 2). Ultimately, minority students, especially Black girls, received the most severe disciplinary consequences from these policies.

In-school policing led to the term *school-to-prison pipeline*, a metaphor which describes the lived experiences of students of color and how often their school disciplinary infractions result in contact with the criminal justice system.

Today, the legacy of those early policies is felt in very different ways. Schools have become environments where there is seemingly little to no tolerance for what is deemed unacceptable forms of behavior in the classroom, leaving Black girls susceptible to school punishment (Hines-Datiri & Carter-Andrews, 2017).

### **Discontinuities and ruptures**

Black girls are invisible in the school discipline literature, and due to being overshadowed by studies focusing on the outcomes of boys of color, they are also absent from educational policy discussions. However, explosive suspension and expulsion rates of Black girls in K-12 schools warrant a deeper examination of Black girls’ experiences in schools, along with a renewed focus on how the social constructions of gender and femininity, when intersected with race, shape their educational outcomes.

The modern-day experiences of trauma and violence impacting Black girls and their educational experiences cannot be adequately addressed without



acknowledging African American women's historical experiences with sexual assault and its role as a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement. In that era – and still today – issues of race and gender intersected to perpetuate stereotypes of Black female sexuality, to justify sexual assault and to preserve racially biased social and power structures that discounted sexual violence against Black women and allowed such assaults to persist unpunished. Many Black girls' experiences of assault and violence are still met with indifference, rooted in racism and lack of proper supports and services. This response has a detrimental effect on the academic outcomes of African American girls, especially when the violence is taking place in schools.

The traumatic encounters Black girls have within schools – because of language or actions used toward them – dictates how they interact with school professionals. Often, school professionals respond to Black girls in language that is cold and does not allow room for meaningful conversation, just punitive reactions (Crenshaw et al., 2015). If school professionals had a deeper understanding of the cultural identities, background, and customs of the students they were working with, there would be fewer misunderstandings, more compassion, and more communication between the teachers and their students. When looking at which cultural norms, beliefs, or experiences are represented within schools, it is not uncommon that the customs Black girls, as well as students from other marginalized communities, relate to are not present.

School professionals' lack of awareness about the cultural experiences of their students contributes to a lack of understanding, sensitivity, and connectivity among teachers and students. The narratives of Black girls and the literature surrounding the exclusionary treatment of Black girls exposes that the lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity allows school professionals to perform microaggressions and criminalize Black girls.

To combat the negative experiences Black girls face in school, a comprehensive approach – to include trauma-focused counseling, implicit bias training, along with a review of disciplinary rules and procedures – must occur to change the trajectory for many of America's Black school age females. No longer are zero-tolerance policies necessary to remedy disciplinary infractions, nor do they promote remediation for the infractions. The only benefit is “pushing out” and denial of access to education commonly needed to change and ultimately improve the educational outcomes of these vulnerable youth. It is the responsibility of school professionals and educators to ask questions about how their policies can affect Black girls or students from other marginalized communities.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Several critical assumptions undergird the intersectionality of race, gender, and education of Black girls in K-12 schools.

1. Black girls face both racial and gender bias in the nation's classrooms. As a result, Black girls are often suspended for infractions, including violations of dress code policies resulting in them being pulled out of the classroom to change their clothes. Other objective disciplinary penalties Black girls encounter and are

disproportionately removed from class include being too loud, too assertive, too sexually provocative, too defiant, and for exhibiting adult-like behaviors.

2. “Adultification, defined by Morris, (2007a) as teachers, law enforcement officials and even parents view[ing] black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers,” begins as early as 3 or 4 years old for many Black girls. This criminalization neglects their social-emotional needs for development. Schools adhering to disciplinary systems like “zero tolerance” are perpetuating a racist culture that creates systematic inequality. Racial bias, along with the denial of intergenerational traumas of racism and social-economic inequities, continues to be an open door for the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is a war on poverty and economic resources that disproportionately impacts students of color, especially Black girls.
3. The adultification bias can make school unsafe, resulting in Black girls finding safety through unhealthy means and makes them prone to risky behaviors (e.g., drug abuse, sexual trafficking, etc.). The overlapping risk factors for relationship abuse, sexual violence, and being “pushed out” or suspended from school easily initiate pipelines to prison, beginning as early as preschool, where the use of terms such as manipulative, shrewd, or intentionally disruptive are the descriptors associated with young girls.
4. The adultification bias against Black girls affects how authority figures (i.e., teachers, parents, and law enforcement) comfort, discipline, and interact with Black girls. This negative bias affects the way Black girls are punished, mentored, and consoled.
5. The intersection of racism and sexism greatly impacts the health and wellness of Black girls, while often portraying them as angry, manly, overweight, overly sexual, or asexual caregivers. These messages force girls to either constantly fight against them or succumb to what is expected and enforce the idea that Black women and girls can handle abuse and are not deserving of the experiences of childhood, often afforded to girls of other races. These stereotypes about Black girls are often reiterated in various forms of media, helping to solidify the narratives around adultification bias.
6. For Black girls who are nonbinary or who identify as transgender, there is an increased likelihood they will face discrimination and violence. In school, it is not uncommon for these Black girls to often receive harsher punishments and are five times more likely to be suspended than their White classmates.
7. Disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) for infractions are far more consequential, especially for Black girls. Oftentimes, girls who lose class time from suspensions have lower math and reading scores and are less likely to attend a 4-year college and are 15–20% more likely to be arrested and incarcerated as adults (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019).
8. Trainings and skill development on gender equity in education are needed, coupled with creating curricula, learning activities and assignments that respect and build on students’ gender, and cultural backgrounds are necessary to shift beliefs about minority learners and mitigate more punitive approaches to classroom discipline.

9. The war against Black girls will only end when there is social liberation and acceptance. Releasing societal pressures, eliminating “zero-tolerance” policies in school, community building, and trauma-informed care, is our path to freedom. Along that path is developing a school climate that no longer discounts the experiences of Black girls and their educational experiences.

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## Introduction

Educational leaders and scholars have been concerned about inequitable school disciplinary practices regarding socially marginalized youth for nearly four decades (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Their concern has focused on young males of color, who have elevated risks for exclusionary discipline and perceived criminality (Caton, 2012). When exclusionary discipline is coupled with the widening racial-ethnic achievement gap and growing school dropout and incarceration rates, males of color, particularly Black males, garner attention in the public debate on the lack of disciplinary equity.

While the school discipline issues Black males face are research worthy, those faced by Black females are rarely examined. When they are discussed, it is in relation to the experiences of Black boys (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011). This inequitable reporting of the disproportionate discipline girls often receive may be attributed to the perception that, because their academic achievement is higher, girls generally have fewer behavioral problems. It may also be due to gendered racial bias toward Black boys (Blake, Keith, Luo, Le, & Salter, 2017). Black males are thought to require more social control than their female counterparts (Rollock, 2007). Although Black males are more likely to receive exclusionary discipline, Black females also experience inequitable discipline practices, including exclusion.

## The Construct of Childhood/the Destruction of the School Experience

When the disciplinary records and school experiences of Black girls are examined, the results are disheartening. Nationally, 45% of girls suspended and 42% of girls expelled from K-12 schools are Black, which are the highest rates among all racial/ethnic groups (Smith & Harper, 2015). Black girls' discipline rates were also higher than 67% of the boys (Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Among 13 southern states, Smith and Harper (2015) found that Black girls represented 56% of all students suspended and 45% of those expelled (see Table 1). It should be noted that many of the southern states examined by Smith & Harper had high concentrations of Black families living in extreme poverty, with limited access to health care, and with no high-quality educational opportunities.

While only 20% of public school preschoolers in the United States are Black girls, they represent 54% of all preschool girls who received an out-of-school

**Table 1** 13 US states with highest suspension and expulsion rates among Black girls

<b>GIRLS</b>		
<i>Black Percentage of Female Students Suspended and Expelled</i>		
<b>State</b>	<b>Black % of Suspended Girls</b>	<b>Black % of Expelled Girls</b>
Alabama	70.1	52.5
Arkansas	57.9	31.9
Florida	46.1	34.2
Georgia	73.3	65.1
Kentucky	31.5	13.0
Louisiana	74.1	77.8
Mississippi	80.0	74.2
North Carolina	58.1	31.1
South Carolina	65.5	65.8
Tennessee	64.9	75.4
Texas	35.3	22.3
Virginia	56.4	37.2
West Virginia	13.0	9.0
<b>Nationally</b>	44.7	41.7

Smith and Harper (2015)

suspension (Morris, 2016). For many of these girls, suspensions begin as early as preschool and persist throughout elementary, middle, and high school, often resulting in permanent expulsion from the educational system and denied access to educational opportunities the educational system.

In 2016, the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reported that Black girls were overrepresented among students who face discipline that excluded or criminalized them (Morris, 2016). Although Black girls constituted only 8% of K-12 students nationwide, 14% had received one or more out-of-school suspensions (Morris, 2016). Out-of-school suspensions often lead to interactions with the criminal legal system, increasing the likelihood of imprisonment and often beginning the school-to-prison pipeline for the most vulnerable youth. Data from 2011 to 2012 showed that Black females constituted 31% of public school girls who were referred to law enforcement but represented a staggering 43% of those arrested on school grounds for school disciplinary reasons. Similar findings on the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline were reported by Tate et al. (2014). These trends are paralleled in the criminal legal system (Tate et al., 2014). It is thus imperative to explore why the basis of Black girls' discipline is less on their behavior and more on how they are portrayed in society.

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## **Understanding the Disconnect for Black Girls**

The focus of research on these issues is shifting toward efforts to understand how Black girls become disconnected from or pushed out of school. Several contributing issues must be explored:

- The interaction of race and gender to form Black girls' identities
- The process of Black girls' adultification, in which they are viewed more adult-like or less innocent than their non-Black counterparts
- The role of unseen racial trauma experienced by Black girls
- The highly consequential exclusionary disciplinary policies and procedures

## Race and Gender Identity Struggle

Based on critical race feminism (CRF), or “FemCrit,” we argue that Black girls are held to White standards and definitions of femininity and ideals. These standards on what it means to be a girl or “lady-like” dictate that girls and women should be silent, passive, and harmonious in their relationships. To maintain a nice, pleasant, and respectable image, they must not express authentic feelings, opinions, or displeasure, i.e., they should mask their emotions (Winkle-Wagner, 2009). Black girls are seen as deficit when they do not match standards of White femininity. We also contend that FemCrit offers a deeper understanding of how the nuanced ways in which Black girls are disciplined are affected by dominant narratives about who Black girls are in society – historically and contemporarily.

In direct contrast to the docile imagery applied to White females – the model standard – Black females are portrayed as assertive, independent, and confident in expressing their feelings and thoughts without regard to reprisal (Morris, 2007). Since these racialized gender norms do not align with their cultural identities, Black girls are deemed deficient. FemCrit highlights the importance of multiplicity and intersectionality of identity (Berry, 2010) while also drawing upon critical race theory to assert that the experiences of Black girls are unique from those of their White counterparts. When Black females do not conform to the middle-class social norms of White females, they are scrutinized and penalized, often with the harshest consequences.

## Adultification

Adultification emerges from two processes: social stereotyping process and socialization process. Most detrimental to the educational experiences of Black school age children, especially girls, is social stereotyping, which increases the likelihood girls will be disciplined (Smith et al., 2015). Social stereotyping consists of negative and controlling images based on race, class, and gender. Black females are stereotyped as self-sacrificing, combative, overly aggressive, unfeminine, loud or hypersexualized, and exploiting government policy by having children and refusing to work (Hancock, 2004; Mullings, 1994). Media portrayals of Black girls as more adult-like renders them vulnerable to adultification.

The socialization process involves exposing children – particularly those from culturally diverse families – to adult content before societally-defined norms would dictate. This early exposure encourages children to assume adult roles that may be

necessary for their family's daily living needs (e.g., caretaking roles, household chores) (Burton, 2007). The developmental socialization process affords children the opportunity to develop skills needed for their resiliency.

## **Unseen Racial Traumas**

Collective racial trauma refers to the large-scale impact of historical and/or discriminatory treatment of communities of color. Students, particularly Black females, see systemic racism play out daily on TV and in social media. Their community trauma is often manifest in their schools as well.

The global COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies how community trauma often manifests in schools. Black students and their families have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic: they have higher rates of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). These health effects have been exacerbated by economic fallout from the pandemic: Black students and their families had disproportionately higher rates of food insecurity, eviction, internet inaccessibility, unemployment, and job loss as a result of the pandemic (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2021). For Black students – particularly females – this trauma may manifest in different ways in their schools, which puts them at risk of receiving disproportionate punishment for behaviors that instead should be addressed by counselors, social workers, or other professionals.

Racial trauma in schools is reflected in the inequitable access females of color have to advanced coursework and other pathways to postsecondary education (Johnson, 2018). Black students in general are more likely to attend schools that are underfunded, not in culturally-sustaining school climates, and lacking teachers or counselors who look like or who can culturally identify with them (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). This minimizes opportunities for Black students, particularly Black females, to connect to their schools and school leaders, making it especially difficult for them to thrive and succeed academically.

In order to understand how trauma is affecting their behavior, schools need to create safe spaces for Black girls to talk. A deeper understanding of the traumatic events in the girls' lives – e.g., racism and adverse childhoods – can explain their behaviors, particularly those considered aggressive and dangerous to others. Black girls who experience harsh school discipline are often struggling to overcome multiple forms of victimization (e.g., sexual abuse, poverty, drug abuse, homelessness, incarceration of a parent, etc.), yet leaders discuss their actions as combative or angry behaviors, rather than a response to trauma.

Although Black girls have adopted coping and defense mechanisms to deal with gendered racism, these methods are often misinterpreted by teachers and school personnel as personality and/or cultural characteristics instead of responses to traumatic events or living with daily microaggressions (e.g., administrators, counselors, assessment personnel).

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## Exclusionary Discipline Practices

Research has shown that female students of color receive harsher punishment in schools for the same practices that other nonminority students commit (Payne, 2006). They are suspended or expelled for actions that only required a referral to the principal or a phone call to a parent or guardian (Payne, 2006). School policies, many based on zero-tolerance principles, predispose schools to consign Black females to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Significant disproportionality in disciplinary actions may be the result of implicit biases (IB). Implicit biases are preconsciously unacknowledged schemas that distort perceptions of racial outgroup members (Payne, 2006). Skiba et al.'s (2002) research, for example, found that teacher referral bias rather than students' actual behaviors was associated with disproportionate discipline sanctions. These referrals were based on subjective rather than objective measures. The subjective measures included students' "snappy or disrespectful" tone, profanity, or eye-rolling when speaking with teachers (Payne, 2006). Black girls were punished largely for perceptions of threat, noncompliance, and harm, based upon stereotypical images suggesting they were loud, defiant, seductive in demeanor and attire, and aggressive. Such criteria are difficult to measure because they are perception based; they are also shaped and bound by an understanding – or lack thereof – of one's culture and stereotypes.

An overreliance of disciplinary referrals and punitive discipline measures can be explained by teacher inexperience, the absence of cultural understanding between teachers and students, and inept classroom management skills.

While much of the scholarship on IB focuses on race, complex biases are based on an intersection race and gender. This suggests further research is needed on understanding how the intersections of role of race and gender identity can create an alternative space for Black girls to safely explore their femininity. Until this research is conducted, Black females will continue to be vulnerable to unequal disciplinary referral and unjust consequences.

Persistent and severe punishment creates a wide range of negative effects. Females who are regularly disciplined often feel spurned by their educational institution, prompting a cycle of disengagement involving school dropouts and contacts with the criminal justice system (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). To combat these effects, alternatives to harsh discipline are needed.

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## Recommended Alternatives to Harsh Discipline

In order for schools to provide a more culturally sustaining and socially just school climate for Black girls, we recommend the following equitable alternatives to discipline.

*Policies and Practices Reviews:* Review the school district and campus codes of conduct and data with an equity lens to ensure policies do not have a discriminatory impact on Black students. Engage in districtwide trainings on systemic racism and

bias and on strategies to address discriminatory beliefs and behaviors. Develop a districtwide plan to address racial bullying and provide training to all staff and students. Teachers and administrators should be prepared to address racial bullying swiftly, immediately, and appropriately. Develop school policies that reflect the tenets taught in these trainings.

*Social-Emotional Learning:* Introduce workaround reflection and meditation stations for students to center themselves when dealing with difficult situations. Discuss their struggles and celebrate their growth. When conflicts occur, find ways to teach students how to make things right. If a student is having difficulties, bring in peers who can support them in their journey to restoring balance. Have them make commitments by designing actionable steps they can take to progress.

*Restorative Practices:* Get police out of school buildings and end other harmful exclusionary discipline practices that push students out of class and deny them learning opportunities. Instead, train staff, teachers, and families in restorative practices and thoroughly implement those practices. Restorative practices are designed to improve the school climate and strengthen the social and emotional skills of students and teachings, while also addressing the underlying reasons for students' behavior by nurturing their intrinsic desire to be treated and to treat others with care and respect. Also require trauma-informed trainings and implement trauma-informed educational practices for all staff. With these restorative practices, implement, for students and teachers, safe healing spaces that protect them from retraumatization.

The path of restorative justice offers a different perspective in the way educators think about healing harms, consequences, or accountability. It presents educators with an opportunity to teach students the true meaning of justice and harmony. At some point in our history, we misconstrued the idea of justice regarding discipline as needing to be harsh or violent. Restorative justice values allow our students to center themselves around examining righteousness in their thoughts and actions, while also empowering them to develop a process of self-reflection to comprehend their relationship with others. The primary focus of restorative practices should be on providing opportunities for personal growth in which students can understand wrongs and acknowledge the hurt of others while building a sense of compassion and empathy.

*Building a school community:* Building community is an actionable step taken to implement restorative justice. Students should feel a connection to their school in which they are seen and heard. It is important to foster this sense of belonging through various activities. School communities help student to feel as if they are the subject of their school experience, not the object. As a member of their community, students are placed in positions to be active citizens who play a role in their schools.

*Engage with families.* Understanding family dynamics and structure can help provide the much needed structure and connectivity between the two primary entities that dominate Black females' attention – school and family. To help with this connection, encourage Black families to take a leadership role in the school, by creating opportunities to participate in campus and district governance. These opportunities should be scheduled during times that are respectful to working



families' schedules. Engagement with students and their families should be authentic in nature and should include meaningful opportunities for them to reconnect to the school and its leadership team.

*Unbiased Curriculums:* Using more culturally diverse, gender inclusive curriculums helps to engage Black females as they begin to see themselves reflected positively in stories and examples shared in class. Providing this level of culturally responsive pedagogy goes far beyond discussing the importance of culture; it also offers a consistently used racially identifiable method of instructional delivery for all content and subject areas.

*Read the Data:* Collect detailed and contextualized data regularly about how Black female students are faring in school, including how they are accessing opportunities like advanced coursework and how they are being pushed out through harmful discipline practices. Equity audits can help to get a full picture of how school districts are supporting their students. Guidance on college career pathways nurture girls' pathways to college and career readiness by engaging them actively in opportunities to lead and learn in schools.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

School leaders and others in the field of education can shift the paradigm for Black females and excessive discipline. Critical protective factors are needed to diminish the involvement of the criminal and juvenile legal systems in school-based discipline. By creating a space and culture that nurtures their socioemotional development and academic growth, schools can become more attuned to the needs of Black girls. By doing so, schools will be viewed as powerful agents and coauthors for successful stories and trajectories of America's Black females.

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# Braiding Indigenous and Racialized Knowledges into an Educational Leadership for Justice

69

Jerome Cranston and Michelle Jean-Paul

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## Abstract

The tenacious knowledges that undergird educational leadership as a field of study and practice were founded on and remain largely anchored in Eurocentric White philosophies, values, and epistemologies. This results in enduring

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commitments of many scholars of educational leadership to a presumptive color-blind knowledge base that has failed to decenter epistemologies and ontologies that deny Indigenous and racialized students, their families' and communities' racial justice, and an equality of educational outcomes. In many regards, the discourses of educational leadership continue to marginalize Indigenous and racialized knowledges, ways of knowing and of being. Critical race theory provides an opportunity to expose and analyze how the extant knowledge base continues to reify a field of study and practiced that is tethered to Eurocentric White discourses that act as tools of imperialism and neocolonization. This chapter describes how a critical race theory analytic approach when combined with a decolonizing framework can open up the space and create opportunities for practitioners and scholars to develop a more reflexive field. Furthermore, it offers the opportunity for the knowledge base to be rebuilt by braiding Indigenous and racialized knowledges with anti-oppressive Westernized knowledges that when tied together can reorient educational leadership toward racial justice.

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**Keywords**

Racial justice · Educational leadership · Critical race theory · Decolonization · Indigenous and racialized knowledges

**Field of Memory**

In general, educational leadership as a field of study and practice has a long history of focusing the work of the formal leader on determining and enacting efficient and effective approaches to move a school or school system as an organization toward a goal or set of goals. Influenced by empiricist theories of knowledge and armed with an unwavering commitment to colonial understandings of intellectual mastery and practical experience, educational leaders have been ushered to deploy their technical-rational expertise to calculate appropriate means that would lead to universal, given ends of schooling. These influences still permeate the field.

**Field of Presence**

While it has been argued that schools have typically worked in ways that reinforce and perpetuate disadvantage and stereotypical understandings of human diversity, resistance is emerging to push back against these forces of oppression. More and more, educational leaders are beginning to understand that schools and school systems as social organizations should not be equated with such objective physical phenomena as a building or a classroom. There is greater clarity that organizations do not set goals or choose ends, as logical-positivistic theories might suggest, without human intervention. Increasingly, schools are being reconceptualized as social inventions in which humans construe and come to understand themselves and their histories in diverse ways. The goals or prized-ends of formal education are matters of choice; human choices are guided by human desires and values. Drawing from diverse knowledges and knowledges systems, the work of

educational leaders and the scholarly field that supports them is beginning to reflect the hopes and aspirations of Indigenous and racialized students, families, and communities.

### **Field of Concomitance**

Fostering community and building trusting relationships among racially diverse school communities is more important now than ever for educational leaders committed to support learning for all students in the midst of the uncertainty. The knowledges that have underpinned educational leadership as a scholarly field, ones rooted to Eurocentric Whiteness as concepts, theories, philosophies, and practices need to be decentered and the field needs to be rebuilt. If there is any chance to effect systemic change and dismantle the systems that perpetuate racial inequities and inequalities, the knowledge base of educational leadership, one that is founded on neocolonial, presumptive race-neutral field of study and practice, must be transformed.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

There is a growing narrative which recognizes the need for educational systems, K-12 and higher education, and those who lead them to undergo a transformational change if they are to create social contexts in which students who have been and continue to suffer from colonization, oppression, and racialization are to flourish. Even as educational leaders focus on the need to equalize and improve the educational experience for Indigenous and racialized students and their families, the fact is that many educational leaders lack an orientation to a scholarly field that can help them understand how many of the current neocolonial epistemologies and practices deny Indigenous and racialized students equitable opportunities for success. In order to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous and racialized students, educational leaders need to have access to Indigenous and racialized epistemologies – the knowledges, skills, and dispositions – that will allow them to engage with families and community members to address educational issues and improve outcomes for students.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Schools must become effective spaces designed to support the success of Indigenous and racialized students. What is needed for this is to occur requires that the scholarly discourses of educational leadership and in its practices become repositioned as commitments to use critical race theory to uncover the purported “color-blind” epistemologies that whitewash the field. It then requires a process of decolonizing educational leadership and decenters Eurocentric Whiteness. Once the space is created for mutually respectful knowledge exchange, a process of braiding Indigenous and racialized epistemologies with anti-oppressive Westernized forms of knowledge can happen. With the development of a new scholarly field educational leaders will be oriented and prepared to dismantle systemic racism and enact the racial justice that is so desperately needed in schools and society.

## Introduction

Khalifa, Khalil, Marsh, and Halloran (2019) contend that scholars of educational leadership have done little to disentangle the practices, theories, or knowledges of the field from their colonizing histories. This unwillingness has led scholars to critique the ways in which the Eurocentric, White discourses of educational leadership have and will continue to fail Indigenous and racialized students, their families, and communities (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Paraphrasing Carter Woodson's sentiments from 1916 (as cited in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50), the same educational processes which inspire and stimulate the oppressors with the thought that they are everything and accomplished everything worthwhile, at the same time depresses and crushes the spark of genius in Indigenous peoples and racialized people by making them feel that their races do not matter much and that they will never measure up to an Eurocentric, White normative standard. While much has changed in the 100 years since Carter expressed those insights, in some regards, little progress has been made in understanding how educational leadership might be decentred, decolonized, and rebuilt as a more reflexive and racially just field of study and practice (Khalifa et al., 2019).

If schools are to not only reflect the diversities that exist in society but honor their knowledges, ways of knowing, and being, they require educational leaders who understand the epistemologies and discursive ontologies that exist in the Indigenous and racially diverse communities they serve and the society students are being prepared to enter (Brown & Williams, 2015; Van Langenhove, 2019). A critical element to prepare educational leaders for this work will be accomplished by equipping them with a deeper understanding of the richness of Indigenous and racialized epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies so that they can advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and in their consciousness the challenges society faces. Many of which are anchored racialized divisions that act to consistently marginalize some while privileging others (Sefa Dei, 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

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## Weaponizing Education to Serve Colonial Ambitions

The linkages between the imperialist ambitions of European nations such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and others through conquest were enacted through colonialism and colonial institutions that allowed for direct and unfettered sociopolitical and economic control over the territories and nations the colonizers invaded (Kelly & Altbach, 1984). Colonialism was never intended as a benign form of sociopolitical and economic exploitation. Rather it was built on an architecture of social institutions that had as their main purpose the exploitation of stolen lands through the labor of stolen lives with the intent of repatriating the economic benefits to the imperial rulers of Europe (Kelly & Altbach).

As one element of the architecture, colonizing nations used their political, military, and economic powers to force a formalized system of education on

Indigenous populations to control and, as the colonial rulers felt necessary, to destroy them (Kelly & Altbach, 1984; Nwanosike, 2011). The colonial school system was designed to extend foreign domination and economic exploitation of the colony and those who were subjugated and, in some cases, shape those who were to be assimilated into the dominant European culture (Nwanosike, 2011). For Indigenous populations the education system was to be directed toward assimilating them by stripping from them their Indigenous languages, cultures, knowledges, spiritualities, and identities and by forcing on them the values, languages, religions, and social order of the colonizers (Kelly & Altbach, 1984; Khalifa et al., 2019).

As part of the colonial architecture of schooling, higher education, that is colleges and universities, were also established in the colonized lands and territories (Kelly & Altbach, 1984). Within them were the knowledges that were held in high esteem by those devoted to notions of higher education and as colonial institutions they were buttressed through staunch commitments to exclude those and their knowledges which were seen as being unworthy. Colleges and universities in the British-North American colonies were established as “instruments of Christian expansionism, weapons for the conquest of Indigenous peoples, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery” (Wilder, 2013, p. 17).

Indigenous and racialized peoples were never intended to be the beneficiaries of colonial higher education (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017; McGee, 2020). Such a fact should not be surprising as racial constructs have a long history of serving as demarcated lines between those considered literate or illiterate, and have been used as the basis for decisions about who should and should not benefit from higher education (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Grosfoguel (2015) argues that the canon of thought that forms the knowledge base in almost all disciplines of the social sciences and humanities of Western and Westernized universities and colleges is based on the knowledge claims produced by a small number of men from five countries, namely Italy, France, England, Germany, and the USA. In addition, Grosfoguel contends that the knowledges that are nurtured and guarded in universities reflect a devotion to the superiority of what Moreton-Robinson (2008) labeled as “Eurocentric Whiteness.”

Higher education, and educational leadership as a field of study, must acknowledge that the institutional spaces, literally and epistemically, were constructed to only welcome some while excluding others (Ahmed, 2012). Not only were colleges and universities never intended to educate Indigenous peoples or enslaved peoples, the brutal fact is that a number of colonial campuses were built by the hands of slaves on the lands from which Indigenous people were dispossessed by force (Ash, Hill, Risdon, & Jun, 2020; la paperson, 2017).

Understanding the intersections of colonialism and the creation of a formalized education system intended to initially support imperialistic ambitions that now in many ways serve neocolonial ones are important to illustrate and understand because in many ways educational systems continue to serve the colonial purposes of domination, subjugation, and assimilation of Indigenous and racialized people (Kelly & Altbach, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Masta, 2019).



## The Colonial Antecedents of Educational Leadership

Initially established as an extension of the colonial ambitions for formal education as a practical field, school administrators were taught to understand how best to go about eliminating all that was Indigenous about the Indigenous students the school system educated (Khalifa et al., 2019). As a field of practice, school administrators “inherited colonial leadership structures and practices that were meant to wipe Indigenous cultures, norms, languages, spiritualities and epistemologies clean of indigeneity” (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 2). The superordinate positioning of school administrators sanctioned them to impose a Eurocentric White worldview as the only way of understanding the colonial ordering of a social reality on those who were colonized (Kincheloe, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2008).

In the twentieth century with the establishment of departments of educational administration in many North American universities, educational administration shifted from being primarily regarded as a practical field substantially oriented to normative concerns to become recognized as a field of study and was granted ontological status (Bates, 2010; Campbell, 1981; Culbertson, 1988; English, 2001, 2002; Griffiths, 1983; Riffel, 1986; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Echoing many of the changes that were occurring in other professional fields, educational administration with its focus on solving problems of practice became understood as “educational leadership” with a reorientation of its central efforts to support those with formal and informal authority within schools and school systems to create a vision for educational change and needed to develop an organizational culture (Bennis, 1994).

However, even with the reorientation toward a focus on leadership, the knowledge base remained anchored in principles of “scientific management” (Callahan, 1962, as cited in English, 2002, p. 110). Over the course of the latter part of the twentieth century, in significant ways, educational leadership continued to be elevated through discourses of logical positivism as defined by its knowledge base in accordance with the accepted conventions of a modernist and rational-empiricist approach to the social sciences (Culbertson, 1988; Mills, 1997; Scheurich, 1995; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995).

Decades ago scholars such as Hodgkinson (1978), Bates (1980), and Foster (1999) among others began to raise questions of whether educational leadership should be conceived of and enacted in substantially the same generalized forms regardless of the community contexts in which the leaders work. Bates (1980) critiqued the scholarly field by proposing that educational leadership had become a ubiquitous “umbrella term that covers a multitude of ideas and activities representing considerable differences of view between various groups with the profession” (p. 2). Thirty years after offering an initial critique of the field, Bates (2010) noted that the foundations of educational leadership were still based on the artificial partitioning of what Dewey, a century earlier, had labeled the “mechanics of schooling” and “educational ideals,” which were presented as unquestionable universalisms and still remained largely anchored in Eurocentric, White philosophies, social structures, paradigms, and discourses.

As a result, claims have been made for decades that the knowledge base of educational leadership is infused with the norms of the dominant class and more powerful in society to which it is connected, and has a distinctly conservative orientation (Culbertson, 1988). In many ways, the field and the discourses that support educational leadership have obscured many of the connections between the work educational leaders do and the knowledges that exist within the racially diverse communities in which they work (Barakat & Brooks, 2016). Unsurprisingly, the field remains anchored in the traditions of logical positivism and reifies the perpetuation of an existing social order (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Ikpa, 1995).

## **A Knowledge Base that Reifies Neocolonialism**

Neocolonialism can be described as the subtle propagation of socioeconomic and political activity by former colonial rulers aimed at reinforcing capitalism, neoliberal globalization, and cultural subjugation of their former colonies. As a form of neocolonialism, the organizational structures of schools and school systems continue to reflect a social order and architecture designed for domination, subjugation, and oppression in postcolonial nations (Altbach, 1971).

Arguably, educational leadership, as was the case with “a great many fields in higher education emerged from a White male supremacy paradigm that reflects ideas about non-White peoples’ genetic inferiority and advances White hegemony” (McGee, 2020, p. 635). And, as a result the majority of “leadership theory and practice has been normalized within a white, male, Western, capitalist, Christian hierarchy” (Khalifa et al. (2019, p. 7). Many of the theories of leadership project a worldview that requires force and/or coercive power to maintain order in society (Hickey, 2019). The worldviews represented in such theories of leadership are founded on colonial doctrines of discovery and claims to settler-state land title, and have been used to justify the ongoing oppression of Indigenous populations in postcolonial states around the world (Schabus, 2017).

Educational leadership as a contemporary field of study continues to be heavily dominated by Eurocentric, White social paradigms and theories. Many of discourses of educational leadership remain embedded in the proverbs, myths, rituals, customs, and traditions of Eurocentric, White society. The majority of the current models and theories of educational leadership draw on the perspectives of scholars and practitioners who willingly provide the impression that educational leadership is a universal structure or set of domains even if its foundations are not necessarily relevant in different cultural contexts or racialized communities (Oplatka & Arar, 2016).

A significant force that underpins neocolonialism in higher education is legal status of property rights, which includes the legal ownership of intellectual property such as who owns and controls the knowledges of educational leadership (Cote-Meek, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As intellectual property owned by predominately Eurocentric, White scholars the field is protected as intact, and continues to remain void of an understanding of the legacy of colonialism and its

related violence that is enacted by society's neocolonial educational institutions (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Commitments to protect and preserve the existing knowledges of educational leadership as the core – namely ensuring that it remained intact in a recognizable, coherent form and reflects the values and philosophy of the dominant group of society – while suggesting that there might be some space available for other epistemologies and ways of knowing, ones that anchor the nondominant groups' ways of being is simply a manifestation of epistemic injustice, which occurs when the concepts and categories by which a people understand themselves and their world are replaced or adversely affected by the concepts and categories of the colonizers (Bhargava, 2013; Cranston & Whitford, 2018).

The pervasive influences of colonialism have bound many scholars, policymakers, and, in some cases, practitioners of educational leadership to culturally oppressive practices and epistemologies designed to conserve the power and authority of an Eurocentric, White knowledge base (Cranston & Whitford, 2018). In large part the field “has been and remains a field skeptical of the consequences of difference” (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). The dominant racial enactments of leadership serve to maintain hegemonic powers which in turn continues to disadvantage Indigenous and racialized people within the education system, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through postsecondary education.

Evidence continues to mount that the majority of the existing theories, practices, and discourses of educational leadership with their adherence to dominant hegemonic, most often Eurocentric, White epistemologies and ontologies repeatedly fail to support the success of Indigenous and racialized students (Cranston & Whitford, 2018). As long as the field remains, as Garcia and Natividad stated (2018, p. 30) “grounded in colonial ways of knowing and being with little effort to understand how minoritized people engage in leadership and/or how leadership practices affect colonized groups,” Indigenous and racialized students, their families, and communities will be subjected to the ongoing effects of colonization through what Nkrumah (1966) referred to as “neo-colonialism,” imperialism's final and potentially most dangerous stage of domination.

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## **Disrupting Discursive Eurocentric White Knowledges**

If all children and families, but in particular those who have been sociohistorically disadvantaged because of their Indigeneity or racialization, are to be served well by the education system then those responsible for leading schools and school systems need a deeper understanding of “Indigenous perspectives and the epistemic traditions of knowledge of colonized/oppressed/Indigenous peoples” (Sefa Dei, 2016, p. 27). In fact, the needs of Indigenous and racialized students, families, and communities cannot be met unless the dominance of Eurocentric, White knowledge, practices, and beliefs is disrupted and decolonized to make equal room for the experiences and knowledges of the peoples who have been colonized and suffer under neocolonialism (Lopez & Rugano, 2018; Nkrumah, 1966).

Knowledge is largely acquired and refined by discourse and discursive practices. Both discourse and knowledge are fundamental concepts of the humanities and social sciences, and are tied together (van Dijk, 2014). Drawing from the works of Foucault, Weedon (1987) claimed that discourse refers to:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (p. 108).

Therefore, there is much work to be if the discourses of educational leadership represent and are involved in the creation of knowledge (van Dijk, 2014). There is a need to ensure that the knowledge and the processes for producing and recognizing it represent a multiplicity of knowledges and ways of knowing (Sandoval, Lagunas, Montelongo, & Díaz, 2016).

Even though scholars and practitioners of educational leadership are positioned as ideological political actors who produce and control power/knowledge discourses that "make true" and determine what is accepted as "true" (Hall, 2001; Torfing, 1999), it appears that many scholars of educational leadership have expended little energy to disentangle the knowledges or the espoused practices of educational leadership from their colonizing legacies (Khalifa et al., 2019). In fact, Mills (1997) argues that there has been a blithe indifference paid by scholars to the traumatic, cognitive consequences that have resulted from the strict adherence to the mainstreaming of Eurocentric, White epistemologies of educational leadership that have been imposed on Indigenous and racialized peoples.

The reality is that despite calls to reconceive and rebuild educational leadership as a reflexive and scholarly field, the knowledge base and its discourses have largely remained rooted to concepts, theories, philosophies, and practices that continue to reflect and reify a dominant colonial, cultural context and social order that continues to disadvantage Indigenous and racialized students (Cranston & Whitford, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2019). As Leonardo (2002) suggested, scholars and practitioners need to work together to name, reject, and dismantle the dominant discourses of Eurocentric Whiteness that are reified within the field, and actively work together to disrupt their discourses and unsettling their codes.

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## **Recognizing the Centrality of Race in Educational Leadership**

Race has been and continues to act as an invisible, basic categorical object in the production of knowledge and acts epistemologically given in almost all academic disciplines (Moreton-Robinson, 2008). If there is any chance to affect systemic change and dismantle the systems that perpetuate inequities and inequalities across demarcated racialized lines, the only way forward is through to forge paths that critique the Eurocentric, White understandings of education and its practices (Lopez & Rugano, 2018).

Regardless of the disciplinary field, critical race theory allows scholars to challenge claims that knowledge is somehow color-blind or race-neutral (Bell, 1980; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated:

Race has become metaphorical — a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological ‘race’ ever was. Expensively kept, economically unsound, and spurious and useless political asset in election campaigns, racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment. It seems that it has a utility far beyond economy, beyond the sequestering of classes from one another, and has assumed a metaphorical life so completely embedded in daily discourse that it is perhaps more necessary and more on display than ever before (p. 49).

Applying a critical race theory analytical framework to the knowledge base and the discourses that support it provides an opportunity to first decolonize it to create space and then braid in Indigenous and racialized understandings of leadership. What are needed are epistemologies and discourses that recognize Indigenous and racialized peoples, their rights and knowledges, and also reorients educational leadership in ways that works for the benefit of those who continue to suffer from the ongoing effects of colonization (Lopez & Rugano, 2018; Sefa Dei, 2016).

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## A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Educational Leadership

Critical theories applied to educational leadership can help to “analyze asymmetrical power relations and inequities in educational contexts” (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015, p. 26). Specifically, critical race theory, oftentimes referred to as “CRT,” has become an important analytic framework to better understand education and to analyze how racism is embedded within its systems (Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglass, 2013).

CRT begins with the fact that racism is ordinary, deeply ingrained and a permanent part of postcolonial societies and exists in all of their social institutions (Bell, 1980). Iverson (2007) noted that CRT reveals that racism “is well disguised in the rhetoric of shared ‘normative values’” (p. 74), and that it “elucidates the ways in which specific forms of knowledge, skills are valued over other” (p. 602).

While no simplified definition can do justice to the richness of it as a scholarly field, for the purposes of providing an entry point to understanding CRT, there are, in general “six key tenets connected to the social justice goal of leading to combat racism in education” (Amiot, Mayer-Glenn, & Parker, 2020, p. 201). These six tenets that CRT focuses on are:

1. The permanence of racism
2. Whiteness as property
3. The importance of counternarratives and counter-stories
4. The critique of liberalism

5. Importance of interest convergence
6. Intersectionality (Amiot, Mayer-Glenn, & Parker, 2020)

CRT as a specific form of critical theory allows scholars and practitioners to pose the important question of how power is constructed in human interactions, how democracy is subverted, and how domination takes place based on racialized demarcations (Amiot et al., 2020; Kincheloe, 1999).

The concept of racialization refers to the processes by which a group of people is defined by their “race.” Processes of racialization begin by attributing racial meaning to people’s identity and, in particular, as they relate to social structures and institutional systems, such as housing, employment, and education. In societies in which “White” people have economic, political, and social power, processes of racialization have emerged from the creation of a hierarchy in social structures and systems based on “race.” The visible effects of processes of racialization are the racial inequalities embedded within social structures and systems.

The rejection of a static and universally accepted, objective reality within the field of educational leadership is essential if schools as their leaders are to better serve the hopes and aspirations of Indigenous and racialized students (Amiot et al., 2020; Kincheloe). CRT challenges claims presented by scholars of educational leadership who attempt to present its knowledge base as an objective, race-neutral field that is somehow built on a foundation of equality of educational opportunity for all (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

It is necessary for leaders to engage in essential conversations while applying a critical lens to their work in order to create space for voices not central to the traditional discourse of educational leadership (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Scholars and practitioners of educational leadership need to shift away from notions of management in favor of “educational leadership as imperative for global human development and social betterment” (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015, p. 25) as part of a commitment to create more just and equitable outcomes for Indigenous and racialized students and their families.

What is needed is a dismantling of the structures that reify the existing knowledge base of educational leadership and a commitment to a newer foundation that relies on a race praxis approach that allows scholars to develop a more robust epistemic and ontological orientation that braids Indigenous and racialized knowledges, ways of thinking and ways of being with those existing ones that are not mutually exclusive (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

## **Eurocentric Whiteness and Educational Leadership**

Eurocentric Whiteness can be understood in broad terms as: “the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236) based on racialized social constructs. Eurocentric Whiteness is a legacy of global White colonialism based on a racialized worldview anchored on an ideology of White

European supremacy (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002). Eurocentric Whiteness, according to Ansley (1992), can be understood as:

a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement . . . [that] are wide spread, and [how] relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutional and social settings (p. 592).

The interconnected features of neocolonialism, Eurocentrism, and Whiteness intersect and amplify the effects of Eurocentric Whiteness (Ansley, 1992).

### **Eurocentrism**

The term Eurocentrism denotes a worldview which, implicitly or explicitly, posits European history and values as normal and superior to all others, thereby helping to produce and justify Europe's dominant position within the global capitalist world system (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). It has been variously defined as an attitude, conceptual apparatus, or set of empirical beliefs that frame Europe as the primary engine and architect of world history, the bearer of universal values and reason, and the pinnacle and therefore model of progress and development (Sundberg, 2009).

### **Whiteness**

Whiteness can be defined as a system of domination that upholds a White identity "as an essential something" (Fine, Powell, Weis, & Wong, 1997, p. 9). Its meaning and status depend on racist structures that associate Whiteness with normality so that people who deemed White, independent of their social status, can assert their "property rights in whiteness" (Harris, 1993). Thus, Whiteness exists as a "property" that operates "socio-discursively through subjectivity and knowledge production" (Moreton-Robinson, 2008, p. 85). A property in which White people have invested in and profited from as a result of the asymmetrical power relations between those on the margins and those in the center of power forging what Mills (1997) describes as a "racial contract."

In addition, Whiteness represents race without ethnic or cultural context except for privilege and exclusion of those determined not to be White by those who are White (Leonardo, 2013). As Moreton-Robinson (2008) stated, "Whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West; it is an invisible regime or power that secures hegemony through discourse and material effects in very day life" (p. 75).

### **Amplifying the Effects of Eurocentrism and Whiteness**

When the two interrelated concepts of Eurocentrism and Whiteness are integrated within the apparatus of neocolonialism, Eurocentric Whiteness becomes the foundation of ongoing colonization, systemic racism, and cultural imperialism (hooks, 1990). The amplification results in Eurocentric Whiteness taking on the appearance of being normal, natural, and fair, as it operates in the background in activities like



theoretical framing and the generation of theory (hooks, 1990). Discourses of race-neutral epistemologies or color-blind theories stifle deeper reflections about inequity and precludes interrogations of White privilege or conversations about how best to equalize the outcomes of the education system (Davis, Gooden, & Micheaux, 2015).

Thus, Eurocentric Whiteness is rendered invisible, yet remains dominant and pervasive as it influences every aspect of life every day (Moreton-Robinson, 2008). “There are,” as Davis et al. (2015, p. 337) stated, “material implications around race for how people live their lives and how educational leaders do their work,” and suggestions that educational leadership should be color-blind or race-neutral will only serve only to disenfranchise non-White students and their families even more (Cranston & Whitford, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2019).

The dominant, hierarchical models of educational leadership preparation controlled by colleges, universities, ministries of education, and professional associations draw from a limited rather self-referent “expert” knowledge base that reflects hegemonic values associated with Eurocentric Whiteness and values that are continually reinforced by colonial discourses and practices (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Cranston & Whitford, 2018; Kovach, 2009). The fact is that a majority of the published theory and empirical research on educational leadership continue to perpetuate an implicit assumption that leadership ought to be enacted in an Eurocentric White racial and cultural context is highly problematic because race is not just a factor to be considered in discussions about educational leadership, but is, in fact, an integral dimension of what it means to effectively lead schools and their communities.

López (2003) contends that by ignoring the broader sociological web of power in which racism functions and by relegating Indigenous and racialized theoretical understandings of educational leadership to the fringes it “not only relegates race to a theoretical footnote within the larger discourse of educational leadership but also fails to probe how issues of race intersect and permeate the educational landscape” (p. 69). If they are to nurture the vibrant knowledges that support students and the communities they live in, scholars of educational leadership and practitioners “have a duty to know and raise questions about race and racism in society, as well as an ethical responsibility to interrogate systems, organizational frameworks, and leadership theories that privilege certain groups and/or perspectives over others” (López, p. 70).

Although there is a growing cohort of scholars documenting the value in understanding culturally relevant stories and narrative accounts that Indigenous and racialized educational leaders and scholars share about the ways in which educational leadership can be conceived and enacted, ways of knowing and doing that are qualitatively different from historically mainstream leadership practices, these rich epistemic traditions are all too often overlooked in the discourses of educational leadership or placed on the margins of the presumptive knowledge base (Cranston & Whitford, 2018; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie, James, & Bynum, 2006; Tillman, 2007).

Indigenous and racialized scholars continue to champion the call for the field to be interrogated and for the knowledge base to be redeveloped in ways that honor the



knowledges of Indigenous and racialized communities. Increasingly, they are being joined by their White colleagues who heed their calls for epistemic and ontological racial justice (for examples, see Cranston & Whitford, 2018; Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Lopez & Rugano, 2018; among others).

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## Decolonizing Educational Leadership

Decolonization critiques the effects of colonialism on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2004; Smith, 1999). Smith (1999) defines decolonization as “a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (p. 20). A decolonial framework invites scholars and practitioners to question and examine the impacts of colonialism on the knowledge base of educational leadership as it provides an opportunity “to reimagine and rearticulate power, change and knowledge through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies” (p. iii).

Decolonization at the individual level requires flexibility in thinking as it challenges the thinker to accept multiples ways of knowing and of being as they strive to understand social reality from another’s perspective (Berryman, Nevin, SooHoo, & Ford, 2015). More broadly, decolonization requires the collective efforts of an “epistemic community who can develop and nurture hope, dreams and aspirations and transmit the energy of this work” (Sefa Dei, 2016, p. 37).

Drawing on the insights of a number of scholars (for example, see Bacchi, 1999; Bell, 1980; Sefa Dei, 2016; Ma Rhea, 2015; Smith, 1999, among others) in order for educational leadership to be decolonized, three central tenets should guide the work. Firstly, decolonization rests on a willingness to critically confront the effects of colonization, including racialization, marginalization, and other forces of oppression. Decolonizing educational leadership also requires challenging the epistemic discourses of the field that only serve the masters of neocolonialism, those who control discourses that are “larger than language, more than words” (Bacchi, 1999, p. 40). It means interrogating what is allowed to be said, who is permitted to speak, when they are permitted to speak, and with authority is given to the words they speak (Bell, 1980).

Secondly, decolonization means recognizing and accepting that current, dominant model of education, one that is in many aspects a form of neocolonialism, fails to recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples and is therefore oppressive to Indigenous children. It requires a deep commitment to an Indigenist, rights-based mindset, which implies a commitment to learn and an openness to understand Indigenous worldviews and the worldviews held by many racialized peoples (Ma Rhea, 2015).

Finally, decolonizing educational leadership requires a reflexivity that can “capture and lift out of the culture and (un)consciousness of academia that which is oppressed, suppressed and disavowed” from the field (Sefa Dei, 2016, p. 41). This requires recognizing the legitimacy and the authority of Indigenous and racialized forms of knowledge that are often times relegated to the margins of the field, and also

ensuring that processes were in place to enable their articulation and inclusion in the knowledge base (Cranston & Whitford, 2018).

## Creating Space

The result of decolonizing educational leadership is that it creates an equal space for the inclusion of Indigenous and racialized knowledges and ways of both knowing and also ways of being. Their acknowledgment and inclusion as legitimate forms of knowledge that are considered equal to anti-oppressive Westernized forms of knowledge is essential because if they are not used as a foundation to move forward the effects of colonization and neocolonization will continue to permeate the education system (Cote-Meek, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Sefa Dei, 2016; Smith, 1999).

According to Cote-Meek (2020), the space that must be created needs to be more than one of reconciliation, it must also be one that confronts the truth. Among the truths that Cote-Meek (2014) identified is the physical and epistemic violence that has been perpetrated on Indigenous and racialized peoples by educational institutions through its colonial structures of oppression.

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## Braiding Indigenous and Racialized Knowledges with Anti-Oppressive Western Knowledges

The process of braiding Indigenous and racialized knowledges with anti-oppressive Westernized ones (Moosa-Mitha, 2005) can be described as a process of co-learning that allows for multiple forms of meaning-making (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Vukic, Gregory, & Martin-Misener, 2012). As a metaphor and process, braiding the knowledges together can be described as a commitment to acknowledge and listen to the discourses of those who have deep Indigenous understandings and racialized knowledges who collaborate with colleagues who are knowledgeable with Westernized knowledge forms to bind the knowledges together in ways that are reciprocal and respectful (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Bartlett et al., 2012).

Braided knowledges demonstrate how diverse ways of knowing can be braided to create new understandings and insights when considered together (Hopkins et al., 2019). As Snively and Williams (2016) described:

braiding Indigenous Science and Western Science is a metaphor used to establish a particular relationship, an obligation of sorts to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. We braid cedar bark to make beautiful baskets, bracelets and blankets. When braiding hair, kindness and love can flow between the braids. Linked by braiding, there is a certain reciprocity amongst strands, all the strands hold together. Each strand remains a separate entity, a certain tension is required, but all strands come together to form the whole. When we braid Indigenous Science with Western Science we acknowledge that both ways of knowing are legitimate forms of knowledge. For Indigenous peoples, Indigenous Knowledge (Indigenous Science) is a gift. It cannot be simply bought and sold. Certain obligations are attached. The more something is shared, the greater becomes its value (p. 3).

## Indigenous Epistemologies

Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral tradition of sharing knowledge. It is akin to what different Indigenous scholars and researchers, the world over, identify as storytelling, yarning, talk story, re-storying, and/or remembering (Kovach, 2009). The International Council for Science of the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (2002) described Indigenous or “traditional” knowledges as:

*a cumulative body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations maintained and developed by peoples with extended histories of interaction with the natural environment. These sophisticated sets of understandings, interpretations and meanings are part and parcel of a cultural complex that encompasses language, naming and classification systems, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality and worldviews.* (p. 9)

Foundational to Indigenous epistemologies is a worldview of interrelationships among the spiritual, the natural and the self, forming the foundation or beginnings of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

## Racialized Epistemologies

“Race-based epistemologies serve to de-center and contextualize western ways of thinking and knowing, to define their limits. They advocate that other forms of knowing and understanding need to be respected, included, in order to deconstruct past and resist future epistemological colonization” (Almeida, 2015, p. 85). Hill Collins (199) names and discusses the four “contours” (p. 206) or characteristics of race-based epistemology, which are: “concrete experience as a criterion of meaning” (pp. 208–212), “the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims” (pp. 212–215), “the ethic of caring” (pp. 215–217), and “the ethic of personal accountability” (pp. 217–219).

## Anti-Oppressive Westernized Epistemologies

Anti-oppressive Western epistemologies push back against the active or passive distancing of oneself from the social reality that people form the lives of people, where they work or attend school (Ngũgĩ, 1986). These epistemologies “would have to be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as oppose[d] to a universal world” Grosfoguel (2007, 212).

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## Toward Braiding

Braids are regarded by many African people as a symbolic representation connected to culture. The history and tradition of African hair braiding within tribes and the cultural significance of braiding is deep and long (Kiros, 2020). The significance of

braids to African American culture is also connected to the impact of slavery on African women (Kiros). As Kiros noted:

Slavery brought not only physical and psychological trauma, but it also brought erasure. In an attempt to strip them of their humanity and culture, traffickers would shave the heads of women. Colonizers effectively attempted to take away the women's lifeline to their homeland. Hair was an important piece of a complex language system, in which it communicated the identity of the person wearing the braids (para. 3).

Within some Indigenous communities braided hair is regarded as symbol of strength, wisdom, and is something that reflects aspects of an individual's identity. While for other Indigenous communities braids have a cultural significance and reflect a connection to the creator, their ancestors, and the earth (Monkman, 2016).

Braiding is focused on what Jimmy, Andreotti, and Stein (2019) refer to as "thread sensibilities" and thread sensibilities "are oriented towards relationality" (p. 15). Thread sensibilities:

require that we sense entanglement in order to weave genuine relationships, which will in turn command responsibility for collective wellbeing as a grounding force for adequate (new) political and institutional systems (i.e. adequate relationships will build adequate capacities to work together that will secure adequate processes) take language to be both practical and metaphorical. Language can never describe the unknowable wholeness of the world, but it is extremely useful to move things in the world. In this sense, both language and knowledge are "entities" whose impact is evaluated not by their accuracy in describing something, but in their impact in the world (i.e., what they enable and what they foreclose). In this case, knowledge can come from many places (the land, altered states of consciousness, non-humans) and is something that is earned (not an entitlement) (p. 15–16).

In a metaphorical way, the similarity of what braiding represented and still represents for and among Indigenous and racialized peoples illustrates a fundamental similarity between Indigenous and those from African descent as peoples bonded through the trauma of colonization and an ongoing racialization that is anchored in the lack of humanity that the Eurocentric, White establishment presumed each group to possess.

## **Braiding Knowledges**

The process of braiding recognizes the mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate their peoples' way of living and making sense of their world. These stand in opposition to imposed colonial norms and practices that center imperialism (Sefa Dei, Hall, & Goldin Rosenberg, 2002). Broadly understood Indigenous and racialized knowledges can be understood as "pragmatic and ceremonial, physical and meta-physical" (Kovach, 2009, p. 56). Little Bear stated, "no matter how dominant a worldview is, there are always other ways of interpreting the world" (p. 77).

Braiding diverse yet distinct knowledge systems create opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of historical and present events and their consequences on people's lives. Braiding allows for a respectful, reciprocal knowledge exchange that

can lead to more robust insights and innovations in thinking, and can result in decisions and actions that are informed by Indigenous and racialized knowledges and not only the extant knowledge base (Hopkins et al., 2019; Raygorodetsky, 2017; Sefa Dei, 2016; Snively & Williams, 2016).

In practical terms, the inclusion of Indigenous and racialized knowledges would illustrate how educational leaders might “see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these” to lead schools and communities (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). Indigenous and racialized epistemologies value different ways of knowing that inherently acknowledge the heterogeneity of knowledge (Martin-Hill & Soucy, 2007; Sefa Dei, 2016). Braiding knowledges respect that there are diverse understandings of the world, and acknowledge and respect a diversity of perspectives without perpetuating the dominance of one over another (Martin, 2012).

In spite of the history of colonization and its ongoing effects, braiding these distinct but not incommensurable ways of knowing is a continued practice of resurgence and demonstration of how Indigenous and racialized scholars and communities can work and cocreate knowledge (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). The process of braiding together the three strands of knowledge acknowledges that Indigenous and racialized worldviews, and anti-oppressive Westernized ones each have something to offer.

When they are commensurate and are considered tightly braided together in ways that respect and value the different perspectives that each offers, as a braided thread they are stronger than when considered in isolation. By drawing on the rich and robust epistemologies offered by Indigenous peoples and racialized communities, scholars and practitioners of educational leadership can work to braid together different ways of knowing to motivate people, Indigenous, racialized and White, to use their collective understandings to create more just schools and communities through more equitable educational opportunities (Iwama, Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2009). Braiding enriches the existing knowledge base and expands it. The act of braiding moves Indigenous and racialized knowledges from the fringes and instead highlights the epistemic knowledge traditions of Indigenous, colonized, and oppressed racialized peoples (Sefa Dei, 2016). Thus, when Indigenous and racialized knowledges are braided together with close meaning together in solidarity they demarcate the relationship between communities who forced through the violence of colonialism and slave labor can be drawn together through their shared experiences of oppression, and resistance to an imperialist, White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy.

Braiding distinct but not incommensurate Indigenous and racialized knowledges with Westernized anti-oppressive knowledges (Moosa-Mitha, 2005) is a continued commitment to lead schools through the diversities of knowing and ways of being (Sefa Dei, 2016). Indigenous and racialized knowledges allow for an equitable approach to valuing the knowledges that people possess by focusing on reciprocity and obligation in the development of curriculum, the recognition of authoritative voices, and through the distribution of power of educational leadership. Such an

approach to braiding honors the diversity and richness of Indigenous and racialized knowledges without seeking to cancel the strengths that can come from Eurocentric White forms.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

López (2003) warned of the danger that comes from minimizing race in educational discourses by explaining that a “decontextualized and deracialized narrative” can foster “an inability to critically confront racism and racist educational policy” (p. 72). As Almeida, (2015) articulated, “Race-based epistemologies serve to de-center and contextualize western ways of thinking and knowing, to define their limits. They advocate that other forms of knowing and understanding need to be respected, included, in order to deconstruct past and resist future epistemological colonization” (p. 85). Race-based epistemologies illustrate the contradiction that emerges when dominant discourses and commentaries “begin to eulogize about universities being a site for equity and social mobility” when the reality is that the dominant Eurocentric White “canons” denigrate the value of Indigenous and racialized knowledges (Arday, 2018, p. 194).

By drawing on the work of critical race theorists, an avenue can be opened for a decolonizing approach to reform the knowledge base of educational leadership (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013). A decolonizing approach allows for the critical examination of the ways that racism and Eurocentric White privilege operate together to dominate the knowledges valued and reified in many educational institutions and systems including departments of educational leadership (Cranston & Whitford, 2018).

According to Lopez and Rugano (2018), “The dominance of Eurocentric knowledge, practices, and beliefs in education must be disrupted and the experiences of people with a colonial past must be centered for authentic meaningful change to occur” (p. 2). There is a need to eliminate the existing colonially oriented power relationships that positions non-Indigenous and nonracialized educators and educational leaders as the experts of other people’s children and reifies that they know what is best for someone else’s children even more than their own Indigenous or racialized families or communities do.

Following the recommendation of Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) there is need to dismantle the knowledge base of educational leadership through a decolonizing dialogic process where both intra- and intercultural knowledge traditions, namely Indigenous and non-Indigenous forms, can be used to inform each other. Foster (1999) ardently declared that “knowledge is always produced in specific contexts, which are time and space dependent” (p. 104), which means that the knowledge base of educational leadership is unlikely to be universal. In order to disrupt the extant knowledges that dominate educational leadership, new perspectives must be included that respect the diverse communities that schools serve (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

Educational leaders “working in diverse cultural landscapes need sophisticated understandings of the concept of culture as a learned and adaptive response to

contextual needs. They need to see that manifest levels such as roles, rituals, regulations and policies are frequently based on inheritances that may be explicit or assumptive” (Collard, 2007, p. 750). They need to understand and learn from the discourses and discursive norms of Indigenous and racialized peoples because language is not simply descriptive or a reflection of the social order of the world, insofar that it does not just mirror social reality. Educational leaders require opportunities to reflect on and respond to the diverse cultural forces at play in society if they are to construct new and deeper understandings of historical traumatic effects of colonialism if they are to be prepared to face the diverse social contexts they will encounter in many contemporary school settings (Collard, 2007).

More than 30 years ago Cuthertson (1988), and Beare, Caldwell, and Millikan (1989) called for a commitment to dismantle and rebuild the whole field of educational leadership for both practitioners and scholars. Rather, the discourses of educational leadership actively shape the way scholars and practitioners perceive and understand it as a field of study and practice, and the discourse has a profound influence on the way that individuals act and think (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Mills, 1997). However, such efforts are needed now so that scholars can better understand how they can decolonize and reconstruct educational leadership as a field of study and practice and how they can create a reflexive field that illuminates the shadows that continue to cloak the ongoing effects of colonialization and racialization.

As a result, if the field of educational leadership can reject its colonial epistemic discursive base, it can make spaces for other knowledges, Indigenous and racialized ones. It can then become a truly transformative field of study and practice. The knowledge base could be reconstructed “from new fundamentals” and undergo “a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications. When the transition is complete, the profession will have changed its view of the field, its methods, and its goals” (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 84–85).

The pathway forward requires scholars and practitioners of educational leadership to avoid the tendency to search for essentialist solutions that invoke simplistic binary oppositions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies because such “either/or” approaches leave little space or afford sufficient time for real dialogues to occur. What is required is for the scholarly community to engage in this decentering of Eurocentric Whiteness out of a sense of humanitarian responsibility as opposed to reactionary guilt (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

It is clear that school leaders need to be given formal opportunities to learn about epistemologies and ontologies quite different from the dominant ones they hold through a process that is designed as mutually respectful and reciprocal process of knowledge exchange that leads to new understandings. It can be fostered through relationships firmly set to allow for an even understanding of Indigenous, racialized, and non-Indigenous assumptive worldviews and cultural values. It is through this exposure that educational leaders can opt for frames of reference through which to lead schools other than the historical and predominant colonial frames rooted in Eurocentric Whiteness that continue to dominate and guide the field.

An approach that is framed through a critical race theory analysis that uses decolonizing methods scholars of educational leadership can eliminate those practices and theories that leave no room for other epistemologies to be considered as valid, and thereby create space for Indigenous and racialized forms of knowledge. Such space would allow scholars of educational leadership to collaborate across their differences to braid the rich knowledges of the peoples who have historically been omitted from the discourses of higher education. Despite the resistance of the institution and some of its agents to make this type of work intrinsic, it is a necessary recalibration of the scholarly field of educational leadership.

What is needed now, perhaps more than ever before, is the active decolonization of the knowledge base of educational leadership so that Indigenous and multicentric racialized ways of knowing, being, and leading become equally important central tenets for practice and theory. This active decolonization must cautiously consider how to avoid institutionalizing these often-excluded knowledges within the framework of White supremacy, but instead needs to shift the foundation of the institution and the field. This is where equal doses of reconciliation and truth, described by Meek-Cote, become essential ingredients.

By acknowledging and responding to the different sociopolitical and ethno-cultural differences of experience that exist in pluralistic societies and are part of the fabric of Indigenous, racialized, and non-Indigenous/racialized students' lives, educational leaders cannot only challenge power and privilege that advantages a few while oppressing many, but they also have the opportunity to leverage their individual and collective agency to further educational opportunities for students who – because of the continued effects of colonialism – deserve and need them the most. If the needs, hopes, and aspirations of Indigenous and racialized students and their families are to finally be served, educational leaders will require a knowledge base that reflects a deep understanding of Indigenous peoples' and racialized peoples' historical struggle against colonialism, cultural assimilation, and systemic racism to support their work.

A reconstructed field ought to position Indigenous and racialized ways of knowing and knowledges in ways that hold equal weight and validity to the anti-oppressive Westernized ones that currently dominate the field. Such a process relies on the intricate work that is required from scholars from diverse backgrounds to work to braid them together. The result would be a field that is explicit about what is implicit in terms of what educational leadership values as a field of study and practice. A field that can truly be directed to serve the public good.

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# Black Bodies and the Role of Schools in Sex Trafficking Prevention

# 70

Tashina L. Khabbaz, Ariel Otruba, and Heather Evans

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## Abstract

Human trafficking is widely regarded by experts today as “modern slavery.” Research consistently reveals that survivors of the sex trade are disproportionately women of color in the United States. Such racial disparities are explained by a long history of structural racism and inequality resultant of colonialism. Colonial knowledge production systems are responsible for producing and maintaining anti-black sexual archetypes premised on the pornographic objectification of Black women’s bodies. The hypersexual scripting and adultification of the Black body help to explain why sex trafficking impacts Black girls at higher rates compared to other groups. This also explains why Black youth are less likely to be perceived as victims. In this chapter, we connect the disproportionate impact of sex trafficking to reporting

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barriers and the often harsher, exclusionary discipline and punitive treatment of Black female youth experienced in the K-12 setting. Although sex trafficking awareness among educators is improving in the United States, we call attention to the pivotal role that educational leaders can play in the prevention of sex trafficking by working in collaboration with the community and local stakeholders to create a shift in culture, response, and policy.

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**Keywords**

Sex trafficking prevention and education · Racial disparities · Anti-racist education · Black body politics · Colonialism · Vulnerability · Black youth · Discipline

**The Field of Memory**

Education is a vital dimension of the human trafficking prevention toolkit. Many of the highest-risk populations to sexual exploitation are school-age youth in the United States, a country which ranks among the three worst in the world for human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Among these youth, Black females are disproportionately vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This is attributable to the complex trauma experienced because of systemic racism and the legacies of colonial body politics. The modern fetishization and sexual exploitation of Black bodies is a product of European colonial expansion and a key dimension of enslavement both then and now. Colonialism has produced ways of knowing, seeing, and understanding the bodies of Black women as innately lustful beings. This “Jezebel” imaginary was premised on a juxtaposition of Black, corrupt, evil, immoral, or dirty bodies (Roediger, 2010; Sherman & Clore, 2009) with white, pure, clean, ethical, and even Godly ones (Sherman & Clore, 2009). This produced a category of subjects perceived as hypersexual and “deserving of punishment” (Butler, 2015b; Phillips, 2015, p. 658). Sexually objectifying the body made it commodifiable and exploitable, another piece of territory to America’s manifest destiny. Despite the abolition of slavery, the Civil Rights movement, and multiple waves of feminism, this commodification of bodies continues at epidemic proportions through the sex trafficking industry today (UN.GIFT, 2008).

**The Field of Presence**

Global urgency to address sex trafficking has come from an increased attention to violence against women (VAW) and the trafficking industry’s connections to drug trafficking, commercial sex, coercive labor, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Yet there is an overall lack of deep public awareness about human trafficking and misunderstandings about victimology. That Black youth are disproportionately sex trafficked is the result of racial biases, which have led to the criminalization and adultification of Black youth. Although the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and recently enacted “Safe Harbor” laws recognize that all youth under the age of 18 are victims, Black juveniles remain more likely to be arrested for prostitution and experience violence by law enforcement (FBI, 2017; Phillips, 2015). This barrier to



identification is compounded by the reluctance of trafficking survivors to identify themselves as victims out of shame, fear of law enforcement or authorities, and concern about retribution by traffickers. This makes trafficking victims intrinsically hard to reach. These same racial and sexual stereotypes have created a culture of punishment within schools, wherein youth of color face greater exclusionary discipline. This chapter draws attention to the important intersections of the role that school systems play in systematically making criminals of Black youth and the vulnerability of this population to trafficking.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The integration of trauma theory, drawing on the field of psychology, offers a way to make education more equitable for historically marginalized students in the United States by addressing how educators may reproduce criminality and reinforce vulnerability. This is essential to intervening with at risk populations. Historical and familial trauma not only have a predisposition to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and lower academic achievement but are at higher risk of substance abuse and other risky behavior (Brave Heart et al., 2011; Maxwell, 2014; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smoleswski, 2004). Studies have revealed histories of adverse childhood experiences prior to being trafficked heighten vulnerability to deception and recruitment of a trafficker (Choi, Klein, Shin, & Lee, 2009; Evans, 2019; Smith et al., 2009; Wilson & Butler, 2014). Therefore, knowledge about adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and generational trauma by educators is essential to mandated reporters' ability to identify and assist Black sex-trafficked youth, as well as prevent retraumatization.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Trauma-informed attention must be called to multiple intersecting identities to address the vulnerability of "sex-trafficked Black female youth." Black feminist and intersectional research on gender and sexuality has played a vital role in confronting and challenging racial and sexual stereotyping by interrogating the colonial gaze that has fetishized the Black body in schools, as well as society at large. Alongside feminist activism, this literature has helped to expose Black women and girls' experience, which has otherwise remained silent within society and the academy. Nevertheless, even within the recent #MeToo and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements, Black feminists recognize the continued marginalization and exclusion that women and girls of color experience within the larger (White) feminist movement in US society. Interrogating the colonial gaze and recognizing Black women's experience are some of the first steps to understanding how the Black body can become a strategic site of postcolonial resignification (Netto, 2005). This is needed to liberate and recognize agency of Black women's sexuality and dismantle the systems of oppression and criminalization that have made disciplinary practices and sexual violence against Black women and girls permissible.

### **Critical Assumptions**

This chapter works from the following critical assumptions. Blackness is fetishized and hypersexualized. Western social thought associates Blackness with an imagined

uncivilized, animal-like sexuality. These dehumanizing colonial body politics oppress and subjugate by producing acquiescent subjects, who are perceived to be always consenting either passively or enthusiastically. This rationale has been used to justify exploitation, oppression, and sexual violence. These ideologies have lingered centuries after the Transatlantic Slave Trade, continuing to manifest in how Black sexuality and Black bodies are perceived and treated in contemporary society. Black youth are not free from this hypersexualization, as a maturity is inscribed onto them, becoming sexualized through a process of “adultification.” The convergence of these imaginaries means that Black female youth are increasingly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. Adultification also shapes identity and how Black female youth come to navigate and conform to the social and political order. Many Black sex-trafficked youth in the United States go unnoticed and struggle to receive societal support because of these body politics. Racial inequity and bias in schools mean that Black female youth are greater targets of punitive practices, such as exclusionary discipline, making an already vulnerable population at risk for human trafficking. Therefore, adopting anti-racist and anti-trafficking practices within the educational system can play a decisive role in reducing vulnerability among Black female youth.

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## Introduction

Colonial body politics produced a legacy of dehumanizing and injurious stereotypes for Black men and women in the United States. The objectification of the Black body has served to justify violence, exploitation, and marginalization in all dimensions of life, from the streets to the classroom (Butler, 2015a; Morris, 2016; Phillips, 2015; West, 2009). This chapter begins by discussing the genesis of the hypersexualization of Black womanhood as a product of colonial body politics. Next, it recounts the issue of sex trafficking in the United States, drawing special attention to racial disparities among trafficking survivors. The vulnerability of Black female youth to sexual exploitation is then tied to issues of racial discrimination within education as they relate to disciplinary practices. By assessing present day K-12 responses to Black youth, this chapter proposes a set of school-based anti-racist strategies for educational leaders to use as trafficking prevention.

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## Colonial Body Politics: A History of the Fetishization and Hypersexualization of Black Women

Slavery, servitude, and coerced human labor existed long before the development of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the sixteenth century. These colonial power structures relied on racial hierarchies and taxonomies of power based on biological determinism (Quijano, 2000). Pseudoscientific ideas such as phrenology rationalized Black inferiority, slavery, and centuries of social and economic domination. Black people were animalized and dehumanized, scripted as barbaric and subhuman, and often situated between humans and primates along the evolutionary ladder (Albarello & Rubini, 2012;

Davenport & Steggerda, 1929; Ferguson, 1916). This racial hierarchy was also sexualized. The genesis of anti-black sexual archetypes begins with the arrival of European colonizers to Africa (Magubane, 2001). These European travelers were both perversely fascinated and appalled by their encounters with the bodies of Africans (Holmes, 2007). Their writings and pseudoscientific practices characterized Black bodies as having an insatiable, primal, and animal-like sexuality. This codified the Black male as a brute and a potential rapist and the Black woman as lascivious by nature.

These anti-black sexual imaginaries thrived in the United States, a country founded on white supremacy, where 40 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and 10 of the first 12 presidents owned slaves and the Constitution only counted slaves as three-fifths of a free person. The hypersexualization of the Black body was essential to the sexual economy of slavery. This rationalized and normalized exploitive sexual relations between White men and Black women, especially sexual unions involving slavers and slaves (Butler, 2015b; Davis, 2002; Hooks, 1981). Black women, who were reductively characterized as innately seductive, promiscuous, alluring, predatory, and lewd, were constructed in contrast to White women, who were considered pure, modest, and civilized. These narratives suggested that Black women had an insatiable appetite for sex, which could not be satisfied by Black men. Even more, this logic excused slave owners' sexual exploitive abuse (Butler, 2015b; Lindsey & Johnson, 2014). This also created the basis for which slave women were property and could not, legally speaking, be raped (Kendi, 2017). In contrast, Black men convicted of raping White women were usually castrated, hanged, or both (Jordan, 2012, p.150–163). *Plaçage* and other long-term relationships that existed between White men and women of color certainly complicate this story. Entering a sexual relationship with a White man who was not her owner could sometimes be a path to freedom or offer better economic stability for free women of color (Clark, 2013). However, “the rape of a female slave was probably the most common form of interracial sex” (D’Emilio & Freedman, 1988, p. 102). Practices that treated slaves as “breeders” and “encouraged reproduction” relied on the belief that Black fecundity was proof of an insatiable sexual appetite (Roberts, 1999; White, 1999, p. 31). Contracted concubinage and the Fancy Trade also promoted prostitution, especially of light-skinned, mixed-race enslaved women at genteel sex markets, such as “quadroon balls.” Like *plaçage*, mixed-race people and the experience of free women of color challenged the racial binaries that slavery was premised, though this was countered by anti-miscegenation laws. Nonetheless, an open attitude of prostituting Black women was present and continued till the next century, though it became underground thereafter (Kendi, 2017).

Even as old racist ideas were discarded, new ones were produced for renewed consumption. Emancipation, reconstruction, desegregation, and the eventual passing of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts did not end white supremacy in America nor Black women's sexual exploitation. The portrayal of Black women as sexually lascivious remains commonplace in American media. Over time, injurious images of Black womanhood in political and popular culture have evolved from the “Hottentot [Black] Venus” (embodied by Sarah Baartman) to the “sapphire,” “Jezebel” whore, “bad-black-girl,” and “welfare queen” (Collins, 2000; Holmes, 2007; Jewell, 1993; White, 1999;

Woodard & Mastin, 2005). These archetypes have been produced and reinforced through literature, drawings, sculptures, and figurines (West, 1995), as well as the evolution of print media, film, and television. The Jezebel trope has dehumanized, objectified, and overshadowed the complexity of Black sexuality and agency. Despite advances in racial consciousness and Black feminism, even when Black women now play central characters of the movies, Hollywood continues to typecast Black women in demeaning, sexually aggressive, or deviant roles. This is also profoundly demonstrated in the pornography industry, which remains a bastion of explicit anti-black stereotyping – raw, obscene, and increasingly mainstreamed. Collins (2004) argues that race and gender are commodified in systems of colonialism and patriarchal capitalism. The sexual violence and abuse toward Black females is evident in present-day pornography where they are generally exhibited as animals and gagged, in chains, or bound by the White male who rapes her (Benard, 2016; Collins, 1991, 2005, 2008; Dines, 2006; Jensen, 2007). This has occurred alongside popular constructions of Black masculinity that glorify the pimp and glamorize the ghetto (Jackson, 2006; Staiger, 2005).

The scripting of Black women's bodies has created an incredible pressure for Black women to adhere to "respectability politics" and work toward dismantling representations and social structures that cast them as sexually promiscuous and deserving of rape, abuse, and stigma or as less deserving of justice (Higginbotham, 1993). Black women had to learn a "culture of dissemblance," which Darlene Clark Hine (1989) describes as tactics of masking and a disavowal of sexuality to shield themselves from sexual exploitation. Nonetheless, the impacts of the hypersexualized imaginaries of the Black women's body are profound. Among the many institutions where the legacies of these colonial body politics persist is human trafficking.

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## **Racial Disparities Among Sex Trafficking Survivors: The Vulnerability of Black Female Youth**

Long after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863 in the United States, anti-trafficking activists and advocates argue that slavery persists today. Trafficking is now widely regarded as "modern slavery" (Kara, 2008, 2017; UN.GIFT, 2008). Just as colonialism involved practices of domination and dispossession, sex trafficking operates through the exploitation of another person for the purpose of a commercial sex act through force, fraud, or coercion. The United States' first federal trafficking law, the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000* (TVPA), states that force, fraud, or coercion does not have to be proven if the individual is under 18 years of age because, by law, they are a minor and are unable to give consent (H.R. 3244, 2000).

Although trafficking victims can be of all genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, nationalities, or income levels, women and girls of color are of special concern. The International Labour Organization (2017) notes 99% of the victims involved in sex trafficking are women and girls. While there is no current clear data on how many individuals have been victimized in the commercial sex industry, it is estimated that 200,000 American children are at risk for trafficking into the sex

industry (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Within this data, survivors of the sex trade are disproportionately LGBTQ+ youth, marginalized youth of color (e.g., Hispanic, Latinx, Native American), youth with developmental disabilities, and immigrant youth. In a 2-year review of all suspected human trafficking incidents across the country, 94% were female, 40% Black, and 24% Latinx (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; The National Center for Victims of Crime, 2013). While this statistic may sound racially balanced, one must consider that the percentage of Black individuals residing in the United States only amounts to 13% of the population (US Census Bureau, 2010). In Cook County, Illinois, 66% of sex trafficking victims between 2012 and 2016 were Black female youth (Cook County Sheriff's Office, 2017). In Nebraska, 50% of individuals sold online for sex are Black female youth, though Black people comprise only 5% of the general population (Women's Fund of Omaha, 2017). These disproportionate statistics are also prevalent in studies looking at minors (Carey & Teplitsky, 2013; Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, 2018; Puzanchera, Sladky, & Kang, 2018; Richey, 2017). Studies also reveal that Black women and girls are more often arrested for prostitution-related offenses rather than being seen as victims of crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017). Thus, Black female youth are disproportionately trafficked at higher rates. Factors such as limited educational opportunities, poverty, structural inequalities, and historical hypersexualization of Black female youth contribute to their victimization (Crenshaw, 1989; Fredrickson, 1989; West, 2009).

Literature has begun to explain how the impact on a victim of human sex trafficking is layered, complex, comprehensive, and difficult to describe or enumerate. One contributing factor to this complexity is the prevalence of childhood experiences that made them vulnerable to further sexual exploitation. The physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological control of a trafficker and the events during the time of sexual exploitation are factors that create symptoms of trauma and compound early childhood trauma (Choi et al., 2009; Hardy, Compton, & McPhatter, 2013). Complex trauma or DESNOS, while not an official diagnosis listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition*, is a term that more accurately describes the trauma seen in victimization within human sex trafficking (Busch-Armendariz, Busch Nsonwu, & Cook Heffron, 2014; Choi et al., 2009; Evans, 2019), because it further assists in understanding the impact of trafficking on a victim. Complex trauma emphasizes alterations in six areas: regulation of affect and impulses, attention or consciousness, self-perception, relations with others, somatization, and systems of meaning (Spinazzola, Blaustein, Kisiel, & Van der Kolk, 2001). In turn, to cope or regulate, victims who present with complex trauma may resort to substance abuse, self-injury, disordered eating, suicidal ideation, or other forms of self-destructive behaviors (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2014). In exploited youth, there have been high rates of suicide and depression, sexual health issues, long-term health problems, and delayed progress in school (Phillips, 2015). Exploited youth face higher risk of mortality through murder and HIV/AIDS. Research also indicates that exiting the sex trade is extremely difficult for youth with recidivism rates indicating that it can take numerous relapses before an exploited youth is free from her exploiter (Abu-Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Clawson & Goldblatt Grace, 2007).

Traffickers commonly target individuals with characteristics of vulnerability and isolation (Clawson, 2009). These vulnerabilities include age, history of abuse (Carpenter & Gates, 2016; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Lloyd, 2012; Varma, Gillespie, McCracken, & Greenbaum, 2015), mental health, LBGQT youth, and homelessness. Other factors that encourage general vulnerability to sex trafficking include involvement in the welfare system, being a native or aboriginal youth, experiencing familial difficulties, and lack of social support (Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019; Littrell, 2015). Vulnerability, involvement, or history of exploitation inevitably impacts our youth and results in trauma that derails development and will therefore hinder their education process (Courtois & Ford, 2009). This is further compounded for Black female youth, since race is often overlooked as a predictive factor (Beegan & Moran, 2017; Butler, 2015b). While the current culture promotes sexualization of youth, Black youth have a particular challenge because of the ongoing narrative of Black femininity, which includes a “Jezebel” stereotype (Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017). She is not only presented as a hypersexualized “vix-en” in hip-hop videos but also present in the social discourses that produce public policy responses to child welfare, health, and criminalization or incarceration (Morris, 2016).

Thus, racial disparities heighten the risk of sex trafficking among Black female youth where they are less likely to be perceived as a victim and less likely to receive help in comparison with White female youth (Butler, 2015a; Sedlak et al., 2010). The notion of sex-trafficked Black female youth as a victimless crime stems from historical narratives about Black females in which they are perceived as sexually promiscuous and incorrigible (Morris, 2015; Phillips, 2015; West, 1995). Data reveals that when a sex-trafficked Black female youth is identified, the criminal justice system treats them more harshly (Phillips, 2015). For example, they are at higher risk for criminalization and spend more time detained in comparison with White sex-trafficked youth (Phillips, 2015). In receiving supportive services, White females are favored in treatment centers (Gerassi et al., 2019). As health treatment and counseling are primarily led by White individuals, Black female youth are often not a priority. Additionally, youth from Black communities are hesitant to receive supportive services due to mistrust stemming from a history of being harmed by health professionals during studies such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Maultsby, 1982). Furthermore, across juvenile justice and education systems, Black female youth face more punitive treatment compared to peers. *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood* (2017) emphasizes how the adultification bias influences adults' perceptions of Black girls. They are seen as less innocent, more adult-like, and more culpable for their actions. For example, past research has shown that prosecutors dismissed an average of three out of every ten cases for Black girls and seven out of ten cases for White female youth. In addition, Black female youth have not received equal opportunities for diversion compared to their White peers. Black female youth are three times more likely to be removed from their homes and placed in state custody in a secure or locked facility than White peers (Epstein et al., 2017). In the education setting, adultification results in harsher treatment and higher standards for Black girls in school.



## Sex Trafficking Prevention Efforts and Barriers Within the US Educational System

Schools are a mirror into our society (Beachum et al., 2008). As Black female youth struggle to receive support from the community, their needs are often overlooked within the context of school (Batchelor & Lane, 2015). An institutional lack of support for this population hinders identification of potential sex trafficking victims. Achievement gaps, school-to-confinement pathways, and the school-to-sex trafficking pipeline are all connected.

School region, resources, demographics, and practices influence the level of academic quality and achievement (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Low-income schools have fewer resources, such as limited course offerings, little to no after-school programs, and limited teacher experience (Johnson et al., 2004; Lacour & Tissington, 2011), which can lead to unequal opportunities, such as lack of quality education, support, and student guidance (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Across the United States, a large portion of Black youth attends low-income schools (Hussar & Bailey, 2018). Skiba et al. (2011) note that regardless of socioeconomic factors, race is a significant contributor to disproportionate discipline outcomes. Districts with more youth of color experience harsher exclusionary discipline punishments such as suspension and expulsion than White youth (Anderson & Ritter, 2019). Although Black youth only amount to 15% of the youth population, 36% of expulsions and 44% of multiple suspensions are experienced by Black youth (Hussar & Bailey, 2018; U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). These forms of school discipline are associated with future misbehavior, lower academic achievement, school dropout, and involvement in the juvenile justice system (Anderson & Ritter, 2017). In addition, youth who have received three or more suspensions are five times more likely to be involved in sex trafficking (Gerassi, 2020).

As Black female youth experience suspension at a high rate, their time out of school can increase their involvement in criminalizing pathways such as sex trafficking (Morris, 2016). Sex trafficking behavioral indicators are overlooked due to lack of training and racial biases, which steer educators away from questioning inappropriate age group behavior. Training and awareness programs play an important role in educators' ability to support sex-trafficked youth. One study that looked at 76 principals in North Carolina noted that teachers were not prepared to address sex trafficking among youth in comparison with social workers, school resource officers, and guidance counselors (Rizo et al., 2019). Teachers' inability to respond to sex trafficking cases may be attributed to the lack of adequate training (Khubchandani et al., 2017). This leaves teachers feeling ill-equipped to identify and respond to sex-trafficked youth. Although policies and practices are developing to enhance sex trafficking awareness, various factors contribute to lack of identification, especially among Black youth.

Changes in educational policies and programs across the United States are slowly heightening sex trafficking awareness (Clay, Okoniewski, & Haskett, 2019; Cornyn, 2015). These shifts influence educators' role as mandated reporters, whereby they are legally required to report any forms of child abuse (physical, sexual, and/or

emotional) (Clay et al., 2019). Out of the number of child abuse and neglect reports made in the United States, educators account for most reports (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, & Children's Bureau, 2020). To align with the TVPA standards, policy amendments such as the 2015 Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) noted that states must treat sex-trafficked youth as victims of abuse (Cornyn, 2015). In addition, the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 2010 (CAPTA) added the term "exploitation" to the definition of child abuse and neglect; thus, mandated reporters such as educators are legally required to report sex trafficking cases (Clay et al., 2019; Williams, 2017). Although educational state-level policies on sex trafficking require educators to be trained, cases still go unreported.

There are many factors that contribute to reporting barriers where contextual policies and practices vary. Lack of training depth or inconsistency of training poses barriers to assisting these victims (Rizo et al., 2019). In some cases, policy to practice has yet to be fully enforced in all districts, or when implemented, surface-level knowledge does not lead to enhanced safety of sex-trafficked youth (Williamson, Perdue, Belton, & Burns, 2012). For example, the Florida Department of Education (FDE) lists Florida as top three states for trafficking prevalence, and in 2019 the FDE mandated training for all students and educators. However, districts are required to develop an educational prevention strategy and curriculum (Khabbaz, 2020, February 10). Thus, the quality of program and practice is incumbent on districts to ensure adequate qualifications and design effective materials. To date, there are no well-established sex trafficking training evaluation measures to determine the effectiveness of programs (Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Rizo et al., 2019). In addition, school sex trafficking programs for educators primarily provide an overview of sex trafficking, leaving educators feeling unsure when identifying and responding to suspected sex trafficking cases (Khubchandani et al., 2017; Williamson, 1 July 2020, personal discussion). Blanket knowledge of sex trafficking is expanding but is limited when addressing the efficacy of school and community response to trafficking (Williamson, 1 July 2020, webinar).

In addition, trainings relating racial inequality to sex trafficking are limited (Butler, 2015a; Khabbaz & Zungu, 2020). Hardly any programs address racial inequality in conjunction with sex trafficking in the K-12 context. Development of programs in this area and research is needed to determine if intended practice is in alignment with desired outcomes. Khabbaz and Zungu (2020) conducted a pre- and post-pilot test to examine the influence of a sex trafficking training on educators' perception, likelihood to report a sex-trafficked youth, and determine if race of supposed victims would play a role in educators' response. The individuals who participated in the study were primarily white, K-12 educators. The pre-test results suggest that although educators felt more empathetic toward Black sex-trafficked youth, they were more likely to report and help White youth. The scholars attributed this finding to ingroup-outgroup distinction, with people being more willing to help members of their group (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). After the sex trafficking training intervention, Khabbaz and Zungu's (2020) post-test findings



indicate that educators were less likely to report on behalf of a sex-trafficked youth and felt less empathetic for those exploited. A potential explanation for these results is preconceived stereotypes about sex trafficking, such that a person who is sexually exploited is forcibly pressured against their will into the situation of harm. The intervention instead highlighted the complexity of sex trafficking and the various vulnerabilities that influence individual's likelihood of sex trafficking. Therefore, when having increased awareness of the nuanced dynamics involved in exploitation, it may have shifted participants' perception of agency. Although pre- and post-tests were underpowered, responses revealed the need for multiple trainings to overcome bias and misconceptions so that educators will report all sex-trafficked youth, despite the circumstances in which one is trafficked. Novice programs on sex trafficking and racial inequality need rigorous assessment so that proper school amendments are made to ensure implementation practice helps to protect at-risk Black female youth.

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### **Conclusions and Reflections: Combatting Racial Discrimination as Trafficking Prevention**

Racial disparities among sex-trafficked youth in the United States must be understood within a broader context of body politics. Although the hypersexualization of Black bodies can be traced to the history of colonialism and chattel slavery, injurious images of Black bodies persist and are maintained through modern systems and structures of racial injustice. Stereotypical perceptions of the sexually active, deviant, defiant, and insubordinate Black female harmfully impact how society treats Black female youth. Such imaginaries infiltrate and affect how Black female youth are treated even within the school context. Racial disparities are evident when assessing school suspension and expulsion discipline patterns. These forms of discipline play a role in the school-to-prison pipeline as well as the school-to-sex trafficking pipeline. The ubiquity of injurious images and stereotypes of Black bodies that perpetuate bias among school educators and administrators contributes to the vulnerability of Black female youth to sex trafficking. This means that educational leaders must work to promote anti-racism at the same time as trafficking prevention.

School leaders' practice and policies can lead to problems or prevention (McCray & Beachum, 2014). Continuous and purposeful action is required to bring about effective change regarding sex trafficking prevention and racial equity. Equity-based school practice can help to reduce racial discrimination and help to identify and support sex-trafficked youth. As school leaders influence educators' willingness and desire to improve student relations, genuine dedication to equity-based outcomes is required (Kennedy, 2019). This can be done by providing professional development training for school personnel and amending school policies with the support of parents and community, as well as structure school programs that help to identify local needs through collaboration with local stakeholders.

Professional development training for school personnel on bias can shift discipline practice through perspective-taking, individualizing experiences, and fostering

stronger and more positive teacher-student relations (Gregory, Huang, Anyon, Greer, & Downing, 2018). Improvement in teacher-student relationships is vital in sex trafficking situations, as educators may be more in tune to identify vulnerable youth, or youth may be more inclined to share their experience within the context of a trusting relationship. Additionally, positive relations have shown to reduce discipline practice among youth (Rivas-Drake, Lozada, Pinetta, & Jagers, 2020). Community stakeholders can work with and train school personnel by arming them with equitable discipline and race-conscious pedagogy. This practice can be embedded within the school from dialogue to curriculum where the notion of equity and inclusion becomes a state of being. Uncomfortable conversations about race are inevitable but necessary to break down stereotypes that have been ingrained into our society for centuries (Singleton, 2014). Sex trafficking trainings should be handled somewhat differently. Through collaboration with local anti-trafficking stakeholders, together parties can develop a training to meet the needs of the community. Factors to help the success of prevention efforts include comprehensive weekly training, varied teaching methods, fostering positive relationships, enhancing socioculturally relevant content, and development of evaluation outcomes (Nation, Keener, Wandersman, & DuBois, 2005). Through this process, educators should feel more confident and competent in their ability to identify sex trafficking red flags (Rizo et al., 2019). Additionally, the breakdown of racial bias and sex trafficking trainings should help educators accurately interpret Black female youth behavior.

In addition, schools should consider if pre-existing policies are in alignment with equity-based goals, and if not, amendments are needed (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Anderson (2020) notes that schools should brainstorm potential unintended policy outcomes such as hair or dress code. When amending policies, schools can collaborate with parents and community members, specifically those underrepresented (Anderson, 2020; Banks & Obiakor, 2015). The collaborative process will enhance positive relations and provide perspectives that may alleviate or prevent future conflicts (Anyon et al., 2016; Gregory, Bell, & Pollock, 2016). If policies are not already established, schools should develop a sex trafficking response plan to be able to clearly identify, assess, and report sex-trafficked youth. Sources such as the US Department of Education's Human Trafficking in America's Schools (2015) report can provide a guide to structure response protocols and policies. To ensure policies and protocols are based on school needs, schools can work in collaboration with an anti-trafficking organization to develop sex trafficking response and support measures.

As shifts are required at the school level, educator level, and policy level, change is also needed at the student level. Schools can implement race-conscious and equity-based approaches (Welsh & Little, 2018). For example, schools can implement curriculums which promote critical thinking and engagement with difficult conversations related to controversial policies, ethnicities, and values or beliefs (Banks, 2015). Utilization of anti-racist curriculum has the potential to incite evaluation and demotion of stereotypes and forms of systemic discrimination. Regarding sex trafficking, age-appropriate trainings can be incorporated into health class curriculum. As sex trafficking is not an isolated phenomenon,

additional discussions on healthy relationships, sexuality, sexual violence, and the impact of pornography are needed. When developing a training for youth, schools can work in alignment with community stakeholders to ensure that the practice is tailored to authentically meet school and youth needs. In addition, knowledge and use of community resources may be useful when needing to refer to students who are particularly at high risk (Banks, 2015). By schools working in collaboration with the local community and stakeholders to promote school equity practice, and response, through sex trafficking trainings and anti-racist curriculum, educators will be more equipped to identify and support sex-trafficked Black female youth.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Confronting Forms of Sexual Violence in Schools: De-Constructing Policy Paradoxes](#)
- ▶ [Racial Inequality in K-12 Schools and Implications for Educational Leadership](#)
- ▶ [Refocusing Educational Practice through an Ethic of Care](#)
- ▶ [The Emergence of Culturally Responsive Leadership](#)

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**Part IX**

**Leadership and Culture**



# Justice, Public Scholarship, and Improvement Inquiry in the Practice of Educational Leadership

# 71

Ronald W. Whitaker II, Jacqueline Roebuck Sakho, and Rick McCown

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## Abstract

This chapter organically troubles justice, as a means to explore public scholarship within authentic contexts, in which interventions are implemented. The authors of this work focus on new principle preparation standards, as a means to “go-deeper”

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with public scholarship. Additionally, this chapter employs a frame of improvement inquiry to reveal how leadership practice in education has been driven by accountability imposed on leaders and the systems they lead. The chapter concludes with a proposal to consider a new frame for understanding and improving the practice of educational leaders within and across specific contexts.

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**Keywords**

Public scholarship · Justice · Improvement inquiry · Principle preparation · Educational leadership

**The Field of Memory**

The notion of investing leadership decisions within a position that enjoys power and privilege within a system is problematic. If problems are identified and then solutions imposed from the top of an organizational chart, the voices of those who are users of the system do not inform what problems are identified and how those problems are addressed. Educational *reform* efforts have typically come from spaces of privilege and power. Efforts are underway to replace the *reform* approach to educational leadership with efforts that are distributed across sectors and across spaces within educational systems.

**The Field of Presence**

Recognizing that collecting and analyzing outcome data for purposes to meet criteria of system accountability does not serve the purpose of continuous system improvement. Practical measurement undertaken for the purpose of improving educational systems looks different than measurement that seeks to judge summatively educational systems and, in some cases, the people who work in those systems. Measurement that is designed and undertaken with improvement in mind engages those who are – and who engage most closely with – the learners in the system. Argumentation is a frame that serves improvement and provides a way to focus on the *impact* of educational leadership practice rather than the *intention* of leaders and others who exert power and privilege.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Community organizing, political activism, and community-based research and development have contributed notions of democratic engagement to the work of understanding and addressing the problems that lead to unacceptable outcomes in too many educational systems. The work now more closely aligns with scholarship that is of public consequence. The field of healthcare improvement has been engaged in the science of improvement for over half a century. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has worked closely with – among other organizations – the Institute for Healthcare Improvement to bring improvement science to the work of improving educational outcomes for all learners.

### Discontinuities and Ruptures

Framing disparities in performance as achievement gaps and holding systems responsible for those disparities have attached to many reform efforts. That frame has also led to practices that serve the system more than those the system was meant to serve. Ladson-Billings (2006) reframed *achievement gaps* as the *education debt*. That reframing exposed needs of learners and needs of the systems meant to serve learners in ways that have challenged normative practices in educational leadership. It has also assisted in focusing on how students who are owed the education debt experience obstacles in authentic contexts. One other challenge to normative educational leadership practice has been movement from privileging the knowledge and experiences in the academy over the knowledge and lived experiences in schools and communities to a more democratic valuing across the sectors.

### Critical Assumptions

Critical assumptions attach to each of the three frames through which shifts in educational practice are examined. Justice in the realm of the practice of educational leadership requires that values of righteousness and love must be enacted. Educational leadership that is of public consequence rests on scholarship that focuses on the implementation in real practice contexts. Improvement inquiry proceeds from what is referred to as the *central law of improvement*: “Every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it produces” (Langley et al., 2009, p. 79). A proposal to view educational leadership practice as argumentation assumes that leadership decisions and actions are claims that need to be explicated in order to improve educational leadership practice.

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## Introduction

In this chapter, the authors examine how normative practice of educational leadership has shifted and the nature of the leadership practice that is emerging. In general, the authors map how practice that privileges power and position within an insulated educational system has moved toward an emergent practice that privileges (1) cross-sector, democratic engagement and (2) interrogations of practice that focus on the *impact* that leaders’ decisions and actions have on learners rather than leaders’ *intention* and intellectual justification.

The nature of the shift is traced through three frames: *justice, public scholarship, and improvement inquiry*. Each frame is used first to focus how leadership practices have looked and then to bring into focus the assumptions and reasoning that underlie newer, emergent leadership practices. Observing educational leadership practice through a frame of justice reveals how values of righteousness and love must be enacted if *just action* is to emerge as a new norm of practice. Using a frame of public scholarship reveals how traditional leadership practice – and preparation – has focused more on generalized descriptions, prescriptions, and proscriptions of

interventions and how a greater focus on the *authentic contexts* in which interventions are *implemented* is emerging. Employing a frame of improvement inquiry reveals how leadership practice in education has been driven by accountability imposed on leaders and the systems they lead and how collaborative *design thinking* – undertaken by multiple stakeholders – is emerging in pursuit of *continuous quality improvement* of local education settings.

The chapter concludes with a proposal to consider a new frame for understanding and improving the practice of educational leaders within and across specific contexts. The proposal is to view *practice as argumentation*: to treat leadership decisions and actions as claims of practice, identify the reasons for making decisions and taking actions, determine what evidence is used to support the reasoning and, if necessary, show how the supportive connection between reasoning and evidence is warranted. The proposal yields a call to action to advance emergent leadership practice across the domains of culture, community, justice, and policy.

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## Framing Justice

On April 3rd, 1968, just four days before the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was scheduled to preach his sermon Titled: “Why America May Go To Hell” (Dyson, 2009), and less than 24 h before he would be assassinated at the balcony at the Lorraine Motel, Dr. King delivered his prophetic “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech at the Mason Temple Church of God in Christ. In this timeless address, passionately articulated the following statement: “*the world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around. That’s a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars.*”

It is within the context, of the aforementioned claims by Dr. King; that the authors trouble justice within the context public scholarship and improvement inquiry. To that end, since the nation is still sick, trouble is still in the land, and confusion is still all around, educational leaders need to rethink our notions around educational leadership, through courageous practices around justice.

Specifically, this chapter’s notions around justice also align with Schubert’s (2010) assertions around love, justice, and education, when he writes:

The intertwined and dynamic force of love and justice is the driving force to overcome acquisitiveness and oppression. In Deweyan terms it may be more integrative than merely two entities to be balanced once and for all; therefore, we wrestle constantly with the emphasis on love and activism in every situation (p.219).

Therefore, if educational leaders are really going to be serious about facilitating leadership practice that are emerging, innovative, but most importantly, infused with equity, then substantive concepts of justice, need to align with prophetic love. To embellish the Old Testament prophet Amos pronunciation to “to let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (New

International Version, 2011, Amos. 5:24). In other words, this chapter declares that it cannot be justice, if it is not righteous (love), and it cannot be righteous (love), if it is not justice!

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## Public Scholarship When the Knowing Is Not Enough (Non Satis Scire)

The new PSEL/NELP national standards seek to heal and balance injustices for all students especially those students owed from the “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) These new standards have either been adopted or adapted by most state licensure and accreditation bodies carried out in education preparation programs. The standards are established to bring equity into public education using specific standards with indicators and prescriptive actions. While there exists a continuum of how these standards are interpreted by education preparation programs for aspiring leaders my claim is that there does exist overlapping fluency factors calling for the Principal to enact, embody and lead with *equity*, and to do so by interpreting and implementing *policy for justice*; to be an instructional leader across the campus and its broader community; intentionally practicing and modeling culturally responsive leadership; and to be an informed *communal* advocate for students, staff and families in solidarity with academic success for all students. The depth and breadth of the standards can be distilled down to expectations for the building principal to be fluent across four overlapping areas of education leadership: culture, community, justice, and policy.

Holding all the above as true, candidates in principal preparation programs will be served well with preparation that happens in real-time school settings offering opportunities to apply critical praxis triangulation frameworks of “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (Freire, 1970, p. 126) while engaging in transformative andragogy for self and other adults in the building. Riley and Hawe (2005) make a provocative analysis from their study involving teaching and learning interventions and preventative educational practices for health promotion practitioners. As discovered by the growing field of Improvement Science, the education sector as an interdisciplinary field can benefit from cross-sector andragogical investigation.

Riley and Hawe (2005) also argue that the teaching and preparation interventions or interruption practices trend is, to “focus on the technology of the intervention without informing... about how the context in which it was implemented affected the technology” (p. 226). The authors find this trend to also exist in educator preparation. In fact, the design of “*how to*” of education practice must not be disjointed from the concentrically interconnected levels (e.g., individually, organizationally, politically, historically) of “*what, who and why*” of policy, practice, and/or belief in education practices. Simply, this is what it looks like when “knowing is not enough.”

Ball (2012) argues that to improve, let alone dismantle or interrupt inequitable practices in schools the building principal must be intimately aware of the system. Humans, build realities based on understandings, experiences informed, and zones

of proximity – individual networks, institutions (structures & systems), cultural (beliefs, behaviors, assumptions values), and historical (e.g., the journey toward adult development). When aspiring principals and other school leaders are up against “facilitating a situation so entwined with complex issues [and] challenged by where to start or when to intervene as well as how to bring closure” (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2018, p. 27) more than the “how to” or “technology” of practice is needed. A critical awareness of adult development in conversation with the “how to” or technology of equity, culture, policy, and justice fluency is a leadership cocktail and paramount in preparing aspiring principals and other educational leaders’ writ large. Yet, knowing that inequity exists and subsequently produces predictable grave life outcomes historically for Black and Indigenous students of color in the system of public, has not been enough to produce sustainable transformative change. There appears to be a gap not only in the knowledge practice continuum of preparation but also in how education researchers understand the that “how to” is informed by the “who, what and why” of educators when making sense of inequitable practice. To intersect the how to with the who, what and why of an inequitable practice requires fugitivity frameworks. By investigating problems of practice in schools as public scholarship – an applied education research methodology – operationalized as a collaborative research effort, is to invoke education researchers to be accomplices for justice.

Dr. Jeanne Oaks in her Presidential address at the 2016 AERA meeting listed engaging in public scholarship as one of three priorities for conducting education research in the twenty-first century and beyond. Oaks defines public scholarship as a cross-sector collaborative process that aims “to produce and use knowledge in concert to shift cultural norms and political power toward equity and inclusion” (p. 91). Oakes (2018) calls education researchers to be in authentic partnership with “educators, political leaders, storytellers and activists” (p. 91) to move toward this way of thinking about and practicing public scholarship work in motion.

Further, Oaks provides a powerful reframing of public scholarship by explicating its purpose as an “applied” research methodology to the purpose and measure of tenured track faculty to be in service. While Oaks way of framing public scholarship resonates profoundly, it does require a decolonizing. Precisely, educational leaders continue to engage in a fugitive process of principal preparation practices the notion of producing and actionizing knowledge systems that aim to transform school practices into equitable practices and just learning environments. This chapter makes a connection of Oaks thinking about public scholarship through the lens of Givens’ (2021) description of “abroad mentorship,” a fugitive practice of Black leaders to pass critical information and messaging about teaching and learning while oppressed, thus influencing others. An influencing that, for better or for worst, has sustained to influence how Black educators think about teaching and learning.

Oakes (1990) sets out to investigate student tracking - a practice she names as one of the “failings” (p. 2) in public schools and as an education debt. The study examined several schools in California and a key finding unearthed as an educator’s knowing deepened about “failing” practices and specifically the disproportionate impact on historically marginalized students that the educators became activist. These educator

activist exhibited determination to put an end to the failing practice of tracking. The study exposed a connection to the deepening of an educator's knowing – their activation of self-determination and activism – and classrooms becoming less segregated.

In addition, these educator activist in collaboration with the researchers, employed the research findings and reduced the racial gap of enrollment and achievement in accelerated courses. A galvanizing implication from the study: when educational researchers engage with educators investigating problems of practice as public scholarship; then, educators become more informed activists and accomplices with students and their communities and ensure that all children have successful academic outcomes and outputs. While the findings and results proved promising, the team could not replicate nor scale the process out. This is another great example of why knowing is not enough! It appears that for the education researcher delivering empirical research illustrating grave indicators of inequity alone is not enough to replicate successful outcomes, disrupt disparate outputs, foster policy change, and improve the learning environment.

For educators, it appears that knowing inequitable practices exists and being equipped with tools to respond and improve it, it is not enough to engage their resistance to inequitable practices. Situating the problem requires engaging in deeper work, work that examines how the cognitive development of educators inform the ways in which they enact and embody equitable practices in schools. Robinson (1998) recommends that the problem be engaged by placing the examination of the practice as the primacy of critique – seeking out what is known about the practice by listening to the current status of research in the field. Robinson argues, “the adequacy of a practice cannot be reached without evaluating the adequacy of the reasoning that supports it” (1998, p. 23). As we consider public scholarship research, improvement inquiry and justice in practice, let us embrace the claim, an actionable awareness, that knowing about a problem and being exposed to empirical practice strategies to address the problem continue to not be enough. To prepare school leaders to enact transformative change as justice in the 21st century public education system, let us investigate the “how to” or technology of school leadership practice while bound to the who, what and why of the individual networks, institutions (structures & systems), cultural (beliefs, behaviors, assumptions values), and historical informants of inequitable problems of practice in public schools.

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## Improvement Inquiry

After a brief introduction to improvement inquiry and how it fits with the previously discussed frames of justice and public scholarship, this section examines the normative shift in the practice of educational leadership through the lens of improvement inquiry. Improvement inquiry provides a systems improvement frame to focus the normative shift as movement from the reform efforts of the late twentieth century to a focus on enhancing system capacity through design-based, cross-sector collaboration. Thus, the normative shift described in this section is from “reforming education” toward the emergent practices that “builds organizational capacity for continuous quality improvement.” The section concludes with a brief discussion of



how the general principles of improvement inquiry and, more particularly, the principles of design-based implementation research can support and sustain emergent educational leadership practice.

Historically, the three general purposes of educational research have been (1) to create new theory, (2) to develop new methods or materials for educational interventions, or (3) to evaluate policies or programs (c.f., Kerlinger, 1973; LeMahieu, Bryk, Grunow, & Gomez, 2017; Tuckman, 1974). Improvement inquiry differs from traditional approaches to educational research in that it purports to improve educational systems in the course of serving the users of those systems. An approach that might be characterized as “improving while doing”.

Improvement inquiry proceeds axiomatically from a critical assumption that is sometimes referred to as the *central law of improvement*: “Every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it produces” (Langley et al., 2009, p. 79). Educational systems can exist in different settings (e.g., after-school programs, community centers, museums, churches, dojos, schools, etc.) and educational systems can exist on different scales (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts, college consortia, etc.). Whatever the unit of analysis, an educational system that is producing inequity, marginalization, and other unacceptable outcomes is a system that presents opportunities to design and rigorously test potential improvements. The central law also means that examining and investigating system structures and processes can reveal laudatory results that point to the assets in the system.

Improvement inquiry seeks to understand how educational systems work, what results a system is producing, and how to change the system in order to produce better results. This approach is characterized nicely by the subtitle of foundational work by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: *Learning to Improve: How America’s Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better* (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). The previous frames—justice and public scholarship—combine with improvement inquiry to create an analytic space that focuses generally on how educational systems can get better at getting better. More specifically, there needs to be a focus on a call for getting better at implementing just leadership practices that produce outcomes of public consequence and that increase system capacity for continuous quality improvement.

## **The Normative Shift: From Reform to Improvement**

Part of the shift from reform to improvement can be characterized as movement from top-down leadership to leadership that engages practitioners throughout the system. There is considerable evidence to document the failure of changes that are imposed on educational systems from the top down (Fishman, Penuel, Allen, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013; Penuel & Spillane, 2013).

Too often, the press of urgent action and immediate resolution of unacceptable results has led to selecting solutions before clearly and comprehensively understanding the problem (Bryk, 2020). The desire for quick action and immediate results can push those who hold power and privilege within an educational system to (1) decide,

with insufficient consultation, what the system's most critical problem is and (2) decide what needs to be done in order to solve that problem. As a result, those who serve in the system are required to implement solutions even when they have played no role in identifying and defining the problem (c.a., Datnow & Castellano, 2001). This kind of top-down leadership practice contributes to a condition that has been called *solutionitis*: deciding quickly on a change to the system that is thought to be a solution before comprehensively and usefully understanding the problem as it exists within the particular practice context (Bryk, 2020; Bryk et al., 2015). *Solutionitis* contributes to failed initiatives when those with power and privilege impose solutions on those who live and work in that system.

When leaders decide and act to impose solutions from the top-down rather than consult from the bottom-up, they are committing themselves to what Mintrop (2016) calls the *buy and buy-in mode* of innovation. When leaders encounter major problems in their educational system they often look outside the system for solutions:

They scan the environment for programs, consultants, or packages that seemingly address the problem. Their preference is to find solutions that carry the label 'research-based' or 'best practice.' Solving the problem then becomes a matter of implementing a package, a script, or a consultant's directions—solutions that have a supposedly proven record of success. Innovation is all about buy-in the package and, afterward, creating buy-in for it. (Mintrop, 2016, p. 5)

Many school and district initiatives have failed to address the unacceptable outcomes that are being produced by the local system that is perfectly designed to produce those outcomes. Some of those initiatives have been imposed via recent educational reform efforts.

## **A Reform Paradigm**

While improvement inquiry represents a departure from the traditional purposes of educational research, it also represents a departure from recent educational reform efforts (Bryk, 2020). Bryk identifies three types of reform initiatives that sought to propel US education to the top of the list of countries in math and science: performance management; evidence-based practice; and school-based learning communities. Each reform initiative is acknowledged as having strengths, but also weaknesses that prevent them from driving continuous quality improvement in authentic and localized practice contexts. Each initiative is characterized and then strength and weakness are addressed.

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## **Performance Management**

Performance management initiatives to reform education – of the type that grew from and aligned with NCLB, for example – focused on holding educators and the educational systems in which they worked accountable for meeting goals. Policy-

makers would set goals, expect educators to meet those goals, and provide incentives that were, for the most part, punitive. Measurement for accountability can be contrasted with measurement for academic research and measurement for improvement. According to Bryk et al. (2015), measurement for accountability includes the following characteristics:

- Its purpose is to identify either commendable or problematical teachers, schools, or school districts (e.g., identification of teachers to be placed on an individualized improvement plan).
- The measures that are taken tend to be end-of-line outcomes (e.g., end of year achievement tests or graduation rates).
- The measurement methods seek inter-rater reliability and standardized administration.
- The measurements are used to make summative judgments of performance and are applied to all who are assessed.
- The data generated from measurements are not clearly linked to specific practices and so have limited formative – or improvement – value.

The strength of the performance management reform effort is that it focuses educators on data. Because local educational systems were held accountable for demonstrating that outcome goals were reached and that they were reached on time, the data from accountability measures are scrutinized by school and district leaders. That said, such scrutiny was often focused for reasons other than equitable practices in service of all learners. In an effort to reach targets for proficiency on standardized test, many schools and districts focused on students who performed just under the defined proficiency range. Such students are sometimes referred to as “bubble students” (Blazar & Pollard, 2017). Another weakness in performance management efforts are the lack of contextually-informed theories of action. Typically, there are not clear, localized plans for how to improve practice of professional educators within a particular educational system in order to yield better outcomes for learners served by that system.

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## Evidence-Based Practice

In evidence-based practice efforts, the typical pattern of an initiative would start with an idea generated within an academic or commercial enterprise that produces and sells education products. The reform ideas might be new educational materials, new programs, or new tools for educators and those evaluating educational practice. The new designs would be refined through small-scale, applied research and, many times, become the subject of a large-scale test over a longer time-frame (e.g., a multi-year randomized control trial) to determine the design’s effectiveness. These kinds of efforts are what is reviewed and eventually what was documented in the *What Works Clearinghouse* (WWC) in the Institute of Education Sciences that is part of the US Department of Education (2012).

If an intervention—a new program to support English language learners (ELL), for example—is judged to be a success, that intervention is designated by WWC to be an effective program. School districts that decide to try the ELL program – designated as effective based on evidence over time – can justify the investment of considerable resources such as materials, training, evaluation, and data systems. According to Bryk (2020), the strength of the evidence-based practice movement is that it brought to the education profession a more disciplined approach to the design and testing of educational interventions. The weakness is that the evidence that is used to judge effective educational practice – i.e., to claim that a program “works” – focuses on average differences in outcomes across contexts. There is a failure to account for the variability in outcomes, often considerable variability that occur in most educational interventions (Weiss et al., 2017). Knowing that average differences between groups exist without knowing how specific contexts contribute to those group differences does not serve efforts to provide just and equitable learning opportunities to all learners.

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## School-Based Learning Communities

School-based learning communities – sometimes referred to as localized communities of practice – represent the third type of reform initiatives. The school-based learning community approach to reform deviates considerably from evidence-based practice efforts. School-based learning communities are formed to identify problems and address issues in a particular school. The practice context is a critical determinant of local outcomes that are problematic. Understanding “what works” in general is not the goal. In this approach, the goal is to understand what works in a specific practice context.

Consider, for example, a group of 4th and 5th grade teachers in a school who form a learning community in order to engage in lesson study. The purposes of the lesson study group are to improve the quality of specific lessons and advance the professional learning of the group’s members. The lessons that are the focus of improvement and the learning that occurs in the course of the lesson study are situated within particular classrooms in a particular school and community. What the students in that community bring to the classrooms and the lessons that are studied will necessarily influence how the lessons are designed, delivered, and assessed. The particular student characteristics, the particular school and community assets, resources, and challenges, the particular professional experiences of the teachers, the particular culture of the school and leadership support are all contributors to the outcomes of the lessons.

Context matters in school-based learning communities because context contributes to variations in teaching performances and, in turn, learning outcomes. Sometimes variations in teaching performances are subtle and nuanced and sometimes they are dramatically disparate. The same can be said for what students learn in response to teaching performances. The strengths of the school-based learning communities approach are (1) that the issues or problems are addressed within a specific practice context, (2) that problems are identified and addressed by the educational practitioners who live and work in the system, and (3) learning communities encourage and support

collaboration among teachers rather than the isolation that has long been the norm for many teachers (Artman, Danner, & Crow, 2020; Bautista, Stanley, & Candusso, 2021; Lortie, 2002). The weakness that attaches to school-based learning communities is that what is learned in the specific practice context tends to stay in that specific context. Education lacks a mechanism for clearly and usefully documenting the practical learning in one school and then communicating it to other school-based learning communities. As a result, while much practical learning is being done, it is not contributing to a professional knowledge base that could improve educational practice at scale (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002).

The three approaches to the reform of educational practice attest to the education profession's aspiration to improve educational practice. Bryk (2020) argues that each of the approaches described above “. . .has distinctive strengths, but none alone or even in combination will help close the aspirations chasm. Instead, educators need to draw on the best of what these strategies offer . . .” (p. 8). By synthesizing the strengths of education reform efforts with what has been learned from other fields and professions about improvement, an improvement paradigm has emerged and is influencing significantly the practice of educational leadership.

## **An Improvement Paradigm: Six Principles**

Across cultures, it is a truism that effective educational leaders build relationships with, among, and across people that serve in the educational system they lead (Fisher, 2021; Simons, 2020). As mentioned at the beginning of this section, improvement inquiry is built on the *central law of improvement*: “Every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it produces” (Langley et al., 2009, p. 79). Those who work in educational systems are aware of the differences in background, experiences, and expertise that human beings bring to the enterprise. There is a human tendency to commit what is known as the *fundamental attribution error* (Langley et al., 2009; Ross, 2018). The error is that while most people explain their own behavior as being influenced by environmental circumstances, they attribute the behavior of others to some personal deficiency (e.g., lack of commitment, dedication, knowledge, etc.). The improvement paradigm, based on the central law of improvement, helps focus our aspirations for improvement on the systems in which people live and work rather than on assumed deficiencies of others. An unacceptable result in an educational system is an opportunity to improve the system rather than place blame on the system's people.

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## **The Six Principles**

The focus on system design is illustrated by the six principles that form the improvement paradigm. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has been the major driver of the improvement paradigm in education. The book, *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*, authored by leaders at the Carnegie Foundation, (Bryk et al., 2015) is organized

around the six principles. The principles also frame the stories of how six educational systems worked to “get better at getting better” (Bryk, 2020). The principles are described briefly below.

1. *Be problem-focused and user-focused.* Ask, what specifically is the problem that needs to be solved? Ask the question of those working in the system and ask it often.
2. *Attend to variability.* The key question is not, What works? Rather, the key question is: What works for whom and under what set of conditions?
3. *See the system.* It is hard to improve a system that is not fully understood. Observing and collecting data about the system and from those in the system is necessary in order to learn how local conditions shape practice and contribute to unacceptable results.
4. *Embrace measurement.* It is critical to measure not just key outcomes but the processes by which designs are implemented. The idea of “practical measurement” is important here.
5. *Learn through disciplined inquiry.* Using the data collected to fuel cycles of improvement means not just successes but also failures. To fail is not the problem, failure to learn from failure is.
6. *Organize as networks.* Create networks that shift practice away from telling educators what to do toward building and supporting collaborative learning focused on both the how and the why of making systems better.

The above principles offer general guidance for learning how to improve an educational system. These principles have guided a variety of improvement approaches in education (c.f., LeMahieu et al., 2017). Among those approaches is one that clearly embodies the shift of educational leadership practice away from top-down efforts driven by external criteria and toward collaborative design thinking to address unacceptable outcomes. That approach is called design-based implementation research.

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## Design-Based Implementation Research

Design-based implementation research (D-BIR) is guided by several key imperatives (c.f. LeMahieu et al., 2017). First, D-BIR focuses on persistent problems of practice, but only as those problems are understood from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Second, D-BIR requires a commitment to a collaborative and iterative approach to design, development, implementation, and improvement of well-understood problems of practice. Third, D-BIR reflects a deep concern for developing theory, knowledge, and practice-based expertise; and fourth, D-BIR seeks to develop organizational capacity for sustained system improvement.

D-BIR is one of several *design-thinking* approaches to building knowledge in education. The 2013 volume of the *National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook* is devoted to accounts of D-BIR (e.g., Dolle, Gomez, Russell, & Bryk, 2013). The imperatives of D-BIR have been used by a collective action network to guide improvement efforts across educational contexts that include the following:

- Principal preparation at the graduate level.
- Community learning exchanges that convene cross-sector and often intergenerational learners on matters of just educational practice.
- Classes taken by police cadets inside prisons and taken with incarcerated classmates.
- A community effort to interrupt gun violence by treating violence as a contagious disease.
- An urban elementary charter school focused by environmental justice.
- The professional development of a group of elementary teachers designed to improve math outcomes.
- A program in urban high schools for African-American students combating the narratives of toxic masculinity and misguided manhood.

The D-BIR imperatives, along with the six principles of improvement informed the improvement efforts listed above and yielded a set of “rules of engagement” that were used across the contexts (Duquesne Collective Action Network, 2020). The application of those rules of engagement have also informed our use of the term *improvement inquiry*. Some authors prefer the term *improvement science* (e.g., Langley et al., 2009) or *improvement research* (e.g., Bryk et al., 2015; Russell et al., 2017). The Duquesne Collective Action Network (D-CAN) employs the phrase improvement inquiry rather than science or research. Community partners at a D-CAN Community Learning Exchange in 2017 suggested that the terms *science* and *research* carry connotations that send the wrong message: that the knowledge of those who practice in the academy—scientists and researchers—should be privileged over the knowledge of those who practice in schools and/or the community. The use of improvement inquiry is an effort to better communicate a commitment of democratic engagement across the boundaries of school, academy, and community.

The Duquesne Collective Action Network employs the phrase improvement inquiry rather than science or research. The terminology resulted from a lesson learned during a SAC partnership convening in May 2017. Community partners at the convening suggested that the term also science and research carry connotations that send the wrong message: that the knowledge of those who practice in the academy – scientists and researchers – should be privileged over the knowledge of those who practice in schools and/or the community. The use of improvement inquiry is an effort to better communicate a commitment of democratic engagement across the sectors represented by multiple stakeholders. The lessons learned from across those contexts of improvement inquiry have informed our proposal for building capacity to get better at making educational leadership practice better.

## Reframing Practice as Argumentation

To close this chapter, the authors offer a modest proposal for improving the practice of educational leaders within and across specific contexts. The proposal is to reframe the

way educators observe and analyze leadership practice. The reframing has implications for the self- and professional development of practicing educational leaders, for the preparation of aspiring educational leaders, and for research on educational leadership practice.

The authors also propose to view practice—in this case, educational leadership practice—through the frame of argumentation. After briefly describing the particular model of argument highlighted in this chapter, and how that model can focus our observation and analysis of leadership behavior, this chapter concludes with a call to action to advance emergent leadership practice across the leadership domains of culture, community, justice, and policy.

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## The Elements of an Argument

The model of argumentation that we will use as a new frame for viewing educational leadership practice is from the fourth edition of *The Craft of Research*, a venerable volume that has, for many, defined the structure of a research argument (Booth, Colomb, Williams, Bizup, & FitzGerald, 2016). According to Booth et al., there are five elements to consider in a research argument: a claim, reasons, evidence, acknowledgement and response, and, sometimes, a warrant.

Research arguments are typically understood as verbal phenomena: they are either written or spoken with the intent to have a reader or listener understand and accept claims made by the writer or speaker. That is certainly the context in which Booth et al. describe the elements of a research argument and the context in which they address how to construct an argument. They introduce the elements of a research argument by describing a verbal exchange between two people. The elements are characterized as answers to questions. When the verbal context is reading rather than conversation, the author—who is building the argument—asks the following questions on behalf of the unseen reader.

1. **Claim:** What do you want me to believe? What's your point?
2. **Reasons:** Why do you say that? Why should I agree?
3. **Evidence:** How do you know? Can you back it up?
4. **Acknowledgement and Response:** But what about...?
5. **Warrant:** How does that follow? What's your logic? Can you explain your reasoning? (Booth et al., 2016, p. 111)

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## Conclusions and Reflections

This chapter concludes by conceiving an argument of practice. Specifically, every argument begins with a claim. In the case of a research argument, that claim is a statement made by the researcher. An example might be the researcher's hypothesis: the a priori answer to the research question stated in advance of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Looking at the questions that Booth et al. use to



characterize a research claim, it is what the researcher wants a reader to believe, it is the researcher's main point. In the case of an argument of practice, the claim that initiates the argument is not a statement, but rather a leadership decision and/or action. An example of a claim of practice might be a leadership decision—made individually or collectively—to implement a new teacher evaluation system. A claim of practice might also be any one of a number of actions taken by, say, a middle school principal. One example might be implementing a new set of prompts designed to elicit more information about formative assessment from teachers and students during walk-throughs.

Although arguments of leadership practice might be initiated by claims of collective decision-making or action, they can also start with an individual's decision or action. The authors revisit the questions that characterize the elements of an argument below. This time, the questions pertain to building an argument of practice rather than a research argument.

- **Claim:** What is the decision you made? What action did you take?
- **Reasons:** Why did you decide that? Why did you do that?
- **Evidence:** How do you know your decision was correct? How do you know that your action was the right thing to do?
- **Acknowledgement and Response:** But what about . . . a different decision/action?
- **Warrant:** What's the logic that underlies your decision/action? Can you explain your reasoning? Is there a theoretical or conceptual framework that justifies your decision or action in this particular context?

The form of the questions assumes that an observer directed the questions to a leader (or leadership group). The questions could be asked by leaders themselves in order to reflect critically on their own decisions and actions (e.g., What action did I take? What were my reasons? Why did I do that? How do I know . . . etc.).

People make arguments, researchers make research arguments; and practitioners make arguments of practice. Both types of arguments must, of course, be tested; data are required to determine the strength or weakness of an argument. In the case of an argument of practice, the data required document the impact of leadership decisions and actions. Being able to examine system impacts via arguments of practice moves our observation and analysis practicing beyond leadership intentions to the impacts on the people and processes of the systems they lead.

Our proposal to reframe educational leadership practice as argumentation provides practicing leaders with a systematic way to reflect critically on their own leadership behavior. It provides aspiring educational leaders a way to systematically analyze leadership practice in authentic contexts. Imagine an aspiring leader interviewing a master principal in order to better understand how the master's knowledge base, reasoning, and theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks informs their practice. Those who research educational leadership practice can use the reframing as a model for data collection and a tool for data analysis.

This chapter's call to action is an experiment with arguments of practice in an effort. Explicitly, the authors see the reframing of practice as argument to enable educational leaders to engage in design-based implementation research collaborate with practicing leaders and the professionals with who they work to improve the cultures of their systems through just practice, that yields outcomes of public consequence, and that builds systems' long-term capacity to improve continuously.

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## Abstract

Leadership is a cultural construction that is studied, theorized, and practiced in multiple fields, including education. Educational leadership as a cultural construction has various manifestations. In the USA, educational leadership has as one of its aims to bring vision and organization to an effort or project through a central actor, such as the figure of the school principal, the superintendent, or the teacher. Although many can partake in the leadership construct, the term or role in the USA is inscribed with individualism and exceptionalism. Considering the cultural situatedness of the construct, it may not have the same meaning when one crosses borders. This chapter examines educational leadership within a Mexican context and examines the ways in which distinct actors contribute to the educational leadership construct, how these constructions speak to and against each other, and what is left after these interactions that are negotiations take place.

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## Cultural Constructions of Leadership

Williams-Boyd (2002) offers a history that highlights key moments in the development and transformation of the field that we now refer to as “educational leadership.” She notes that the word “principal,” referring to the figure of the school leader, first appeared in print in 1835 both in the Common School Report of Cincinnati and in the writings of educational reformer and “father” of the Common School, Horace Mann (p. 102). Williams-Boyd argues that these early references mark the emergence of a separate profession from that of the principal-teacher, who as the title suggests, was both teacher and school overseer, to that of a school leader attending to staff, student, and site needs, while being positioned as a “manager of virtues” (p. 104). As such, the principal of the late 1800s was expected to “embrace and reflect the values, norms, beliefs, and ideals that the United States holds...” (pp. 103–105), a provocative notion in a moment of Indian Removal, the arrival of 25 million people to the USA from western and eastern Europe, the arrival through formal, albeit unfair, labor agreements, as was the case with Chinese men, or legalistically fused into the USA upon losing a war, such as Mexican nationals who lived in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Nevada, and other states when these were annexed in the aftermath of the US-México War. This conceptual shift from teacher/overseer to manager of virtues marks a moment of deliberate ideological reinforcement, a move that ensured that White supremacy, as expressed through Anglo-conformance and Eurocentricity, could prevail, both in embodied ways in the figure of the principal and in constructed ways through curriculum, pedagogy, and who was allowed to teach and to learn.

This chapter pursues the idea that educational leadership is a cultural construction, one that serves as embodied ideological reinforcement and which functions within and is constitutive of a social formation that is characterized by a racialized labor and knowledge hierarchy in which Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are prefigured by the State and constantly recast using the same mold. As BIPOC continue in abolitionist, liberatory struggle, the leader adapts to the clamor for equity, racial justice, equality, and educational uplift, migrating from managerial/bureaucratic forms of leadership to transformational models. However, schools are embedded in communities and communities are part of larger geographies and politics, which unfold in a society that does not adequately fund schools, does not adequately prepare educators or educational leaders, does not adequately educate children, any of them, and does not decisively dismantle the racist systems that seek to block BIPOC progress. The shape-shifting of the leader, then, becomes a symbol of benevolence but also of intransigent resistance to change. As BIPOC work daily toward emancipatory self-determination, they are faced with this contradictory

figure, that of the shape-shifting principal who is at once benevolent but a staunch representative of “the values, norms, beliefs, and ideals that the United States holds” (Williams-Boyd, 2002, pp. 103–105). Another way to view this principal is that s/he is a person living a moment of hyper-heterogeneity. As a principal, s/he must find a way to *manage* the diversity for the good of the nation. Hence, the reactionary discourse and embrace of traditional US values (e.g., Anglo-conformance, and upholding homogeneity, monolingualism, Christian values, etc.).

### **The Field of Memory**

Deficit discourse: There is a culture of poverty that can be readily found throughout the world, and it is characterized by parents who just do not care about their children’s education. The public wants to blame the teachers and the principal for the children’s academic failure, but they do not see that the children come to school knowing nothing, which makes teachers’ work difficult and require of the principal the enforcement of rules with this student population.

### **The Field of Presence**

Nuanced deficit discourse (Emerick, 2021): Systemic and structural racism denies BIPOC education and jobs, and this reverberates into future generations. The children come to school with little academic knowledge and the parents are too overwhelmed to help. The school does what it can to help the children and their families. The school’s goal is to have the parents become more involved so that they can support their children’s academic growth and the children can eventually prosper. The principal encourages parent meetings and sending pedagogical materials home (e.g., books, games) for parents to use with their children to foment academic growth.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The growth discourse is grounded in the field of economics. Spangenberg (2010) outlines how a growth discourse has multiple purposes: to ensure economic and societal development and improvement, to meet the needs of the poor, and to promote social, economic, political, and environmental progress (pp. 551–552). That is, growth, development, improvement, and progress are interlinked discourses informed by, says Spangenberg, neoclassical economics’ dynamics of supply and demand (p. 551). It is in this way that education is recruited into the larger economic projects of nations and regions. It is in this way that BIPOC children and youth globally are situated within schooling in ways that ensure that they become the workers and technicians of the world, and rarely its creators and leaders.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Social justice, abolitionist, liberatory discourses reject growth and dependency discourses, recognizing that these lead to compliance with polices that are generated in places far from the communities they seek to target. Liberatory discourses reject the standardization of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment. Teachers might camouflage their dissent, and this is one way to navigate complex landscapes, but many

teachers do not dissent. The entanglement of growth, development, improvement, the poor, and progress emerges from modernity and the establishment of nation-states and a world order in which economies of extraction of colonizing nations leave former colonies economically dependent and in a perpetual state of need. Former colonies agitate for change, and economic and political sovereignty but are politically and economically intervened by colonizing nations that continue to wield power and control.

In schools, this is mirrored in processes of dominance and subordination of certain groups and in assessments that measure BIPOC students' academic growth on tests not designed with them mind; hence, the students are positioned to be in a state of perpetual need. The discourse shifts from families not caring, to teaching families how to do school-centric things at home to support their children's academic growth, to schools becoming more community-centric and engaging culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive (Gay, 2000), and/or culturally sustaining practices with BIPOC students. That is, schools begin to offer BIPOC students what they historically have always offered White, middle class students: a curriculum that reflects their lived experience, histories, values, and languages with a culturally sustaining pedagogy of care and regard.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Educational leadership is culturally constructed in ways that position personnel who are among the highest paid, highest educated, and perhaps also having the most work experience within the field of education, as privileged bodies who rely on standardized measures, bubble sheets, sharp pencils, computers, and other artifacts of a global bureaucracy and project to demonstrate pedagogical knowledge about how to grow children and youth academically and to demographically, politically, and socially locate children and youth on the social landscape, an act that can determine futures of opportunity and futures of exclusion or expulsion from opportunity.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter examines the cultural construction of leadership. This refers to the meanings and understandings that are imagined, nuanced, assigned, enacted, accepted, rejected, and revised in continuous fashion which inform or drive the development of particular constructs, such as leadership, by members of a community. That is, that the cultural construction of leadership is a dialogic process that involves actors – historical, social, and philosophical ones; ideologies, writings, events, human figures, and more – that reference both local and global phenomena and the personal, the intimate, or that which is lived by each actor. The mutually constitutive role played by ideology and willing or consenting and unwilling or non-consenting participants of ideological discourse is at the heart of these cultural constructions and representations of leadership. Useful references here are Bakhtin and Hall in helping us think about representation. Holland et al. note that Bakhtin

helps one understand “history-in-person,” which they theorize as, “... the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present. The constraints are overpowering, yet not hermetically sealed. Improvisation can become the basis for a reformed subjectivity” (p. 30). Hall (1997) understands that representation helps ideologies circulate, inserting themselves into the everyday practices and aims of certain processes, such as schooling. While the historical example offered by Boyd that marks how ideology is embodied, and in that example, by the principal advancing traditional American values, it can also be embodied by actors whose ideology is not reactionary but revolutionary. How is it that different actors take up different projects? Does history-in-person have explanatory value in this process?

Presented is a historical example of how distinct actors take up contrasting ideologies, and how these confront each other to advance their respective visions. Such is the case of México’s democratic teachers, who resist subordinating Mexican education to a global, economic order co-constructed by the Organisation of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) and participating nations. Key nodes in this process are the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the discourse of “educational reform.” Cultural construction refers to both the process of developing shared meanings about phenomena and the resulting construct; here, the process is carried out by humans though nonhuman actors, such as ideology, tests, roles, and curriculum, for example, also participate.

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### **Cultural Constructions of Leadership – Construction 1: José Vasconcelos, Race, and Nation-Making**

A key figure in Mexican education, leadership, and educational history is José Vasconcelos, the first secretary of education in the then newly formed Ministry of Education, la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), which was created in 1921. The SEP was to expand educational opportunity beyond the country’s capital into all corners of the nation as part of its democratization efforts in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. The SEP would oversee public education from prekindergarten to the university level, as well as libraries, and the arts. President Álvaro Obregón appointed José Vasconcelos to the position of secretary, a man who supported the social justice project of the Mexican Revolution, a commitment that marked his tenure (1921–1924). His was a period of great cultural production when murals celebrating critical moments in Mexican history, indigeneity, and mestizaje were created by Aurora Reyes, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueiros, among others (Palacios, 2017). Composer Carlos Chavez wrote and conducted symphonies that integrated indigenous instruments and rhythms. Through the commissioning of these projects, Vasconcelos, a former dean of the Autonomous University of México, advanced the revolutionary ideals of indigenous triumph over the latifundismo and other vestiges of colonialism through his work with muralists. At the same time, his theory of “la raza cósmica” [cosmic race] was criticized for its



eugenic desires to have a whiter, more Eurocentric race (Manrique, 2016; Palacios, 2017). The cosmic race is a superior race that would result from the mixing of all the races of México (Manrique, 2016; Palacios, 2017). The erasure of indigenous people goes beyond the cosmic race theorization: indigenous people are missing from Vasconcelos' school curricula (Palacios, 2017, p. 418) and through an insistence on assimilation. Although Vasconcelos launched critiques of social Darwinism and Spencer's evolutionary theory, notes Palacio (2017), he was, nonetheless, ensnared by eugenics, being sympathetic to Nazism and the fascism of Franco, and stating late in life that his views on mestizaje were mistakes of his youth (p. 243). Manrique (2016) explains, "The members of the Mexican Eugenics Society viewed indigenous peoples as an object of redemption that needed to be incorporated into the nation. In this way, heterogeneity could be eliminated, and the Europeanized mestizo could rise. Indigenous peoples were only accepted in this vision of the nation to the extent that they adapted to modernity and adopted the dominant way of life" (p. 4). These observations illuminate how Vasconcelos understood México's unique positioning: Human evolution and social progress were being linked (Palacios, 2017, p. 420) while miscegenation was considered transgressive and believed to result in an inferior type of human being. To have achieved the first modern revolution that called for land redistribution and a lay, free, and public education along with the constitutional reforms to make the victories a reality, but still have an "Indian problem" as it was referred to (Castañeda, 1919; New Century, 1902), pointed to the racism and anti-indigeneity still entrenched in Mexican society and expressed the deep ambivalence felt toward México's mestizo identity.

Vasconcelos was aware that social and economic uplift was necessary in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1921). Theorizing the multiracial mestizo body as a representative of a cosmic race would serve to racially situate a large percentage of the Mexican population in an exalted space, even as it advanced the assimilationist aims he had for Indigenous and Black Mexicans and those of low socioeconomic status. Vasconcelos, a Europhile who inscribed this passion in his work, the choice of books he published and distributed for free, and statements made about the poor and the Indigenous, exposed him also as someone who was either unaware of or flagrant with his classism and racism. About the poor, he said:

By education I mean a direct teaching on the part of those who know something, in favor of those who know nothing; I mean a teaching that serves to increase the productive capacity of each hand that works, of each brain that thinks [...] Useful work, productive work, noble action and high thinking, that is our purpose [...] Let us take the peasant under our care and teach him to increase the amount of his production a hundredfold through the use of better tools and better methods. This is more important than distracting them in the conjugation of verbs, since culture is the natural fruit of economic development. (Vasconcelos, 1920/1992)

About Indigenous and Black people, he said, "The greatest urgency of our school is to put to work these hands of our race, which have been idle since the conquest, put the Indian and the Black to work for the benefit of the urban class" (Vasconcelos, 1981, p. 142). Vasconcelos intended for the Indigenous of México to assume their place in the new social and racial order, and education would do its part to ensure this

would happen. Locating race within the social landscape of post-revolutionary México was a central aim of the discourse of the cosmic race. The “Indian and the Black” were not part of that cosmic race; they were still pure and unassimilated; hence, they would be subsumed into society through a subordinated labor status in the service of the urban/urbane class. In this way, Vasconcelos, like the US principal of the late 1800s, embodied state ideologies, which ensured that the gains of the Mexican Revolution would not upset the racial hierarchies established during colonization. Vasconcelos, with ancient Greek philosophers as interlocutors and a White savior disposition underpinning his work (Manrique, 2016), deployed a contra-revolutionary, anti-democratic education for México’s most marginalized populations, and engaged a cosmic race discourse in a reactionary, racially, and socially retrogressive manner. At the same time, he was critical of the Ivy Tower, which he asserted, “had served for nothing.” Vasconcelos emerges as a complex leader who opts to locate race in a modern Mexican landscape and does so in ways that are racist and reactionary. By doing so, he also ensures that the economic order would not change, and the elite would not be impacted by any new freedoms that might have been gained through the triumph of the Mexican Revolution. At the same time, Mexican modernity, its cultural production, its grand vision of its Indigenous past would not exist without Vasconcelos. His tenure is thought to have left an unmatched legacy, one that is inscribed throughout México City in its public arts projects and the murals within the Ministry of Education complex.

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## **Cultural Constructions of Leadership – Construction 2: Clara Isela Gómez Rosales**

Clara Isela Gómez Rosales is an elementary school head teacher featured in a documentary about school leaders who participated in a British-based pilot of professional development on school leadership, focused on implementing standards for school leaders. In the documentary, Gómez Rosales is featured in her community, Cosoleacaque, a city in the Mexican state of Veracruz, and in her school, Escuela primaria 22 de septiembre 1972 [Elementary School 22nd of September 1972], where we see her interacting with colleagues and students. She offers an extended definition and demonstrates through actions, her understanding of what it means to be head teacher and, in that role, a leader. Gómez Rosales notes that being a school leader involves “being proactive, getting things done, being a role model, being inspirational, enthusiastic and spread this to others.” She tells the students that school offers opportunities to experience “things that are different to what they are used to,” and she encourages her colleagues to make learning interactive and hands on. In these moments, the film shows how one teacher is dissecting a frog to teach about how the frog breathes, while another teacher follows Gómez Rosales’ instruction to add centimeter lines to a mop handle in order to make the teaching of measurement more concrete. Gómez Rosales has integrated the lessons and language of the professional development:

What should a head teacher know? What should they be able to do? I should be leading on learning, change management, team building, accountability. What would be teachers' ideal actions? What attitude would best serve these changes that we need? We needed to systematize our roles. What we're seeing in the classroom in terms of learning comes from the strategy, "leading learning." I need to know the educational aims and the learning needs of each child so that instead of criticizing the teaching strategies I can suggest a range of activities that a teacher can use with everyone. If a head teacher knows the science curriculum, they can suggest to their third-grade teacher, Why not do a live experiment? Teachers appreciate students' disposition to learn. Before we had the standards, teambuilding was foreign to us. There is a standard that says a team is something you have to build. You can't take it for granted, and so we began to innovate. We write about our participation in the Cosoleaclaque parade. We've now got a project management strategy. Every teacher has her own project to manage, almost like running a business for a day. Through role playing we've learned to adopt. It helps us to think of others and to understand why someone decides to do one thing and not what we told them to do.

Through the language used, a leadership and managerial discourse, Gómez Rosales expresses acceptance, if not submission, to the paradigm she was exposed to through the professional development. Leading, managing, team building, and being accountable speak to specific forms of labor center Gómez Rosales as the one who sets the vision and organizes others to work toward that vision. By centering one person as the leader, the potential of others to participate conceptually is diminished and their contribution becomes more technical in nature, as they faithfully carry out the ideas of the leader. Words like "leading," "managing," "team building," and "accountability" would be better replaced with "serving," "supporting," "inspiring trust," and "collaborating," respectively.

These proposed terms would reflect community values grounded in Mexican Indigenous axiological orientations. Of special relevance here is the practice of "tequio," or collective work that every member of the community is expected to carry out in rotating fashion. This affords each member of the community to serve, collaborate, advance the aspirations of the community, and provide support. Although tequio is labor which is not remunerated, the principle of tequio is that everyone can and should serve and that it is through collective, nonhierarchical relationships that the aims of the community can be met and further be developed. Tequio moves communities away from the protagonism of individuals and instead situates the community and its collective work as the site of change and renovation. Tequio could be adapted as a governance model in schools as well as a model of pedagogical planning and implementation.

Equally problematic is the idea of "systematizing" each colleague's role and making "achieving the standards" the goal of teachers' work together. These actions suggests that the professional development does little to offer participants a space to engage in a process of analysis, in which teams are asked to consider how these ideas might transfer to their unique geographies, places which are inscribed with historical and cultural onto-epistemologies. At the very least, there should be opportunities for educators to contrast new content from the professional development, with what they already do, and to identify the cultural resources they would be able to draw from in order to do work that is relevant and sustaining of their communities. They should be

allowed to ask what would be lost through a partial or wholesale acceptance of the standards set by the professional development and to problematize the role they play as Mexican teachers in advancing US- and Eurocentric- models of educational leadership and teacher learning and development.

In her narration, Gómez Rosales *does* reference a new unity that emerges from working with this model of educational leadership. She notes that she and her colleagues are no longer “grade-level teachers but elementary school teachers,” suggesting that the conversations they are engaged in and the work they are carrying out break down silos and build a sense of unity. The film also features scenes in which the teachers are engaged in reflexive dialogue. The critique offered here, however, is not aimed at Gómez Rosales and her colleagues. They are applying new lessons from the professional development with intention and authenticity and seeing results that they value. The critique, instead, is much more about the disregard large organisms have for localized forms of knowledge, organization, relationship-building, and teaching and learning.

The organisms promote the idea that the ability to influence others should be concentrated in one person, who is referred to as a leader, and this leader should focus on managing learning, managing labor, and managing team building. This is, of course, intentional. By concentrating knowledge, power, and control in one person, and using managerialism as the conduit for establishing the person’s authority, a hierarchy is established (Diefenbach, 2013); this hierarchical understanding of leadership is not consistent with more general definitions of leadership that posit that leaders are more like coordinators who seek dialogue and consensus (Samosudova, 2017) or with *tequio* discussed above. In this way, the professional development is disconnected from community, teachers, and historical and cultural forms of planning, coordinating, interacting, teaching, and learning. It is further disconnected from local experiences through the discourse of accountability, which is used to justify the use of standardized testing, fraught as these are with historical entanglements with eugenics and contemporary class ordering of society along racial lines. The plan is orchestrated with the intent that educators across the world will more uniformly engage practices established in and by historically wealthy, white nations and now willingly, or with little resistance, assume their place and their students’ and nations’ place within the global hierarchy, lining up their students for the PISA test and, like it or not, embracing neoliberal forms of education.

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### **Construction 3: The Organisation of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD)**

The OECD is an international organization that uses various approaches and measures to issue educational, labor, and economic policy on a global scale. Since 2000, the OECD has implemented the study, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which relies on a life skills test with the same name, PISA. PISA measures reading, math, and science of 15-year-old students in OECD member and nonmember nations. The test items seek the application of knowledge in real life

scenarios. In 2022, creativity will also be tested. The PISA has been controversial since its inception in 2000 (Araujo, Saltelli, & Schnepf, 2017). The OECD, itself one of the largest publishers in the world, awarded the British education publishing conglomerate, Pearson, a contract to write the 2018 frameworks for the PISA. The PISA is applied every 3 years and the comparative educational data are used to address educational practices and policies within nations.

This approach to changing national educational systems has been controversial, because it is driven by a single test that is applied to nations with historical, cultural, social, and profound economic differences, and because, as members of the academic community have argued, the OECD uses the PISA to subsume national education systems to a neoliberal international economic order (Andrews et al., 2014; Sahlberg, 2011). An important and overlooked argument against the use of PISA is the historical racist legacy of standardized testing (Au, 2016). No doubt, the OECD is a formidable interlocutor. As a powered and monied structure that contributes to structuring and renewing the historical classed and raced world order, it represents a threat to democracy as it undermines decolonial, critical multicultural projects within education.

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#### **Construct 4: México's Democratic Teachers: La CNTE**

The Coordinating Committee of Educational Workers (la CNTE) within the teachers' syndicate (el SNTE) in México has as one of its aims, the democratization of both the syndicate and Mexican education (Sánchez, 2018). La CNTE has defended teacher labor rights and teacher autonomy in the classroom by resisting neoliberal education reform. Because of such mobilizations and resistance, la CNTE has been positioned as self-serving and against social progress. However, it is important to know that la CNTE was able to stop the further implementation of the neoliberal education reform introduced in México from 2012 to 2018, and it is a legitimate and formidable interlocutor that has a membership of nearly 500,000 educators who shape Mexican education. Further, the CNTE's continuous rearticulation of local, culturally situated critical theoretical frameworks and pedagogies that build upon or emerge from community onto-epistemologies, as well as from the curated and nuanced integration of global theory (e.g., constructivism, Marxism), is inscribed with a desire for an autochthonous, emancipatory, decolonizing education for México's children, youth, and young adults.

La CNTE, thus, was critical of the federal government's massive effort, Programa *Aprende en casa* [Learn at Home Program] that involved the SEP, who coordinated pedagogical content for 30 million students, and the nation's largest private broadcasters (e.g., Televisa, Azteca, Grupo Multimedios, and Grupo Imagen), who televised the content at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and into the 2021 spring semester (Salinas Maldonado, 2020, August 5). La CNTE's stance has been in defense of students, many of whom struggled because of a lack of hardware (e.g., smartphone, computer, etc.) and connectivity or unstable connectivity and other problems with infrastructure. Some families and teachers could not afford the cost of cell phone service, which was the primary way they accessed the Internet (Oropeza, 2021).

In part, the technology challenges were due to the economic hardship that also accompanied the pandemic when the country went into lockdown, bringing labor activity to a halt, as it did around the world. Another challenge identified by teacher Saúl Elizarraras Baena, who was interviewed by *La Izquierda Socialista* media (2020, September 9), was that although students were native to social media, they have neoliberal understandings of using technology; that is, youths' interest in technology is guided by consumption rather than engagement. Social media are for youth a source of entertainment and leisure with very limited and shallow engagement.

Teachers working in remote rural areas across distinct states decided to offer face-to-face classes given that rural students had no access to televised or online classes (Pérez, 2020, April 21). The small class and school population made it possible to observe social distancing protocols without limiting the number of children and teachers in attendance. Overall, however, la CNTE has maintained a skeptical stance toward remote learning, even with México's long history of providing televised middle school for children in remote areas of the country or in areas where middle school enrollment is low. La CNTE asserts that teachers and peers are and represent embodied knowledge and are also powerful mediators of learning and knowledge construction, especially in the context of high poverty that contributes to academic lag.

Elizarras Baena, the teacher interviewed by *La Izquierda Socialista*, acknowledges that remote learning is a challenge but adds that the success and failure of *Aprende en casa* will be defined by each family, because each family has different resources, supports, and challenges. He was critical of televised and online education in general, because of the medium itself which can be manipulative, but he acknowledges that the federal government had to respond to the disruption of face-to-face education caused by the pandemic. He laments that it is always the most marginalized students who will suffer the most because of disruptions. Elizarras Baena rejected the idea that television could replace the teacher:

Television cannot replace the teacher or any other means of digital communication. These tools can only be recognized as a means for teaching, but interaction will always be essential so that the sense of collaboration and solidarity among human beings can be promoted. In this sense, the educational process should always be conceived under a humanistic approach because only in this way will it be possible to contribute to the harmonious coexistence of society. (La Izquierda Socialista, 2020, September 9, para. 13)

In some areas, rural teachers affiliated with la CNTE organized and created their own curricular materials both to support teachers and students. The first set of curricula had to do with understanding what a virus and pandemic are, how family dynamics might unfold and shift under the "stay at home" orders and the importance of nurturing these relationships and emotional ties, how the family is a site of joy, play, and knowledge, and how the family could strategically develop more this way through engagement of games the teachers described in the written curricula, that ranged from pre-colonization to the present moment. Finally, discussions about human rights were included with plans to continue developing these curricular modules (Oropeza, 2021).

Oropeza (2021) writes that in a Mexican urban school whose principal is also the director of a CNTE chapter, the challenge was very similar. Here, again, school personnel together with parents took the lead to devise ways to offer children who did not have access to televised or online lessons, written access in the form of daily assignments notebooks. Parents also had teachers' phone numbers and relied on WhatsApp to communicate. This was overwhelming to many teachers, who not only took calls but also received photographs of student assignments. In short, Mexican teachers and families concluded what has also been concluded in the USA that the pandemic revealed already entrenched educational, and more broadly, societal, inequities and issues with infrastructure and Internet access that impacted student learning. Additionally, although US teachers have been using online platforms such as Google Classroom, Dojo, and other forms of technology to work with students and their families for several years, the pandemic, nonetheless, revealed a lack of adequate teacher and family support to confront such a formidable set of challenges that the pandemic presented.

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### **Conceptualizing the Cultural Construction of Leadership as Contested Space and a Site of Struggle**

Presented here were four interlocutors: the SEP's first minister of education, José Vasconcelos, who remains a key figure among educators and the public at large; Head teacher in an elementary school, Clara Isela Gómez Rosales who is participating in professional development that is part of a larger global project to standardize educational leadership; the OECD, a structure that structures; and la CNTE, the coordinating committee within the national teachers' syndicate. More actors contribute to the leadership construct – academics, students, families, teachers, and nonhuman actors, such as licensure requirements or policies. Each introduces its own demands, its own politics. What is interesting about the four cases here is that they demonstrate the ongoing tensions between being led by external forces or by relying on the vast epistemological resources within México. Vasconcelos, even when marked by ambivalence, looked to Mexican indigeneity, painters, composers, poets, and history to develop a national plan for Mexican education; this same disposition is evident in la CNTE. Clara Isela Gómez Rosales, a teacher committed to growth and improvement, is ensnared by the OECD's vision of leadership. She is also provoked into new ways of thinking about teaching and leading. She is a critical thinker, but nonetheless is ensnared by these standardized versions of leadership.

Leadership, even when defined as managerial and bureaucratic, must still respond to competing demands that can be seen as vestiges of colonial contestations. In presenting these four constructions of leadership, a theory is advanced: the discursive space in which "leadership" is constructed is contested space and a site of struggle. Vasconcelos was fighting racism and the impact of being "openly Indigenous" could have on the economy of a nation under reconstruction. He introduces the cosmic race, which ends his fight against racism by promoting it through the cosmic race and mestizaje. In this sense, he is reactionary, and his actions further

support racism. At the same time, he hired México's first woman muralist, Aurora Reyes, who was also a member of the Mexican Communist Party, a social activist fighting on behalf of the working class and women, and a federally funded muralist whose murals commissioned by Vasconcelos featured images of brutal beatings teachers endured in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1921) during the counterrevolutionary Cristero War (1926–1929). Vasconcelos is making decisions in a very dynamic space in which race is becoming salient as México continued to liberate itself from the oppression of colonialism, first through independence, and then through the Mexican Revolution. He is situating the brown body on a spectrum that can serve to whiten it, assuring the monied elite that Mexicans will assimilate to the Eurocentric values that accompanied Spanish invasion and colonization. Reyes does the opposite. She situates the brown body in the middle of contested space and lets it be sovereign and triumphant even as it is beat up by the Cristero fighters. Vasconcelos' leadership allows for these contradictions.

Gómez Rosales, the head teacher, is navigating temporalities, geopolitics, the OECD, and her own desire to be a better educator and educational leader. She seems to be inspired by the professional development she participated in, or perhaps because she is being prepared for a specific job, a school leader, she feels some stability and can now ask endless questions as she embarks on this clear/clarified journey. Gómez Rosales does not identify any negative or concerning implications of the training. This may be because the film was produced to tell about successes about the professional development, and professional critique may have been perceived as problematic.

Although Gómez Rosales' reflection on the training seems noncritical because she does not unpack the layers of influence this leadership style will have on pedagogy, student-teacher relationships, student learning, and rich measures of student academic performance, she, nonetheless, compellingly describes the ways in which the professional development is transforming her and her team. She is immersed within the logic and project of the professional development, perhaps the only formal, official, and school-based representation of leadership she has encountered. However, whether she challenges or not the constructs and how the professional development represents these – leadership, management, team building, and accountability – does not mean she is not in contested space. She follows the advice, strategies, and techniques offered in the professional development. While she does not critique the paradigm offered to her on screen, she does interact with it critically, drawing comparisons between her actions before the professional development and after. She does recognize that she and her colleagues are the site of intervention as captured in her comment, “Before we had the standards, teambuilding was foreign to us. There is a standard that says a team is something you have to build. You can't take it for granted, and so we began to innovate.” She understands this moment as a moment of change, and she will change in order to remain relevant and viable as a professional, a decision which requires the critical ability to read the world.

The OECD continues to have enormous power in the world to hold countries accountable to its understanding of education, that it should be standardized and be at



the service of the economy. The president of México (2018–2024), Andrés Manuel López Obrador, committed to reforming the constitution to undo neoliberal education reform. He has kept that commitment, and it was reported that his administration has also decided that Mexican youth will not take the PISA. However, he has stated that tests that are useful will be applied; it remains to be seen how his Ministry of Education will qualify the PISA. This exchange between reporters and the president about the PISA, however, points to another actor that was not introduced above but which is a formidable force in Mexican society: the media, which has on many occasions published fake news about this administration.

Aside from the failed project that testing the world's youth using a standardized test is, it is also a costly undertaking. There are international costs for member nations, which are determined by the Secretariat of PISA; this cost is a "floor contribution." Remaining costs are on a sliding scale of sorts, which takes into consideration "national income data and exchange rates." There are also national costs:

National costs for the implementation of PISA vary by country, according to factors such as sample size, the number of languages to be tested in the assessment, national income statistics and living standards. For example, a small country might spend approximately EUR 75 000 per annum while a medium-sized country EUR 300 000 per annum; a large country could spend up to two or three times the latter amount. (PISA FAQs, [OECD.org](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/faq/)).

For the world's nations, a site of contention are these global organisms, such as the OECD, who in capitalist class unity with the monied elite of various countries, can muscle their way into a nation's agenda and disrupt its autonomy. The OECD has, since 2000, embarked on a project that seeks to subsume education into the economy – no doubt, education plays an important role in a nation's economy, but education should not be subordinated by the economy, nor subsumed by it. The applied focus of the PISA seeks to measure "what students can do with what they have been taught. . . [which] goes hand-in-hand with the view that good educational outcomes imply commensurate economic returns to individuals and societies" (Araujo et al., 2017, p. 22). The question, then, is, Can the PISA make any claims about commensurate economic returns? Araujo et al. (2017) seek to respond to the question and begin to draw out the difference between methodological and ideological claims and criticisms. A first critique that they offer is what la CNTE and other teachers around the world ([www.teachersolidarity.com](http://www.teachersolidarity.com)) have denounced: the OECD's assumption that the life skills needed to function are the same or even similar across all countries.

The authors then ask about PISA's validity. They note that test-takers must know the content and the rules or practices around taking a test and comply with these. It is, therefore, important that the OECD not neglect but rather highlight country-specific observations about compliance with the procedures of test-taking in each country. Cross-national surveys must also be able to create culturally neutral items in order to ensure validity, and they are not certain that the PISA has such items. Finally, an approach is used that summarizes various responses based on a series of assumptions

in order to generate a single score for an individual. This can skew the educational inequity score, for example, the authors argue. They offer more examples, such as concealing some of the questions that point to PISA's problematic cross-sectional methodological approach that could impact its validity and limit its usefulness for policy (p. 24). They also raise questions about representation and conclude that improvements to measurement and representation would make their test more legitimate (p. 25). Araujo et al. then take on the ideological suppositions and note that the OECD has narrow definitions of "global," linking it to the logics of neoliberalism:

The technical agenda implemented through PISA – in what it measures, and how – is entirely congruent with OECD ideals and the vision of the world it supports. Sellar and Lingard (2014) go on to note that “[...] the OECD uses a ‘performative’ semiotic construction of the concept of globalization, implying only a neoliberal reading, and denying other accounts in the process” (p. 922). PISA-based league tables are controversial. . . because of their close-to-hegemonic status and ideological implications... (p. 25)

Araujo et al. (2017) rightly identify the key controversies about PISA: it assumes that “education policy recipes transfer from one system to the other” (p. 27); policy analysts judge the effectiveness of school systems based on country rankings, and countries are targeted for reform when their ranking is low. Taken together, the PISA is not a reliable measure nor a desirable tool to be applying across the world. It is ideologically driven, methodologically confounded, and compromised by its narrow world view that is entangled with neoliberal market logics and which situates it as another tool of Whiteness. The OECD remains a powerful interlocutor that peddles neoliberal forms of leadership, and because it does so, it is not trustworthy.

The teachers of la CNTE remain legitimate interlocutors in Mexican society, reminding the nation of the importance of critical theory in education, emancipatory pedagogies, and a social justice imaginary that honors a student's right to a critical education and a teacher's right to labor protections. They have successfully advocated for the reopening of rural *normales* [Normal schools for teacher preparation] and continue to advocate for more reopenings. They continue to fight for basic labor rights in states with rogue governors and continue to shape the dialogue about education in the public discourse. They are also part of the Mexican Left that currently seeks to redefine itself under a progressive administration.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

In a return to the beginning, Holland et al. are relevant. They provide examples of how individuals improvise to navigate untenable situations. They focus on an event that occurred when two of the co-authors were conducting research in India, and one of the authors asked a woman to come to her home to discuss hiring her to do chores. The woman was from a lower caste than the persons living on the first floor. Caste rules prohibited the woman from passing in front of the home of the higher caste

family, so she could not use the stairwell to reach the second-floor apartment where the author lived. The woman scaled the wall to reach the author's apartment to avoid violating caste rules.

The example is a bit unnerving; no one should have to go to these lengths to improvise and navigate a challenge, an obstacle, or something new, but improvising new identities can be a way to engage the difficult or the new, like the ongoing impositions that are vestiges of the neoliberal machinery. The cultural constructions of leadership presented here offer citizens representations to critique, to coalesce around, to dismantle, to invest in, to protest against, and so on.

The process of making meaning of and embracing or rejecting these cultural constructions of leadership is also to enter contentious spaces, for there is support for all of the interlocutors presented here by different segments of Mexican and international society, those who want México to join the global world order under Eurocentric paradigms, and those who want México to leverage its Indigenous and rural onto-epistemologies, lessons from invasion, colonization, independence and revolution, and its social movements to establish and drive its own agenda. There is a third group that does not mind integrating aspects of current global governance models. In this way, each of the culturally constructed leadership forms presented here are for Mexican citizens to identify the tolerable, the desired, and the refused. These sites of struggle are ongoing and, in this way, dynamic, allowing for possibility and change. Such spaces should be inscribed with human presence and action.

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# African American Administrators' Leadership Practices As Forms of Resistance

# 73

Kendra Lowery

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## Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of general areas of inquiry regarding African American P-12 school administrators and what is known about how African American administrators resisted race and gender oppression. Extant literature makes it abundantly clear that over the course of history, from the antebellum, Reconstruction periods, *de jure* and *de facto* forms of segregation and beyond, African American principals were motivated by a commitment to community, combatting racism, and upholding high academic standards. After a general review of what is meant by the term “resistance,” a review of African American leadership within general categories are explored. These include segregation before and after the landmark *Brown* decision, which deemed racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in the South, resistance to *Brown*, leadership styles, urbanicity, gender, and research about Black principals across race, gender, and urban schooling.

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African American school administrators · Resistance · Community · Leadership styles · Gender · *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) · Principals · Superintendents · Segregation · Activism

**The Field of Memory**

Research about African American P-12 school administrators is often understood in relation to the 1954 landmark Supreme Court landmark decision, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)). The Court unanimously decided that racial segregation by law in public education was unconstitutional. The second *Brown* decision, decided in 1955, declared states should implement the *Brown* decision (dismantle *de jure* segregation) “with all deliberate speed” (Brown v. Board of Education, 349 US 294 (1955)). Despite the emphasis on deliberate speed, many school districts in the South delayed integration for decades, created private schools for White students known as segregation academies (Ladson-Billings, 2004), while many states that either never instituted or abolished *de jure* (by law) segregation by 1954, continued *de facto* (by practice or custom, although not formal law) forms of school segregation. Much scholarship about Black education and Black administrators refer to their experiences in the context of pre- and post-*Brown* (shorthand for the *Brown* decision).

While pre-*Brown* studies reveal dimensions of African American school leadership in the North and South in contexts of legal segregation, due to the differences in the context of *de jure* segregation, which remained largely in the South by 1954, researchers have explored the impact of *Brown* vis à vis the employment of African American administrators largely in the South, where *de jure* segregation and the dismantling of it post-*Brown* had particular consequences for Black administrators in the South. Other facets of African American school leadership include an examination of leadership styles, gender, and urbanicity, as well as at the intersection of multiple areas of inquiry.

Increasing research also examines the reality of racial segregation pre- and post-*Brown* in the North (Lowery, 2019; Randolph & Robinson, 2017). This scholarship is important as it acknowledges the existence of *de jure* segregation in the North, even though it was abolished earlier than in the South. Yet, much research about Black administrators in the North pre- and post-*Brown* has generally been conducted as a way of understanding the conditions for those administrators during *de facto* segregation, even before *Brown*.

In sum, one way to organize extant research about Black school administrators is to understand administrators’ perceptions and lived experiences of themselves, students, families, and communities before and the decades after the 1954 *Brown* decision (Butler, 1974; Foster, 2004; Horsford, 2010a, b; Brown, 2005; Robinson & Williams, 2005; Tillman, 2004a, 2004b; Walker, 1996, 2000, Walker & Byas, 2003; Randolph, 2004).

### **The Field of Presence**

Research about African American school leaders reveals that for many, their leadership identities are informed by a legacy of Black activism, which created a calling into the field of education as socially conscious, student-centered leaders. Additionally, the belief that cultural synchronicity is of benefit to African American students is often asserted. This may be in part, because many African American leaders feel a sense of cultural obligation to serve African American students and families in particular, as they serve their school communities as a whole. The vast amount of qualitative inquiry into the professional lives of African American leaders reveals that they often relate to African American students and families because of similar backgrounds, experiences, and heritage. Increasing research reveals the anti-racist leadership practices, or more general social justice leadership practices of African American school leaders. While they are committed to serving all students and families, they may face particular challenges as they increase access and opportunity for African American students and families.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Explorations into the lived experiences of African American leaders have historically been influenced by theoretical constructs such as cultural synchronicity, critical theories, standpoint theories, and intersectional theories such as Black feminist and womanist theories. The construct of anti-racism, although not always identified as such in the literature, has also shaped inquiry in this area. Constructs developed in the field of teacher education informed by critical theorists that focus on the dismantling of inequities for students and families of identity subgroups such as race and gender, also inform inquiry into Black principal leadership styles. For example, culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive teaching influenced the development of culturally relevant leadership and culturally responsive leadership paradigms. Similarly, teaching for social justice has evolved into leadership for social justice, which researchers have used as a way to understand the practices of African American leaders in particular.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Increased understanding about African American school administrators disrupts existing leadership theories by broadening epistemological foundations of traditional leadership theories often based on the experiences of White males. This resulted in a woeful lack of acknowledgment and inclusion of the lived experiences and perspectives of Black men and Black women (English, 1994; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Through the addition of the knowledge and lived experiences of Black male and female principals, the "histories, purposes, and consequences of racialized [and gendered] school leadership discourses may bring to the foreground a vision for dismantling the old architecture of education as we currently study it" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 605).

### **Critical Assumptions**

The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably as a matter of personal choice as an African American scholar, and as a reflection of the preferred

terms of scholars who write about African American/Black school administrators. In places where direct quotes are used, the scholar's preferred term is used. Secondly, although discrete categories of research on Black administrators are offered, these categories are not exhaustive, and they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

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## Introduction

In his overview of the community activism of African American educational leaders between 1795 and 1954, Franklin (1990) noted, "historically, the largest group of professionals to provide leadership within the African American community was the educators" (p. 40). Because education was highly valued among enslaved and free Blacks during the antebellum through postbellum periods and beyond, many Blacks entered the education profession. In fact, scholars such as Sizemore (1986) framed research about Black education leaders as part of the struggle for Black education within the larger context of Black history and the fight against inequality in school and societies. Given the realities of racism within society and schools, much scholarship which investigates the lived experiences of Black principals reveals the ways in which they have resisted racism and other forms of oppression.

This chapter describes aspects of African American school administrators' leadership through the lens of resistance to demonstrate how these school leaders were and continue to be agents of resistance against oppression. The chapter is divided by basic categories of the scholarship of Black educational leadership. First, resistance is explained. Second, Black leadership and resistance during the pre-Brown era is followed by the urban North. Next, an explanation of Black administrators' leadership styles is provided, followed by urbanicity, gender, and what is known about Black administrators' leadership experiences and resistance at the intersections of urbanicity, race, and gender.

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## An Explanation of Resistance

Resistance against oppression is understood by critical theorists as actions taken to disrupt hegemony. Hegemony is rooted in Marxism. Although he was not the only theorist to expound on hegemony, Gramsci's extensive writings about hegemony formed many scholarly understandings about hegemony (Forgacs, 2000) or the dominating societal systems and influences in society, which are reinscribed by institutional structures such as courts and schools, social structures such as families, and is espoused by those with political and social power as well as those throughout society.

Carroll and Ratner (1994) explained,

For Gramsci, hegemony is understood as an historically specific *organization of consent* that rests upon – but cannot be reduced to – a practical material base. In the modern era, formal freedoms and electoral rights exist alongside the class inequalities of the bourgeois state;



therefore, relations of domination need to be sustained with the consent of the dominated. . . .By these means, a general interest or collective identity is constructed that unites the dominant and subordinate alike as members of the same political community. In Gramsci's formulation, power is *both centralized* in the coercive apparatuses of the state and *diffused* across other institutional sites such as the church, the family, and the school. (pp. 5–6, italics, original)

Acts aimed at disrupting or resisting these systems' power are implemented with hopes of disrupting the status quo, which are considered counter-hegemonic.

Freire (2009) expounded upon how oppressed people can resist their oppression. He argued that dehumanization will eventually lead the oppressed to struggle with their oppressor, while not internalizing the acts of their oppressors. Further, Freire asserted that education is central to liberation:

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted (p. 54).

Freire asserted that liberation, which is the intended outcome of resistance is a praxis: “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (p. 79). Black critical and critical feminist scholars such as hooks (1994) espoused Freire's beliefs that education can be liberatory, and that the practice of education itself “could be the practice of freedom” (p. 14). Therefore, the leadership practices of Black principals that contributed to community upliftment, critical consciousness and citizenship of Black students and families in a society that oppressed, disenfranchised, and under-resourced them are counter-hegemonic. These leaders' actions disrupted various forms of material oppressions enacted and supported through laws and customary practice, as well as narratives of inferiority and a lack of respectability.

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## Pre-Brown in the US South

The opportunities and structures of the education of Blacks often mirrored the political social limitations for Blacks in the larger society (Franklin, 1990). Additionally, Blacks in other professions such as ministers, lawyers, and business were educators. There is also a rich history of Black school leadership rooted in the Black church, where ministers saw themselves as educators. For example, Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal church in Philadelphia, also provided a day school for Black children and adults as early as 1795. Black women were active school leaders and community activists during the 1800s as well (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). For example, Sarah Smith was the first Black principal in the New York

public schools when she was appointed as principal of the African School in Brooklyn in 1863. Fannie Jackson Coppin, who was born a slave, was appointed principal of Philadelphia's Institute For Colored Youth (ICY) in 1869 and remained so for over 35 years (Franklin, 1990).

The African American community collectively resisted the dehumanization efforts meted out against members by its continued pursuit of education despite persistent efforts to deny it. Therefore, the act of seeking education itself was resistance. Under Coppin's leadership of the ICY in the period immediately after the Civil War, "the ICY had come to be considered one of the best classical secondary schools in the country" (p. 49). This combination of commitment to educational excellence *and* community leadership positioned Black leaders to craft educational goals within the Black community and actively dismantle oppression. For example, Sarah Smith was one of the founders of the Equal Suffrage Club, a group comprised of African American women.

Murtadha and Watts (2005) shed further light on the ways in which African American leaders during this timeframe resisted oppression. They characterized these leaders as "not only educators, they were public speakers, community activists, and civil and women's rights advocates" (p. 592) from the antebellum, Emancipation and Reconstruction periods, through the first half of the twentieth century. The plethora of public acts leaders engaged in, from joining societies, church organizations, crafting public scholarship to fight injustices, and advocating for community resources actively resisted the over-arching narrative of Black inferiority.

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## Segregation Pre- [Continued into] Post-Brown

The resistance of Black administrators during segregation could be characterized as leading the school as a site of resistance against a status quo of White supremacist, sexist oppression, and dominance of African Americans. Yet, even the narratives about segregated schooling historically portray Black schooling as inferior. Walker (2000) explained,

The more traditional and widely accepted portrait of the schools depicts a theme of almost complete inferiority. In this view, the African American segregated school is depicted as inferior because of inequality in facilities, lack of transportation, shorter school terms, teacher-pupil conflicts, overcrowding, poor teaching, and poor student attendance. (p. 253)

In response, Walker chronicled how histories that are limited to an accounting of resources ignore "the ways in which African American schools strived to become intellectual institutions, despite the expectation of European Americans that any learning beyond menial employment was unnecessary" (p. 254). Therefore, the commitment to high academic standards and preparation for professional opportunities on the part of African American school leaders in this context were acts of resistance. Walker's review of literature about common themes and characteristics of teaching and learning in segregated schools yielded a conceptualization of "valued

segregated schools” (p. 260). She points out that while many of these schools were located in urban areas, many other schools were in rural settings. Walker characterized valued segregated schools as having “1) exemplary teachers, 2) curriculum and extracurricular activities, 3) parental support, and [most important in the context of this chapter] 4) leadership of the school principal” (p. 264).

The principal of segregated schools was both school administrator and “the conduit through which the needs of the school were translated to the community” (p. 274). Therefore, the principal was highly visible as a community leader, counselor, involved in service activities, and as “liaison with the White community,” which required them to advocate for the school’s needs and required a level of political astuteness (p. 275).

Walker’s & Byas’s (2003) depiction of Ulysses S. Byas’s leadership of a segregated high school in the South reveal how he advocated for the school, navigated relations with the superintendent while seeking material support for the school, gained parental support, was a community leader, and engaged in resistance. In 1968, in an act of political resistance, Byas resigned rather than accepting a position as an assistant superintendent, in a district move designed to remove him from the principalship in response to desegregation. This is an unfortunate illustration of the lengths to which White supremacists sought to maintain power and control and what scholars have called an unintended consequence of *Brown* that resulted in the decline of Black administrators (Abney, 1974; Tillman, 2004b).

One of the more well-known African American principals of a segregated school that created nurturing and enriching education for its students was Anna Julia Cooper, who was principal of Dunbar High School (formerly known as Washington High School and the M Street School) in Washington, D. C. Dunbar was the nation’s first Black public high school which gained a reputation for its legacy of rigorous academics, highly educated principals and teachers, and long line of famous graduates (Stewart, 2013; Walker, 2000). In addition to leading the high school and contributing to its stellar academic reputation, Cooper was already an accomplished author in the tradition of what would become known as Black feminisms. *A voice from the South* (1892) articulates her argument that higher education would further equality for Black women and the entire race.

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## Resistance to *Brown*

Researchers have chronicled the displacement of Black principals in the South in the decades after the *Brown* decision due to a complexity of factors, most notably, the closing of formerly all-Black schools in response to desegregation mandates, which lead to the firing of Black principals (Abney, 1974; Butler, 1974; Karpinski, 2006; Tillman, 2004b), creating job loss and insecurity in a formerly “sheltered market” (Butler, 1974, p. 11) because of racial segregation. Although data collection about principal employment by race was not transparent or always available (Karpinski, 2006), data that is available revealed patterns of Black principal decimation. For example, between 1954 (the year *Brown* was decided) and 1970, the number of

Black principals in Kentucky declined from 350 to 36. In Maryland, between 1954 and 1968, the number of Black principals declined from 44 to 31. This “did not keep pace with the number of White principals, which increased 167%” (p. 252). Concomitantly, researchers also examine the benefits, tradeoffs, and consequences of *Brown*, either through archival or reviews of research (Karpinski, 2006; Tillman, 2004a, b) or through the reflective lenses of retired Black principals who experienced desegregation (Horsford, 2010a, b, 2011; Lyons & Chelsey, 2004). Consequences typically include while noting increased access to resources for Black students, principals recognized the deleterious effects of desegregation on the jobs of Black teachers and principals, as well as a lack of culturally responsive educators and curriculum to meet the needs of Black students (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004).

Black principals were negatively impacted by attempts of state and local efforts to resist the decree to desegregate. These efforts included firing them for belonging to organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), widening the scope of standardized teacher exams, and limiting access to teaching licenses either by cancelling certification programs or by revocation (Tillman, 2004b), and school consolidation which resulted in Black principals being disproportionately reassigned or dismissed compared to White principals (Karpinski, 2006). However, Karpinski (2006) chronicled the ways Black principals resisted the concerted, racist efforts. They viewed their professional associations “as weapons to correct injustices” (p. 240) and engaged in education campaigns to prepare the public about the impending *Brown* decision. They also aligned with the NAACP and pursued legal action to address the crisis. Black educators and activists counteracted decimation efforts and eventually received support from some northern school districts who (slowly) increased recruitment of Black teachers and principals. Unfortunately, despite ongoing resistance efforts, the impact of anti-desegregation activities resulting in the dismissal of Black educators continues to contribute to a dearth of Black educators today. As Karpinski noted, “In time, the dearth of minority applicants in education has required federal, state, and local programs to offset the shortage of African American educators. . .through programs designed to encourage ethnic minority teacher recruitment” (p. 269).

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## Leadership Styles

Black principals’ and superintendents’ leadership styles have been of great interest to researchers interested in understanding “the foundational ground that supports African American leadership in schools and that concomitantly supports African American student achievement” (Foster, 2005, p. 692) and promotes anti-oppression. This perspective is often analyzed through a historical lens of the legacy of Black educators’ community activism, dating back to the eighteenth century (Franklin, 1990; Pollard, 1997) and include an understanding of their commitment and motivation to educating Black youth and developing their communities (Sizemore, 1986). These styles include ethnohumanist identity (Lomotey, 1993), interpersonal caring (Walker & Archung, 2003), and tempered radicals and servant leaders (Alston, 2005). These studies, which

center the voices of Black leaders, are also important because they broaden leadership theories by including Black school leaders' "perspectives on leadership, teaching, and student achievement" (Brown, 2005, p. 586).

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## Urbanicity

Another body of work focuses on the experiences of African American administrators several years after *Brown*. This research usually focuses on Black urban school principals, who lead schools of predominantly Black children (Case, 1997). Black principals have consistently been underrepresented since the 1980s. Jones (1983) argued that Black school administrators were appointed to large urban school districts largely in response to fulfilling a need for principals in superintendents in majority Black and Brown districts when White administrators did not want them; and where they are expected to fix serious problems (Pollard, 1997). Black principals have steadily comprised 11% of all principals from at least 2002 (Brown, 2005) to the latest data released by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017).

A related body of research consists of the experiences of Black principals in the context of revealing schooling experiences in all-Black schools in the urban North pre- and post-desegregation (Randolph, 2004), who, because of *de facto* or neighborhood segregation, led schools of predominantly Black students, such as in Harlem, New York (Johnson, 2006), or as among the first hired in predominately White districts (Lowery, 2019). Research about these administrators chronicles both the material challenges they faced, as well as the efforts they made as school and community leaders to create rigorous educational experiences for Black students. Black principals in these contexts were public scholars, who published articles about sociopolitical issues and fostered high academic standards (Randolph, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Muradha & Watts, 2005).

Randolph (2004) examined the schooling practices of an all-Black urban high school North that was all-Black due to *de facto* segregation in Columbus, Ohio. She sought to understand the factors that contributed to memories of goodness associated with the school. One factor was the leadership of the schools' principals, including its first one, an African American woman who was appointed when the school opened in 1910. Characteristic of previous research about the role of Black principals who facilitated outstanding educational experiences and outcomes for Black students and communities during segregation, principal Baker believed her responsibility was to "lift the African American race through educational means" (p. 599). The leadership of Principal Mitchell also contributed to the school's legacy of greatness. He "believed that education would quell racist deprecations of the intellectual abilities of Black youth. As the principal of Champion, he would erase racist notions about Black people, particularly doubts of the educability of Black youth" (p. 600). Through his role as a principal and through his public scholarship, similar to the Black school leaders in other parts of the United States before him, principal Mitchell resisted the racist discourse about the inferiority of Black students by articulating and disseminating writings about the equality of Black children, thereby contradicting long-held beliefs about Black inferiority.

## Gender

Lomotey (2019) asserted, “Black principals make a difference for Black students, and most Black principals are women” (p. 337), yet they are underrepresented in scholarship about principals. Lomotey’s review of extant research published between 1993 and 2017 revealed that most researchers focus on Black women principals’ lived experiences including their gender and race identities, leadership styles such as “passion/mothering/caring” and “servant leadership” (p. 339), the ways in which spirituality informs their leadership, the importance of family, and race and gender barriers faced (Lomotey, 2019). Indeed, research about Black women administrators generally focuses on the unique challenges and experiences they face as Black women or as a subset of the leadership style – what aspects of their intersecting race and gender identities form successful leadership for Black students in particular (Pollard, 1997).

Blair (2009) described the leadership vision of nineteenth-century school founders Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Their leadership practices were grounded in character education and community building. Important tenets of their education programming included developing skills (manners and etiquette) to appease White allies, and pairing morality with seeing the value of hard work. Their conception of work included domestic labor to meet the financial needs of their families, given the race and gender constraints of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Blair, 2009). These women lauded character education as an explicit resistance to prevailing narratives of Black inferiority, thereby creating an avenue to gain respectability (Blair, 2009). She explained,

They knew that character traits were important to White employers and, given the economic needs of their students, they did not hesitate to emphasize the development of these traits at their schools. At the same time, they never allowed themselves to be defined by Whites. (p. 574)

As evidence of the diversity of thought within the African American community, this approach did not go unchallenged by other members of Black society who derided their efforts as assimilationist actions that underscored White supremacy. The debate over whether engaging in activities that appear to pacify the oppressor but result in some modicum of political, financial, and social security are acts of resistance or assimilation is longstanding within African American communities. And, scholars who have studied these women leaders’ lives in-depth maintain, as Blair does, that “these women believed in the power of education to help African Americans rise above the degradation that shaped so much of their history” (p. 582).

Research about Black women principals is also contextualized within periods of segregation post-*Brown*, as it took decades for states to comply with the *Brown* decision: school principals during segregation such as Ethel T. Overby who emphasized high educational standards and sought to close the achievement gap (Randolph & Sanders, 2011), or the experiences of Velma Dolphin Ashley who was appointed

the first Black female superintendent of an all-Black district in Oklahoma in 1976 (Revere, 1989).

Loder (2005a, b) explored how race, gender, and generational status informed Black women principals' leadership experiences. Her findings also provide evidence that neither Black principals nor Black women principals should be viewed as a monolithic or homogeneous group. Her analysis of an intergenerational sample of African American principals in Chicago revealed how generational status informed differences between how the principals portrayed their journey to the principalship (2005b). The African American women principals born before the Civil Rights movement entered education because it was one of few professional opportunities. They were aware of institutional racism and sexism, and committed to education as a spiritual calling on their lives. In contrast, African American women principals born after the civil rights-era had more access to a variety of professional options and viewed themselves as more individualistic, rather than part of a collective culture. Loder (2005a) analyzed a subset of those principals who were born in the same generation prior to the Civil Rights movement and started teaching in the 1960s. She found that those principals, who "came of age professionally" (p. 306) during the Civil Rights movement revealed that their response to school reform in the 1980s resulted in "governance reforms that restructured long-standing authority relationships between African American principals and parents" (p. 316). This awareness transformed how they viewed themselves as mothers and carers. Loder's analysis of these generational differences led her to ponder:

What might these divergent reflections on the salience of race and gender in the professional realm reveal about contemporary African-American women principals' capacity to carry forth the longstanding tradition of activism in African-American education? Do younger generations of African-American women principals view it as their obligation to use their professional status and capital to "uplift the race" as has been widely documented among their predecessors? (p. 261)

These questions remind us of the complexity of analyzing historical and contemporary African American school leadership. Further, should one answer the second question negatively, questions remain about how to educate African American current and aspiring school leaders about the importance of the activist tradition.

Some research exists that explores Black women principals' and aspiring principals' experiences and perceptions in regarding the principalship. Allen et al. (1995) found that mentors and sponsors for Black women play a key role in their professional success, including motivation and maintaining high expectations. Pollard (1997) and Aaron (2019) found that Black women principals' race and gender informed their view of their professional role and mission regarding their students. As knowledge about the experiences of Black female superintendents is sparse (Alston, 2000), more understanding about their leadership styles, perhaps through the conceptual lens of the tempered radical/servant leadership, is warranted (Alston, 2005).

Johnson's (2006) examination of the leadership practices of Gertrude Ayer, the first Black woman principal in Harlem, contributed to "a historical continuum of



African American women's educational practice" (p. 21) which again, was steeped in a commitment to school, community, and public scholarship that criticized race, gender, and class oppression. Black administrators challenged injustices in schools and society. Over a 40-year career starting in the 1930s, Ayer was a public intellectual who published widely about race, gender, and class, championed innovative curriculum, and led workshops and taught classes about race, gender, class, and labor. Ayer's commitment to the education of her community, which was majority Black exemplifies resistance against racism because in the 1930s, "Harlem public schools, in particular, provided stark evidence of the effects of years of underfunding and neglect by the central school bureaucracy" (p. 23). Effectively, by investing in her community and creating educational spaces that provided rich educational opportunities for students otherwise underserved, Ayer resisted the narrative that the Black community of Harlem deserved and should expect less for themselves because of their race and class. Further, Johnson asserted that during Ayer's "tenure as a school leader, militant social activism was viewed as a community responsibility by many of Harlem's movers and shakers" (p. 31).

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### **Race, Gender, and Urbanicity**

As stated earlier, these categories are neither distinct or mutually exclusive. Scholars have explored Black female principals at the crossroads of race, gender, and urbanicity (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Case, 1997; Dillard, 1995). Case (1997) explored the concept of othermothering, a concept where Black women, known as "othermothers within the community exhibit a sense of responsibility to the offspring of other mothers" (p. 26), which results in assistance to biological mothers in the raising of their children with the community. One of the two participants in Case's (1997) study was a Black female principal in an urban elementary school. The principal exhibited othermothering as she explained school expectations to parents and students, compassionately processed student discipline issues, and protected school grounds; thereby "[g]aining the respect of blood mothers" (p. 32). Bloom & Erlandson (2003) examined three Black women principals of urban schools through the metaphor of visibility and invisibility to reveal the factors that informed their leadership vision and how they engaged in leadership practices. As with extant leadership, the researchers found that the principals' memories of the rich Black culture and community created a strong cultural identity formation, which developed an appreciation of their collective cultural history and collective consciousness for engaging with the Black community as school leaders. Attention has been paid to Black administrators in suburban settings where the majority of the educators and students are White.

Madsen and Mabokela's (2002) interviews of four African American assistant principals, three men and one woman, yielded evidence that the assistant principals developed a color-conscious leadership and they experienced challenges as they navigated intergroup conflict, such as incompatible diversity goals and power dynamics in their interactions with stakeholders.



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## Conclusions and Reflections

hooks (1992) summarized how affirming practices of African American administrators that disavow oppressive practices and narratives are forms of resistance:

Collectively, black people and our allies in struggle are empowered when we practice self-love as a revolutionary intervention that undermines practices of domination. Loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life. (p. 20)

In sum, the actions of Black administrators that provided access to education, community resources, and a counternarrative of Black equality to negate messages of Black inferiority were counterhegemonic. It is a legacy worth remembering as many of the same tactics and messages that align to deny quality education to Black people continue in similar and different forms today.

Franklin (1990) urged contemporary African American educators to continue the legacy of community uplift, while cautioning against what he interpreted as a disavowal of this dual commitment during the latter half of the twentieth century:

During the 1980s as numerous interest groups raised their voices in support of the campaigns to improve the public educational conditions for a "nation at risk," noteworthy from the chorus of proponents for change was the collective voice of African American educators. . . This is unfortunate, for the historical record is clear. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, African American educators and administrators not only held themselves accountable for what took place within their educational institutions, but they also moved out into the community to provide leadership for organizations and movements aimed at the social, economic, and political advancement of the entire African American population. These educators knew that their progress and advancement as educators and administrators was tied to the overall progress of African Americans a group. (pp. 59–60)

The wide scope of possible research topics about African American principals and their experiences means that undoubtedly, there are many more questions to explore through a range of methodologies and theoretical/conceptual lenses. At the same time, it is important that scholars continue to examine the nuances and within-group differences of Black administrators, and continue to examine other identities to understand how those who identify as "Black" as one aspect of their identity experience the principalship, as well as challenges and resistance narratives. Otherwise, without a keen eye to detail and nuance, it may be too easy to homogenize experiences or create erroneous narratives of a monolithic experience of all Black administrators, and romanticize resistance efforts.

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# The Emergence of Culturally Responsive Leadership

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Dionne V. McLaughlin, Derrick D. Jordan, and Tawannah G. Allen

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## Abstract

Public schools across the country are becoming increasingly more diverse, particularly with respect to culture, race, and ethnicity. Given the perpetual gaps (e.g., achievement, discipline, referrals to exceptional children’s programs, etc.),

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the need for researched-based strategies aimed at leveling the playing field for historically marginalized populations is compelling. Much of the extant literature on school reform and school improvement focuses on the role of the teacher in stemming the tide. More contemporary research, however, reveals that school leaders in general and principals in particular also have a significant impact. In that regard, culturally responsive leadership has emerged as a research-based approach to support students of color.

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**Keywords**

Principal leadership · Culturally relevant leadership · Culturally sensitive leadership · Culturally responsive leadership · Deficit thinking · Genetic Deficit Theory · Cultural Deficit Theory · Racial bias · Equity · Minoritized students · Marginalized students · Parent and community engagement · Inclusive school environments · Exclusionary practice

**Field of Memory**

**Evolution of Deficit Thinking.** As early as the 1600s and grounded in long-standing racial beliefs about people of color, deficit thinking arose from moral, political, pseudoscientific, and racist debates (Foley, 1991). These discourses centered on the premise that people of color were either biologically or culturally inferior to Whites.

Rooted in the study of human beings, their culture, behavior, and beliefs, anthropologists took the approach of understanding the different aspects of the human experience. In the early 1900s, Darwinian Genetic Deficit Theory and concepts of evolution found genetic differentiations of animal species based upon geographical or environmental adaptation. Genetic Deficit Theorists quickly expanded this idea to include social and cultural systems of people (Davidson, 1992). From this research, anthropologists ascribed to three main theoretical frameworks: Cultural Deficit Theory, Cultural Difference Theory, and Cultural Ecological Theory. Each of these theories was formed in response to certain historical realities or educational dilemmas. For the purposes of this chapter, Cultural Deficit Theory will be utilized to frame the discussion of culturally responsive leadership.

In the 1960s, Cultural Deficit Theorists such as Hess, Shipman, Engelmann, Bereiter, and Deutsch began to gain more credence over the Genetic Theorists. Their studies specifically focused on the premise of “nurture” versus “nature.” Most cultural deficit studies portrayed the child’s social, cultural, or economic environment as “depraved and deprived” of the elements necessary to “achieve the behavior rules (role requirements)” for academic success (Hess & Shipman, 1965). Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) further emphasized that “cultural deprivation” theories purported that social and emotional deficiencies affected student performance within the academic system. Until dealt with, these differences would make it “impossible for” culturally deprived students “to progress in academic areas” (p. 41).

Ultimately, Cultural Deficit Theorists viewed cultures and environments other than European American as inferior. Middle-class expectations and values

promulgated in educational systems highlighted perceived deficiencies inherent in minoritized children. The realization that teachers were also failing to effectively teach minoritized children was rarely broached, and blame remained conveniently elsewhere. Cultural Deficit Theorists asserted that deficiencies in the home environment result in shortcomings in skills, knowledge, and behaviors that contribute to poor school performance. According to Cultural Deficit Theory, some students perform poorly in school due to the linguistic, social, and cultural nature of the home environment that does not adequately prepare them for academic pursuits. While the assumptions and biases posited by Cultural Deficit Theorists are now veiled in more modern descriptive nomenclature – such as at-risk – the undertones and cultural inferiority continue to be echoed.

**From Deficit to At-Risk.** For the past 38 years, describing vulnerable young people as “at-risk” became ubiquitous in schools, colleges, and universities in the United States (McKenzie, 2019). The at-risk label which was widely disseminated in the 1980s has also been utilized to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school (Strauss, 2019).

Circumstances that could jeopardize school completion include homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, and transiency (as in the case of migrant-worker families). Other factors may include learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect educational performance and attainment for some students. While educators utilize the term at-risk to refer to general populations or large categories of students, it is often applied without regard for the stigmatizing effect on students.

When educators highlight intrinsic student deficits and interpret cultural and racial difference as a deficit, students of color become vulnerable to disparate treatment in schools. The deficit model is based on the normative development of students whose homes and communities have prepared them for schooling long before they enter school (Harry & Klingner, 2007). Educators often struggle to view student difficulties as “human variation rather than pathology” (Reid & Valle, 2004, p. 473). If children – specifically minoritized students – are to develop the skills for success in life, thinking must move beyond the deficit model towards culturally responsive pedagogy and leadership.

### **Field of Presence**

Today’s principals are expected to be culturally responsive leaders and to develop and successfully implement evidence-based solutions aimed at improving outcomes for all of their students. School reform and school improvement literature has historically emphasized teacher impact and instructional approaches for strengthening outcomes for traditionally marginalized students (Bond, 2017; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, school leaders, particularly principals, also play a critically important role in improving outcomes for vulnerable students (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Minkos et al., 2017). According to Horner and Jordan (2020), “The accountability

and education reform era among other factors changed the role and expectations for principals over the last two decades from that of a manager to an instructional leader and school cultural broker. Principals became the centerpiece of effective schools” (p. 3). Culturally responsive school leaders critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors, develop culturally responsive teachers, promote culturally responsive inclusive school environments, and engage students and parents in culturally appropriate ways (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). The Field of Concomitance underscores historical connections to philosophy and education.

### **Field of Concomitance**

Socrates, one of the Greek progenitors of philosophy, vigorously challenged commonly accepted knowledge. Centuries later, others, namely, Kant, Locke, and Hume, created a contemporary view of philosophy heralded as a critique of knowledge. In keeping, Foucault’s “critical philosophy” questions truth, particularly truth grounded in Science, and instead exalts the notion of contingent historical forces as a critique of historical reason (Gutting & Oksala, 2019).

Critical Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education both stem from ruminations that originated from Socrates and his protégé, Plato. Both philosophers purported that dialogue for human interaction and for education was essential (Guilherme, 2017).

Critical pedagogies insist that, as a consequence of mainstream technocratic models of public education, the larger historical, ideological, economic, and cultural conditions out of which today’s social and institutional crises have grown, generally go unquestioned. It is precisely this lack of inquiry, analysis, and agency that a critical philosophy of learning hopes to reverse (Leistyna, 2002, pp. 14–15).

Critical theory, a precursor to critical pedagogy, stemmed from the development of the human emancipation project at the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1920s. “Critical theorists want to determine the oppressive features of society; once they are understood the intent is to develop the conditions under which those who are oppressed might be able to liberate themselves” (p. 4). Further, critical theorists suggest that “all knowledge is socially and historically determined and they reject the positivist notion of knowledge and science. . . Logical positivism asserted that only scientific knowledge, verifiable in principle, was true knowledge” (Tierney, 1993, p. 5).

Derived from critical theory and critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism encourages rethinking paradigms and processes and promotes teaching for educational and social equity and change. Critical multicultural theorists espouse that individual critical consciousness about class, race, gender, racial identity, and beliefs are influenced by perspectives, ideologies, and practices from the Dominant European American culture in the United States (Ukpokodu, 2003).

Banks (1993b) views the primary goal of multicultural education as transforming schools so that “all students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse nation and world” (p. 27). Sonia Nieto (2000) adds: multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school



reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the schools' curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning.

Culturally responsive pedagogy was deeply influenced by multicultural education. In addition to Describing Gay's, 2010 work, Harmon states "Three ideologies emerged, including teaching racially different students differently, using insights into ethnic or cultural pluralism to improve all educational decision-making, and teaching content about ethnic groups to all students. These ideologies provided the foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy" (2012, p. 17). From culturally responsive pedagogy, scholars culled a theory later conceived as culturally responsive leadership. Culturally responsive school leaders "nurture and maintain high-quality teaching, and foster an inclusive community that builds on teacher, student and family assets" (Schlanger, 2018, p. 1). A critical assumption advanced in this chapter is that leadership affects student learning and culture is inextricably connected to learning.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Principals influence the school environment, teachers' learning, instruction, student success through relationship building with students and families, and ultimately student achievement (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Additionally, culture plays a critical role in learning. Learning for children of color is optimized when culturally responsive pedagogy is employed. Culturally responsive pedagogy consists of critically analyzing instruction through the lens of race, ethnicity, and culture (Howard, 2003). Culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

A fundamental shift that profoundly impacted culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership was the movement away from problematizing students of color with labels like at risk, culturally deprived and cultural deficit to problematizing the environments in which students of color are educated. Attention turned to policies, practices, and personnel. Wherein students of color and families of color had largely been blamed for underachievement and a lack of success in schools, critical theorists argued that the lack of cultural synchronization between teachers and students had created a negative impact on student achievement (Irvine & Armento, 2001). A clarion call was issued for culturally responsive leaders to enact policies and practices geared towards improving learning environments for marginalized students and to transform teaching through the introduction of culturally responsive pedagogy. To illustrate how culturally responsive leadership is actualized and thereby influences the school environment for students of color, the following narrative of Principal Dolores Ollie is presented here.

More than two decades ago, Principal Dolores Ollie's historical narrative of culturally responsive leadership became an inspiration for a career in the principalship and ultimately higher education for one of the authors of this chapter.

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## Introduction

Dolores Ollie is fondly remembered as the Principal of Harriet Tubman Elementary School in Newark, New Jersey. Ms. Ollie was a teacher at Harriet Tubman Elementary School for 28 years before becoming the school's principal. A New Jersey state report explains that Ms. Ollie's successful approach includes "strong educational programs, inspired leadership and active parental support."

Ms. Ollie has created a full-service school that includes Saturday parenting classes, breakfast, and an afterschool program that ends at 5:30 pm, and she regularly writes grants to support needs for her school that the district cannot provide. Under Ms. Ollie's leadership and with a no excuses approach, Tubman Elementary 3rd graders scored 11–28 points higher on Math and Reading assessments than other district 3rd graders. Sixth graders scored 88% in Reading and 100% in Math on state standardized assessments, outperforming other district 6th graders that scored 28% and 27%, respectively. To their testament, Tubman Elementary students attend prestigious private and public high schools and universities. Her graduates have attended Yale, Colgate, and M.I.T. Tubman Elementary School also regularly ranks as one of the district's highest performing elementary schools. In fact, more than two decades ago under her leadership, even though the majority of her students are low income, Harriet Tubman Elementary School was recognized as the best school in New Jersey (Kaplan, 1996; Strum, 1993).

Ms. Ollie describes her work as an adventure and states that it is her job to keep teachers stimulated and renewed. Ms. Ollie's teachers report that they are treated like professionals, student expectations are high, and risk-taking is encouraged. Ms. Ollie has developed a culture of success by implementing effective structures that include teacher assistants in every classroom and an emphasis on Science, Music, and Art. Student accountability is prioritized and Parent involvement is remarkable. Seventy-five percent of Harriet Tubman Elementary parents attend parent meetings, and students who misbehave or do not complete homework receive a home visit. Ultimately Ms. Ollie sees her role at Harriet Tubman Elementary School as cultivating student leadership (Kaplan, 1996; Strum, 1993). Ms. Ollie's culturally responsive leadership was evident through her own ability to critically self-reflect on her leadership of Harriet Tubman Elementary School, her teachers' development of a stringent culturally responsive academic environment, and her highly engaged parent community.

Not only did Ms. Ollie utilize culturally responsive leadership practices, she also embodied theories of successful school leadership. Well-regarded leadership theories like Leithwood, Sun, and Schumacker (2020) Four Leadership Paths Framework illustrate the connection between successful school leadership and student learning,

termed here academic success. Leithwood asserts that school leadership indirectly influences student learning. In describing the Four Paths Leadership Framework, he further asserts that school leadership includes an emotions path which consists of how feelings and dispositions and the affective state of staff members impacts their work. The Framework also includes a rational path depicted by teachers' skills and knowledge about pedagogy and teaching practices, and an organizational path that includes structures and communication among stakeholders. The fourth part of the framework consists of a family path that includes variables that determine family expectations such as the family's access to social capital and school communication to families about expectations. With the Four Paths Leadership Framework, Leithwood claims if leaders address how feelings and dispositions impact teacher work, foster pedagogical knowledge and skills, examine organizational structure, and improve family communication, principals can improve the leadership of their schools by focusing intently on specific variables in each of the Four Paths.

Successful leadership practices which emanate from leadership theories cannot alone, however, elucidate how academic success occurs for students of color (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leadership that is culturally responsive is an essential component of successful school leadership. Further successful leaders understand that culture is intrinsic to the performance of minoritized students who are disciplined disproportionately and whose intelligence is often derided. Race, ethnicity, and culture are believed to significantly impact academic performance (Aceves & Orosco, 2014). Darling-Hammond (2010) also advances the argument that culturally responsive leadership improves student performance in schools. This chapter will focus on the emergence of discourse that promotes culturally responsive leadership and the role of culture.

## **Emergence of Discourse that Promotes Culturally Responsive Leadership**

Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003) asserted that from slavery to the Civil Rights era, African Americans had a rich tradition of pursuing education as an act of freedom and resistance. In pre-Civil Rights segregated schools across America, academic achievement was an aspiration. Many post-Civil Rights integrated schools have stymied these aspirations by adopting the views of mainstream American society that promoted messages of Black cultural and intellectual inferiority.

The clamor that began in the 1960s and 1970s for separate ethnic content evolved into a signal in the 1980s and 1990s for integrated ethnic content that was part of the core curriculum (Banks, 1993a). Though primarily touted to focus on curricula changes, multicultural education was initially conceived to focus more broadly on institutional changes that include curriculum but also include teaching practices.

Banks (1993b) states that the five dimensions of multicultural education include (1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) empowering school culture and structure, and (5) equity pedagogy.

Content integration consists of the utilization of examples and data pertinent to diverse cultural groups to describe concepts, principles, theories, or generalizations. Knowledge construction is the process that behavioral, natural, and social scientists utilize to explore knowledge development in their respective disciplines. In addition, implicit biases, perspectives, and cultural assumptions are considered as they relate to knowledge development. Prejudice reduction examines the racial attitudes of children and practices that can impact children's attitudes and increase democratic racial attitudes. Empowering school culture and structure includes "restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment" (Cummins, 1986). Banks asserts that often school reform is not successful because the "roles, norms, and ethos of the school do not change in ways that make the institutionalization of the reforms possible" (Banks, 1993a, p. 33).

Equity pedagogy emphasizes pedagogies that improve academic achievement for students of color. In the 1960s, cultural deprivation became the paradigm that dominated education theory in explaining how schools could assist impoverished, underachieving students. It purported the deficits of poor children and the homes that they were raised in inhibited academic attainment. Absent was any discussion surrounding how systems had exacerbated poor academic performance. Cultural deprivation theory problematized poor children and their families. In the 1970s, cultural difference theory which assailed cultural conflicts in schools as the real obstacle to minority achievement surfaced in contrast to cultural deprivation theory that blamed the families of color for their children's lack of academic success.

Cultural difference theorists asserted that rich cultures of students of color were largely ignored in schools across the United States. Rather the cultures promoted in schools were in opposition to the cultures of students of color (Banks, 1993a). Cultural deprivation reemerged in the 1980s but with a new descriptor termed, at-risk as was mentioned above.

The term at-risk and the standards movement both gained prominence in the 1980s following the 1983 release of the report of *A Nation at Risk* published by the National Commission of Excellence in Education. The report described the United States as an economically and socially endangered society and highlighted the importance of preparing public school children to compete in a global market. Following this report, several well-read and widely adopted critiques of multicultural education were launched by Bloom, Ravitch, and Schlesinger who purported that multicultural education lacked rigor and instead incorporated self-esteem in lieu of targeting demanding work and countervailing viewpoints. In addition, with significant influence from the Business Roundtable, States across the country created standards and mandated tests to assess the implementation of those standards (Sleeter, 2004).

As discourse related to culture and achievement progressed, a new paradigm dominated the discourse that focused on changing the manner in which teachers educated students of color. The importance of not only reeducating teachers but reimagining ways to better prepare students for lives in a multiethnic, racially diverse society became paramount.

## Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

More than 25 years ago, Ladson-Billings' (1994) provocative work, *Dreamkeepers*, popularized the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy which informed Gay's (2000) landmark work on Culturally Responsive Teaching.

In her Treatise on effective teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings centered teaching practices rather than curriculum. Her own work was informed by Ellen Leggett and Harvard Professor Courtney Cazden and Leggett (1981) work on culturally responsive education. Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant pedagogy as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, pp. 17–18). In her vision of a culturally relevant school, Ladson-Billings describes a school that provides educational self-determination, honors, and respects students' home culture, helps African American students understand the world as it is, and equips them to change it for the better. Educational self-determination refers to parental requests for specific educational needs for their child(ren)'s education and the school's willingness to address those needs. By honoring and respecting a student's culture, schools accurately and fairly portray African Americans in the curriculum. Helping African American students to understand the world as it is and equip them to change it for the better consists of teachers, parents, and community members explaining instances of racial discrimination and equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to respond effectively to oppression.

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## Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2010) introduces four components of culturally responsive teaching that she describes as caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. Teachers that care about their students, not only care about their academic achievement, but they also care about their students' emotional well-being. "Mr. Monroe, M.Ed., Social Studies teacher, 17 years teaching experience described his own learning experience as impersonal, so he has created the antithesis in his classroom. He communicates caring for his students by providing them with individual attention, building relationships with students, responding to student questions, and meeting students before school, at lunch and after school. Mr. Monroe also connects with students by being transparent with them and acknowledging the days that are harder emotionally for students than others" (McLaughlin, 2020, pp. 63–66). Caring about academic achievement includes a relentless pursuit until mastery is obtained and encouraging students to believe that they can succeed in learning tasks (Gay, 2010).

Given that communication is a vital aspect of conveying and acquiring knowledge, classroom communication should include making sure that all students are called on and participate in the classroom discourse. Additionally communication

should include patiently providing careful explanations of classroom material in clear language that students understand (McLaughlin, 2020). Smith (1971) states that “teaching is, above all, a linguistic activity and language is at the very heart of teaching” (p. 24).

Whether making assignments, giving directions, explaining events, interpreting words and expressions, proving propositions, justifying decisions and actions, making promises, dispersing praise and criticism, or assessing capability, teachers must use language. And the quality of the performance of these tasks is a direct reflection of how well they can communicate with their students. . . These effects of communication skills are especially significant to improving the performance of underachieving ethnically different students (Gay, 2010, p. 79).

Curriculum content is another fundamental component of culturally responsive teaching that impacts academic performance. Classroom teachers’ overreliance on textbooks, however, means that textbooks should be reviewed for inclusion of accurate, authentic, significant, ethnically diverse content as teachers are determining which curricula material to utilize. Gay (2010) adds that curriculum should include relevant, accessible knowledge that is connected to students’ lives. Mass media should also be utilized as a source of culturally responsive curriculum content while also including debunking myths, biases, and inaccurate and stereotypical portrayals through contemporary representation.

For instruction in culturally responsive classrooms, part of the focus should be obtaining cultural congruence in teaching and learning and determining how ethnically diverse students learn, organize, and master knowledge and make connections to prior learning. Although teachers should also be familiar with their students’ learning styles, students of color are not a monolithic group so universal strategies should not be applied. Additionally, Gay (2010) mentions cooperative learning and study groups, active learning, multisensory, participatory, emotionally engaging, and visual and physical stimulation as effective instructional strategies, particularly for African American students. Dramatic performance, music, and movement are also effective instructional strategies for improving academic achievement for students of color.

In keeping with Ladson-Billings’ notion of utilizing cultural referents, Gay asserts that culturally responsive teachers utilize prior experiences and frames of references. Both emphasize teaching from cultural strengths rather than operating from a deficit model wherein children of color are blamed for their own underperformance. By “filtering curriculum content and teaching strategies through their cultural frames of reference, culturally responsive teaching makes the content more personally meaningful and easier to master” (Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings and Gay ultimately engendered a body of research aptly termed culturally responsive leadership. Eighteen years ago, Davis (2002) addressed the importance of culturally responsive leadership in the twenty-first century. Though not entirely interchangeable, culturally relevant leadership and culturally responsive leadership will be introduced here.

## **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

In their description of culturally responsive leaders, Khalifa et al. (2016) assert that culturally responsive school leaders make the entire school responsive to the academic needs of students of color. As has been mentioned, culturally responsive leadership behaviors are described as (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016).

### **Critical Self-Awareness**

Having self-knowledge as a person, as an educator, and as a leader is a fundamental component of developing a disposition towards effective, results-oriented leadership. Additionally by reflecting on their own cultural foundations, school leaders are better able to address the challenges and barriers faced by traditionally marginalized students. Self-awareness informs leaders' beliefs and values and ultimately shapes their awareness of inequity, race, culture, ethnicity, class, and language.

### **Culturally Responsive Curricula and Teacher Preparation**

Teacher preparation programs have generally fallen short in their efforts to prepare educators to address gaps in classroom achievement and teach in culturally diverse settings, producing scores of teachers who are ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the work they are hired to do. Thus, Khalifa et al. (2016) state that culturally responsive school leaders who are committed to "ensuring that teachers are and remain culturally responsive" (p. 1281) also provide adequate professional development while directly confronting deficit thinking and disrupting the status quo. When teachers are unable or unwilling to build their capacity, it is the principal's responsibility to help them explore other options. Culturally responsive school leaders also examine hiring practices and prioritize efforts to recruit, retain culturally responsive teachers, and acquire culturally responsive resources.

### **Culturally Responsive and Inclusive School Environments**

Principals who are intentional in their work to ensure that school spaces promote inclusivity also cultivate positive climates wherein diversity is respected. Failing to do so (whether directly or indirectly, intentional or unintentional) creates isolation and exclusion for some students. Khalifa (2018) calls for a reframing of sorts. He asserts, "...the principal and other administrators are not only the best positioned,



but [are] also most responsible for ensuring that both school policy and practice are (non-exclusionary (i.e., anti-oppressive) for minoritized students” (p. 86). For example, students of color are often suspended from school at disproportionate rates, particularly when zero-tolerance policies are applied. The same is true when infractions allow for discretionary consequences. Khalifa points to aggressive behavior as one such example. Minority students are more likely to be seen as dangerous by their teachers and other educators when compared to their White peers. Systematic analysis of discipline and performance data, coaching for teachers, and an emphasis on restorative practices are all within the principal’s purview and could decrease the potential for exclusionary practices.

## Engaging Students and Parents in Community Contexts

Numerous scholars have acknowledged the role that family and community engagement play in improving student outcomes (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davis, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe, & Traynor, 2017). It is therefore incumbent upon principals to forge and sustain meaningful partnerships with students, families, and communities in authentic, and culturally appropriate ways. Table 1 juxtaposes pertinent culturally responsive leadership practices with what are portrayed as historical leadership practices.

While the emergence of a discourse that promotes culturally responsive leadership has been outlined along with the aforementioned culturally responsive leadership practices, culture which is essential for understanding culturally responsive leadership has not been explicitly addressed.

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## Explaining Culture

Amidst the many disparate portrayals of culture, Foucault (2001) depicts culture through the lens of philosophy as “a hierarchical organization of values, accessible to everybody, but at the same time the occasion of a mechanism of selection and exclusion” (p. 173). Alternately Engelke (2018) asserts that culture, a hotly contested term among anthropologists, is “a way of seeing things, a way of thinking. . .a point of view. Culture is a way of making sense” (p. 27). Engelke further acknowledges the pertinency of what Franz Boas describes as *Kulturbrille*, the “cultural glasses we all wear” (p. 31). The cultural glasses help to create meaning. Boas would say that people don’t just see the world; they see the world precisely, not just as a young woman from the United States but as a young, African American female school leader from North Carolina. Gay (2018) added, even without being consciously aware of it, culture determines thinking, beliefs, and behavior that affects how teachers teach and how students learn. A reality for some teachers is the adjustment to expectations to integrate various student cultures as part of instruction while they do not consider themselves to have a culture. School



**Table 1** Culturally responsive leadership practices and historical leadership practices

Culturally responsive leadership tenets	Culturally responsive leadership practices	Historical leadership practices
Critically self-reflects	Continuous learning of cultural knowledge, challenges hegemonic epistemologies, self-reflects about biases and professional practices	Normalizes biases and colorblind thinking
Develops culturally responsive teachers	Promotes pluralism, provides culturally responsive professional development for teachers and others, reforms curriculum to become more culturally responsive. Recruits and retains culturally responsive teachers who address gaps in achievement	Adheres to monoculturalism, builds teacher capacity with professional development but marginalizes the role of culture, race, and ethnicity, cultural diversity not considered when recruiting
Promotes culturally responsive/inclusive school environment	As needed, challenges exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors, confronts intolerance, demonstrates acceptance, uses school data to discover and track disparities in academic and discipline trends, modeling culturally responsive leadership practices for staff in building interactions	Social closed-mindedness, shaming, dominant discourse centers cultural disadvantage, cultural deficit models, and promotes equality versus equity
Engages students and parents in community contexts school	Develops positive, trusting relationships within the community, listens, embraces, validates, and promotes individual and collective voices, empowers stakeholders in culturally appropriate ways	Isolation, rigid, rote tightly controlled opportunities within to meet parents, parents only contacted about children’s negative progress, spurious community events

Khalifa et al. (2016), Khalifa (2018)

leaders are inexorably affected by culture as well. Foster and Tillman (2009) state that race and culture are not just relevant but integral to effective leadership.

## Conclusions and Reflections

More than 30 years ago, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that “culture plays a critical role in learning.” By centering the culture of students of color, classroom teachers can improve the academic achievement of their culturally diverse students and create caring classroom spaces where rigorous curriculum, diverse instructional strategies and racially divergent communication styles are welcomed. In these classrooms, teachers reject historically held beliefs about cultural deprivation, cultural deficit, and at-risk behaviors and instead adopt Gay’s (2010) culturally responsive pedagogy that includes a focus on caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. In

public school settings with increasingly diverse populations, culturally responsive pedagogy is pertinent for teachers whose charge is to effectively educate students who may not share their cultural backgrounds.

Amidst the immense popularity of multicultural education, culturally relevant teaching, and culturally responsive pedagogy as strategies for effectively educating marginalized students, culturally responsive leadership emerged. Culturally responsive school leaders increase understanding, civility, and adequate support for a range of diverse students (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Murkuria & Obiakor, 2006; Vilorio, 2019). In Khalifa's (2018) discussion of four key tenets of culturally responsive leadership, he espouses that successful leadership practices alone cannot adequately address the needs of marginalized students. In addition to effective leadership frameworks like Leithwood et al. (2020) Four Leadership Paths, culturally responsive leadership should also be adopted. The tenets of culturally responsive leadership include advocating for marginalized students and their families and improving outcomes for students of color. By embracing the tenets of culturally responsive leadership, school leaders gain a critical understanding of self and others and become aware of how race, ethnicity, culture, values, beliefs, and dispositions impact their practice. The tenets also highlight culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation for student success and emphasize professional development that addresses inequities, biases, and culturally responsive teaching and hiring practices. Leaders can adopt deliberate practices for hiring diverse faculty that may include recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Black Sororities and Fraternities or sponsoring an Educators of Color Networking Night (McLaughlin, 2020). The tenets of culturally responsive leadership also address culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, school processes and procedures for equity and cultural relevance, academic success and student well-being, and the discipline trends of marginalized students. Lastly culturally responsive leadership tenets support engaging students and families in community contexts in culturally appropriate ways. Practices could include conducting parent meetings in community settings, in multiple languages, and at times that are convenient for working parents. Culturally responsive leadership engenders self-reflective leaders who affirm culture and foster an academically rigorous, culturally coherent, equitable school environment in which students and families feel safe enough to be themselves.

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# Authentic and Inauthentic Constructions of Islamic Educational Administration and Leadership

# 75

## Contrasting Discursive Formations of Myths, Assumptions, Stereotypes, and Exclusions

Eugenie A. Samier

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### Abstract

This chapter explores the rich history of Islamic education, administration, and leadership, as well as many of the disruptions in this tradition due to historical periods of colonization and the current globalization colonization of education internationally and how this has affected Muslim countries. Important also to the Islamic tradition in particular is the erroneous and damaging negative stereotyping and Islamophobia that have been applied to Islam and Muslims as a whole, including the exclusion of their intellectual heritage. The chapter first examines these problems, then provides an overview of the actual values and principles of its educational, administrative, and leadership tradition historically including its social justice tradition as it applies in organizations and in education. This is followed by an overview of new work that has been done internationally in reconstructing an Islamic tradition and practice for modernizing Muslim countries and communities. Finally, the chapter identifies many dimensions and topics that require further development in Islamic educational administration generally and its adaptations in a highly diverse number of countries in the Islamic world.

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**Keywords**

Islamic administration · Islamic leadership · Islamic ethics · Curriculum diversity · Muslim women's leadership · Decolonization · Islamic social justice · Values in educational administration

**The Field of Memory**

There are at least three major phases in the field of memory for Islamic education and its administration and leadership. First is the early Islamic period from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries in which Islam began and formed state, cultural, and educational traditions. It is this period in which the "Golden Age" of Islamic scholarship was conducted in all disciplines and applied fields from which the European renaissance and part of the enlightenment formed as this scholarship was transferred, including the development of scientific and social science and humanities research approaches and methods, the formation of universities, and Islamic educational theory and philosophy, a heritage that most Westerners have forgotten or deny despite a very large body of literature in English on this topic. The next phase was a colonization of most Muslim countries and communities by Western states that disrupted societal traditions and imposed foreign educational systems on many colonized states. The third phase in the contemporary history period is a complex dynamic of decolonization in the twentieth century, with a mixture of achieving independent statehood and development, while also coming under the colonizing forces of globalization with some reclaiming of Islamic principles and traditions of knowledge, administration, and leadership although educational systems are heavily influenced by foreign systems.

**The Field of Presence**

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been some reconstruction of Islamic traditions and practices in education, administration, management, governance, and leadership to variable degrees across Muslim countries, but many Muslim states have also had authoritarian regimes, wars, invasions, and other forms of destabilizations that have prevented development and implementation, along with the current globalization period that has exported predominantly Anglo-American theories and models in the field, often to the detriment of local societies, cultures, religions, and languages as education has been treated as a commodity that is also expected by many to serve as international standards. However, there are many areas of research on the Islamic tradition that have been developed producing for the contemporary world Islamic models of administrative, governance, and leadership practices reflecting Islamic values, social justice, and principles of practice and put into practice, along with a number of countries establishing constitutions and legal systems based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

**The Field of Concomitance**

A number of disciplines contribute to an Islamic educational administration and leadership. Several primary disciplines contribute theories and models such as

political science in its study of Islamic political theory, state structures, and political values of social justice and a global/international. Sociology and psychology also have produced not only more accurate and comprehensive coverage of the developments in the Islamic medieval tradition during which many theories, models, and research practices formed but also have broadened their scope to represent the diversity of knowledge and practices from many non-Western countries. There is also a large body of literature on Islamic business and management in management studies, and in Islamic public administration upon which Islamic finance has developed and arbitration and mediation systems, both recognized internationally. These include philosophies of education, decision-making models, human resource systems, ethics of leadership, work ethic, financial management, arbitration and mediation, and social justice, as well as policy planning, implementation, and evaluation models. In addition, there have been large bodies of literature developing in the last few decades on the primary texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, histories of various successful and well-functioning Islamic states and empires in history when advanced administrative systems were formed, intellectual and scholarly institutions formed, the formation of the first degree-granting university, research traditions, and the important mirrors of princes' tradition of writing throughout Islamic history. There has also been a very large body of literature on women in the Qur'an and Sunnah and in various periods of Islamic history in which women had leading roles in all sectors, in contrast with the negative stereotyping of Islam's treatment of women and inauthentic treatment of women due to political and cultural factors in otherwise Muslim states. There has also been a literature on research methods appropriate for an Islamic context forming, in part built upon the centuries of research methods that formed during the Islamic intellectual "Golden Age," which also laid much of the foundation for Western research during the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

There have been a number of disruptions, quite often caused by colonization up to the twentieth century or rapid decolonization in the rise of authoritarian regimes that deviate significantly from Islamic principles and values. Initially the disruptions formed during European colonization of the Middle East and North Africa, and in parts of East Asia where social institutions were reshaped and educational systems remodeled on various European systems. In addition, the politicization of Islam in the last few decades has given rise to negative stereotyping and Islamophobia, which are grounded in deviations and violations of Islamic principles by extremists and autocratic rulers. To a large extent, this has led to an exclusion of Islamic curricular content in Western countries since the faculty have not studied Islam and assume that the negative stereotyping and Islamophobia accurately represent it. Finally, the globalization form of colonization through borrowing of Western administration, management, leadership, and education, along with US or UK accreditation criteria often used, has colonized the field to varying degrees across the Middle East and North Africa. Many faculty from these countries also do their doctoral degrees abroad, often only being education in Western literature, which they then return with to their own countries maintaining the values, theories, and models they studied



abroad. There are also Western consultants who work in Muslim countries on contract-designing organizations, policies, and education, but who tend to replicate the structures and practices from their home countries.

### **Critical Assumptions**

There are a number of critical assumptions necessary for this topic, given the politicized environment internationally, including errant ideas in universities. First, negative stereotypes and Islamophobia need to be exposed and disposed of, placing actual texts and history into curricular context, following guidelines that not only many Middle East scholars, but also Western scholars, who have studied the field at an academic level, have produced. Second, the actual history of Islamic societies and education needs to be recognized in various disciplines and fields, including those in education which often are simply excluded. One of the reasons for this is to recognize the enormous contribution the Islamic world made during the medieval period and later in all disciplines, applied fields, research methods, and technologies during the European late medieval period, the renaissance, and into the Enlightenment, the subject now of a large body of literature and many documentaries readily available. This recognition of higher education and research developments provided a foundation for Western scholarship not only in terms of the theories and philosophies of various fields, but also in the construction of the social institutions, such as the university itself grounded in the earlier universities in the Islamic world such as the first degree granting university in the world, Karueein University established in now Fez, Morocco, in the mid-ninth century.

There is continued development in scholarship and practice in Muslim countries that contribute to disciplines and applied fields that also need to be included. To some extent, these are part of the internationalization of disciplines and fields as well as cross-cultural literature; however, Islamic contextualized scholarship has also contributed to the mainstream body of knowledge. Respecting and including diversity also requires working against neoliberal globalization in order to preserve the integrity of other cultures and societies, while also taking into account Indigenous and many postcolonial critiques that have arisen. To some extent, this requires the adoption of the multiple modernities' sociological perspective that has also been adopted outside of sociology to some degree that recognizes that countries can pursue their own form or model of modernization without having to replicate a Western model, and to create a form that preserves their society, culture, religions, and languages.

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## **Introduction**

The history of Islamic administration and leadership for education, like that of many educational systems in the world, is embedded in the structures of government, its public administration, social institutions, cultural norms including that of religion or belief system, and in historical traditions of society. This embeddedness, as Foucault (1980) points out in his many writings on the relationship between power and

knowledge construction, is also a consequence of who has the power to determine what knowledge is, and the structures created to build and enforce their interests. It also contains the many forces and factors in the formation, technologies, or historical constitution of the self (Foucault, 1988) affecting identity, values, thought, and action, in the educational context, curriculum and pedagogy, roles, dominations, and discourses. Islamic educational administration in broad strokes has a tortured history in the last few centuries, colonized and disrupted, subjected to “orientalism” (Said, 1978), regaining some measure of autonomy and rebuilding through early twentieth-century state liberations, and then overtaken by international politics, extremism among a small minority, and now the “softer” form of colonization through globalized education.

In order to appreciate the characteristics of Islamic, and other non-Western, educational administration traditions, one has to use a sufficient contextualized model that takes into account the self, identity, and role of the individual and important character virtues, the interactional styles used in the society, the values, culture and religion that shape society, what form social institutions take, and relationships regionally and internationally. An added dimension that has to be included is the historical – what forces and factors have shaped the society and culture as they are in the contemporary period. One model that has combined most of these is Côté and Levine’s (2002) psycho-social model that also incorporates culture and covers micro-, meso-, and macrosocial structures. It is a model that is transcultural and can therefore be easily modified or adapted to particular countries.

Prior to the politicization of Islam that can be dated generally at the hostage taking in the American Embassy in Tehran, Islamic studies was generally treated similarly to any other tradition in history, political science, sociology, psychology, and international relations. With the further politicization through the rise of Al Qaeda and other extremist “Muslim” groups, there was a considerable increase in negative stereotyping and Islamophobia predominantly in Western countries that affected politics, the media, education, and international relations, affecting not only Muslim countries internationally but also minority Muslim populations in many non-Muslim countries. This has also increased through greater Internet use and the ubiquity of social media (Bhatia et al., 2018; Morey et al., 2019). There is also a misrepresentation and misunderstanding of women in Islam, one dimension of negative stereotyping and Islamophobia, but countered now by a large body of literature that has arisen internationally in the last twenty years in English addressing how women are viewed in Islam, the rights they are supposed to have, and the critically important roles they played throughout Islamic history in all societal sectors (see Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001; Haeri, 2020; Samier and ElKaleh, 2021). Engaging in Islamic studies, of particularly the contemporary period, involves examining political analysis, security, surveillance and intelligence studies, and related topics in various fields even if one is focused on educational topics such as Croft’s (2012) *Securitising Islam*. There are many issues in education in Western countries involving foreign Muslim students, members of Muslim minority communities, and the Muslim community in general such as a lack of representing Islamic tradition and values in the curriculum, pedagogical and supervision issues,

marginalization, problems for Muslim scholars, and general negative stereotyping (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2017).

This chapter is structured in the following sections: an identification of the problems for Islamic educational administration in the historical phases of marginalization, negation, negative stereotyping, and Islamophobia. The second section provides an overview of the early and established Islamic societies, their intellectual traditions, and formation into an educational sector that heavily influenced later Western developments through the transmission of this knowledge from the medieval through to the modern period. The following section identifies many Islamic theories and models of administration and leadership that are critical for educational systems, as Islamic knowledge has been reconstructed for the contemporary age, followed by work that still needs to be done in this process, and conclusions and reflections.

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## The Problems

Many topics and approaches in educational administration and leadership do not need the section here; however, because of current negative stereotyping and Islamophobia, and the histories of many Muslim countries under foreign occupation and administration, these issues need to be addressed here. The problems exist on many levels, also contemporary negative stereotyping, Islamophobia, in many fields the skipping of the medieval intellectual traditions in texts, and acknowledgment of the relationship. Islamic knowledge traditions also are addressed in the general postcolonial literature with authors like Freire (1985), whose work applies in principle to other regions of the world, but the first major author to address negative stereotyping of the Muslim world was Edward Said (e.g., 1978, 1994), who through several publications addressed misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims as uncivilized, uneducated, etc. More recently, rising populism in many countries promotes hostility and marginalization if not deportation for many minority groups (Kaltwasser et al., 2017), as well as the devastation of many Muslim countries through political destabilization and fragmentation, war, and invasion (Samier, 2021). An important dimension of these problems lies also in the many implicit, covert, and unconscious racist effects in education as in other societal sectors, due to many causal factors, including an ethnocentric assumption of superiority and high levels of ignorance making educational communities vulnerable to negative stereotyping and Islamophobia, even if not consciously intended, discussed in more detail below.

The effects of colonization into the twentieth century cause many levels and layers of institutional disruption, cultural and religious fracturing, and “subaltern” identities and roles (e.g., Spivak, 1988). Most importantly, it caused what Ali and Al-Shakhis (1989) term a “disengagement” from Islamic values that are critical to being Muslim and creating successful Muslim communities. Their study identified several ways in which this occurred in the world of work not only in historical colonization periods but also in the cultural and educational colonization under

globalization: avoiding responsibility and risk; preferring a stable life to rewarding, challenging work; being highly concerned with job security; exhibiting a reluctance to delegate authority; believing that centralization builds respect giving priority to friendships and personal consideration over organizational goals and performance; and displaying a higher commitment than Westerners to principles, but not carrying this out in practice. Many other authors have examined the disruption of colonization periods in the Middle East that create gaps between Islamic beliefs and values and work life and which have included the imposition of secularity (Metcalf & Murfin, 2011), restructured along colonizer lines such as Beekun and Badawi (2005) on increased bribery and corruption, Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) on injustice, corruption, abuse of power, and over-centralization, and Ali and Al-Shakhis' study (1989), in which Saudi and Iraqi managers scored higher in work ethics than Western managers although they were less effective indicating that their Islamic beliefs may not be reflected in their work practices, or may not be able to, if the organization is structured and functions along Western lines. Similar results were found by Jreisat (2009) in his work on public administration in Arab states.

The negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims, often in the form of Islamophobia, has taken many forms in society and has many causal factors (Massoumi et al., 2017). Initially, this began with some intensity during colonial periods in the Middle East, but in the contemporary world it has been contributed to with radical politics, extremists (both of whom do not follow fundamental principles of tolerance, avoiding any form of extremism, the inviolability of non-combatants, the humanistic principles of the tradition, etc.). There have been strong discursive formations of myths, false assumptions, stereotyping, and exclusions. One form is the golemization or rewriting of history in the West to exclude the vast amount of scholarship that transferred into Europe from the medieval through to the enlightenment, still evident through shared humanisms. One author in particular received international attention for a few years after the 9/11 attack in New York: Huntington (2003), through his *Clash of Civilizations* (and an earlier article version). Many authors have disposed of this mythology and false history that was politically motivated, like Achcar (2002), whose *Clash of Barbarisms* demonstrates that it is the extremisms in both that are in opposition.

In contrast with inclusive, humanistic, and multicultural models of the positive attributes of culturally diverse groups (Barinaga, 2007), Islamophobia accepts the opposite or denies the existence of the elements of this approach in which diversity is viewed as social, cultural, and intellectual capital (drawing on Bourdieu, 1977) as a discursive resource that provides human growth and development and acts as a source of creativity. The effect of Islamophobia in higher education has been examined by a number of authors such as Ahmadi and Cole (2020), who examine how it becomes institutionalized in policies, and is reflected in social interaction, curriculum, and pedagogy, often propelled by "fake news," now a common feature of populist politics in many Western states, enforced through surveillance violating privacy and other rights at times reaching criminalization levels, and practiced through marginalization.

One more recent development, in analyzing discriminatory thinking and behavior, is the critique of unconscious racism that may apply more often in organizations like schools and universities, accompanied by many forms of defense mechanisms used to justify it such as denial, rationalization, projection, etc. Fakhry Davids (2011) proposes a psychoanalytic theory of how discrimination forms in the mind, and evolves into patterns of behavior in the individual and groups and then into institutionalized forms, many of which the participants are not consciously aware of.

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## The Islamic Intellectual and Valuational Foundation

It is important to note that the Islamic tradition of administration and leadership also drew on prior states and empires in the region, and on intellectual traditions that formed prior to the Islamic period. Administrative regimes in the Middle East and North Africa drew upon a very long history of administrative systems, leadership roles and practices, and legal codes that extend back to at least 3000 BCE, first extensively documented in the first city in Mesopotamia, Uruk, where thousands of tablets have been recovered that document the sophistication and complexity of public bureaucracy in Uruk. Its characteristics consist of the following: an impersonal administration organized into central agencies with a functional work structure, regulatory practices, and accountabilities so exact and complex they created the need for administration training in specialized schools for bureaucrats; a hierarchy of four ranks; a mass public production of some goods; a coordinated economic exchange with accounting using a coding system and stamp seals for transportation and storage records; a comprehensive system of receipts, tallies, allocations of goods and rations, allocations of responsibility to offices, projections of yields and expenditure of labor, setting fixed prices and using contracts; maintaining records of waste in metal production; and a system of public buildings for religious, defense, and economic and administrative activity. The empires of Akkad, the Babylonians, Hittites, Assyrians, and many others built upon this foundation, creating a body of knowledge and practice that subsequent civilizations used (Liverani, 2006; Nissen, 1988).

The history of the Islamic classical golden age of scholarship from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries (CE) contributed heavily to the development of all disciplines, including a strong humanistic tradition focused on rights and social justice (Goodman, 2003; Boisard, 2007), later further developed in Europe during the late medieval period, the Renaissance (e.g., Makdisi, 1990; Al-Khalili, 2010), and the European Enlightenment including educational thought, educational organizations (including some of the earliest universities) (Makdisi, 1981), and literature on education itself, which by the ninth century had developed into a distinctive and large body of literature – the *adab al-‘ālim wa-l-muta‘allim* literature – as formal education systems were established (Günther, 2016). Many Muslim scholars helped shape the Western tradition in all fields, sometimes used so heavily that they were assigned Latin or Greek names, such as Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (Saliba, 2007). One scholar who has been receiving attention in history and

sociology is Ibn Khaldun from the fourteenth century for his scholarship on analyzing the rise or fall of societies (Irwin, 2018), to a large extent preceding Max Weber's world historical sociology by several hundred years, a context in which the educational sector is formed including its governance and administration.

The educated and cultured world of the higher echelons of Islamic empires and their senior administration who were required to have an advanced education are referred to by Goodman (2003) as a "courtly humanism" where not only knowledge and skills of commerce, administration, and war were valued, but also a higher education and patronage of scholars, artists, and philosophers. This produced a systematization of theoretical and applied knowledge in all disciplines, in an intellectual world heavily humanistic in character (Kraemer, 1984; Ljamai, 2015). Senior officials, or *wazirs*, at this time commonly practiced scholarship while serving in the administration and often founded and supported the establishment of schools and research (Black, 2011). Islam requires one to seek and acquire knowledge, even from distant lands, and a life-long pursuit of learning was viewed as the highest type of profession. Within this context, *adab* was understood to be a culture of courtesy and urbanity, in which the secular values drawn from a broad and international range of literature from the classical Greek, Persian, Arab, Byzantine, Indian and Chinese art, and Jewish and Syriac literature were combined with Islamic law and faith into a highly cosmopolitan synthesis that was highly humanistic in character, particularly in ethical values and views. In addition, many scholars at that time also incorporated the Bedouin virtues of generosity, graciousness, and eloquence (Peters, 1973), creating a historical continuity with preurban periods in Arab history.

One example, particularly appropriate for educational studies, is the educational scholarship of Ibn Miskawayh, illustrative of these principles in his engagement with ideas from both the Greek and the Islamic traditions, common to major scholars of this period (Adamson, 2005), particularly the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Bryson. As Omar (2017) explains, Baghdad was one of the most important centers of learning in Miskawayh's time where extensive scholarship was conducted on Greek and Islamic thought where a large number of scholars worked. These cross-fertilizations of knowledge were similar to that of today, reflected in the multi-religious and multicultural groups of scholars with whom he studied, typical of this open and tolerant period of Islamic history during which time Christian and Jewish scholars worked with Muslim scholars and often wrote in the lingua franca of the period, Arabic (Adamson, 2016). Omar, (2015) describes how Miskawayh's medieval Islamic Baghdad received Westerners who came to pursue academic activities in the same way that Muslims in the Middle East currently travel to the West for the same purposes.

What is important is that these generations of scholars were also "men of action," involved in various affairs of state, who sometimes suffered the reversal of fortune and experienced risk, providing a context important in understanding and interpreting many Islamic scholars not only of the Golden Age, but also in later historical periods, and whose work still serves as principles in contemporary Islamic societies and academia. It is this combination that gives the Islamic humanist tradition of the time a validity that is both theoretical and applied, in other words a

form of praxis comprised of higher-order ideals and the practicality and tensions of life at the highest level of the state. They served as senior officials in state and empire offices, bringing professional experience and knowledge to their scholarship. One example of this is one of the major educational scholars, Aḥmad bin Miskawayh (932–1030 CE), a Persian philosopher and historian from the Islamic humanist tradition (al-Din, 1994) who was a senior official in the Buyid tenth to eleventh-century empire ruling over the area that is now Iraq and Iran. He made significant contributions to Islamic thought, philosophy, and ethics and became an influence on many later scholars like al-Ghazālī (932–1030 CE) (Goodman, 2003), known for his system of ethics informed by governmental experience and intellectual study (Leaman, 2001). As an official, he worked in the chancery of the Buwayhid ruler, familiarizing himself with practical aspects of working with political authority in governing and administering society, which granted him professional knowledge and skills. This he balanced with scholarly work mastering theoretical aspects of knowledge (Goodman, 2003). These are reflected in his view on their being two types of knowledge: knowledge power that moves us toward scholarly knowledge and sciences; and acting power that attracts us toward organizing in a practical manner. Like many other important Islamic scholars in this period, he followed Aristotelian principles, in this case the distinction between theoretical and practical reason and knowledge and the requirement for both, since theoretical knowledge of the good does not necessarily mean that it is carried out in practice (Adamson, 2005).

Miskawayh is most important for education through his text, *The Refinement of Character (Tahdhīb al-akhlāq)* (1968), that focuses on the philosophy of ethics and on practical wisdom as a main objective of education applying not only to curriculum and pedagogy for the moral values and character virtues for students, but also are principles expected to be observed in teachers and school principals and in their role-modeling responsibilities. This work not only applies broadly to both the educational system as well as professional communities and organizations like government, but also has a strong tolerance for others built in which makes it suitable for contemporary multicultural settings. His ethics was forged out of many influences, such as scholars oriented toward virtue ethics focused on character within its social and cultural context (Goodman, 2003). The ethics of character, then, in *The Refinement of Character*, is not intended for opportunistic value in cultivating useful relationships, not only in the pragmatic sense of fulfilling one's professional duties, but also in developing a moral character that can also express itself in the highest ideals of government and public service through friendship, piety, cooperation, and the perfection of our identity as human beings (Goodman, 2003).

Islamic administration and leadership developed to a very high level – both in practice and theory – in the Abbasid Caliphate, once Baghdad was established as a new capital with a court that patronized intellectual and technological development. It adopted administrative expertise and personnel from other empire in the region such as the Sassanian with bureaucratic specialized structures and a centralized administration, functionally organized into departments (*diwans*) consisting of the treasury, chancellery, an intelligence bureau, in part to monitor government officials to ensure accountability, and a court of appeal. Due to a fundamental Islamic



principle of tolerance, the civil service included thousands of non-Arab, non-Muslim professionalized administrative staff (Kennedy, 2005; Samier, 2017). What is important to note in this history is the increasing responsibility of the public administration for educational and research organizations being established, with heavy involvement from the senior civil service.

The top level of civil servants, the viziers (*wazir*) came from specialized status group families with advanced education, experience, and their own power bases (or networks in current usage). Islamic states and empires depended heavily on the attributes and decisions of a vizier since they carried out senior administrative roles such as handling correspondence, managing financial affairs, carrying out audits, inspections, and supervision of administrative aspects of the military (Lambton, 1968). In addition to their administrative roles, many viziers were also scholars, and some maintain very large research libraries of their own. The most important literature they produced is often referred to as the “mirrors of princes” texts, in addition to scholars, that identifies the responsibilities, competencies, and character traits not only of administrators, but also of those in political ruling positions involving leadership and governance, as well as identifying in some detail ethical norms and actions that one should never commit involving others, essentially regarded as forms of corruption (Boroujerdi, 2013).

There is an important educational feature in the formation of a strong and highly competent civil service – the emphasis on character development and the importance of role modeling and mentoring in Islamic traditions. Figures, beginning with the Prophet Muhammad through the Sunnah as the embodiment of compassion, wisdom, and social justice, are used in daily life (Hawwa, 1988) as a measure in reflection on one’s conduct and a guide to thought and action not only from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but also from other figures in the Islamic tradition who exemplified the virtues (Salahi, 2013) whose qualities exemplify kindness, empathy, forgiveness, the use of consultation, and informed decision-making. It is the quality of knowledge, character, principles, and skills the viziers had that provided the driving force behind the sophisticated and successful Islamic states established during the first six centuries of Islam (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Jabnoun (2008) identifies a number of other qualities necessary to informing modern Islamic administration and leadership in the tradition for role modeling and mentoring purposes: courage, generosity, perseverance, having vision, being responsible and hardworking, cultivating strong communication skills, being aware of one’s limitations and those of others, and adapting to new conditions while remaining loyal and true to fundamental principles (similar to Kantian principles of ethics). These are also characteristics expected in teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators in educational organizations since they serve also as role models and at times mentors for students and each other (Samier & EIKaleh, 2019).

Just as in many other world regions, the Islamic world also produced a large body of literature often referred to as “mirrors of princes” (and sometimes as “arts of war”), intended to provide leadership and administrative guidance for rulers and senior officials, applying also to the educational sector, grounded in beliefs, values, jurisdictional characteristics, and culture (Boroujerdi, 2013). The earliest document



that is regarded not only as one of the main pillars of Islamic religious literature, but also as a guide to good administration and leadership, is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (see Adair, 2010; Salahi, 2013). In subsequent empires, rulers and viziers wrote many texts of values and guidance such as al-Marwardi, one of the most respected judges and administrators of the Abbasid period, who wrote a comprehensive text on the principles and values of Islamic governance grounded in the core texts of Islam as they could be interpreted and applied to a very large-scale population and empire, called *The Laws of Islamic Governance*. Al-Mulk is another notable vizier who wrote an influential text, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, and Ibn Zafar al-Siqilli's *The Just Prince* identifying foundational principles that are still relevant, applying equally to educational administration as it does to the rest of the public sector. Many of the important scholars of the "Golden Age" contributed authoritative texts on administration and leadership, such as Al-Ghazali's (1964) *Book of Counsel for Kings* covering administrative ethics and Al-Farabi's (1985) *On the Perfect State*, that build upon Aristotelian and other classical Greek political philosophy and ethics typical of the period used to interpret and apply Islamic values and principles.

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## Modern Islamic Educational Administration and Leadership

Exploration of the Islamic administrative and leadership tradition for modern application began by the mid-twentieth century with books even in English, covering foundational principles and values, structures and roles, and applications to various country contexts (e.g., Imamuddin, 1984; Al-Buraey, 1985; Asad, 1999; Ali, 2005; Jabnoun, 2008), as well as foundational fields that inform administration such as legal frameworks (e.g., Hallaq, 2005) and leadership in organizations (e.g., Beekun & Badawi, 1999), all of which apply to the educational sector in providing laws, government agencies and policies, and frameworks for schools and universities. The sources drawn upon for this literature is considerable, but begins with the foundational values and principles in the Qur'an and Sunnah as the central authoritative texts for Islam. Following this in terms of authoritative interpretation and application is the Rashidun period, the period in which early successors to the Prophet Muhammad lead early Islamic society, setting up the structures and systems of administration built on Islamic principles. It is also during this period that the foundation was laid for scholarly and reliable studies of principles for application, through the Hadith and Tafsir that continued to be developed throughout the next several centuries, accompanied by the mirrors of princes, and works in ethics, rulership, administration, finance, legal texts and systems, and education that define Islamic identities, roles, and sociocultural and political structures. These also draw upon history and historiography and other disciplines that formed, as well as a number of legal traditions, the shari'ah (a much maligned body of knowledge through Islamophobia), that still provide the foundation for laws in Muslim states. Knowledge in these categories does not remain static – it continues to evolve through scholarship and sociopolitical practice.

There are significant features of Islamic administration, reflective of values, family, and often tribal structures and culture in Muslim communities that make its administration of education distinctively different from the many Anglo-American theories and models that make contrary assumptions. Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa (2006) conducted a comparative values study of the US and Arabian Gulf states that indicate very clearly many of the sociocultural differences that need to be reflected in educational administration in the region. Where US society prominently values secularity, materialism, and individualistic values and the achievement of individual success, efficiency, and free enterprise capitalism, the Gulf prioritizes values that reflect the dignity and honor of family and religion providing meaning and morality, loyalty to family and friends, social interaction characterized by hospitality, generosity, sharing, justice, patience, honesty and mercy, compassion for the downtrodden in society, and an orientation that aims for a balance of individual and community responsibility. Central to this value system is a respect for and pride in heritage and tradition. In this regard, education is not just formal schooling but has strong informal and nonformal dimensions, diffusing administrative and leadership responsibilities to the family and community; in other words, in Weberian (1968) terms it is a combination of the legal-rational or bureaucratic, and the traditional.

A number of dimensions of administration and leadership have been developed in contemporary contexts for Islamic countries and communities. All of these also apply to the educational field, since they tend to focus on the underlying values, principles, character traits, etc. that apply not only across the public sector, but also in many management contexts that would apply to international and private educational organizations operating more on management principles than those of public sector administration. From an Islamic perspective, fundamental principles and values apply everywhere at all times, in part because in Islam there is no distinction between sacred and secular – all educational activity by participants, whether student, faculty, or staff, is considered to be a form of worship.

The Islamic administrative and leadership tradition is heavily influenced by the humanistic tradition that establishes a number of sociopolitical and cultural values that should be achieved and maintained: social order for societal stability; principles of justice, fairness, equity, and tolerance; the betterment of people's health, welfare, and personal development; the development of faiths, that is, belief systems that encompass a wholistic vision, in contrast with those with monodimensional aims like the material reductionism of neoliberalism; and sociopolitical accountability (al-Qudsy, 2007). This entails drawing upon humanistic traditions in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and political science, and using research methods that are sufficiently qualitative to examine meaning and interpretations. From this perspective, the study of character and personality is critical in educational administration and leadership, encompassing not only qualities identified above, but also restraint and good manners in public, approaching one's work through brotherhood and the assumption of the equality of mankind, and carrying out one's responsibilities and social interaction with benevolence and the growth of others, not only students, but also staff and colleagues (Kalantari, 1998).

The theories and models for educational administrative practice are also conditioned by the Islamic social justice tradition, embedded at the core of the Qur'an and Sunnah, a topic of some interest in the last few years with a growing body of literature in English on the core precepts of the tradition and how they are interpreted and applied in various contexts (e.g., Qutb, 2000; Harvey, 2017; Rosen, 2018). Not only it is a major aim of education to produce people with a strong sense of social justice and the formation of personality and character qualities in their growth as human beings, but also the educational organization itself professionally is to function on these principles. Several authors have applied fundamental Islamic concepts of social justice to administrative and leadership practice in a number of organizational contexts including that of education (e.g., Hourani, 1985; Gulen & Ceylan, 2001; Hashmi, 2002; Kamali, 2002; Syed & Ali, 2010; Samier, 2016), applying equally to women (Samier, 2015; Samier & ElKaleh, 2021). These include using the principles of fairness, equity, and equality in protecting diversity and in governing one's duties and responsibilities, aiming for the collective good and in protecting the weak in society in one's social relationships, contributing to harmony and balance in society, advancing consultation in governance, and benefiting society with beneficial, transparent, and meaningful activity. Islam also takes a global perspective, which aims toward cultural coexistence and international cooperation, aided by a traditional conflict resolution, arbitration, mediation, and reconciliation process that originates in its early history (Samier, 2018). Importantly (and contrary to many negative stereotypes), one also must use reason as part of one's ethical decision-making, a point stressed in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

An important and often overlooked feature of Islam is a strong work ethic, which Aldulaimi (2016) has summarized in a model of ethics, other values, and practice-based principles. Moral principles include honesty, truthfulness, and adherence to human rights and humanistic values that are aimed at achieving justice, safety, and the dignity of others. Work-based principles include cooperation and using consultation with others knowledgeable and qualified to advise, responsibility, viewing one's work as a virtue and personal fulfillment, being obedient to legitimate authority, and following discipline principles. The work ethic also stresses self-control (rather than submitting to anger or other damaging emotions) aiming for excellence in one's work and efficiencies.

These values are reflected in Islamic conceptions of leadership, consisting of both servant and guardian dimensions and governed by tolerance, compassion, patience, empathy, honesty, justice, kindness, and consultation or *shura* (ElKaleh & Samier, 2013). Othman, Hamzah, and Ridzuan (2018) have proposed an Islamic leadership model for use in diverse contexts that stresses these values and ethical principles toward maintaining others' human dignity and welfare by identifying how these must take place in the context of administrative and leadership roles in all sorts of organization including educational ones. Saleh (2002) also developed a model for educational administration that is built upon these principles and values in the role, and in one's interpersonal relations. In effect, this tradition has clearly and in detail with applied practices defined what it means to be a professional in education as in other sectors, principles, and practices that have been appearing for a number of

years in educational administration literature (e.g., Shah, 2016; Samier & ElKaleh, 2019).

There are other aspects or dimensions of administrative practice that have been developed for Muslim contexts, all of which are applicable to educational organizations. Othman (2008) has proposed a modern Islamic decision-making model, drawing on the conventional Western models of identifying problems and decision criteria, with a development, analysis, and selection of alternatives, and the implementation and evaluation of that chosen. What distinguishes an Islamic model is the stronger introduction of seeking consultation (shura) required in Islam and the framework governed by Islamic values discussed above. Alkahtani (2014) and Branine and Pollard (2010) have described Islamic principles of human resource management that also infuse the process with the values and aims of administration described above with an emphasis on social justice and moral values, lifelong learning, and the benefit to and well-being of society. Another important dimension is that of policy studies, that Ahmad (2008) has proposed, focused mainly on the values that should inform the process. Samier (2020) has identified a number of criteria that need to be introduced into policy studies overall that would reflect Muslim values and principles, in order to reshape the field to better fit the contextual factors of Muslim states, including differences in the policy process, analysis of policy actors and instruments, and various changes in the critical and analytic approaches to policy studies.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

There is still much work to be done in the field of Islamic educational administration and leadership. Much of the literature in the general administration, management, and leadership fields has still not been applied in education. There also is a great deal of work that needs to be done in applying these values and principles to the different cultural and jurisdictional characteristics across Muslim countries, which vary considerably in these respects. One of the greatest barriers to overcome is the effect of globalized educational administration and leadership in which developing educational systems in many countries have been dominated by Anglo-American theories and models, which a number of authors have demonstrated and which have a negative impact on culture, in part inappropriate or offensive content, and the omission of relevant material in curriculum and pedagogy as well as policy and practices (e.g., Donn & Al Manthri, 2013). In addition, Hourani, Diallo, and Said (2011) have reported on how expatriate teachers and professors either unwilling to change or avoiding change, use educational philosophies and traditions at odds with the local Muslim communities and which do not fulfill legal and policy requirements or present the rich intellectual tradition of the region to peoples for whom this is critically valuable heritage and a source of identity. Many others also have identified both the sociocultural damage of a foreign and colonizing curriculum, as well as the need to (re-)construct a field that meets the societal and individual needs of Muslim countries and communities (Shah & Baporikar, 2011; Samier, 2019).

There are a number of areas that need to be developed and challenges to overcome in order to construct a full and accurate Islamic educational administration and leadership that represents the needs and diversities of Muslim countries and communities. The two major challenges are to fully represent the diversity of systems internationally, essentially running contrary to globalization and false assumptions about the universality of some Western systems and knowledge and assumptions about their superiority, effectively excluding other knowledges and referred to as “epistemicide” by Hall and Tandon (2017). Another is to confront and overcome the negative stereotyping, false assumptions, and Islamophobia that consciously or unconsciously dominate attitudes and perspectives on Muslim traditions, including how many of these practices are encountered by Muslim foreign graduate students who come to Western countries for their degrees, and often return home with little knowledge other than that of the country they studied in, which compromises their effectiveness in their home countries. These issues are also social justice issues and compromise academic freedom. One form this takes in relation to Islamic values is the contradiction between the primary values of cooperation and working for the well-being of community and society in Islam and many Western practices that promote self-interest through extreme individualism, as well as contractions in terms of the sacred and the secular, and a humanistic conception of human beings that is wholistic against a materialistic, commodified, and instrumental approach (Ali, 1990), which Branine and Pollard (2010) refer to as a “mismatch between global integration and local responsiveness because of an excess forward diffusion of Western management and business practices” (p. 712).

This necessitates a change in curriculum in many graduate programs. The field needs to not only internationalize much more, along the lines that psychology, sociology, management, and leadership have been doing, but it also needs to cover topics historically as well as in contemporary forms to understand which are enduring traditions. An additional restriction is the overfocus on schools when in fact what happens in schools is a function of the context and contextual forces that they are embedded in a sector in societies and in the society as a whole, and often influenced directly and indirectly by external forces. This means that other educational organizations need to be studied, research institutes and foundations, various interest groups, and government at administrative and political levels. It is much easier to understand how a particular educational organization functions and what causes it to be the way it is if the system that produces the causes is examined affecting identities, roles, values, styles of social interaction, and strategic forces. It is only in this way that national and community identities can be examined in educational environments and what may be damaging to them. This also means working against the leadership fad – far too much of roles of responsibility involve many administrative and managerial activities within regulated guidelines, including the constitutional and legal frameworks, which for Muslim countries differ in significant ways from those Western countries dominating the field.

One final reflection is that the field, in its research and teaching, needs to understand that all world traditions have contributed knowledge, and that knowledge transfer does not only work in one direction. Nor is Western knowledge superior to

the knowledge of other societies and communities. The first step perhaps is to acknowledge the actual history that exists – the “West” advanced during the late Medieval, through the Renaissance and Enlightenment by inheriting knowledge, scholarly practices, research methods, and institutional structures from many other parts of the world, including the Islamic world. The second step is to acknowledge that now, in the contemporary world, value and solutions may exist elsewhere.

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# Educational Issues of Indigenous Peoples: Past, Present, and Future Snapshots

# 76

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## Abstract

Educational issues of Indigenous peoples cannot be said to revolve around a single concept, but indigeneity is a provocative lens for calling attention to European origins of sovereignty. Colonization, a pivotal concept, permeates educational studies and, in recent times, educational leadership. Decolonization and other Indigenous concepts like self-determination, sovereignty, and futurity target the continuing plight of Indigenous peoples in global cultures. Past, present, and future snapshots are provided of grave global educational matters concerning the USA, Canada, and Australia. Within the context of cultural genocide, such issues include colonial policy, compulsory boarding schools, educational disparity, and racism. Conveying the call for “unsettling” colonial ideologies, policies, and settlements with deliberate intent to assert

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freedom and self-determination, activists forge pathways for educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike. Implications for educational leadership and administration are decolonizing colonial settler mindsets and opposing White hegemony and its normalization at the expense of Indigenous engagement, empowerment, and sovereignty. All education stakeholders are called upon to play a vital role in promoting Indigenous justice on behalf of tribal rights and the well-being of every Indigenous child for a more inclusive, better tomorrow.

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**Keywords**

Colonial settler · Colonization · Cultural genocide · Decolonization · Decolonization project · Education · Educational leadership · Indigenous futurity · Home/land · Indigeneity · Indigenous justice · Indigenous peoples · Indigenous sovereignty · National sovereignty · Racism · Self-determination · Settler futurity · Social justice · Teacher education

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**Introduction****The Field of Memory**

Control of governing and power are retained by nation-states, in keeping with the European origins of sovereignty. National sovereignty encompasses ownership over Indigenous land agreements corresponding with nation-states' interest. Colonial and settler conceptions of Indigenous peoples and communities are fundamentally racist, influencing policies, practices, administrations, and curricula. Government declarations of national sovereignty over land and resources historically belonging to Indigenous peoples occur worldwide. Denial of reparations for damages incurred to peoples exiled from Indigenous home/lands. Governments' refusal to recognize Indigenous sovereignty (self-determination). Rejection of alternative histories rooted in Aboriginal knowledges and the marginalization of Indigenous narratives; colonizing education, pedagogy, and curriculum and the subsuming of Indigenous worldviews (e.g., holism and interconnectedness) to settler worldviews; decades of government-sponsored assimilation of Indigenous peoples through compulsory schools used as a tool, like the appropriation of land, to eliminate traditional languages and cultures. Nation-states' policies and programs designed to eradicate and/or subjugate Indigenous communities and way of life. Racism against Indigenous peoples was/is sanctioned, internationally.

**The Field of Presence**

*Indigenous* is used as an identifier for peoples who are Indigenous to any place, and *indigeneity* signals a process. A political concept, indigeneity targets genocidal displacement from colonial imposition and violent disruption of Indigenous

life and Aboriginal ancestry. Tribal councils of different nations assert inherent land rights and claims to land, although land title when bestowed is not equated with ownership. Indigeneity's critical consciousness is directed at patriarchal systems of settler nations, including colonial schooling and its mechanisms of mind control. Indigeneity asserts freedom and self-determination for the longest continuous cultural history of any group with living descendants whose stories and, with increasing reliability, ancient DNA link them to their ancestors. Indigenous justice advances the right to self-governance and control over one's ancestral habitats, education, and life-ways, extending to discourses on, and representations of, Indigenous histories and stories. Educational assimilation's imposed schooling lacks cultural responsiveness and homogenizes student populations (e.g., high-stakes standardized testing). Perpetuations of the White–Indigenous binary exaggerate racial and cultural differences, and produce opportunity, educational, and income gaps. Damage and resiliency reverberate in survivors' accounts.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Indigenous issues permeate the social sciences and arts (e.g., Indigenous studies, cultural studies, teacher education, and educational leadership) and pull from history, sociology, ethnography, etc. In critical discourses, *indigeneity* is juxtaposed with the settler concept (also colonial settler) and (national) sovereignty. Coexisting with indigeneity are concepts of self-determination (exercising tribal rights), also known as Indigenous sovereignty (self-governance). Indigenous justice, referring to inherent and civil rights, is addressed in multiple discourses and by advocacy and world organizations. Social justice and multiculturalism canons could further indigeneity's claims to tribal rights but often fall short. Allyship misses recognition of Indigenous rights over stolen territories and natural resources, thereby reducing Aboriginal claims to a race issue on par with other minorities' plights. Other races' experience of racism and colonization is not tangled in settler colonization, the act of forcible removal from one's land, lifestyle (e.g., fishing), and ancestral ways of knowing.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Indigeneity's rejection is of systemwide patriarchal entitlement mentality and entrenched practices of settler colonialism. Social movements and educational discourses' unintended consequences of rupturing indigeneity when at odds with its political and educational aims. Social justice and multiculturalism canons generally overlook Indigenous-specific issues, tribal (in)justice, and Aboriginal peoples' global fight against banishment, persecution, and assimilation. Decolonization, the fight for justice, calls for decolonizing/ indigenizing mainstream education, pedagogy, programs, curriculum, etc. From an Indigenous perspective, settler power enables appropriation of Indigenous frameworks and languages appearing in educational discourses, including pedagogical research. A trend in literature, this produces

discontinuity in campaigns to further Indigenous aims. Indigenous storytelling ruptures colonialism and disrupts the minoritization of communities, propelling continuity with Aboriginal knowledges and lifestyle. Discontinuities arise out of government-sponsored assimilation, enforced schooling, subpar education, land appropriation, and more.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Settler discourses, nation-states, and systems manifest colonial power. *Colonial settler* describes White settlers and governments, institutions, populations, and body politic. Colonizing settler populations and structures are complicit in removing Indigenous tribes from their ancestral territories and isolating them, commonly in toxic environmental and industrial spaces. Entire Indigenous communities across nations have been reduced to poverty, unemployment and underemployment, subpar and deficit-based education, poor health and health care, water and land pollution, and other threats. Colonial powers steal vast territories from Indigenous tribes, disrupting identities and destroying the very fabric of communities. Indigenous treatments of educational issues interrogate colonial-settler mindsets of domination and entitlement, putting justice and the public good to the test.

Snapshots of the past, present, and future are provided that convey educational issues of Indigenous peoples. At best, this account offers a partial view of history, culture, and society, and, at the same time, specific details shed light on particular times and patterns.

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### **Snapshot of the Past**

Genocidal violence was committed against Indigenous groups in the Americas, Africa, Australia, and Asia by European imperialists who established colonies “formed from stolen land” (Smith, 2016). According to Lemkin, a twentieth-century attorney credited with articulating the concept of *genocide*, colonization is “intrinsically genocidal”: first, Indigenous communities’ way of life is destroyed, and then colonial settlers impose their lifestyle. They accomplish this by clearing territories of the inhabitants for purposes of colonial settlements and resource extraction, or through conscripting Indigenous peoples as laborers in colonial projects (as cited in Forge, 2013).

A complexity of justice, land is native life and native life is land; thus, the banishment and exploitation that disrupt tribes perpetuates *cultural genocide*, which is mirrored in ecosystems that suffer “a slow industrial genocide” (Huseman & Short, 2012, p. 216; also, Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Mullen, 2020a, b; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2012). In the living past (the present), challenges to exploitation and racist policies and practices contest ongoing cultural genocide. The historic seizure of native lands and resources is mirrored in today’s destruction of tribal communities and even lives in the USA, Canada, Australia, and other nations (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Tribal injustices in education today are rooted in colonial legacy, with marginality and mortality going hand-in-glove. A particularly egregious form was “boarding school policies directed at Indigenous peoples globally [that] have infringed upon [their] right to self-determination” (Smith, 2009, p. 48). Comparative study of Indigenous boarding schools and Indigenous peoples confirmed that forcible colonial schools were “exceedingly brutal places where children were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused” and sometimes even died; beyond “cultural alienation” was “loss of language, disruptions in family and social structures, and increased community dysfunction” (Smith, 2009, p. 48). Snapshots follow of what transpired in three countries’ colonial campaign of schooling and assimilation of Indigenous groups.

### **United States: Forcible Colonial Schooling**

In the USA between 1878 and 1918, an off-reservation Indian school system was established by Carlisle Indian School founder Brigadier General Richard Pratt (1840–1924), whose “rationale was ‘Kill the Indian in order to save the man’” and whose motive was to engineer America’s great social experiment (Smith, 2009, p. 5). Grant’s Peace Policy of 1869–1870 formalized “the boarding school system” and turned it over to “Christian denominations” for administration (Smith, 2009). Forcing “thousands of Native children” to attend Native American boarding schools (also known as Indian Residential Schools) removed children from their families and placed them into foster care by the state. Indoctrinated with Christianity and “White cultural values,” their education was in reality training the children “to be assimilated into the bottom of the socio-economic ladder” and prepared for “manual labor” and “domestic work”; females were socialized to “lose” their leadership place “in Native communities” (Smith, 2009, pp. 5–6). Starving and imprisoned, the children had to ensure “efficiencies” involving dreaded tasks, such as in “steam-filled laundries” (Dejong, 2007, p. 261). Government-sponsored assimilation of Indigenous peoples occurred in approximately 357 Native American boarding schools, often church-run:

For decades, the US took thousands of Native American children and enrolled them in off-reservation boarding schools. Students were systematically stripped of their languages, customs, and culture. And even though there were accounts of neglect, abuse, and death at these schools, they became a blueprint for how the US government could forcibly assimilate native people into white America (Chakraborty, 2019).

Genocide, even cultural genocide, is increasingly recognized in relation to the global phenomenon associated with this period (e.g., Smith, 2006; Witte & Mero, 2008). It was a matter of economics that cultural genocide was chosen over physical genocide – the latter would cost more (it was reasoned that it was much cheaper to school a native child than kill an Indian; Smith, 2009). Cultural genocide had many

other effects: dissolving Indigenous ties by breaking up families, countering the active resistance of victimized Indigenous communities, indoctrinating stolen children as a strategy for eliminating the “Indian” in them, and disbanding native cultural practices and languages (Chakraborty, 2019; Child, 2000).

Mounting evidence has been cited for the makings of cultural genocide initiated with Pratt’s influential campaign. His paternalistic paradigm and aggressive lobbying enlisted military and political leaders in the “educational subjugation of all tribes” (Witte & Mero, 2008, p. 208). Pratt was convinced “that Indian children were the key to controlling the permanent future of Indian relations and to making a so-called primitive people ‘productive’ [during America’s] Industrial Revolution” (Witte & Mero, p. 208); this logic sustained Native American children’s exposure to “deadly contagious diseases” (p. 257).

The perfect storm arose from mandatory confinement to boarding schools. The 1928 Meriam Report (government research commissioned by what came to be known as the Brookings Institution) confirmed that infectious disease was often widespread at the schools due to malnutrition, overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and weakening from manual work programs (cited in Dejong, 2007). Native American students’ death rates were six and a half times higher than other ethnic groups (Witte & Mero, 2008).

Epidemics hit dozens of schools. Trachoma and tuberculosis were especially deadly, with misery also imploding from measles and pneumonia. Many died while in custody at Indian Schools, isolated from their homelands. The great influenza pandemic of 1918–1919 hit the Native American population “hard” (Brady & Bahr, 2014; Child, 2000). “Thousands of children died in these schools” due to poor health conditions, abuse, nutrition, and medical neglect, including suicide (Smith, 2009, p. 7). With some boarding schools, “death and disease were simultaneous” (Dejong, 2007, p. 261). The brutal history of the USA in mandating “racially-based separation of children from their parents is still a problem” (Little, 2018) and thus cannot be sealed off in memory or history books.

What was deemed the “‘Indian problem’ of sufficient magnitude to warrant a federal system of education to solve” (Dejong, 2007, p. 257) became “The Problem of Indian Administration” with the 1928 Meriam Report. It confirmed that “federal policies had been a disaster and this failure was nowhere greater than in the field of education” (Witte & Mero, 2008, p. 258). Following the Meriam Report, tribes initiated Indian education reform to overcome the disasters of federal policies, seizing upon “a worldview that acknowledges the inherent rights of Native people to lay claim to their tribal and personal histories” (Native American Rights Fund, 2019, p. 17).

Survivors of the US boarding school era “were marked by trauma,” as are successive generations that must live with this and ongoing trauma from “racially-biased perception[s] of Native families, of Native homes, and of Native mothers” that manifest as “racially-based separation of children from their parent” through “child welfare services” and “significant educational inequities between native and non-Native students” (Little, 2018).

## Canada: Forcible Colonial Schooling

Canada's system of forcible colonial schooling was "inspired" by its neighbor to the North. A government official advocated for Canada to "adopt a similar system to that of the United States' founded upon Pratt" and his ideals (Smith, 2009, p. 7). The Canadian system responded with government-sanctioned assimilationist agendas aimed at obliterating Indigenous persons. From 1879 to 1996, the Canadian Indian residential school system enrolled 86,000 Indigenous children (Coulthard, 2014; McGregor, 2018).

Canadian residential school policy legitimated 86,000 Indigenous children being extracted from their families and placed in nationwide residential schools. In 1883, Hector Langevin, Public Works Minister of Canada, declared, "In order to educate the children properly, we must separate them from their families. Some people may say that this is hard but if we want to civilize them we must do that" (as cited in TRC, 2012). The Canadian government funded the systemic racist initiative, which Christian churches administered. A motive was displacement of Indigenous peoples and appropriation of their lands, thereby disposing of the "Indian problem," which played out in "Aboriginal policies" (TRC, 2015).

In Canada, abuse was reported as high as 100% in "some schools," and the "death rate" was "24% among children in schools, and 42% included children who had died after being sent home when they became critically ill" (Smith, 2009, p. 8). Thus, the government's mandatory relocation of Indigenous children resulted in 1 in 25 dying, with 6,000 deaths (TRC, 2012). The program's goal was to "erase and replace" native culture and destroy Indigenous life (Coulthard, 2014). This history is alive for traumatized survivors and in the "ongoing conditions of colonialism in Canada" that call for "apology, compensation, healing, and reconciliation" (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009, pp. 5–6, 8).

In 2007, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) was the Government of Canada's recognition that the nation was still enduring its residential school legacy. It also served as a public apology "to former boarding-school students and [payment of] reparations to survivors" (Sinclair, Littlechild, & Wilson, 2015). The class action suit financially compensated former residential students for damages incurred. (While money was distributed and survivors' recovery assisted, former students were mistreated.)

Established in 2008 by the IRSSA, the TRC of Canada (since defunct) set forth to ensure that the residential school legacy would be remembered; through this commission, survivors' stories were aired. As explained by Sinclair et al. (2015), the TRC found that residential schooling's continuation "is reflected in the significant disparities in education, income, and health between Aboriginal people and other Canadians [that] condemn many Aboriginal people to shorter, poorer, and more troubled lives"; also confirmed was that "intense racism" and "systemic discrimination" are realities today and that the "beliefs and attitudes" justifying residential schooling "[still] animate official Aboriginal policy." Colonization has not been left behind, as evidenced in and beyond educational inequalities.



Also in 2008, on behalf of the Canadian federal government, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology that served as recognition that the nation was still enduring its residential school legacy. Additionally, New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton made a plea for Canadians to help:

reverse the horrific and shameful statistics afflicting Aboriginal populations, now: the high rates of poverty, suicide, the poor or having no education, overcrowding, crumbling housing, and unsafe drinking water. Let us make sure that all survivors of the residential schools receive the recognition and compensation that is due to them (as cited in TRC, 2012)

## **Australia: Forcible Colonial Schooling**

From the beginning of European occupation in Australia, under the umbrella of paternal safeguarding, Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes (Moses, 2012). Australian native children were isolated and coerced into Christianity in keeping with the “civilization project” (Smith, 2009). They were placed in reserves, training institutes, or non-Indigenous homes, targeted as “cheap labor,” and resocialized around White’s peoples’ beliefs so that at age 14 they could serve colonial settlers away from the settlements and missions (Smith, 2009). Indigenous children’s lives were completely controlled, and they were prohibited from attending state schools.

Stolen Generations, a particular event, refers to the human rights violations of Australian Aboriginals set in motion by the Aborigines Protection Board. In New South Wales, starting in 1905 and into the 1970s, at least 100,000 Aboriginal children were abducted under the policy of “protection” – placed into compulsory residential schools, many were sexually and physically abused, some never seeing their families again (Smith, 2009).

A gross violation, this action was precipitated by state violence against Indigenous communities and so-called half-caste children (with a European father and an Indian mother) (Smith, 2009). Children of mixed descent were specific targets for removal because it was believed that those “with lighter skin color could be more easily assimilated” into White society, whereas “‘full-blood’ Aboriginal people were thought to be a dying race”; in fact, the goal of policy administrators was to eradicate the “Aborigines in Australia” whom they labeled “blacks” (Smith, 2009, p. 13). Policymakers’ colonial ideologies favoring assimilationist education and Aboriginal dislocation of children were extensive. From 1910 to 1970, “between 1 in 3 to 1 in 10 Indigenous children were removed from their families. By the mid-1930s, more than half of ‘half-caste’ children in the Northern Territory were housed in institutions administered by the state” (Smith, 2009, p. 11; also, Manne, 2012).

Once again, Christian churches assumed control over “educating” abducted Aboriginal children. Australian governmental policies, practices, and patterns were similar to the American and Canadian reforms. Throughout Australia in the 1940s, about “50 missions” transmitted education “focused on Christianization and manual labor rather than preparation for higher education” (Smith, 2009, p. 15). Death abuse was rampant:

Conditions were deplorable in these missions and settlements with death rates often exceeding birthrates. Disease, malnutrition, and sexual violence were commonplace. Children were often forced to work in white homes where they were routinely sexually abused. In Victoria, between 1881–1925, one third of Indigenous children died (Smith, 2009, p. 15).

And, like North America, Indigenous education for Aboriginal children was entrenched in training and gender divisions. Aboriginal children taken from their homes were less likely (than those not removed) to attain “post-secondary education”; and twice as likely to “[be] convicted of an offence [and] report [using] illicit substances” (Smith, 2009, p. 15). Consistent with this pattern, a 1994 survey of Indigenous groups “found that removal did not increase the likelihood that Aboriginal children would have higher incomes, be employed, or attain higher levels of education” (as cited in Smith, 2009, p. 15).

Professors at Australian universities described this time in Australian history as profoundly genocidal in which “frontier violence” and stolen Indigenous children were sanctioned (see Moses, 2012). Gradually, educational change has been initiated: “In the 1970s, an era of reform began in Indigenous education that stressed self-determination”; attempts were made to create culturally relevant curricula and bilingual education programs, as well as to engage local native communities in education (Smith, 2009, p. 15).

The memory of the Australian boarding school era lives on, with multiplying effects in the face of other genocidal treatment (Moses, 2012). Stolen Generations may refer to those who were abducted, those who were affected by the loss, and those who will always feel this tragedy. Modern-day settler and Aboriginal perceptions likely differ: in 2019, Stolen Generations was described by a White Australian dean/historian as a tragic historical event. When an Aboriginal Australian academic/leader described the same event, he conveyed how the loss of stolen children terribly affected communities and *continues* to be felt today – etched in *all* Indigenous struggles and collective memory, a “forever tragedy” that has no temporal bounds (see Mullen, 2020a).

Another powerful example of continuing settler genocide centers on Australia’s constitution and refusal to grant human rights protection. The Australian constitution, operative in 1901, was imbued with colonial ideology. In 2020, it still carried remnants of that colonizing dogma. Withholding equal rights and respect to Indigenous Australians, and even declaring that they should not be counted in the census, the constitution still contained “provisions authorizing discrimination on grounds of race” owing to “Australia’s continuing colonial status” and actions taken “to preserve a white Australia” (Saunders, 2011).

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## Snapshot of the Present

Colonization continues nationally and globally, with Indigenous resistance long asserted around decolonization and self-determination (Mullen, 2019). As medical researchers confirmed, colonization is a medical and health issue, leaving “a legacy

of excess mortality, morbidity, and trauma that parallels the economic devastation and cultural loss of land alienation”; the World Health Organization also “recognizes European colonization as [an] underlying determinant of Indigenous health” (Freemantle et al., 2015, p. 644). Hence, colonization is a significant risk factor for the overall population. Underlying characteristics of society past and present (e.g., racism and racial discrimination) ultimately shape health.

Native American vulnerability to COVID-19 is aggravated because this population is “at a higher risk of chronic conditions” (e.g., diabetes and tuberculosis) and health-care systems are both ill-equipped and under-resourced (Eschner, 2020). Implications for Indigenous communities around the globe are that pandemics will afflict them in unprecedented and dangerous ways.

Indigenous cultures have developed in relationship to settler societies wherein either/ or binaries (e.g., savage/civilized) stigmatize them (Woolford & Benvenuto, 2015). Shedding colonization will require “unsettling” settler conceptions of reconciliation and finding a language that transcends identity constraints and binary constructions. Dynamics of domination and subjugation fuel racial politics, whereas reconciliation ignites understanding as well as conflict. Reimagining social relations through reconciliation of settler and Indigenous perspectives is “always beginning” in the present (Hargreaves & Jefferess, 2015). Learning to think and act, lead, and teach has grave implications for Indigenous education.

Besides sanctioned criminal behavior in the form of colonization, another lesson draws upon land. The stewardship of land is rooted in the politics of indigeneity. Without honoring Aboriginal claims to land and historic agreements, colonial states assimilate Aboriginal peoples and replace Indigenous education. In First Nations’ learning, education is embedded within a holistic life system. (*First Nations* as a term is applicable only to Canada and its largest tribe that, as reported in a 2019 Canadian household survey, represented 60.8% of the total Aboriginal population [2.6% of the country’s total population]; cited in Mullen, 2020a). Traditionally, education, like “spiritual life,” was part of “a coherent, interconnected world”; children learned from their elders, who were “keepers and transmitters” of knowledge, as well as from “living and learning” (TRC, 2012, p. 8).

To move global societies from history to legacy to reconciliation, “constructive action” would need to be deployed in education and broader systems – culture, language, health, child welfare, justice, and economics (Sinclair et al., 2015). Disrupting colonialism and resolving its negative impact on Indigenous education cannot happen in isolation, for the problem affects all Aboriginal life systems (McGregor, 2018). According to TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair, the non-native Canadian public must be educated differently about Indigenous peoples. To become accountable to settler impact, educational institutions would need to take responsibility for colonialism and racism in society, and for healing and transformation. Justice Sinclair’s statements resonate with the academic literature cited.

To progress with reconciliation in education, conventional structures of power would be decolonized, including (educational) research practices and methodologies (McGregor, 2018). Colonial institutions would relinquish power, privilege, and/or land, essentially political and financial capital signifying stolen land and oppressed

lives. And settlers would understand that “critical consciousness (of colonization)” cannot be the sole aim, thereby relieving settlers of “feelings of guilt or responsibility” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 10).

A manipulation of settler colonialism and White supremacy today is to make genocide seem like a historical artifact. Smith (2016) asked, if the USA – and we can add other colonized nations – “is fundamentally constituted through the genocide of Native peoples, why are Native peoples not central to the development of American society?” Responding, Smith answered that “native genocide is relegated to the past so that settler colonialism today can be presumed [normal and devoid of genocide].” As a consequence, resistance to colonialism necessitates being bound to it and its genocidal manifestations and repercussions (Coulthard, 2014). Acts of resistance defy the original violence – theft of Indigenous land and labor – and the systemic project of dehumanizing lives. Severe repercussions for Indigenous generations replay the land appropriation and violence that depleted ancestors’ assets, robbing them of their way of life. Like a tree without roots, Indigenous persons cannot live outside their homelands (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012).

In the present, the concept of indigeneity – the political necessity of a revolutionizing impulse – builds in political and cultural studies discourses. Revolutionary imaginations build solidarity among tribes. This decolonization project resists the organized, systemic scheme (i.e., the colonization project) through which disenfranchised communities are occupied, alienated, and destroyed and the young are inducted into colonial schooling (Fredericks, Maynor, White, English, & Ehrich, 2014).

The decolonization project advocates for a comprehensive plan in service of the rights, sovereignty, self-determination, and humanity of tribes for a brighter future. Supporters of Indigenous justice advance the right to govern ancestral habitats and life and to influence education without the interference of dominating settler nations. Tribes expect a strong collective voice from their members on behalf of reforms to systems, policies, and so forth (Coulthard, 2014; McCarty, 2018; Smith, 2016).

A global campaign, the decolonization project as taken up in radical Indigenous sources targets genocidal control of historic Indigenous land to be placed under tribal governance and includes recognition, restoration, and reparation. Contesting a “politics of recognition,” Coulthard (2014) questioned whether much can come from efforts that depend on Aboriginal cooperation with colonial powers. Return of stolen homeland and/or reparations and official recognition of self-determination drive the decolonization project (Mullen, 2019; Woolford & Benvenuto, 2015).

Settler political leaders’ long-awaited apologies for genocidal acts make history when announced. The US Congress passed a bill in 2009 constituting the federal government’s official apology to “all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States” via a joint resolution, which began: “To acknowledge a long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes and offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States” (U.S. Government, 2009, p. 1). A decade later, California’s governor joined the slim ranks of global apologists. In response, a call to action for recognition and compensation could be heard from tribal spokespersons: “We’re still fighting for

recognition, the protection of our sacred places, [and] visibility.” “An apology is great, but what does it look like in terms of moving into action?” Also, “This is all stolen land. We are landless Indians,” and “The only compensation for land is land” (Levin, 2019).

Public education, a microcosm of systemic disorders, needs radical attention, transformation, and healing. Educational trends still indicate disparity for Indigenous students (Gordon & White, 2014; United Nations [UN], 2017), including:

1. An ongoing ethnic gap in educational levels (Indigenous school enrollments, school performance, and literacy levels are all low while attrition is high)
2. Substandard academic achievements compared with other ethnic groups (e.g., “In 2014, the high school graduation rate for Native American students was 67%, the lowest among the [American] racial and ethnic groups measured” [Little, 2018])
3. A discrepancy in educational attainment due to ethnicity, parental education, low socioeconomic status, and geography
4. An increase in Aboriginal persons without a high school diploma

A calamity of colonialism is the failure to equitably serve Indigenous students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gordon & White, 2014; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Low academic attainment continues for Native American students (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2015). High-stakes testing in North America has neither improved Indigenous academic achievement nor bolstered students’ cultural knowledge, identity, capital, and opportunities (McCarty, 2018).

“Low income” and “disadvantaged” within schools, Aboriginal youth struggle to gain postsecondary education in different countries (Hart & Kempf, 2018). Hence, tribes/bands face compounding barriers to accessing and certainly completing secondary and postsecondary education. Besides low self-confidence, obstacles include poor academic preparation, scarce financial resources, absence of educated role models, and campus racism. Systemically, education, “child welfare, health, and justice systems have failed Aboriginal peoples profoundly” (McGregor, 2018, p. 813).

Colonial schooling structures and practices embed a “colonizing legacy” (Khalifa, Khalil, Marsh, & Halloran, 2019). Concerning Indigenous communities, widespread exclusionary and inappropriate schooling is still common, attrition remains high at the secondary level, and severe penalties are experienced globally. Approximately 70% of Canada’s First Nations students drop out of high school, and disproportionate failure and dropouts are reflected in Canadian prison systems (UN, 2010).

Indigenous activism combats unequal and dangerous uses of power. In empowered households, children attend culturally responsive schools that build their knowledge and skills and prepare them for careers and life (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). They are not deprived of their culture and identities. Mick Dodson of Australia, former Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner, equated “social justice” with food, clean water, and sanitation; education that prepares the young for employment and respects their “cultural inheritance”; and with prospects and a discrimination-free existence (as cited in Fredericks et al., 2014).

Thus, impoverished education is not the only threat to indigeneity – it is entangled in other threats that compound negative effects for low-socioeconomic Indigenous persons. Undisputedly, youth have the right to live out Dodson’s scenario. Quite possibly, this stance constitutes the moral spine of Indigenous-based writing in education (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Iseke-Barnes, 2008) and leadership (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2015; Fredericks et al., 2014; Keddie & Niesche, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2019; Mullen, 2019, 2020a, b; Preston, Claypool, Rowluck, & Green, 2017; Robinson, White, & Robinson, 2019).

Educational leadership researchers Keddie and Niesche (2012) reported disturbing findings associated with a White principal’s governance of a rural Australian Indigenous school. The leader’s relationship with “indigeneity” was found to be culturally lacking and her worldview irreconcilable with Indigenous life. Outcomes indicate that this leader’s behaviors were normalizing White hegemony at the expense of Indigenous engagement, empowerment, and sovereignty. Tribes felt segregated and alienated. The colonial leader’s moral compass was lacking.

Offering juxtaposition and hope, Indigenous language immersion schools report success with Aboriginal students (Reyhner, 2017). Nine principals in Canada revealed their support for Aboriginal students’ school experiences and “relationships” while learning in “culturally relevant” ways (Preston et al., 2017). In another Canadian study, five First Nations female principals enabled cultural renewal in Nova Scotia, Canada (Robinson et al., 2019). These studies validated the importance of Indigenous justice at the level of leadership for shaping an inclusive culture. They are an indication of the importance of justice for Indigenous peoples in education, leadership, and scholarship.

Protest of educational discrimination, rejection of colonial legacy, and calls for collective responsibility are premises in the literature. The UN (2010, 2017) addressed anyone who might react negatively to all such assertions, such as by countering that discrimination against Indigenous peoples is an exaggeration or that colonial legacy is a transgression of the past that does not reflect the present (and, by way of implication, Indigenous assertions of human rights). Education is a fundamental human right, yet North America’s record of justice on behalf of its Indigenous peoples is appalling. Aboriginal individuals living in rich countries are among the poorest of citizens.

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## Snapshot of the Future

Futurity is a powerful Indigenous concept in Indigenous literature (Mullen, 2020a). Seeking power over destiny conjures a notion of the future consciously activated in the present. The future is, importantly, acted upon in the present through “calculation, imagination, and performance” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 80). While settler futurity seeks to completely eradicate “the original inhabitants of contested land,” Indigenous futurity “does not foreclose the inhabitation of

Indigenous land by non-Indigenous peoples, but does foreclose settler colonialism and settler epistemologies” (p. 80).

The hope is that education can break the cycle of colonialism and generate values critical to cultural and planetary sustainability. A lesson learned from studies of Aboriginal students’ educational experiences is that they are similar around the globe. Scholars from various nations contributed insights into “leadership in Indigenous education” with accounts of “culturally inappropriate education and poor academic outcomes for Indigenous students”; Faircloth and Tippeconnic III (2013) signaled that much work lies ahead for stakeholders in “mobiliz[ing] to effectively change the educational system” so that “the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous students [can be embraced]” (pp. 484–485).

Despite differences, on a global scale, rights of “equality” and “self-determination” are universally violated. Aboriginal peoples should have the same right to education as everyone else, free of discrimination, and educational experiences that reflect their culture and respect their sovereignty (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). However, importantly, the “education sector not only mirrors and condenses the history of abuse and discrimination suffered by Indigenous peoples, but is also a locus of the continuing struggle for equality and respect for their rights” (UN, 2017). Thus, racial differences in educational outcomes are stark, worldwide: “A significant disparity continues to occur in academic achievement and attainment between Indigenous youth and their non-Indigenous counterparts” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 94; also, Faircloth & Tippeconnic III, 2013). To advance in the twenty-first century, rights-oriented approaches in education would need to support Indigenous cultures and societal progress. Instead, for the most part, educational opportunities exclude Indigenous groups. Migrant peoples and descendants, historical tribes, and urban Indians all experience great obstacles to educational success (UN, 2017).

Global nations carry the sting of tragic human rights abuses (Coulthard, 2014). Self-determination fuels visions of Indigenous education in which colonial structures of injustice are systemically unsettled and teachers and learners are empowered. As such, tribal governance in the educational domain not only advocates the inclusion of Aboriginal worldviews, knowledges, and values but also advances the decolonization project and politics that uphold tribal nations’ human rights and legitimate claims (e.g., Fredericks et al., 2014). As statistics, studies, and testimonials continue to indicate, conventional education has not worked for Aboriginal students – in fact, they show significant gaps in achievement (Faircloth & Tippeconnic III, 2013; Gordon & White, 2014). Culturally devoid of Indigenous ways of understanding the world and worsened by racism (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011), traditional public schooling remains a European settlement with “walls” – schooling occurs as compartmentalized subjects (e.g., mathematics) that are standardized, tested, and alienated from the teachings of elders and village life.

Viable educational alternatives are needed in the twenty-first century that are securely embedded within Indigenous ideals and goals. To help education stakeholders of all racial backgrounds and identities engage in self-determination processes embedded in Indigenous justice – and institutions and Indigenous students



develop some understanding of each other – Brayboy’s (2005) TribalCrit theory advances tenets. Among them, colonization is endemic to society; US policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain; Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification; and tribal visions for the future are central to understanding Indigenous peoples’ realities, but they also illustrate differences and adaptability among groups.

Seeking to benefit Indigenous education, Aboriginal advocacy groups continue to call on federal governments. Educational discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous races, worldwide, need resolution, and federal funding gaps must be closed for students being educated on and off reserves (e.g., TRC, 2015). Research on educational trends and inequalities in Indigenous outcomes within different countries confirms these gaps, underscoring how Indigenous children and youth are in jeopardy educationally and relative to employment and life prospects (e.g., Gordon & White, 2014; Mullen, 2020a).

In response, with reference to Canada, the Canadian TRC (2015) prompted “new Aboriginal education legislation” so that financial capital adhering to treaty-supported principles will be channeled in needed areas. Such principles include “providing funding to close attainment gaps and improve Aboriginal educational success; setting expectations for curricula that are ‘culturally appropriate’; protecting native languages and the teaching of them; and enabling Aboriginal accountability through control over, and parental participation in, children’s education” (p. 2).

All such legacy-building expectations of the tribal commission include post-secondary institutions and their role in educating future teachers. Preservice students, as recommended by the TRC of Canada (2015), should be learning about Indigenous knowledges and teaching methods they can implement in their own classrooms. Gradually, teacher educators in Canada, the USA, and Australia have been experimenting with this course of action. Published outcomes (e.g., Aitken & Radford, 2018) indicate a change in outlook by most colonial–settler student participants in preservice teacher preparation courses targeted for critical consciousness-raising. However, Madden (2015) found that Aboriginal pedagogies tended not to focus on “decolonial goals.” By implication, decolonization and Indigenous futurity have not served as frameworks for engaging majoritarian students’ critical thinking about Indigenous education within the North American context. Regarding the three countries considered herein, a comparative literature-based study of preservice teacher education outcomes (conducted in Australia) found that “distinct models [are] operating in Canada, the USA, and Australia in relation to preservice teacher education as it pertains to Indigenous education”: Whereas “in Canada and the USA the approach to preservice teaching is through a social inclusion and community partnership model,” in “Australia the preoccupation is with teaching Indigenous studies to preservice teachers” (Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, & Robinson, 2012, p. 4).

Barriers to the assertion of indigeneity in global societies more generally include place-bound disruption, poverty, environmental and educational crises,



contaminated water, displacement and homelessness, deprivation, familial abuse, and inadequate funding and compensation from governments (Fredericks et al., 2014; Mullen, 2020a, b; TRC, 2012). On the question of futurity, reconciliation among global citizens depends on the restoration and vitality of Indigenous education, as well as educators' unprecedented support.

Academics' worldwide call for collective and global responsibility targets (a) increasing tribal empowerment through Indigenous sovereignty and futurity; (b) reducing inequality in education, employment, health/medical, and other outcomes for families; (c) developing effective models of partnership and engagement with Indigenous communities; and (d) expanding understanding of structural inequities and associated responsibilities for prospective majoritarian teachers and leaders. Studies relevant to policies and practices that foster awareness are needed in these interrelated areas. Potent interventions in North America advance critical consciousness-raising (Aitken & Radford, 2018) and "culturally responsive schooling" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008) and "culturally responsive teaching" (Gay, 2018).

Critical and collective consciousness-raising is a strategy used to promote awareness about the world's Indigenous peoples, who remain the most marginalized groups in education and society (UN, 2010, 2017). Studies have identified such decolonizing actions as fundamentally changing racist policies and practices, understanding the value of land in Indigenous knowledge systems, and returning stolen land and resources to tribal nations (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Action is called for beyond awareness. As an example, culturally responsive education has been expressed through bilingual and multilingual programs. Fostering "bi-/multicultural" literacy enables Indigenous students to develop capabilities for navigating home, school, work, and global cultures. This facility is considered vital in today's world for Indigenous student engagement, retention, and success (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2018).

Schooling occurs on tribal home/lands, so it stands to reason that respect and reconciliation for Aboriginal peoples would follow. Colonization of Indigenous communities is ubiquitous and remains a critical world problem. Colonial legacy is everyone's challenge to overcome. Supporting Indigenous rights, knowledges, liberties, and humanity could transform mainstream education and unify causes. Indigenous futurity should not have to be pitted against settler futurity – futurity is about remaking the world as a whole.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

While educational issues of Indigenous peoples do not revolve around a single concept, indigeneity calls critical attention to European origins of sovereignty. Indigeneity, decolonization, and other Indigenous concepts (e.g., self-determination, sovereignty, and futurity) target the continuing plight of Indigenous peoples in global cultures. The past, present, and future snapshots conveyed grave educational

matters for the USA, Canada, and Australia. Governmental educational/industrial policy, compulsory boarding/ residential schooling, educational disparity, and systemic racism illustrate cultural genocide.

All three of these nations' federal governments have issued formal apologies to the living descendants of original inhabitants. However, genocidal effects on the world's Indigenous peoples are a crisis of global proportions, with great losses of cultural diversity. Poverty, low academic achievement, poor health, and other barriers that prevail for Indigenous communities inhibit the development of sustainable cultures.

On many measures (e.g., educational outcomes, political participation, and economic status), Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable as a minoritized group. Bleak international outcomes confirm ongoing educational, occupational, income, and health disparities for this diverse racial group that endures systemic discrimination. Schools assimilate Indigenous children and cultivate colonial settlers. An implication is that settlers from a young age are "programmed" to not even notice colonizing dynamics of socialization and disavow the impact, allowing neo-colonization to flourish.

Cycles of deprivation are worldwide. Despite national differences, on a global scale rights of equality and self-determination are universally violated. Educational disadvantage for Aboriginal peoples manifests in health care, ecosystems, and economics. Colonial education "feeds" on tribal injustice, including miseducation. Reforms are needed for restoring inherent rights and defeating systemic racism. Inciting objection, colonizing elements persist within new policy, curricula, and programming that misrepresent Indigenous paradigms, knowledges, and contributions. Hence, generalizing about Indigenous peoples is problematic, as is failing to probe or "call out" the settler mentality that permeates education and leadership. All such ailments of colonialism jeopardize progress and advancement. The fullest expressions of humanity in schooling contexts depend upon dismantling racist educational systems and completely transforming them, as opposed to diversity and inclusion "add-ons." Decolonizing education can help to ensure inclusion and equity for tribes.

Educational stakeholders are called upon to mindfully approach Aboriginal attainment, employment, and quality of life, and to monitor assimilation, discrimination, and exclusion. Finding constructive ways to integrate the decolonizing ethic is a grand challenge for democratic societies. With high-stakes testing, displacement, racism, poverty, and other human rights violations impacting Indigenous communities, educational disciplines can contribute much more to the conversation.

Indigenous persons must be self-determining in education if they are to survive as distinct peoples, and the full decolonization of Indigenous education must be supported if conditions of humanity are to fundamentally change. A global movement has erupted, changing pockets of policy, curriculum, teaching, and research. Through agency and solidarity in public life and, gradually, education, Indigenous justice is a mounting paradigmatic force. Actionable steps include educating for a just world through critical consciousness-raising and collective responsible action, such as by campaigning for fair and responsible legislation; making Indigenous (in)

justice visible by recognizing the unique circumstances surrounding the colonization of this race (i.e., land dispossession); and “decolonizing” settler mindsets, in addition to laws, policies, programs, and curricula.

Finally, implications for educational leadership and administration are decolonizing settler mindsets and opposing White hegemony and its normalization at the expense of Indigenous engagement, empowerment, and sovereignty. All stakeholders in education are called upon to promote Indigenous justice on behalf of tribal rights and the well-being of every Indigenous child for a more inclusive, better tomorrow. Needed are educational worlds in which tribes, unfettered by colonialism, live out the fullness of their lives – futurity’s essence.

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# Leadership Challenges with Multicultural Schools

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Gökhan Arastaman and Tuncer Fidan

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## Abstract

Public schools emerged as monocultural organizations aiming to assimilate the cultural diversity in a society in agreement with ideals like citizenship. These schools were usually deemed as the implementers of the nation-building programs in which certain values were encouraged while others were repressed. On the other hand, nation building programs have not (yet) “managed to” eliminate existing social diversity and create monocultural societies. Moreover, accelerating international migration movements have increased social diversity to the point transcending already weakened assimilation capacities of schools. These developments have given rise to the notion of multicultural schools since the last decades of the twentieth century. However, the vast majority of such/these schools

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have not yet achieved necessary transformations to be a multicultural school. Institutional structures of most schools still reflect the ideal of cultural assimilation, which turns educational leadership in multicultural schools into a complicated task involving facing with policy, cultural, curricular, administrative, and operational challenges. Despite these challenges, no comprehensive leadership practice or strategy has yet to be fully developed. Current suggestions either rely on social transformations in an uncertain future or have the risk of causing even more prejudice between social groups. Furthermore, the fact that schools are embedded in highly institutionalized environments requires educational leaders to secure the support of institutional and political figures to achieve the necessary transformations.

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**Keywords**

Multiculturalism · Diversity · Prejudice · Multicultural schools · Educational leadership

**The Field of Memory**

The emergence of education systems and public schools in the nineteenth century largely reflects the idea of bringing together students from different cultures, religions, ethnicities, and social classes around common values. Public schools have often been regarded as the implementing actors of the nation-building experiments and as monocultural organizations executing cultural assimilation programs where certain values are promoted while others are suppressed.

**The Field of Presence**

Monocultural schools for cultural assimilation have weakened especially towards the end of the twentieth century and begun to decline since then as a result of social diversity. Social groups, such as socioeconomic classes, ethnic minorities, racial groups, immigrants, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and belief groups have largely preserved their existence during nation-building experiments in the world and have created their very own subcultures, leading to a diversity that overcomes the cultural assimilation capacities of schools. Alongside this, the upward trend of international migration as well as the influx of refugees in recent years have increased the pressure of acknowledging diversity on schools and consequently secured the position of multiculturalism within schools.

**The Field of Concomitance**

The term multiculturalism refers to the political accommodation of minority cultures by states and/or majority groups which are mostly defined based on racial and ethnic origin, but can also be elucidated through some rather controversial cases according to categories, such as nationality, aboriginality, or religion. The ideal of citizenship, which was at the center of nation-building experiments of the past, aimed to warrant the adoption of the idea (1) of equality through cultural assimilation. However, social

movements, such as black, feminist, and gay pride, have challenged this idea and upheld the fact that social groups could preserve their differences without having to adapt to dominant cultural norms. In other words, colorblind and culture-neutral concepts, such as equality and citizenship, have been criticized for confining socio-economic, ethnic, sexual, religious, and ethnic subcultures in private spaces (Modood, 2007).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Due to enhanced social diversity and accelerating migration movements, multicultural societies that transcend the cultural assimilation capacities of schools have emerged. This has led to the advent of the notion of the multicultural school and the introduction of multiculturalism into the macro-institutional structures of schools in a fair number of Western societies in the form of government policies and legislation. However, the majority of schools failed to change, and as social diversity has increased, prejudice and discrimination have become more frequently observed and experienced phenomena within schools.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The education of distinctive groups of students from divergent cultural and minority ethnic classes continues to be on political, social, and educational agendas of the world. Depending on this situation, leadership for multicultural schools in broad strokes faces policy-bound, cultural, curricular, administrative, and operational challenges. That being said, frequently recommended leadership strategies to achieve these goals mainly target social transformations in the distant future; or, although they suggest making transformations within the school, they miss the *know-how*, namely, they fail to provide any knowledge on how and through which stages they will be made. Nevertheless, it is still possible to encounter examples of successful leadership particularly in cases where the support of both school-site stakeholders and institutional and political figures is provided.

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## **Introduction**

The rise of public schools and education systems largely reflects the idea of bringing together students from different cultures, religions, ethnicity, and social classes around common values. Apparently, in a good number of regions of the world, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political control over schools was established through secularization, the establishment of education systems, and public funding. Since then the task assigned to schools has generally been to train the manpower needed for the dominant political thought and assuring labor for the existing economy. In this respect, schools have been assigned major roles related to citizenship, and values other than the commonly embraced values have been either ignored or suppressed. Attempts of a social group to bring their unique values, practices, or beliefs into the school environment have often met strong opposition of other groups (Ansell & Lindvall, 2013). For example, at the Testimony of the US



House of Representatives in 1980, Rabbi Daniel Polish objected to the introduction of public prayers in public schools upon demands of some Protestant parents, arguing that it would compromise the sense of community in the school and cause unnecessary schism. As can be seen from this example, especially public schools were seen as the implementing actors of the nation-building experiments and were designed as monocultural environments in which some values were promoted while others were silenced (Meyer, 2006).

In addition, for social groups that strictly resist secular education in public schools, the option of subsidizing private faith schools has emerged. For instance, Catholic or Jewish schools have survived in many secular Western societies. Likewise, missionary schools and religious minority schools have held their places in the vast majority of Islamic countries (Donovan, 2019; Fraser, 1999). But be that as it may there have always been conflicts pertaining to curricula of these schools between the standardization influences of secular education systems and the specific demands of the religious group(s) the school serves. Curricula are largely similar to those of secular public schools though. Yet, it is possible to speak of the dominance of a certain religious group in these schools, particularly through a hidden curriculum. In this context, the most criticized issue about these schools is that they do not leave enough space to critical thinking required by democracy as they are prone to promoting unconditional commitment to a certain belief. Ironically, these schools, which came up due to the need for multiculturalism, turned out to be monocultural environments in which specified values are promoted whereas others are repressed (Feinberg, 2006).

The unifying effect of public schools, which limited social diversity because of their attributed nation-building mission, has been diluted in particular since the end of the twentieth century and started to decline in the face of the overwhelming power of diversity. The *imago* of monocultural school, which was established with the aim to alleviate social contradictions, has come to an end as the subject of these contradictions. As the social and cultural diversity escalated, the number of groups that meant to be the target audience of the schools increased howbeit the number of common educational ideals appealing to everyone decreased. Social groups, such as socioeconomic classes, ethnic minorities, racial groups, immigrants, LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual) individuals, and belief groups, have largely preserved their existence during the nation-building experiments and formed their own subcultures, leading to a diversity that exceeds schools' assimilation capacities (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

It is known that the efforts to assimilate diversity have often reinforced prejudices and deepened social contradictions (Maxwell, 2014; Palardy, 2013). To that end, the differences between socioeconomic groups among schools and within schools are almost taken for granted. Equality of opportunity has turned into a myth rather than a universal principle that guides students' lives (Palardy, 2013). Similarly, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities' facing more prejudice and discrimination in schools than in their neighborhoods is a frequently observed fact (e.g., Burgess, Wilson, & Lupton, 2005). LGBTIQ+ students constitute a less fortunate group; because they

are more likely to encounter stronger prejudice and discrimination both at schools and in their neighborhoods than other micro-social groups (Dessel, 2010). Furthermore, in Muslim countries like Turkey where patriarchy and masculinity are among core elements of national identity, homosexual students are mostly regarded as a “threat” to the society and school communities by several groups (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014). The phenomenon of international migration, which has been witnessed worldwide in a mounting manner in recent years, has led schools to face a pressure of diversity beyond their already weakened cultural assimilation capacities. This has made multiculturalism an inevitable trend bringing about a rising tide for public schools (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

The place of religion and belief groups in schools has been the subject of a heated debate since the establishment of the institution of public schooling. As a matter of fact, debates on religion in social life have generally been carried to schools. Whether faith schools and religious classes lead to social cohesion or to intergroup stereotyping and prejudice has remained a focus of conflicting discourses. However, faith schools have also had their share of diversity pressures, since it is possible to encounter students from different faiths or of no faith even in Catholic schools (Hemming, 2011).

The erosion of the cultural assimilation capacities of schools in the face of social and cultural diversity has forced them to welcome social reality. Notably since the end of the twentieth century, the ideal of cultural assimilation has left its place to the conception of multiculturalism (Meyer, 2006). Nevertheless, in multicultural schools, negative effects of intergroup contacts, such as prejudice and discrimination, can frequently be observed. The most important agenda topics of educational leaders in multicultural schools are then usually the strategies to be followed against such negativities (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). The following sections intend to elaborate on the said discussions by portraying the salient characteristics of multicultural schools and examining the challenges that leaders can face with and the leadership practices that can be resorted to in such environments.

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## Multicultural Schools

Multiculturalism is a term originated from the discipline of sociology. In its simplest term, it bespeaks the political accommodation of minorities. Should multiculturalism turn into a governmental policy, it could have educational consequences, as its primary goals have often been the schooling of children of minorities, the regulation of curriculum content in accordance with the needs of these groups, and those of in-school rules of conduct in conformity with varying beliefs and cultures (Modood, 2007). Thence, in multicultural schools, equal learning opportunities are provided to all students regardless of their socioeconomic status, ethnic and racial characteristics, gender, sexual orientation, or beliefs. This hints at the reorganization of the educational content, knowledge production processes, pedagogical approaches, in-school relations, school culture, and structure; a series of reflections of shifted mindset as well as praxis triggered

by multiculturalism. That is, multiculturalism actually mirrors an ideal for schools (Banks, 2016; Bennett, 2001). Thereupon it has been underpinned in the macro-institutional environment of schools through egalitarian governmental policies, immigrant policies, and legal regulations in many Western societies encouraging schools to change in this direction (Ham, Song, & Yang, 2020).

However, despite the fact that the conception of multicultural school has become a *point à l'ordre du jour* for nearly 30 years and multiculturalism has infiltrated the macro-institutional environment of schools in many countries, to date schools constituting a quorum have not succeeded in achieving this ideal. The existing institutional structures of the aforementioned schools still echo the ideal of cultural assimilation (Banks, 2016). Due to several school-specific factors, viz., curriculum, teacher qualifications, cocurricular and extracurricular activities, as well as school culture and environment, Whites compared to other races, citizens to immigrants, rich to poor (Warikoo & Carter, 2009), heterosexual students to LGBTIQ+ students (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013) hitherto have relatively higher academic achievement. To be specific, diversity has seemingly forced schools towards multiculturalism, but as interaction between social groups has increased, so has stereotyping and prejudice which makes it difficult for schools to attune and acclimatize themselves resulting in discrimination among students (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014).

Stereotyping and prejudice are dissimilar but closely related, if not intertwined, constructs. Stereotyping is a set of knowledge structures that function as mental pictures about a group. Stereotypes represent features that are unique to a whole group or members of that group, which differentiate them from other groups. In short, the term concerns the features, the exemplars that come to mind first when you think about a group. Although it is possible to come across positive examples, stereotyping often has negative connotations. The simplification caused by stereotyping leads to ignoring important details, such as historical realities, individual resumes, and collective responsibility. For this reason, stereotypes are said to reflect inaccurate, negative, overly general, and unfair perceptions (Stangor, 2016). Looking from an educational perspective, stereotypes can indeed shape teachers and students both positively and negatively. To illustrate, teachers often view Asian students as diligent and intelligent, but introverted. African students might be stereotyped as friendly and athletic but disobedient and aggressive. Whites, on the other hand, can be stereotyped as friendly, intelligent, and diligent, but materialistic (Chang & Demyan, 2007). At this point, the fact that they are not stereotyped as intelligent puts extra pressure on African students in academic matters. Similar pressures caused by stereotyping are also encountered in issues related to gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and immigrant students (Wright & Taylor, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the most negative result of stereotyping is prejudice. Prejudice alludes to socially shared judgments and assessments about a group, and emotions they give rise to. Because of its emotional aspect, prejudice can be seen as a negative attitude towards a group or a member of that group. Prejudice is a social category; it leads to the depersonalization of individuals, that is to say, to seeing them not as

individuals with distinctive qualities but as representatives of a social category (Stangor, 2016; Wright & Taylor, 2007). As an illustration, teachers who state “terrorists come from one religion but it’s a very small group. . .” during a lesson about 9/11 attacks, while trying to be fair in their own way, disclose their prejudice against students belonging to that religion (Sullivan, 2018). In a similar vein, individuals, based on the stereotype that “immigrant families are not interested in their children’s school life,” explain their prejudice when “blaming” immigrant students for schools’ declining SAT scores and education quality (Fennelly, 2008).

Legal regulations and governmental policies for the institutionalization of multiculturalism should not be expected to easily change the rooted mental models of school-site stakeholders that lead to stereotyping and prejudice. The realization of the multicultural school ideal in the face of increasing diversity pressures is largely possible through leadership practices. However, leadership for multicultural schools involves struggling with a number of challenges without the guidance of any proven strategy or style (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006).

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## Leadership for Multicultural Schools

The stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination tendencies in the local community can easily permeate the inner environment of a school. Depending on the intensity of these tendencies, the type and frequency of leadership practices in multicultural schools may vary. Leading in a multicultural school is a challenging task involving dealing with multilayered issues. It is viable to enlist the challenges that leaders face with while struggling to arrive at the ideal of a multicultural school as: (1) policy challenges, (2) challenges related to cultural diversity, (3) curricular challenges, (4) administrative challenges, and (5) operational challenges. Furthermore, the touchstone shared gives an idea about the challenges that educational leaders encounter while transforming their schools and the leadership practices that can be employed against these challenges. It is also noteworthy to state that oftentimes these challenges are interwoven (Banks et al., 2001; Bennett, 2001).

## Policy Challenges

With the rise of multicultural education, the focus of policy-making has been on the success of all learners including students of racial and ethnic minorities and of low socioeconomic groups, not only those with high competency, and on the closing of the achievement gaps between these groups. In that, policy documents regarding multicultural education usually involve the realization of the vision of educational equity and assign responsibilities to various public institutions, such as schools, school districts, and state as well as national level agencies (Singh & Taylor, 2007). To illustrate, legal regulations like No Child Left Behind Act establish a legal basis for policies aiming at enhancing proficiency levels of all students to meet pre-determined criteria, and distribute tasks and responsibilities among governmental

agencies at various levels to realize policy goals. It can be argued that ensuring equitable opportunities lie at the core of policy-making in multicultural education (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). Concordantly, multicultural schools are built to fulfill schools' roles in realizing the vision of educational equity. Equity indeed is the provision of equal opportunities for students to reach their full potential (Bennett, 2001). It includes creating an awareness of students, who are more disadvantaged than others, compensating for past misfortunes, inadequacies, disabilities, and deprivations, and establishing schools and education systems that will ensure all have access to high levels of academic achievement and a similar type of healthy lifestyle (Simon, Małgorzata, & Beatriz, 2007).

Educational equity vision has come to the fore because of the heavy social and financial costs of educational failures in the long run. Although there has been a great expansion in the number of students, educators, and institutions in all education levels from basic education to higher education around the world, the dropout rates of students of racial and ethnic minorities and of low socioeconomic groups and marginal students are higher than the mainstream groups. Additionally, even if the number of years they spend at school is the same as the majority students, these students' basic skills, such as reading, writing, and problem-solving, are generally at a lower level. Poor basic skills mean less chances of getting a job, more health problems, higher likelihood to commit crimes, and a shorter life expectancy (Demirel & Kurt, 2021; Lochner, 2004). Another disturbing fact is that despite the increase in the number of students, this situation has not increased social mobility, on the contrary, increased economic inequality. To put it in another way, even an egalitarian scenario, in which all individuals receive the same education at the same time and acquire the same advanced skills, does not always guarantee equitable results. The time and effort that individuals from marginalized groups must spend to "compensate for" the disadvantages they inherit from their families cause them to reach lower living standards than their peers. Accordingly, irrespective of the cause, inequity is among the reasons why stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination continue through generations (Autor, 2014; Öçal & Cicek, 2021).

Although equity is occasionally associated with the ideal of a socialist society or individualistic and radical liberal transformations, it actually indicates the need for a democratic society supported by a robust welfare state. Social inequity is the result of the massive historical and socioeconomic problems and injustices, solutions of which necessitate the intervention of large governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, and the allocation of immense financial resources. Put it differently, inequity can be deemed as the indicator of the failures of welfare states and democratic societies (Offe, 2006). To give an example, inequity issues are relatively less common in Nordic countries where welfare states are still highly redistributive (Kääriäinen & Lehtonen, 2006; Öztürk & Tataroğlu, 2017). At this point, promising that all individuals, including those from marginalized groups, can be adapted to the society and economy as largely free from the negative effects of the inequity issues solely via education and thence inequity problems can easily be solved by multicultural schools can be regarded as a fallacy. This is because schools

have a slight effect on improving actual conditions of parents and repairing socio-economic injustices they inherited from the past, and cannot undo differences in students' social capital (Esping-Andersen, 2006).

Along with this, schools are not independent institutions developing and applying their own policies but, instead, are one of the implementers of the equity-oriented welfare programs and policies administered and funded by large governmental agencies. For instance, The Equity and Excellence Commission in the USA has distributed roles within a spectrum from teachers to the federal government in the equity issues. Remarkably the states and the federal government were assigned tasks on topics, such as goal and standard setting, funding, and political and legislative actions. In other words, educational leaders usually take action against inequity issues by following certain rules, codes and standards to realize specific goals all of which are predetermined by other organizations. This should not mean that there is no room for equity-oriented leadership practices at the school level; because it is primarily the mission of school leadership to "agitate" the school environment and change the mental models of school-site stakeholders (USDE, 2013). To achieve the vision of equity, making school-specific action plans in line with ideals, such as cultural pluralism, social justice, and affirmations of culture in teaching and learning, instead of one-size-fits-all leadership strategies, promise more effective results (Bennett, 2001; English, 2020).

## **Challenges Related to Cultural Diversity**

Educational leaders generally perceive their schools as amicable and inclusive multicultural organizations valuing every student's cultural heritage and neutralizing their social and physical disadvantages. However, studies on stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in educational organizations have indicated that cultural conflicts and distinctions become more salient as cultural diversity in a school increases. The fact that schools are the places mostly dominated by the culture of the majority group gives rise to stereotyping and prejudice particularly against culturally different minority students during intercultural contacts. To illustrate, educators and parents tend to distance themselves from members of the minority groups, such as Black and Hispanic students, due to cultural differences. Factors such as language, group identifications, and socioeconomic status serve as bases of cultural conflicts and distinctions by creating achievement gaps and communication barriers. Expressly, bringing students from different cultural groups together in a school does not ensure intercultural contacts to produce positive results and attain policy goals regarding multicultural education (Cooper, 2009). To do so, firstly leaders need to figure out how to bring students from different cultural groups together without quitting their cultures, and secondly they need to find ways to compensate the effects of past misfortunes and unjust treatments on student learning. Briefly, taking steps towards cultural pluralism and social justice ideals can help leaders to alleviate the negative effects of cultural conflicts and distinctions on intergroup contacts (Bennett, 2001).

At this point, Bennett (2001) identified the ideal of cultural pluralism as one of the prerequisites of transforming multicultural schools in compliance with the equity vision and establishing constructive intergroup contacts. The vast majority of contemporary states emphasize the definition of citizenship built around a dominant culture. Therefore, fulfilling cultural pluralism is among the primary goals of multicultural school leadership. In societies dominated by a single culture, the preservation of the subcultures and their integration into society can be realized by cultural pluralism. The nomenclature of cultural pluralism was born into a world where newly arrived immigrants were expected to choose between adapting to the dominant culture by giving up their own languages and cultures or being discriminated and otherized (Bennett, 2001). Strictly speaking, cultural pluralism has manifested itself as an option developed for minorities in a multi-ethnic society, apart from cultural assimilation and discrimination. Hence, the former definitions of cultural pluralism resonate the ethnic perspective. By way of illustration, as part of the initial attempts to expound cultural pluralism, Kallen (1957) considered pluralism as the perpetuation of the cultural heritage of each ethnic group and, in this regard, the acceptance of their values and identities by the dominant culture.

Later, Kallen (1957) expanded this definition to include race, belief, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status groups. It can be underscored that equality lies behind cultural pluralism. Nonetheless, equality does not imply the adjectives similar or identical; it is the equivalence of unequals or the equality of dissimilars. The right of individuals and social groups to preserve their differences is indispensable and they cannot be punished for their inborn and/or developed differences. Cultural pluralism envisages giving equal status to each subculture, which is of great importance to get to positive results arising out of the interaction between cultural groups. As it can be understood from the definitions, cultural pluralism denotes a prescriptive approach rather than a descriptive term that portrays the current situation. To rephrase it, cultural pluralism necessitates an intense, democratic form of idealism and a high level of commitment (Bennett, 2001; Kallen, 1957).

However, the kind of equality envisaged by cultural pluralism may not completely eliminate the effects of the factors that cause inequality. Minority cultures are generally composed of lower socioeconomic groups. Moreover, the mechanisms of knowledge production and dissemination in a society are mostly shaped according to demands and needs of the majority group. Therefore, the fact that they have equal status does not mean that different groups are truly equal. Economic and cultural disadvantages inherited from the past can lead to the continuation of discrimination between groups that have been given equal status and opportunities. To put it concisely, formal equality status without alleviating social injustices risks masking existing discriminations (Miller, 1987).

This is evidently valid for the following situation, where Card and Rothstein (2007) argue that in integrated schools consisting of different socioeconomic and racial groups, White students with higher socioeconomic status incline to enroll in higher level advanced courses more than the other groups. Besides, the SAT scores



of the students coming from the neighborhoods of lower socioeconomic groups are lower than the other students (Card & Rothstein, 2007). Similarly, in Turkey, where millions of Syrian and Afghan immigrants have been continuously accommodated, immigrant students usually have lower levels of academic achievement than Turkish students even though they take courses in the same classroom being exposed to the same curricula (Karsli-Calamak & Kilinc, 2021). It is understood that benefiting from equal opportunities with equal status cannot eliminate the disadvantages of students stemming from their family background. In this instance, the ideal of social justice appears to be necessary to mitigate the effects of prejudice and discrimination in multicultural schools. In the past, due to the extreme tensions and inequalities caused by class society, the redistribution of capital and property was the subject of the ideal of social justice. Today, the goal of improving the human rights and lives of groups that have been discriminated against and marginalized due to a bunch of factors, i.e., gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, is at the center of the ideal of social justice (Barry, 2005).

As a result, the ideals of cultural pluralism and social justice serve as guiding principles for educational leaders rather than being a set of leadership strategies to be employed in certain school situations to lessen conflicts and distinctions. Furthermore, it is not possible to entirely isolate schools from intercultural tensions in and of the society. Also cultural interactions at schools are highly likely to catalyze stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination as individuals are not always willing to change their existing positions against others and change their habitualized actions easily when they construct a collective identity against another group (Hogg, Van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012). What is worse, the resources of schools are usually too limited to make significant improvements in students' social lives and the actions of school leaders are strictly constrained by highly institutionalized environments of schools. In addition to that, "fancy" leadership styles with romantic and stylish names that give great roles to educators are not magic wands. Cultural pluralism and social justice are ideals that can be attested at the end of a long and difficult journey entailing shared and distributed leadership practices with the active participation of all stakeholders (English, 2020; Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

## **Curricular Challenges**

Ideals of cultural pluralism and social justice are the main pillars of the societal structures of multicultural schools to create constructive intergroup contacts, but multiculturalism is not merely about intergroup interactions. Curricular activities, which comprise the technical and pedagogical core of schools, are also among the main elements of multiculturalism. Culture guides the actions of individuals through shared beliefs, values, worldviews, and norms of behavior. In the past, attempts to use schools as a means of cultural assimilation during colonialism had led to the disruption of minorities' social reproduction and the pathologizing of minority parents. This in turn have triggered intergenerational traumas and deepened the



antagonism between minority and majority groups. Individuals, whose ancestors experienced such traumatic schooling experiences in the past, are likely to have a feeling of injustice and resist engaging in constructive interactions with majority group members (Maxwell, 2014). It is, therefore, possible but not wise to teach in multicultural communities without considering the cultures and cultural backgrounds of individuals (Banks et al., 2001). Alongside this, curriculum in multicultural schools is generally transformational and action-focused since curricular activities are the parts of struggles to enhance equality between the cultures of social groups and rectify outcomes of past unjust treatments. This at times necessitates the parental participation to provide cultural context for classroom activities. Teaching methods and techniques are personalized and participatory; and teaching materials are developed to include perspectives of all groups in the school on teaching content. In other words, curricular activities must be designed in a way to improve intercultural understandings and communication skills of teachers and students, and to decrease the effects of stereotyping and prejudice against minority groups (Banks, 2001).

The need to design curriculum activities in agreement with multicultural societies has also led to culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching affirms that cultural diversity is influential in individual learning experiences and organizing teaching activities and in-school relations accordingly. Culturally responsive teaching is quite a broad field. It calls for taking action(s) in line with the knowledge of different cultures in the development of curricula, the use of instructional methods and strategies, the selection of instructional materials, and the conduct of relations with students. Additionally, struggling with stereotyping, prejudice, and injustices that prevent multiculturalism and transforming the school community in harmony with the ideals of cultural pluralism and social justice are among the objectives of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2013).

Culturally responsive teaching usually has positive effects on academic achievement and student engagement. On the other hand, designing curricular activities in keeping with multiculturalism is a challenging process that compels shared leadership practices and must be carried out delicately (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). In this process, past interracial and intercultural tensions may resurface or new prejudices may engender. While individuals with more intercultural interaction experiences can adapt to this process more easily, those with limited and negative past experiences may not want to give up their prejudices. For example, a Black student who encounters Whites only in governmental agencies or through criminal justice system may resist to course activities about the place of Whites in anti-racist movements. Or, students may find it difficult to grasp the long, difficult, and complex nature of equal rights and freedom struggles. In similar fashion, in schools where students and teachers predominantly belong to a certain group, school-site stakeholders may be reluctant to adopt curricular changes. In parallel, teachers may have limited opportunities to determine curriculum content and select course materials. In some cases, administrators and teachers may have to obtain cultural information by contacting families directly (Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011). The most challenging obstacle is that educators mostly do not believe in the idea of

multicultural school and are unprepared for the curriculum changes demanded by the social diversity. The prevalence of educators prefer to emphasize similarities not differences, unity rather than division, and the security provided by stability instead of the uncertainty that change can cause (English, 2020; Gay, 2013).

These examples demonstrate that designing curricular activities in commensurating with multicultural education impels serious preparation and mental shifts for and of administrators, teachers, students, and families. School transformations can be accelerated by school leaders' critical self-reflection on stereotyping and prejudice, their empowering and inspiring teachers to be culturally responsive, their changing curricula, as well as altering the school environment and climate, and last but not the least through their establishing close contacts with indigenous communities. In order for these actions to have long-lasting results in schools and to persuade school-site stakeholders to actively participate in these efforts, they may need to be supported by legislative regulation changes and state or national level governmental policies (Khalifa et al., 2016).

## **Administrative Challenges**

The implementation of policies regarding multicultural education, the resolution of cultural conflicts caused by social diversity, and the designation of curricular activities in the spirit of multicultural education are predominantly administrative tasks calling for transforming schools' organizational structures and daily routines. To rephrase it, the notion of multicultural school can be realized through comprehensive and effective administrative interventions in the first place (Banks, 2001). First off, multicultural schools need to employ culturally and ethnically diverse teachers who are capable of surpassing lingual and cultural barriers caused by social diversity and of implementing curricular activities involving multicultural elements. In this direction, continuous professional development programs are necessary to improve cross-cultural teaching skills of these teachers consistent with constantly changing student profile and curricular activities (Kaye, 2006). Besides, highly individualized classroom activities entail the development or the procurement of curricular materials specific to each school or classroom, which can be accomplished through close and continuous collaboration between administrators, teachers, and parents. Further, not only teachers but also administrative staff in multicultural schools is expected to have a competency to overcome lingual and cultural barriers and a capacity to deal with the increasing workload as they need to repeat the same task in different languages while, at the same time, meeting the standards set by local and national authorities. Most importantly, all these administrative interventions cannot be undertaken without the allocation of adequate financial resources (Knight, Izquierdo, & DeMatthews, 2016).

All the administrative interventions required to build multicultural schools pose significant challenges for educational leaders. Finding highly qualified, committed, and experienced teachers and administrative staff who can meet the requirements of multicultural education is one of the reasons of discontent for educational

leaders (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). This is because adjusting curricular activities through individualized teaching methods and pacing lessons in compliance with learning needs of students from diverse groups in the same classroom are huge concerns for teachers. Furthermore, on most occasions, they have difficulties in ensuring equality among in-classroom groups and applying social justice interventions for disadvantaged individuals due to time constraints (Hamm, 2015). Consequently, preparing existing teachers and administrative staff for multicultural education through professional development programs is a frequently used method, yet it is mostly constrained by inadequate resources. Even educational leaders usually have to reallocate existing financial resources without creating additional expenditures to implement professional development programs and procure curricular materials. In other words, it can be argued that the vast majority of schools lack adequate resources to meet the requirements of multicultural education, making school leaders financially and administratively dependent on local or national authorities in achieving necessary transformations (Knight et al., 2016; USDE, 2013).

At this point, it can be asserted that the most significant challenge in transforming the school community is institutional constraints on in-school activities. Schools are embedded in bureaucratic hierarchies, which implies that in-school structures, rules, and procedures are largely directed by legal regulations and demands of the governmental agencies. Put differently, the implementation of interventions to build multicultural schools and the allocation of necessary resources usually impel securing the support of political and institutional actors (Theoharis, 2007). For instance, in cases where interventions, such as changing the existing curriculum, hiring bilingual teachers and administrative staff, implementing professional development programs, and increasing the number of advanced courses, are supported by political figures and institutional actors, they are likely to reach relatively more successful results. While political figures can initiate legislative actions for legal amendments, institutional agents, like local districts, governmental bodies, and state authorities, can change regulations and directives regarding school activities and finance administrative interventions (Fusarelli, 2002). In addition, the political and institutional support can also ensure the persistence of the effects of these interventions irrespective of the changes in staffing (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

## **Operational Challenges**

School leadership in multicultural schools needs to seek answers to questions such as: “How can I establish a culturally plural school community and school conditions appropriate for constructive intergroup contacts?” and “What kind of interventions should I apply to neutralize the negative effects of past misfortunes and unjust treatments on student learning?” Some may argue that challenges posed by policy, intercultural, curricular, and administrative issues leave a small room for the operationalization of leadership and complicate the application of interventions.

However, transformations in schools required by the multicultural education can be achieved by the leadership distributed among all school stakeholders. For instance, creating a fruitful in-classroom climate through constructive and inclusive interactions for positive curricular outcomes demands teachers and parents to assume leadership roles (Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2013). Similarly, a supportive school community for egalitarian intergroup contacts among majority and minority students can be established by the participation of school administrators, teachers, and parents. Further, the reparation of past misfortunes and unjust treatments drives educational leaders to extend their spheres of influence out of the schools to invite the support of institutional and political figures (Khalifa et al., 2016).

It can be argued that educational leaders must first take steps towards building a culturally plural school community in order to promote appropriate conditions for constructive egalitarian intergroup contacts. Moreover, culturally plural school communities can also facilitate school leaders' receiving the support of school stakeholders while taking actions in favor of culturally different individuals (Opatow, 2012; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). On this occasion, intergroup contact theory can be used to analyze the patterns and consequences of interaction between cultural groups in schools and the interventions that can be employed by educational leaders. This theory is based on the assumption that intergroup contacts under appropriate conditions reduce stereotyping and prejudice between cultural groups. This means, a properly managed contact can reduce intergroup stereotyping and prejudice problems in schools and lead to positive results. Equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support are among the necessary conditions for the intergroup contact to yield positive results. Equal status here signifies different groups' taking part in the interaction as equal parties (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013).

Ensuring intergroup equality can be deemed as the most basic duty of educational leaders for interactions without equality often give rise to hostility, even with the support of institutional actors, such as district administrations and local or national education authorities. The other condition within this frame of reference is that the interacting groups should have common goals. Gathering students from different groups to solve a problem or overcome a challenging task can let them put their differences of opinion aside and focus on common goals (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013). It is a requirement of intergroup cooperation that these students need to have an equal status and work to reach common goals without competing. At this point, teachers may also need to assume leadership roles and encourage students. That said, it is unlikely that such activities will become permanent in schools without an institutional support. As a formal educational leader, the level of influence of the school principal may not be enough to create and institutionalize the necessary conditions to verify positive results in schools. Thus, the support of school district administrations, local or national education authorities through legal regulations and policies can facilitate the engagement of school-site stakeholders in such activities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

The assumptions of intergroup contact theory have been largely confirmed by studies conducted in schools. To give an instance, in a study conducted with Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli students, it was discovered that the tendency of

cooperation and positive feelings between the two groups strengthened when the necessary conditions were met despite the deep hatred among students (Goldenberg et al., 2017). Likewise, a structured intergroup contact provided under appropriate conditions in classroom teaching activities has been found to reduce stereotyping and prejudice among students (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013). The issue that complicates the work of educational leaders in this regard is the possibility of different leader prototypes of each group. Generally, social groups tend to choose individuals similar to themselves as leaders. If an education leader is seen as “one of them” instead of “one of us,” their impact may be limited. Owing to that, the implementation of leadership practices without threatening the identities of the groups in the school and without showing a special affinity to any group can increase the probability of the success of educational leaders (Kershaw, Rast, Hogg, & van Knippenberg, 2021).

However, egalitarian interactions achieved through the application of the assumptions of the intergroup contact theory are not anywhere near as effective in serving as social justice interventions since granting equal status to groups with unequal ability and social capital levels and socioeconomic status in benefiting equal opportunities does not guarantee to get equal educational outcomes for all students. This implies that educational leaders must employ social justice interventions in favor of culturally different individuals to compensate injustices they inherited from past (Berkovich, 2014). Taking a critical stance, it can be pinpointed that schools have contributed to the reproduction of social power relations throughout history. Today, the elements that cause social injustice are mostly due to nonschool factors and historical unjust treatments. This has led to academic discussions about social justice interventions in schools concentrating on abstract concepts or ambiguous goals. Intervention recommendations, such as including the ideal of social justice in teacher training programs, redesigning school leader preparation programs based on the concepts of multiculturalism, social justice, and critical thinking, discussing power and oppression structures in society, believing in the ideal of social justice, creating democratic and critical communities, and bringing the ideal of social justice into daily activities, are undoubtedly crucial for shaping attitudes of administrators and teachers and are essential constituents of multiculturalism (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011). In the long run, such interventions may have the potential to transform schools into autonomous “safe-heavens” isolated from power relations in society or to stimulate social transformations. Having said that, relying on bright, uncertain, and radical changes in the distant future to solve problems inherited from the past and constantly keeping it on the agenda might lessen the threats to the identities of marginalized groups rather than contributing to the improvement of their actual conditions. To be more specific, it can assuage the social injustice perceptions of these people without actually helping them at all (Dubé-Simard, 1983).

Correspondingly, the bureaucratic hierarchies in which schools are embedded limit the social justice interventions of school leaders mostly to the school environment (Ayyıldız & Baltacı, 2020; Theoharis, 2007). Several scholars (e.g., Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2018; Furman, 2012) stated that school leaders usually implement interventions, such as focusing on increasing the academic achievement of marginalized students, the creation of heterogeneous classes by eliminating exclusive

programs like ability-based courses and pull-out models of special education, boosting the number and facilitating the access to educational opportunities for all students such as advanced courses, improving staff qualifications through social justice-oriented seminars, strengthening school cultures, motivating the establishment of positive communication and relationships (Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2018). However, it is often unclear how these leadership strategies close the academic gap between marginalized students and other students. Furthermore, these strategies typically do not offer any guidance about how to overcome legal barriers particularly in services provided to students in special education although such services are generally regulated by rigid legal rules. While the unstructured interaction of different groups risks deepening of the existing prejudices (Goldenberg et al., 2017), it is usually not clearly specified how this problem is to be overcome. Even though students with higher socioeconomic status generally tend to enroll more in advanced courses, it remains ambiguous how other groups are encouraged in this manner (Card & Rothstein, 2007). It is often not explained how the enhancement of staff qualifications and positive communication foster changes in the actual conditions of marginalized students through what mechanisms either (Dubé-Simard, 1983). It is possible to utter that these strategies are equality-oriented but unstructured instructional efforts instead of being social justice-oriented practices. Conceptualizing leadership on social justice and prescribing certain strategies and interventions are undoubtedly well-intentioned efforts, but unstructured intergroup contacts risk inadvertently increasing prejudice and discrimination (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2016). This situation also shows that the ideal of social justice cannot be separated from cultural pluralism (Bennett, 2001).

There is a broad literature on social justice interventions. Social justice interventions often call for the recognition of marginalized individuals or groups and the preparation of action plans appropriate to their circumstances. Thence, there must firstly be awareness about social injustice. Awareness that a marginalized individual or group is more socially and culturally different than others enables individuals, social groups, institutions, and governments to take actions. These actions should be taken as soon as injustice is noticed, because justice delayed is justice denied (Opatow, 2012). Notwithstanding, there may be groups that feel threatened by social justice interventions in favor of an individual or group (Kershaw et al., 2021). For example, Asian families, who feared losing their advantageous position, reacted against a proposal to enroll more Black and Hispanic students to top high schools in New York (Shapiro, 2020). Thusly, arranging social justice interventions in a way that does not threaten their identities and rights can facilitate the persuasion of these groups to support interventions in support of culturally different individuals. What is more, using nonviolent actions in the struggle against injustices may precipitate the support of other groups. Cultural pluralism can create favorable conditions in which these interventions can be made without deepening the existing conflicts and divisions. Finally, a strong institutional support is needed for the persistence and sustainability of the effects of these interventions and the reparation of losses caused by previous discriminations (Opatow, 2012). This support can be in the forms of teacher union actions, regulation changes, and political and legislative actions. For

instance, in schools in a region where Mexican families make up the majority of the population, it was necessary for school leaders to get the support of district administrators and political figures to switch to dual language education, which consisted of the teaching of the same curricula in both English and Spanish in the same classrooms (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2016).

In sum, it can be stated that there is yet no proven leadership practices or styles to build culturally plural school communities fully free from the effects of the social injustices. Establishing constructive egalitarian interactions and neutralizing past injustices in schools can be achieved through a leadership that should be undertaken delicately by all school stakeholders. The fact that such a highly elaborated and complicated task requires the collaboration of a number of individuals during a relatively long period and carries the risk of causing more prejudice and discrimination turns leadership in multicultural schools into a challenging operation. For this reason, making action plans for each school by analyzing the tense and harmonious relations between social groups can help leaders determine appropriate leadership practices and decrease the risks posed by the complexity of the operation and the unpredictability of the intergroup contacts. Furthermore, administrative restrictions imposed on schools require getting the support of institutional actors nearly in every action towards establishing multicultural schools (Hogg et al., 2012; Opotow, 2012).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Especially since the 1990s, the idea that schools, teachers, and educational leaders should be sensitive to increasing social diversity is widely accepted among policymakers and educators around the globe. Ideals, such as educational equity, cultural pluralism, social justice, and cultural responsiveness, are increasingly spreading and finding more and more responses in society. Nevertheless policy-bound, cultural, curricular, administrative, and operational challenges generally slow down the efforts to transform school communities. In policy documents, schools are usually regarded as one of the implementers without goal and standard setting authority, which makes them followers of superior organizations in multiculturalism issues. Furthermore, the settlement of cultural conflicts and distinctions involves acting in keeping with guiding idealistic principles, such as cultural pluralism and social justice, rather than proven leadership strategies or roadmaps. In curricular issues, the tendency of school administrators and teachers to emphasize unity and integrity may cause them to resist changes in the direction of multiculturalism. Hiring skillful teachers, developing and procuring school specific curricular materials, and making necessary transformations within limits set by legal regulations without creating additional expenditures turn administrative work into a bureaucratic mess. What is worse, comprehensive leadership practices and strategies to be applied to achieve multicultural schools have yet to be fully developed. Current recommendations oftentimes rely on social transformations in an uncertain future. Leadership strategies recommended to be implemented at school sites have the risk of causing more prejudice between students and teachers because they are not elaborated



sufficiently to manage intergroup interactions. Also, the institutional environment that schools are embedded in usually limits the multiculturalism-oriented transformational leadership practicum of school leaders. All these obstacles indicate that educational leadership for multicultural schools not only should aim to transform the mental models of school-site stakeholders, but also invited the support of institutional and political figures.

It is anticipated that social diversity will be in the pipeline even more in the future, which means that schools, curricula, and relationships between school-site stakeholders will turn into arenas of sociocultural conflicts. With this in mind, it can be argued that stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination will remain to be issues to deal with for school leaders. As can be discerned from the discussions in the bulk of literature, the multicultural school is a “project” that can be implemented with broad social consensus and strong political and institutional support, as well as via transforming the mental models of school-site stakeholders. Henceforward, it is possible to italicize that educational leadership studies on multiculturalism will continue to focus on major issues, such as policy, cultural, curricular, administrative, and operational matters, that pose challenges to the establishment of multicultural schools and the practice of leadership in socially diverse school communities.

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# Overcoming Invisibility: The Systemic Need to Recognize Indigenous People in Educational Spaces

# 78

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## Abstract

Curricula and educational practices in schools largely define the collective understanding of what society has deemed relevant, accurate, and valued. From the earliest days of colonial contact, the narrative of the presence and role of Indigenous peoples has been offered from a primarily Eurocentric perspective. This process has become normalized and ingrained in the educational system and

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dictated stereotypes and biases about Indigenous nations and peoples. This process continues to do harm to Indigenous as well as non-Native learners. While this state of affairs has been clearly documented, and the harm is ongoing and pervasive, there are practices and policies that have been successful in mitigating these deleterious effects. Within a framework of conceptual change, educational leaders are called upon to help all stakeholders recognize more culturally appropriate and accurate representations of Indigenous nations and people.

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**Keywords**

Indigenous learners · Curriculum revision · Multicultural education · Decolonizing education · Systemic racism · Systemic bias · American Indian · Native American · Indigenous nations · Indigeneity · Educational leadership · Indigenous sovereignty · Settler orientation

**The Field of Memory**

The representation of Indigenous nations and people has an insidious history; the echoes of which overshadow and shape our understanding of topics in education related to Indigeneity. While there is some progress in addressing overt racist representations and cultural misappropriations, the pervasiveness of those messages continues to influence biases and stereotypes. One of these messages is the false notion that there is a fundamental difference among races of people that predispose educational or career success. Aligned with this racist perspective was the misconception that there is a distinct and unitary race of people identified as “American Indian” or “Native American.” Finally, both official policies and widespread public sentiment (among the dominant white culture in particular) held that the forced assimilation of Indigenous people was not only justified but served the best interests of Indigenous people.

**The Field of Presence**

Educators and society, in general, are becoming cognizant of the reality that race is an abstract construction generated by society. In historical and contemporary society, systemic racism and American exceptionalism have promoted and sustained inequitable economic and social advantages to the dominant culture. While racism and misconceptions remain inherent in society, there is also recognition that (a) Indigenous nations are sovereign states that have self-determination in their organization and operation; (b) there is great diversity within and among the hundreds of Indigenous nations (state and federally recognized, as well as those continuing to fight for formal recognition); (c) the histories and contemporary lives of marginalized peoples are critical components to understanding the places we live and work, and (d) contemporary American education has considerable gaps in the representation of the cultures and histories related to Indigenous peoples.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The process of transforming a systemic corpus of knowledge and beliefs as well as the structures that underlie those widespread belief systems and bodies of knowledge align with the field of conceptual change theory from educational and cognitive psychology (Chi, 2008). Conceptual change has been deeply investigated in the field for decades, with early roots in Piagetian perspectives of cognitive adaptation. Central to this line of inquiry is the recognition that naive learners build representations of the world around them, which leads to established or entrenched theories that are laden with inaccuracies. These early misconceptions provide considerable barriers to learning “accurate” representations when entering formal instructional settings because the “new” content is perpetually interpreted from the perspective of the original (or resident) theory. This leads to a series of cognitive defense strategies that inherently protect the resident theory from what is perceived to be “anomalous” information (Chinn & Brewer, 1993). Of course, not all naive learning leads to misconceptions. When a learner is first exposed to positive representations that are conceptually accurate, the “resident theory” is correct and no conceptual change is needed.

To overcome misconceptions, merely providing the “correct” information is usually ineffective, because the learner will reinterpret, discount, or explain away the new information within their existing structures (Chinn & Brewer, 1993; Sinatra & Chinn, 2012). Achieving conceptual change is most effective when learning materials illustrate the failures of the resident theory, offer new content clearly, guard against “backsliding” (reverting to pre-existing misunderstanding), and actively engage learners with an expert mentor.

Using conceptual change theory for systemic change suggests that the first step is to identify critical failures in understanding. Further, under the leadership and guidance of experts, coordinated and consistent presentation of appropriate replacement content that debunks common misconception is necessary. Functions operating at the level of an individual class, lesson, or field trip limited utility in overcoming systemic misconceptions because social awareness and curriculum standards perpetuate the common misconceptions. Finally, as with individual learners’ conceptual change, it is important to recognize there will be resistance to adjusting embedded and inherent “resident theories.”

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

To illustrate primary discontinuities and ruptures related to the education of and about Indigenous nations and people, a broad framework classifying eras represented by the primary interactions between Indigenous and colonizing peoples is illustrative. In the first era – before the arrival of European colonists – there were thousands of diverse and sovereign nations across the Western Hemisphere, with their own histories, identities, cultures, languages, and ways of living. Indigenous governments were built on cultural values and practices, with unique and often democratic principles. Indigenous nations engaged in trade, social relations, diplomacy, alliances, wars, and ecological stewardship since time immemorial.

The second era can be represented by the time frame from the first colonial contact with Indigenous people in North America through the foundation of the United States. That period was driven by a colonial mentality, with focus on “claiming land” within a Eurocentric orientation guided by the doctrine of discovery that was often associated with some degree of “education” connected to religious missionary (e.g., Deloria, 1988; Deloria & Wilkins, 1999). It is during this second era when colonists began to construct the false conceptualization of “Indian” as a monolithic group (or race), rather than recognizing individual sovereign nations.

The next major era – extending through the late 1800s – is characterized by formal U.S.-Indigenous policies and activities such as the Indian Removal Act (1830) and over 370 treaties negotiated with Indigenous nations and ratified by Congress. While the Removal Act is often portrayed in education as a stand-alone moment, the evidence is clear that there was a consistent goal among US government officials to deal with “the Indian problem” (Arthur, 1881). This led to a century of policies, wars, and treaties designed to remove or confine Indigenous people so Americans could occupy the Indigenous lands they found desirable. In this timeframe, educational efforts of the United States and religious organizations were primarily focused on agricultural training in the European tradition and ongoing efforts to Christianize Indigenous peoples (Trujillo & Alston, 2005). In both situations, the prevailing goal was to assimilate established Indigenous cultures and communities into the newly developing United States.

From the late 1800s forward, four eras are discernable: Allotment and Assimilation (late 1800s–1920s), the Indian New Deal (1930s–1950s), Termination (1950s–1970s), and Self-Determination (1960s–forward). During Allotment and Assimilation, the Dawes Act and vast promulgation of Indigenous boarding schools are prime examples of systemic efforts to dismantle Indigenous peoples’ cultures and nations by changing their world views, shaming them, and disrupting their relationships with one another and their homelands. The Dawes Act (1887) forced Indigenous nations to allot communal tribal lands into small parcels of acreage for ownership by individual Indigenous people. Following that phase of allotment, the federal government appropriated approximately 65% of the 138 million acres legally held by Indigenous nations in 1887 in less than 50 years (Deloria & Lytle, 1983), disbursing (usually without compensation) the land to settlers or federal entities. Further assimilation was forced upon Indigenous people through boarding schools. By 1926, approximately 83% of Native American school-age children were attending residential boarding schools (The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, n.d.), with a preference for educating Indigenous children at a considerable distance from their homes to reduce “disruptions” to their training (Trujillo & Alston, 2005). Boarding schools were designed to prepare Indigenous children for life in a “civilized world” by extolling the principles (and superiority) of an American democratic vision, eliminating the use of tribal languages, and employing explicit religious training and conversion (Juneau et al., 2013; Northern Plains Reservation Aid, n.d.).

“The Indian New Deal” has been described by many as a reaction to the Meriam Report of 1928, which demonstrated the deplorable conditions that many Indigenous

nations were living in due to mismanagement of resources by the U.S. government (Deloria & Lytle, 1983). During this era, policies such as the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA) are often represented as formal attempts to promote tribal autonomy and structure. The IRA was beneficial in some ways to Indigenous nations, providing a shift from the brutal policies of Allotment and forced assimilation. It included efforts to restore Native lands that had been lost, support for the revitalization of Native governments, and programs and projects to stimulate the economies of Native communities. However, Hopkins (2020) argues these policies essentially maintained colonial goals, reshaping or destroying tribal identities.

The Termination Era was driven by Public Law 280 (1953), which sought to terminate federal recognition and assistance to more than 100 Indigenous nations. These policies were economically disastrous for many Indigenous nations who ultimately lost millions of acres of valuable natural resource lands. Another failed program of this era encouraged Native people to relocate from rural reservations to urban areas for “better opportunities.” The policy resulted in loss of culture and connection to home communities and created a sense of alienation for many Indigenous families. In these urban settings, Indigenous people were exposed to racist views and behaviors, and the promised jobs often failed to materialize (Deloria, 2001a). As such, policies and practices through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century focused on promoting American exceptionalism, and “success” for Indigenous people often involved leaving their communities or abandoning homelands, family members, and cultures to advance their educational or career goals.

The era of self-determination for Indigenous nations and people (1960s–forward) is highlighted by the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. During this time frame, the federal government has been called upon repeatedly to affirm the sovereign rights of tribes (e.g., the Boldt Decision and Keystone Pipeline; Hopkins, 2020; Deloria, 2001a). This period also has involved the formal abandonment of the termination policy (Juneau et al., 2013) and has been accompanied by a resurgence in Indigenous communities rebuilding and reconnecting with their languages, customs, and more. In conjunction with this focus on Indigenous self-determination, the past 40 years has also been a time of growing attention to the value of recognizing Indigenous voices in the construction of the educational landscape for US curriculum standards and classroom materials.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Effectively considering limitations in educational content and considering processes that may support meaningful corrections in the field is significantly influenced by assumptions about the field and the people who are to be engaged in that process. The first assumption is that most educators do not hold *explicit* racist biases that consciously drive instructional practices *intended* to advance deficit perspectives of Indigenous nations and individuals. However, the second assumption is that people (including educators) hold implicit biases and stereotypes related to Indigenous people shaped by their own educational experiences and popular culture. Those implicit biases and stereotypes, supported by a history of explicit policies focused on



forced assimilation, have normalized standards and educational resources that perpetuate and strengthen colonial representations of Indigenous people. Furthermore, inherent preferences for a national perspective of the United States as exceptional, heroic, or morally superior to other nations produce resistance to the presentation of content that contradicts those tropes. As such, educational leaders and teachers often perpetuate false narratives due to a limited base of knowledge, flawed materials, and curriculum constriction imposed by standardized curricula and testing expectations. Finally, a key assumption is that educational leaders at local and broader levels can be instrumental in critically reviewing the standards and materials used to educate learners about Indigenous learners.

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## Introduction

Recovering from centuries of repressing and misrepresenting Indigenous cultures in educational curricula requires systemic efforts. Building from this review of the challenges created by policies, practices, and embedded biases, this discussion focuses on articulating successful strategies that can guide leaders toward a more equitable and appropriate curricula. The path forward requires first identifying that the existing curricula have perpetuated and strengthened misconceptions and biases about Indigenous people. Next, exposing the harm upon Indigenous learners as well as non-Native learners is essential to illuminate the clear detriment that complacency will sustain. Finally, evidence of successful strategies is provided to serve as a guide to transforming the teaching and learning of Indigenous content within the frameworks of current educational practices.

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## Curricula Based on False Narratives Perpetuate Misconceptions

An indisputable reality in education is that the standard delivery of content related to Indigenous nations and people is incomplete and flawed. In line with a conceptual change framework, effectively remediating this failure must begin by identifying the source. To that effect, while teachers curate and deliver content in classrooms, national and state curriculum standards in concert with textbooks dictate the topics that will be drawn upon by teachers. Collectively, these standards and textbooks stand as *de facto* representations of a society's declaration of truth and validity within educational disciplines (Sabzalian, Shear, & Snyder, 2021). As such, the presence of incomplete and inaccurate representations of Indigenous cultures and Native histories in curriculum standards and textbooks perpetuates reductionist and stereotyped thinking in society (Sanchez, 2007).

In contemporary educational practice, for most learners, Native nations are visible primarily through materials and standards that are limited and focus on select tribes in specific contexts that serve primarily in the role of antagonist or barrier to a settler colonization narrative (Hopkins, 2020). Sabzalian et al.'s (2021) comprehensive review of civics curriculum standards across the United States confirmed the failure

of standards to effectively address Indigenous cultures and histories. Their review demonstrated that state standards routinely ignore tribal sovereignty, fail to recognize or represent treaties and treaty rights, and portray Indigenous peoples in predominantly historical frameworks or as racial minorities in the United States (rather than as members of their recognized tribal nations). In addition to demonstrating the repeated absence of Indigenous cultures' representation in content standards, Sabzalian et al. (2021) identified that primary strategies of explicit and implicit "erasure" from state standards include: (a) standards that should incorporate Indigenous knowledge but did not (e.g., when the standard calls for examples of levels of government and failed to identify tribal governments as relevant examples), (b) restricting standards coverage to the later grades or elective courses, and (c) relabeling Indigenous tribes or nations as "groups" (delegitimizing legal and cultural standing).

Like Sabzalian, Shear, and Snyder's analysis of K-12 civics standards, Shear, Knowles, Soden, and Castro (2015) conducted a national study of K-12 U.S. history standards to better understand how Indigenous peoples and nations are included or not in the narrative of American history. Their findings demonstrated a considerable imbalance favoring historic accounts (pre-1900), with approximately 90% of content standards focused on pre-1900 representations. The disproportionate coverage was more extreme in the elementary grades (on average 20 out of 23 state standards), but middle and high school standards still averaged 80% focus on pre-1900 contexts (on average 17 of 21 state standards; Shear et al., 2015). A qualitative review of the standards across states demonstrated that a narrative of "cooperation to conflict" was common, progressing from genial cohabitation during early colonization to the era of wars and treaties in the late 1800s. Shear and colleagues also noted that the standards depersonalized the experiences of Indigenous nations by focusing on institutional aspects of topics such as removal (i.e., focus on policy or law rather than personal experiences). Finally, the standards predominantly confirmed a vision that westward expansion and dominating colonization was an inevitable outcome, in which Indigenous nations are held to a "secondary role as temporary barriers in the way of American progress." (Shear et al., 2015, p. 87)

Driven by this colonial framework for standards, the information presented in textbooks is largely inaccurate, incomplete, and results in a false representation of Indigenous nations and people. The few representations that do arise in textbook treatments generally portray singular Indigenous individuals or tribes in a historical or prehistorical context (Sanchez, 2007). These limited treatments of Indigenous cultures are incapable of exposing learners to the wide range of tribes that differ in languages, traditions, legends and stories, and relationships with their traditional lands – and how those various tribes have changed over the course of time. Moreover, when teachers and students are offered only one biased and stereotyped view, they are led to make assumptions and overgeneralizations about Indigenous nations. Those assumptions lead to a variety of misconceptions of the people described and eventually affect their understanding of how the people lived in the past and how they live in the present (National Congress of American Indians, NCAI, 2019).

These overgeneralizations and extensions can be easily seen in traditional “Thanksgiving stories” that fail to identify the Wampanoag directly, often referring instead to “Indians” or “Native Americans.” Many texts showcase artistic renderings of Indigenous culture featuring food, clothing, and shelter, predominantly portrayed in a historical context. Furthermore, limitations in textbook space and Indigenous contribution to content commonly lead to overgeneralization, which Sanchez (2007) documented extensively for 15 popular secondary level texts. Relying heavily on these materials, classroom teachers have been observed to favor lessons related to Indigenous tribes from the perspectives of focusing on the past (e.g., living in tipis, hunting buffalo, riding horses, and wearing buckskin) or assigning tasks where the students are “tourists” visiting a tribe and focus on unusual or exotic components of Indigenous cultures (Almeida, 1996).

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## Flawed Curricula Inflicts Harm upon Learners and Society

Attentive educators readily recognize that there are inaccuracies in the information that has become the collective educational consciousness embodied in curriculum materials, state and national standards, and popular cultural representations (Sanchez, 2007; Reese, 2008). School leaders will commonly acknowledge this reality but express a limited ability to overcome the issue given the extreme range of topics related to Indigenous Cultures that have been conveyed with inaccuracies (both intentionally and unintentionally; Quigley, 2016; Sanchez, 2007). This barrier is further compounded by educational leaders’ self-identified limited expertise in knowing “what to trust.” Educational leaders also grapple with the challenge that realities of colonization and systemic cultural oppression are uncomfortable and distressing to many white Americans. Resistance to accurately educating around issues such as forced removal, allotment and termination policies, treaty violations, boarding schools, or the urban relocation efforts are counter to an American exceptionalism that is valued and promoted under the cloak of “patriotic” civic education (Sabzalian & Shear, 2018).

Awareness of inaccuracy coupled with a perceived inability to effectively remediate the flawed curriculum standards and materials has led to decades of incomplete modifications that generally exacerbate misconceptions. For instance, the removal of content that has been identified as clearly racist and inappropriate from textbooks and curricula does not correct the problem. Naturally, eliminating curricular materials that explicitly communicated negative stereotypes and biases is necessary – but when the content is merely *removed* and not *corrected*, the result is a redaction of the culture (Sanchez, 2007). The result has been a large-scale ablation of cultures from history texts (and other curricula) rather than a correction to the frames of understanding.

## Psychological Invisibility

This process has created a crisis for Indigenous nations and people that has long been overlooked – the process of invalidating the cultural identities of entire communities

of people. Fryberg and her colleagues have been raising awareness of the notion of psychological invisibility imposed upon Indigenous People by the systematic removal of their cultural presence in educational materials (Fryberg & Eason, 2017; Fryberg & Townsend, 2008; Fryberg & Stephens, 2010). As their research champions, the practice of removing the content addressing entire cultures of people conveys a message of irrelevance to that group – made all the starker and damaging when the nearest representation of Indigenous people are represented as historical artifacts. This perpetuates the myth that Indigenous nations were “frozen in time” and have not been continuously present in society (see Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). The result of this widespread approach to curricular erasure has a negative psychological impact on Indigenous learners. In essence, the children cannot see themselves in the curriculum that is designed to “tell the story” of their country (i.e., the land currently identified collectively as the United States), creating two points of conflict. First, Indigenous children receive the message that their cultures do not belong in contemporary society or is inferior, because the standard curriculum narratives delegitimize Indigenous nations and center the settler or colonial narrative (Sabzalian, 2019). Second, Indigenous children are pushed to reconcile they exist in “two worlds” – their home culture and the school culture. As Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat articulate in their collection of essays on education (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), this duality often forces Indigenous learners who wish to excel in the U.S. educational system to leave their tribal lands and traditions behind.

Learners from marginalized or minoritized cultural groups collectively face barriers in the predominantly Eurocentric curriculum. The metaphorical “mirrors and windows” approach to recognizing underrepresentation in literature and educational materials (Bishop, 1990, 1997) helps educators be more mindful of resources used in schools. Using this framework, Reese (2018) highlights the importance of Indigenous authors creating the content employed to convey stories about specific tribes to promote authenticity. Centering Indigenous voices also ensures traditions and stories are shared in ways that are consistent with the cultural values of the Indigenous nation. Overcoming this invisibility supports the goals of tribal critical race theory (Brayboy, 2005) or Indigenous critical theory (Reese, 2008), which advocate for identifying how Indigenous perspectives have been suppressed and discounted in the colonial, Eurocentric narrative.

## **False Curricula Harm Dominant Cultures**

While it is clear and irrefutable that misrepresentation of a culture in educational contexts provides a toxic message to those learners who are connected to the erased or invisible culture, this systemic oversight is also harmful to society as a whole. The first point of harm comes out of the wealth of generational tribal knowledge that is routinely overlooked or discounted as folklore and myth (Brayboy, 2006; Reese, 2018) that could support solutions to existing challenges in today’s world. As Wildcat (2001c) expressed, we can benefit from Indigenous knowledge that has

been built from “the lived experiences of peoples who have resided in places long enough to know and remember what it means to be Native to a place” (Wildcat, 2001c). Failure to incorporate perspectives in a pluralistic society is simply short-sighted and limiting.

In addition to failing to capitalize on valuable Indigenous knowledge, centering educational content, and popular media representations on a colonial or settler narrative advances and increasingly stereotypic representation of non-dominant cultures. Recent research examining non-Native U.S. residents demonstrated that roughly 75% of over 5,000 respondents could not identify a “famous living Native American” and when asked to identify a “film with a Native American character,” the responses were similarly dominated by stereotypic (and usually historical) representations of Indigenous people (Davis-Delano, Folsom, McLaurin, Eason, & Fryberg, 2021). When educational materials and leaders are silent on a topic, stereotypes portrayed in popular media and culture become the dominant and accepted representation (Leavitt et al., 2015). To illustrate the relevance of this problem in education, disconcerting inaccuracies, and stereotypic thinking was documented in a national survey of practicing teachers (Cassady, Schupman, Heath, Smith, & Yerdon, 2021). Teachers were unaware of the wide diversity in tribal nations (only 16% correctly identified the claim “there are roughly 120 federally recognized tribes” was false – a value that misses over 400 tribes). Furthermore, less than 60% of teachers believed that Indigenous cultural “mascots” were harmful to tribal children’s self-worth. Finally, teachers routinely misunderstood the concept of tribal sovereignty.

Increasingly biased views of Indigenous people lead to the perpetuation and entrenchment of a settler-colonial narrative that continues to validate views that sovereign Indigenous nations are not present in contemporary contexts and have abdicated their autonomy or agency through the processes of removal and forced assimilation (Hopkins, 2020). The result of the dominant culture’s inability to “see” Indigenous people in accurate historical and contemporary contexts is crippling and consequential, influencing “non-Native attitudes toward Native Americans, which can then affect treatment and public policies that impact Native People” (Davis-Delano et al., 2021; pg. 13). For instance, when products of an educational system are ignorant of Indigenous nations’ diversity and sovereignty, they are unprepared to effectively support the existing rights of Indigenous people as well as critically interrogate existing and forthcoming policies that disenfranchise them (Sabzalian et al., 2021).

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## **Strategies to Recognize and Include Indigenous People in Education**

To support educators in the process of transitioning from perpetuating misconceptions, biases, and stereotyped views toward culturally responsive pedagogy, systemic efforts are needed (systemic problems require systemic solutions). To support this reformation in education, there needs to be action focused on (a) recognizing the

misconceptions that have persisted, (b) holding curricula accountable for portraying accurate core conceptions, and (c) providing supportive structures for educators (Phillips, 1983). A key feature in this process is to advance the number and quality of standards that feature Indigenous content, both as “stand-alone” topics focused on Indigenous peoples (recognized as significant by the National Congress of American Indians, 2019) and as integrated regularly into the standard educational framework (Sabzalian et al., 2021).

It would be naive to consider the process of changing statewide or national standards as a simple process. Political pressures, maintenance of status quo, defensive orientations of educators and policymakers, and curriculum crowding all serve as real and present barriers to growth (Anthony-Stevens, Jones, & Begay, 2020; Quigley, 2016). However, key features of promising systemic efforts serve as a starting point for local and national efforts to more effectively include culturally inclusive and accurate representations of Indigenous nations and people. These strategies are anticipated to assist educational leaders in promoting progressive and continued improvement in the inclusion of Indigenous voices adding to historical narratives. Acknowledging and hearing from diverse perspectives enables learners to more fully understand the complexities of history and civics which enables the learners to be more informed citizens who can contribute to a just society (Davis-Delano et al., 2021; Sabzalian et al., 2021).

## Visibility in Standards and Curriculum Development

One strong case study of a systemic approach to revising the content of educational materials and standards at a state level has been well-documented, focusing on the process of developing and delivering the Montana Indian Education for All (IEFA) program (Hopkins, 2020). As Juneau (2001) recounted, a key first step to curriculum revision was a change in the state constitution in 1972 in which the state recognized “the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” (Montana State Constitution, Article X, Sect. 1.2). As such, Montana started by overcoming the invisibility of Indigenous nations. IEFA was enacted by state legislation in 1999, declaring that all students in public schools “learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner” (Montana Office of Public Instruction; as cited in Hopkins, 2020, p. 7). Furthermore, a requirement of IEFA is that instructions occur across grade levels and content domains. While similar efforts in select states (e.g., Washington, Wyoming, Oregon, and Oklahoma) have been also been promising, the reality is these statewide curriculum revisions remain the minority (Shear et al., 2015).

Hopkins (2020) attributed much of the success in implementing IEFA to the explicit policy mandating the inclusion of Indigenous people as partners in designing and implementing the curriculum. This involves both engaging Indigenous people in the creation of standards as well as ensuring tribal-informed materials and resources are available for meeting those standards. In essence, a simple lesson to be learned

from IEFA's success addresses the problem identified by Deloria (2001a), who stated "the thing that has always been missing in Indian education, and is still missing today, is Indians" (p.152).

The success of IEFA has bolstered and inspired efforts to provide a national framework to help guide educators at all levels to reflect upon and improve their approach to education related to Indigenous cultures. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has provided national standards that focus not on specific events or content but address broad disciplinary skills-focused goals, with guidance toward an inquiry-based model framed around the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework (NCSS, 2017). NCSS released a policy statement in 2018 calling upon all educational leaders to recognize and correct the reality that "education often perpetuates a false understanding of history and trivializes the past and current experiences of Indigenous Peoples and Nations" (NCSS, 2018; p. 167). NCSS advocated for ensuring Indigenous nations were identified as foundational to social studies, rather than peripheral or stand-alone units. Furthermore, they recommended primary starting points for interrogating educational practice:

1. Commitment to responsible representations – recognizing the stereotypes that are replete in society and educational settings (mascots, cultural appropriation, and overgeneralization).
2. Presentation of current events and movements – illustrating the contemporary presence of Indigenous nations.
3. Explicit coverage of tribal governance and sovereignty as civics education.
4. Challenge Eurocentric stance in social studies topics (e.g., "discovery" or "Westward expansion").
5. Affirm Indigenous Knowledge in various fields as relevant and instructive.
6. Pattern curriculum reform after long-standing Indigenous advocacy efforts (such as IEFA).
7. Foster and promote relationships with Indigenous nations and communities – sensitive to the cultural protocols of the Indigenous communities. These efforts may involve connection with local tribal education departments in states with tribal presence. For those states where tribes have been removed from their traditional lands, connection with the Indigenous nation in their current space may be possible and serves as an opportunity for state and district leaders to acknowledge their organization resides on traditional homelands of a removed people (NCSS, 2018; pp 169–170).

To support the implementation of these efforts, educational leaders with Indigenous expertise at the national level such as the National Indian Education Association and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) have been instrumental in supporting schools in making these transitions. For example, NMAI's *Native Knowledge 360° Framework for Essential Understandings about American Indians* promotes conceptual change in understanding about Indigenous histories, cultures, and contemporary lives by inducing an ontological shift in the approach to content presentation (Chi, 2008). This is accomplished by disrupting



resident theories and engaging teachers and learners in actively reconstructing their understanding of the fundamental presence and role of Indigenous people. NK360° shifts attention toward transferable skills that promote review of disciplinary domains through a critical lens that is conscious of Indigeneity.

The NMAI Essential Understandings are organized under the ten themes of the NCSS social studies standards. As an example, one of the themes is *Power, Authority, and Governance*. The first sentence in the NMAI Essential Understanding provides a call to action for educators:

*The 21st-century classroom should include experiences that provide for the study of how American Indians create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance*

Next, the Essential Understanding invites educators to consider large conceptual ideas related to the power, authority, and governance of indigenous nations:

*American Indians devised and have always lived under a variety of complex systems of government. Tribal governments faced rapid and devastating change as a result of European colonization and the development of the United States. Tribes today still govern their own affairs and maintain a government-to-government relationship with the United States and other governments. (NMAI)*

Such concepts support an ontological shift by providing examples of broader themes, new language and perspectives, and inspiration to curriculum writers and teachers. The value of these resources is the empowerment provided to meet disciplinary best practices with quality content. For instance, using this specific Essential Understanding, and linking to Dimension Two of the C3 Framework (“evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles”; NCSS, 2017), a specific historical focus for a lesson might address the structure of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s (Iroquois) Great Law of Peace as a tripartite formal democratic structure that preceded the one created in the Continental Congresses. A contemporary example might inquire into how Indigenous nations govern today and the types of issues they deal with, such as economic development, natural resource management, and criminal jurisdiction.

## **Authentic Voices and Multiple Perspectives**

A simple way teachers have been encouraged to recognize different perspectives in their coverage of the histories of indigenous cultures in the United States has been to ensure that for every story involving Indigenous peoples being encountered, colonized, or “discovered,” learners have the opportunity to consider that story from the perspective of the culture that was “facing East” in the story (Richter, 2001). That is, rather than having all texts discuss “westward expansion” (which is a narrative taking only the viewpoint of the white colonizers), learners examine the context of people



who were “already there” and their experiences with oncoming invaders. Students examining these histories should be encouraged to do more than “imagine what it would be like.” They should be provided with available resources that provide a record of the experiences of those tribal members who were living in that time and experiencing those events. Quigley (2016) illustrated this process in an account of staff development where teachers received textbook representations of boarding schools contrasted with first-person accounts of children who were forced into those settings. This demonstration of multiple perspectives illustrated the potential to interrogate the assumptions and conclusions made in the textbook account (the Indigenous children need to be socialized into the American system), as well as see the real impacts on children taken from their families (Quigley, 2016). In the absence of the Indigenous perspective, the sanitized version of boarding schools fails to recognize the false presumptions of American exceptionalism as well as the persistent and pervasive negative effects on Indigenous communities and people.

Another example of an educational experience effectively illustrating multiple perspectives is the instructional support materials provided to accompany the *Dawnland* documentary (Lesser, 2021; Mazo & Pender-Cudlip, 2018). *Dawnland* documentary the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, revealing to viewers the often-overlooked state-sanctioned removal of children from their homes well into the latter half of the twentieth century (Lesser, 2021). To enable this deep inquiry lesson, teachers are provided with a compelling question to guide the instruction and student exploration (“What is the relationship of the taking of the land and the taking of the children?”), with supportive primary documents from history that faithfully offer points of view “from the boat” as well as “from the shore” starting from the colonial invasion of Wabanaki land and progressing into the present day, anchored by the film (Mazo & Pender-Cudlip, 2018).

## De-Mythologizing Through Inquiry

The misconceptions commonly held about Indigenous people, nations, and cultures are widespread and well documented (NCSS, 2018). As such, educational efforts can be strategic in structuring content delivery in a fashion that directly dismantles the myths and biases that are common in society (Davis-Delano et al., 2021). The general strategies known to effectively isolate and invalidate an individual’s misconceptions include (a) making known the “resident theory” that the individual maintains, (b) providing learning materials that enable the recognition of conceptual failures, (c) ensuring a superior replacement is available to supplant the misconception – ideally focused on active construction by the learner to ensure deeper understanding (Chi, 2008; Sinatra & Chinn, 2012).

The NMAI’s Native Knowledge 360° education initiative features online instructional materials for classrooms. One of the featured resources is an inquiry titled “What Does it Mean to Remove a People?” which focuses on the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2018). This online inquiry addresses misconceptions and omissions commonly observed in

instruction about Indian Removal. For instance, common misconceptions include (a) the “Trail of Tears” was relocation imposed upon one tribe (the Cherokee) in the 1800s and (b) Indigenous nations were merely passive and did not engage in active agentic processes to resist removal. Furthermore, typical instruction focuses primarily on the act of removal, ignoring decades of policies, fraud, and other pressures leading to removal and disregarding the post-removal experiences of Indigenous nations after they arrived in Indian Territory.

Simply, the standard presentation is an oversimplification of the widespread and systemic removal of Indigenous peoples and the wide array of strategies employed by Indigenous nations and individuals to survive. To enable greater awareness of these complexities, the module provides the perspectives of seven different tribes who were removed from their traditional lands. The presentation engages learners in a personal inquiry process that requires active engagement with primary source historical documents, images, maps, and quotes representing both Indigenous and colonizing perspectives. These materials allow learners to recognize multiple strategies employed by the different tribes (as well as within tribes) to resist the removal efforts and colonization or adapt as a culture to survive. In addition, seeing videos of present-day descendants of the Indigenous nations who were removed from their traditional lands helps learners cast aside the “frozen in time” misconception (Shear et al., 2015) – observing that the people were removed from their lands but continue as agentic and sovereign nations.

## Teacher Professional Development and Training

When teachers are asked to comment on the barriers they observe in their ability to effectively provide culturally appropriate representations of content, they cite incomplete training and insufficient curriculum materials (Cassady et al., 2021). Teachers also report great interest in access to better materials to support their *teaching* – however most teachers unknowingly hold inaccurate and harmful beliefs or misconceptions about Indigenous People because they are *products* of the existing and flawed Eurocentric educational and societal narrative (Archibeque & Okhremtchouk, 2020; Shear et al., 2015). With those pre-existing biases, merely offering new instructional activities, standards, or content will lead to insufficient outcomes, because it is unlikely to lead to complete conceptual change for the educational leader. To promote more culturally accurate coverage in classrooms, there is a need for structured in-service professional development and pre-service teacher education that (a) engages teachers in building multiple perspective thinking, (b) promotes infusing Indigenous content in the early grades, (c) combats the misconceptions of Indigenous nations and people as historical, unidimensional, and lacking in self-determination, and (d) builds teachers’ familiarity with high-quality classroom resources (Hopkins, 2020; Sabzalian et al., 2021; Shear et al., 2015).

Hopkins voiced the importance of supporting non-Native educators in “desettling” as a core feature in professional development experiences. Desettling is a transformative process aligned with a tribal critical race consciousness that recognizes that “world

views” and inherent conceptual understandings of most non-Indigenous people are dominated and centered in a Eurocentric narrative (Brayboy, 2005). Desettling focuses on decolonizing the curriculum by recognizing that non-Native’s hold misconceptions and resident theories centered in a Eurocentric framework. Hopkins (2020) suggests that “Land Education” be employed when possible to support this process, which engages educational training in a tribal setting to promote authentic awareness of tribal cultures. This process is particularly important for those white educators who are working in schools serving Indigenous youth.

Archibeque and Okhremtchouk (2020) also explored the needs of white classroom teachers working in a school serving predominantly Indigenous students, identifying specific themes to promote readiness for non-Native teachers serving Indigenous youth. First, the teachers learned the importance of social dynamics among the members of the tribal communities. Adapting from their Eurocentric understanding of personal relationships, teachers learned that it was essential that they develop relationships not only with the children in the classroom, but also with their families and the community. This relationship-building developed trust and support and validated the educational goals promoted by the teachers. The teachers also reported on the importance of recognizing the pedagogical dynamics in the classroom (Archibeque & Okhremtchouk, 2020). Culturally responsive adaptations include greater attention to community life, tribal celebrations, and traditional values for the tribal communities. Teachers also expressed the need to reframe their views of success in their practice. Rather than being focused entirely on statewide assessments of proficiency to determine the school or child success, working in a tribal reservation setting illuminated the importance of knowing and supporting locally-valued indicators of success.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples has been the standard protocol in a variety of forms since initial contact by European explorers. As U.S.-Indigenous interactions have transitioned over the last 250 years, we see greater attention to legal protections, awareness of sovereign rights, and clear expression of agency among Indigenous nations in political, economic, and educational arenas. While there are excellent examples of progress in addressing systems-level fallacies about Indigenous histories and cultures, most classrooms continue to operate in the fog of misconception and stereotypes. Recognizing the need for systemic conceptual change about the place of Indigeneity in standard curriculum development and delivery is the first step in addressing these biases and preparing learners to live in a truly diverse and inclusive society.

Common responses from educators whose misconceptions and biases are exposed in this conceptual change process include embarrassment over ignorance, shame in adding to the problem, and dismay over how to proceed. Cultural experts often disarm guilt and shame in these settings, pointing out that those emotional responses are appropriate – but not the primary goal, which is to promote better

outcomes. This often occurs by accepting or affirming the belief that the educator was truly unaware of the misconceptions and biases and hold no overt racist malice toward Indigenous people. However, the gracious allowance for ignorance comes with a price. Once these problems have been exposed to the educator or leader, ignorance or naivete can no longer be offered as a defense for the curriculum, standards, or practices of education that promote biases and false narratives.

As such, educational leaders are in a key position to call attention to the pervasive biases and misconceptions, build coalitions that can effectively interrogate the curricula and standards guiding practice, and promote positive change in their communities, states, and beyond. These are all systemic efforts and require in many cases considerable conflict with the status quo in education. However, as Deloria (2001a) described in his analysis of the “Perpetual Education Report,” 200 years of federal education reports have made essentially the same conclusions about the challenges facing education with Indigenous people and topics, when what is needed is an education system that recognizes the reality of Indigenous cultures. Such adaptations are not simple, but as Deloria concludes: “If traditional institutions, programs, and teaching have to be changed, so be it. After five centuries of contact, it does not seem too much to ask non-Indian educators and institutions to come to grips with the reality that is the American Indian” (Deloria, 2001a; p. 161).

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# A Foucauldian Analysis of Culturally Relevant Educational Leadership for Refugees as Newcomers

# 79

Khalid Arar and Deniz Örücü

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## Abstract

This chapter aims to deconstruct culturally relevant leadership (CRL) and social justice leadership (SJL) frameworks in newcomers' education using the Foucauldian lens, based on extensive research on refugee and newcomers' education and its leadership. The way the Foucauldian lens on enunciative fields will be utilized in this chapter draws on the proposition of its authors that implementing social justice policies in schools and that existing educational leadership theory (mostly developed in "Western" societies) cannot simply be adopted without revisiting and contextualized into all other world societies, rather a critical form of educational leadership is needed that grounds educators' work in their cultural and social heritage and enables them to understand and carry out their responsibilities in the local educational field.

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**Keywords**

Culturally relevant leadership · Social justice · Refugee and newcomers' education · Enunciative fields · Michel Foucault · Discourse · Identity

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**Introduction**

Every year, people lose their lives or loved ones, and face human trafficking and other forms of violence on their way to *safer* lands, escaping from violence in their home countries. As “No one leaves home unless home is a mouth of a shark” (a quote by Warsan Shire as cited in Arar, 2020), the dynamics behind the forced refugee experience is complicated. This is a story of a former teacher who owned a language studies institute in Syria. He is now a refugee in Germany and he narrated his story:

As a former teacher, who owned a language studies institute in Syria, my children (five in number), were the best in school, despite the war. I saw that there was no chance, even for my own children. The schools ceased to operate, studies ended for my boys, who were about to take matriculation exams and complete secondary school. I decided to emigrate, I sold my house and property. I paid smugglers to bring my wife and three of my sons to the German border. Meanwhile, I and my oldest son, travelled from Syria to Turkey. We walked for days, with little food and money, very many kilometers. In Turkey, we were forced to pay smugglers to cross the border into Europe. We wandered for many days and nights in a small group... walking aimlessly without direction, the time and distance didn't really matter, we wanted sanctuary. Then we arrived in Hungary, where the Hungarian police arrested us, what didn't they do to us! We went through agony, although we had not harmed anyone, and then they sent us back to the Turkish border. Eight days later I repeated the same path and I succeeded [I don't really want to explain how] in reaching the German border. Even though they inspected us and interrogated us quite a lot, the Germans, they finally allowed us the safe haven we sought, food, a place to sleep. We were about 800 refugees who had arrived from different cities in Syria. It took me three months in the border camp until I could join my family. I have now been here in Germany for three years and they have not yet given me the status of permanent resident, we have tried hard to obtain it, but they did not recognize my resources or those of my wife, although we are both teachers. I work in a café, my wife is at home, trying to learn German. My children find it very difficult at school, the language is not easy at all. Each day that passes in our lives here is renewed survival. I won't hide the fact that there are Germans, who try to help us, like the social worker, but the laws here and the bureaucracy are very difficult. (See Arar, 2020)

This is a story that could be told by any refugee on the move because of the forced displacement and flight from home. Refugee movements fast proliferated between 2010 and 2019, following the United States' invasion of Afghanistan (2.6 million) and Iraq, the civil wars in Syria (6.3 million refugees in 2017), South Sudan (2.4 million), Somalia (0.9 million), and Yemen, and the increase of South American immigration to the United States, immigration within Asia and Asia, particularly from Myanmar (1.2 million), and significant immigration from North Africa to Europe. National policies vary toward the absorption of refugees as *forced*



*acceptance, temporary protection; controlled and selective integration; or a welcoming guest reception* (Arar, 2020), while shaping the approach of the local schools toward diversity. Understanding the refugees and newcomers' state as "exile as a modern human condition resulting from the combination of global migration, war and dispossession, statelessness, economic restructuring, and other disruptions" (Leonardo, 2020; p. 103) is important because being a refugee in an unknown place means "existing to struggle while finding a sense of humanity in the struggle to exist" (Leonardo, 2020; p. 106). Therefore, it is essential to discern refugees from other types of immigrants since they are exilic because of any kind of hardship at homeland.

The recent scene in the refugee hosting countries is complicated (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Those who receive massive numbers of displaced people in the last 10 years encounter diversity of challenges and host states often find it difficult to cope with the inflow of large unexpected populations of migrants and to cope with their basic requirements. Their economic, health, and education systems are adversely affected by refugee influx and are likely to experience turbulence. Education systems in the host countries faced with challenges in terms of policy and practice to ensure inclusive, healthy and welcoming schooling services to the refugee minors, who arrive in traumatic states (Arar, Örücü, & Waite, 2020; Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Şirin & Şirin, 2015). Yet, education is the primary formal means to reduce uncertainty and to build better future for the vulnerable children as new comers seeking to integrate in the host society (Arar et al., 2020; Banks, 2017). Given this situation, the roles and responsibilities of school leaders are redefined in how they would address the needs of such vulnerable student communities through welcoming schooling enhancing their integration (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2019). Regardless of and/or despite the political context, educational leaders at school level face moral and ethical dilemmas in creating fair access to high-quality education. Thus, acting to ensure the appropriate premises and academic programs for the refugee children through constant support for healthy integration and better future bring more responsibility and demand on the part of the school leaders (Liou & Hermanns, 2017).

Moreover, refugee minors landing with high level of trauma and vulnerabilities in the host countries (Şirin & Şirin, 2015) necessitates special attention and a sensitive approach while their challenges embedded in the form of culture shock, integration, and adaptation problems create more responsibilities for the school community. Much has been said about the nature of leadership in refugee schools (Arar, 2020; Banks, 2017) and two main concepts of leadership in the literature rest upon cultural relevance (Arar, Örücü, & Ak-Küçükçayır, 2019b; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Lopez, 2016) and social justice (Aronson & Laughter, 2016) to guide the school leaders and teachers to provide welcoming and inclusive education for newcomer children.

Given the above phenomena, this chapter aims to revisit and deconstruct culturally relevant leadership (CRL) and social justice leadership (SJL) frameworks for refugee and newcomer education using the Foucauldian lens based on the authors'

extensive research on educational leadership for refugees and newcomers. The way the Foucauldian lens will be utilized in this chapter draws on the proposition of its authors that implementing social justice policies in schools and that existing educational leadership theory (mostly developed in “Western” societies) cannot simply be adopted into all other world societies and context. Rather a critical and reflective form of educational leadership is needed that grounds educators’ work in their cultural and social heritage and enables them to understand and carry out their responsibilities in the local educational field (Arar, 2020; Arar, Brooks, & Bogotch, 2019), while revisiting these models and their praxis in their social and cultural context (Waite & Arar, 2020, p. 178). Indeed, the current reform and improvement initiatives emphasize the responsiveness of schools, teachers, and educational leaders to cultural, racial, gender, sexual, and religious diversity within their client, student, parent, and community populations (Blackmore, 2006, p. 181). On the contrary, in practice, this could remain as a rhetoric. This is a drive to reconsider CRL and SJL frameworks in the field of EA through Foucauldian lens.

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### **Reframing Culturally Relevant and Socially Just Leadership for Refugees: A Foucauldian Analysis**

CRL and SJL are frequently discussed frameworks in addressing diversity (Arar, 2020; Arar et al., 2019; Khalifa, 2018; Lopez, 2016) as is the case with marginalized and vulnerable groups such as refugees and newcomers. The volatile state of war, social unrest, and natural disasters lead to the rise of refugee influx, which reify the unique position of schools being able to form conditions of equity, high academic expectations, and social in/justice in contexts where there is a demographic transformation (Arar et al., 2020; Liou & Hermanns, 2017). While such vulnerable groups rise in number and the large refugee migration into many countries has contributed to increasing multiculturalism, the mainstream literature in educational administration, management, and leadership is criticized for being hegemonic, standardized, market-driven (Blackmore, 2006) and eschewing to focus on marginal lives and their needs in schools (Arar, Örüçü, & Wilkinson, 2021). One should be cautious of the warning about the misleading cultural isomorphs forged by the Western knowledge in EA (Begley, 2000) as this section will be elaborating on the CRL and SJL in refugee education through Foucauldian concepts of power/knowledge relationships and enunciative field (Foucault, 1972).

Defining social justice (SJ) has been a controversial issue in the literature as it has been regarded as an elusive and ambiguous concept (Bogotch, 2002; Waite & Arar, 2020). Thus, cultural relevance finds itself a position within the SJ as an umbrella term (Khalifa et al., 2016). In an effort to deconstruct these two frameworks in refugee schools, the uniqueness of Foucault’s perspective (Foucault, 1972) is that he situates knowledge and identities in a historical cultural context. Thus, Foucault’s attention to history as the “archaeology” or “genealogy” of knowledge production (English, 2020; Gillies, 2013) urges to explore the continuities and discontinuities between “epistemes” (idea of what constitutes knowledge) (Armstrong, 2015). In educational

leadership, a field already with blurry boundaries (English, 2020) have “authority-figures and gatekeepers controlling the field of knowledge, as also critiqued by several researchers (Blackmore, 2006; English, 2020), including the boundary-work which decides what shall and shall not count as a valid element of it” (Armstrong, 2015; p. 5). Foucault, in this respect, asserts that knowledge is inextricably connected to power as it is both created by it and creates it simultaneously: the “regimes of truth” which operate in society could be promoted (Foucault, 2002).

In this sense, literature and ways of seeing SJ and CRL for refugees depend on the cultural hegemonic discourses in the enunciative field, where the regimes of truth is reconstructed through the gatekeepers’ knowledge and their hegemony; while gatekeepers are most frequently “White and Masculine voices” from Anglo-American cultures (Blackmore, 2006; Brown & Strega, 2005). Hence, traditional social science research has ignored and silenced the marginal experiences of the Other, using a deficit-informed approach in explicating lives and experiences of groups on the margins, while their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages have historically been devalued, misinterpreted, and tokenized in academia (Brown & Strega, 2005). Newcomers and their education as the context in this chapter bear similar features as refugees are regarded to be at “margins” as a case.

In agreement with Blackmore (2006), the absence of transformative discourse toward cultural diversity in policy and mainstream educational leadership and administration (ELA) literature is reified through the critical gaze of the “the other.” On the contrary, identity cannot be reconsidered without the influence of hegemony (Foucault, 1975) as hegemony refers to the fact that individuals can maintain their dominance over other groups of individuals in a society via coercion rather than violence (Gramsci, 1971). Hence, the awareness of the structured binary oppositions as in the form of “otherness” (Derrida, 1982) has led to the formation of this manuscript. Given that “all social justice/educational reform efforts must be deliberately and continuously reinvented and critiqued” (Bogotch, 2002, p. 15), one needs to reiterate the emphasis on the deeper cognizance of the culture in studying educational leadership, management, and administration (Bajunid, 1996). It is now agreed that Western-led educational interventions (Goh, 2009) and one-size-fits-all approach do not forge the necessary accoutrements of school leaders in non-Western contexts (Begley, 2000; Goh, 2009; Oplatka & Arar, 2016).

Drawing on the evidence that Western-centric approaches (Begley, 2000) do not “acknowledge the rich cultural traditions, theories and practices of recipient societies, and may not be appropriately scrutinized for ‘cultural fit’” (Collard, 2007, p. 740), one needs to be cautious of the adoption of Western “cultural bound” theories in the local school contexts (Goh, 2009), it is the authors’ urge to deconstruct the CRL and SJL in educational settings of marginalized refugee and newcomer pupils.

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## Enunciative Fields in SJL and CRL Frameworks

The configuration of the enunciative fields in Foucauldian terms (Foucault, 1972) has three subfields as the field of memory, the field of presence and field of concomitance, while all accompanied by discontinuities and ruptures which form

the different viewpoints within (English, 2020). In any field or framework within, discourse simultaneously forms the objects of which it speaks, categorizing the world in a particular way through power (Foucault, 1972). Power and knowledge are mutually productive, yet power as a discourse depends on the knowledge it has constructed, and developed and promulgated, but that very knowledge is itself dependent on power relations (Niesche, 2011, p. 27).

### **The Field of Memory**

Of the enunciative fields in Foucauldian terms, the first one is the field of memory which refers to the genesis, past traces, ideas, theories, and concepts that are no longer considered valid or viable in the field. That is, *the field of memory* in ELA discourse, in a broader sense, includes the celebrated theories and epistemologies such as scientific management, human resources management, systems approach, as borrowed from the mainstream management literature, while the theory movement, positivism, and standardization measures, that is, ISLLC standards marked their hegemony in the history (Papa, 2009), produced mainly the US-based scholars through their seminal works. This is true for issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice leadership, which were heavily developed in and through Anglo-phonetic contexts and perspectives (Gümüş, Arar, & Oplatka, 2021). Yet, one can see there was no room for cultural politics, cultural sensitivity, or social justice in the archeology of EA. To better interrogate the place of social justice in the field, one needs to remember the below quote hinting at the hegemony embedded even within the intellectual terrain by Campbell (1964):

In seeking talent for the professorship. . .we should look for men who are bright, who are young, who have dealt with the major ideas of Western culture, who have exhibited some independence and creativity, and who have a commitment to education. (p. 19)

What could one expect as knowledge production considering social justice and cultural relevance in *refugee education* from this kind of a *definition of the professoriate* and which has been reaffirmed in recent analysis conducted by Gümüş et al. (2021)? If one to deconstruct this definition; apparently it is full of binaries. Recall identity/self and space are significant factors behind knowledge production in any discipline (Foucault, 2002). Therefore, there was no mention of SJ or CRL in the ELA literature until 1960s. Since the 1960s due to the abolition of school segregation in the USA, scholars have indicated the significance of being responsive to expanded meaning in terms of practice. Some researchers have developed specific models and strategies that would address high-needs students in diverse school contexts such as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), and Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) (Aronson & Laughter, 2016), and a more recent outcome of these approaches is the development of CRL, as a significant component of SJL (Arar, 2020). CRL historically derives from the line of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and its further version as culturally responsive teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2010). CRP is

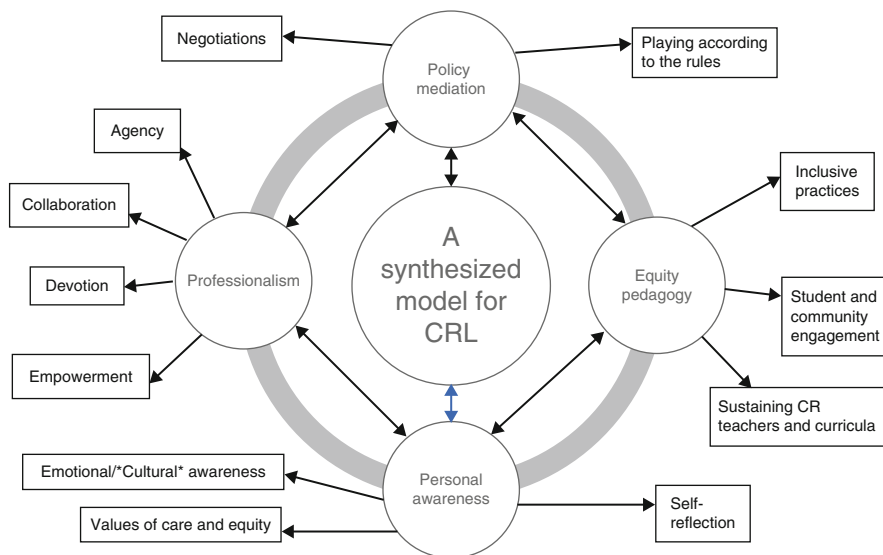
defined as a teaching approach “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 16–17). Thus, CRT is about using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). These two frameworks have led to the understanding of CRL, moving the scope from teaching to school leadership praxis to the present.

### **The Field of Presence: An Attempt of A CRL Model**

The *field of presence* signifies current concepts, theories, or perspectives that are now considered to be valid and viable (Foucault, 1972). The premise that CRL and SJL align with multicultural education praxis is about providing a democratic citizenship and equitable education (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2019). Thus, seeking for social cohesion in the host community necessitates using knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of refugee, undocumented, and newcomer students (Banks, 2017).

A foundational framework for SJL was provided by Fraser (2009) based on three critical concepts as redistribution, recognition, and representation. Redistribution is regarded as sense of distributive justice (relating to allocation of resources), recognition involves consideration of cultural injustices (focusing on the distribution of power) and representation identifies and relates to political injustices (recognizing the need to reflect on multiple identities) (Blackmore, 2006). Hence, English (2020) further purports six barriers to social justice implementations as follows: textual unresponsiveness to social justice issues; school leaders being agents of organizational conservatism; social science methods erasing subjectivity and diminishing moral choices; an aversion to emotionality and other nonrational factors in decision making; a troubling legacy of national leadership standards; and a field historically dominated by anti-intellectualism.

The review of different frameworks of SJ and CRL in an intertwined fashion, a synthesized model, was reached (see Arar, 2020) based on three different models (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Lopez, 2016), which could contribute to address some of the barriers stated by English (2020). Culturally relevant leadership discerns the leadership philosophies, practice derived from the concept of culture and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Lopez, 2016). These three models all focus on critical reflexivity of the leaders on themselves and the contexts they work in, on creating inclusive and caring schools through teacher empowerment, community and student engagement especially when, in this context, dealing with deprived, wounded, and underprivileged refugee students suffering from economic deprivation, trauma, and loss and possibly endured harmful life experiences. Thus, school leaders need to perform collaboration and agency and mediate the policy creatively at the school level. Based on the previous research (see Arar, 2020; Arar & Örüçü, 2020; Arar et al., 2019b, 2020;



**Fig. 1** The CRL Model (Arar, 2020)

Waite & Arar, 2020) and analysis of the three models, we came up with a restructured synthesis, as in Fig. 1.

This visual deconstruction and synthesis might be useful as a framework for culturally relevant leadership based on the three aforementioned models. It has four main components such as personal awareness, inclusive pedagogy, policy mediation, and leader professionalism. *Personal awareness* is about moral values, emotional awareness of the vulnerable state of refugee students as well as their peers in the host community. Moreover, the school leaders' involvement in critical self-reflection is crucial as also suggested directly (Khalifa, 2018; Lopez, 2016) and indirectly (Horsford et al., 2011). However, the "emotional awareness" is not emphasized in the previous models, and it is essential in any effort to build a culturally relevant approach in refugee schools. Moral responsibility, emotional empathy, and cultural understanding on the part of the educators are essential especially for those working with vulnerable groups. Evidence shows that understanding the emotions and emotion management in refugees and those working with them is complex as emotions and cultural understanding has an interrelated pattern (Örüçü, 2019). *Inclusive pedagogy* is ancillary to inclusive educational implementations, engaging students and community for social cohesion and integration and promoting culturally relevant teachers and curricula for both refugees and host nations' pupils. In realizing these components, *policy mediation style* that forges negotiation with external and internal parties, taking risks while playing according to the rules (Lopez, 2016) is needed. The delicate balance is critical in the cases where policy lacks clear guidelines (Arar, Örüçü, & Ak-Küçükçayır, 2019a) or ignores the healthy

integration of the refugees (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). *Leader Professionalism* is another component (Horsford et al., 2011), which pervades agency in overcoming the prejudice to establish the necessary inclusive and cultural practices while engaging the community.

Empowerment of teachers and students at school level through professional collaborations with internal and external actors is a must to achieve culturally relevant and socially just practices in refugee schools. That said, social justice and the necessary activism are driven by “the entrenched social norms giving unique meanings to issues of justice, respect, interpersonal relations, equality and equity in education” (Oplatka & Arar, 2016, p. 366).

### **The Field of Concomitance**

A *field of concomitance*, in Foucauldian lens, refers to the “statements that concern quite different domains of objects, and belong to quite different domains of objects, and belong to quite different types of discourse, but which are active among the statements studied” (Foucault, 1972, p. 64). Herein, the interdisciplinary nature of ELA field marks itself on SJL and CRL discussions in refugee and newcomers’ education. CRL and SJL aim for a democratic citizenship, social cohesion and equitable education (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2019) utilizing knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of the students.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Having focused on the premises of the frameworks, the discontinuities and ruptures as well as critical assumptions in SJL and CRL for refugee schools could be well-deconstructed in multiple ways.

First of all, the authors of this manuscript have their positionality as explained initially, where their “episteme” rests at the intersection of Western and Eastern forms of understanding through their varied backgrounds and interdisciplinary lens.

Secondly, there is no clear consensus in the literature as to what constitutes a socially in/just society (Waite & Arar, 2020). Different disciplines frame the concepts in varied ways and refame their ontoepistemologies (Brooks, Knaus, & Chang, 2015). Understanding the social phenomenon, value systems, beliefs, and culture(s) is not an easy task while the discourse in social sciences, more specifically in ELA, still lends itself to expressions such as “subaltern,” “Black,” “female,” “colonial,” and in this case “refugees,” “newcomers” even, as is the case in this chapter. On the contrary, “those in “Western” worlds, however, often expect those in and from developing worlds to conform to Western conceptions of the social, which implicitly or explicitly includes the supremacy of the Western state, empire, and imperium as argued by Waite and Arar (2020), its people, and their values (p. 182).

Thirdly, this brings the elucidation of the dominant discourse in the field. Historical and contemporary forms of subjugation and hegemony create dilemmas for the researchers and practitioners alike regarding refugee education settings. The



etymological problem here is two-folded. One is about the dominant discourse in the field. The discourse of ELA is rooted in the effective and efficient uses of power to achieve stated educational ends. Those who hold the power, the gatekeepers, or authorities form the current mainstream theoretical orientations, which emphasize achievement over understanding while failing to capture nature of human interactions and the genuine and immediate concerns of children, parents, teachers, and educational leaders themselves (Gardner-McTaggart, 2020). Furthermore, Beachum and Gullo (2019) warns the social justice advocates about the ideological trap if they think that they are the sole repositories of the appropriate knowledge and use this power to determine those who are acceptable and unacceptable. This should be eschewed in any SJ effort, particularly for the marginalized groups. The other is about the possible reproduction of “epistemic violence” to avoid while especially taking a humanitarian stance. Similarly, in an attempt to equalize discourses, one can find themselves in a situation of othering the exiles as marginals (Herising, 2005). A further warning by Herising (2005, p. 139) is paramount importance as:

We need to ensure that we do not reproduce patterns and processes of colonization or “epistemic violence” in relation to marginal knowledges. We need to be attentive to how we relate to and with communities, and to engage politics of location continuously in order to forestall the commodification or fetishizing of marginal identities, knowledges, ways of being, and communities.

In a similar vein, problematizing SJ and CRL may lead one to the danger of acting upon a system of difference although CRL and SJ scholars have positive approaches and good will toward disadvantaged groups as Schmeichel (2012) claimed such genealogy of CRL might produce one way of thinking by reliance upon difference to categorize children.

Last but not least, addressing the ontoepistemic issues discussed above, Blackmore’s (2006) critique of the fallacy of hegemonic discourses in the ELA and the overemphasis of “diversity and difference” in the organizational spaces as discursive practices, would be a food for thought for anyone exploring SJL and CRL for refugee education.

### **Critical Assumptions: Know Thyself and the Field of ELA Discourse**

The cultural context, dynamics, and the positioning of a person have received debates in the field of ELA. The ways in which education systems can develop and respond to the needs of individuals through understanding of social dynamics and notions of power structure, culture, and practice are widely questioned (Waite & Arar, 2020). In this attempt to reframe the CRL and SJL in refugee education, the positioning and ontoepistemic orientations of the authors are crucial to brief the reader. If to draw on Foucault, then it is essential that one position and know the “self” because identities are shaped by external forces and his notion of “technologies of the self” are individual practices shaping the individuals themselves in particular ways in relation to discourse (Gillies, 2013).



## **Epistemologies, Social Fabric, and Commitments**

The authors of this chapter are from entirely different backgrounds and life experience yet have a common approach and sensitivity towards the disadvantages, inequities resulting from diversity, power relations of the emporium, and intercultural meeting.

The first author belongs to the third generation of a Palestinian family that was uprooted from its native village following the war of 1948 and the foundation of Israel following cleaning and demolishing acts. Some of the family were expelled beyond the borders of the new State of Israel, some live in occupied territories of the West Bank of the Jordan, and some remain as refugees in their land, within the borders of the new state. Thus, he maintains in contact with half of his family within Israel's borders subject to a majority-minority discourse, while the other half are in occupied territory in the throes of a conflict to overthrow Israeli occupation. This reality created a childhood torn between two extremes, at the meeting point between two worlds through a military checkpost, facing questions of identity, belonging, exile, and agency. This childhood helped him to develop sensitivity to those who are weak, dispossessed, conquered, the victims of war, refugees, and others who are rejected whether through war, political conflict, or subjected to the supremacy and control of others due to their ethnicity, religion, gender, or social affiliation. His endeavor to study the issue of education for refugees and migrants stems from his own personal moral voice, and epistemology shaped largely by the above history as the phenomenon of life as a refugee has become a large part of the narrative and collective memory of the Palestinian people.

The second author comes from a middle-class Turkish family, while she spent her childhood and youth in an urban area of a big town in Turkey, which could be described as melting pot of cultures. The neighborhood consisted of different groups of immigrants. Some of them were rich Jewish and Christian minorities of Turkey, while some others were the internal migrants coming from the rural areas of Turkey and earn their bread through manual jobs on cheap labor. Experiencing the stark differences and having diversity of friends in the neighborhood and the school within, she developed an awareness of the inequities and social stratification in her early years onwards, while witnessing both very hard and very rich lives next to her. The issues in the neighborhood ranged from family violence to political/religious conflicts, from intolerable poverty of the newly arrived migrants to glittering Christmas lights and expensive lifestyle of the rich families in the same area between 1970 to 1995, which left in her the sting of inequality around her little context, which could be generalized to the globe. Moreover, her exposition to the Western writings during her studies in English language and literature, cultural studies, and educational administration and policy for the last 25 years has developed a moral voice and sensitivity toward the disadvantaged groups. The recent forced influx of Syrians into Turkey has urged her to explore the phenomenon in depth in an effort to contribute, at least a little, to the recent problems and challenges of both refugee minors and children in need.

Both authors' collective memories and experience have led to work on cultural diversity, identity, affiliation, relevance, and question the any possibility of social in/justice in educational leadership (Arar, 2020; Arar et al., 2019, 2020; Örüçü, 2019).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

Reviewing the narrative in the opening of this chapter, there is a wide array of such refugee conditions in previous research (see Arar, 2020; Arar & Örüçü, 2020; Arar et al., 2019b, 2020; Waite & Arar, 2020). Yet, the aim was not to fetishize the refugee situation but rather to lead the readers to rethink, revisit, and re-evaluate how the social reality of this human condition is constructed, from which angles and viewpoints and from whose perspectives when the current state of forced migration is considered, especially when witnessing both the call for humanity, their reception to include welcoming, or exclusion accompanied by xenophobic public and political discourse (Arar et al., 2020).

The concept of SJ is not a new concept, as it is inherent to major religions and philosophies of the world (Oplatka & Arar, 2016). Philosophy, psychology, sociology, and environmental studies and other disciplines can all contribute to a more comprehensive, complex understanding of the relevant phenomena and the issues involved. There is no one best way to understand, capture, and represent our societies. Instead, it requires an ontoepistemological exercise (Waite & Arar, 2020) while in a post-modern view of the world, one can notice that identities become more complex, lucid, and following the people in move phenomena, there is the shift from homogenic nations to cultural liquidity and diversity (Arar & Örüçü, 2020). Along with the imperialistic efforts to establish a common sense, identity would stay in competitive stories and cultural contexts (Waite & Arar, 2020). Therefore, the subjugated level of knowledge in Foucault's genealogy terms, which is "knowledges that exist at the local and specific level which cannot be explained or understood by mainstream discourses of leadership and management," is to be carefully addressed. The power and knowledge relationship is the determinant of true or false (O'Farrell, 2005); However, there are too many gray areas regarding the policy, leadership, and praxis in refugee and newcomers' education leadership (Arar et al., 2019b) leading to stark encounters between power relations and systems structures.

This effort of building a model of CRL and interrogating refugee and newcomers' education may be a depiction of constituting the researchers as subjects (Bernauer & Mahon, 2005); yet as many researchers understand "beneath what science knows about itself is something that it doesn't know" (Foucault, 1996, p. 54).

To sum up, the cultural relevance and socially in/just praxis and theory in refugee education discursively would depend on and is reproduced by the actors, the context, the subjects/objects of the phenomenon, and more importantly under what conditions the phenomenon takes place. Even the use of the word "refugee" or "newcomers" itself is problematic as it is a form of reproducing inequity and categorizing, yet technically the aim was to address and draw the limits of the research and address these needs. What is obvious is to challenge the comfort

zones and revisit the schemata on diversity, justice/injustice, exile, and other forms of exclusion, colonialization. Conceptual frameworks and positions must be considered in peculiar contexts before *prescribing recipes* for school leaders, teachers, refugees, newcomers, and all people who are active in the contested space of the field.

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# Informational Grounds as the Locus of Dignity for Immigrant Students

# 80

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## Abstract

Based on preliminary data explored, the idea emerged that dignity is an important part of inclusion, especially for immigrants, and the way leaders manage inclusion for immigrant students are often scaffolded by where, how, and with whom they receive information about particular groups, such as immigrant groups. However, seeing immigrant students as individuals with dignity and practicing dignity was often informed by leaders' own information grounds (IGs). Preliminary findings (Arnold, Crawford-Rossi & Brooks, School leadership and

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immigration: Funds of knowledge and information grounds. *Int J Qual Stud Educ*, in press) of a previous study are discussed according to the types of personal and professional IGs and how they relate to dignity practices and inclusion for immigrant students. This chapter presents themes and insights to highlight how dignity intersect along axes leaders' information grounds.

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**Keywords**

Immigrant students · Information grounds · Empathic leadership · Trauma leadership · Inclusive leadership · Principal leadership

**The Field of Memory**

The concept of inclusion has expanded since its earliest iterations related to mainstreaming of students with disabilities into regular schools. However, there are various competing discourses through which meaning and understandings differ. As a result, there is a need to disrupt inclusion's tendency to re/produce the otherness and reinforce the marginalization of those who are the targets of inclusion. In fact, conceptualizations of inclusion in schools are still anchored to special education and discursiveness regarding difference, separation, abnormality, and in some cases, deviance which are marked by often produce and reproduce problems of exclusion in schools and can be antithetical to its goals. Educational policy, as it is often written, presupposes that inclusion is a guarantee and thusly produces accountability for its achievement. Yet, schools historically have reified secure exclusion due to the promulgation of normalized discourses that shape and drive policy. However, we contend that the more presence of certain students or others is not necessarily to be inclusive, and inclusivity is not quite the same as "dealing with" diverse groups.

**The Field of Presence**

One could reasonably argue, however, that "[w]e are still citing inclusion as our goal; still waiting to include, yet speaking as if we are already inclusive" (Slee & Allan, 2001, p. 181). Many diversity leaders find themselves in contexts that still confound quotas, tokenism, erasure, and assimilationist practices as inclusion (Ford, Harding, & Learmouth, 2008). Such discursive practices mark individuals and groups by difference, attach them with an identity, and impose upon them a law of truth that must be recognized.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Research has not only highlighted, but demonstrated through empirical data, the efficacy of heterogenous classrooms, not just for students with special needs but for all students. Tying the notion of inclusion to special education populations is not, however, universal. Indeed, in corporate studies, inclusion has been framed more broadly to include the inclusion of a variety of different demographic groups. Inclusion is now theorized as ideas, stances, and practices that not only determine

position (inclusion/exclusion) in organizations such as schools, but also location and position (geography), participation (business), classification (economics), integration (sociology), and reconciliation (theology), to name a few. Consequently, inclusion discourse also creates opportunity and language to interrogate exclusionary practices such as discrimination, deprivation, separation, criminalization, appropriation, and territorialization as articulated in various disciplines such as law, psychology, criminal justice, gender studies, and colonial studies.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Inclusion can be operationalized in many ways, as described in the field of concomitance. One way it manifests is it in the inclusion of immigrant students into school setting in the United States. Many school communities are experiencing sudden influxes of large numbers of immigrants at one time adds a sense of urgency to the general uncertainty of how educational administrators should lead school settings to the benefit of all students. Such dynamic school contexts demand a great deal from leaders and challenge them in terms of their sources and use of knowledge. School leaders are not trained with adapting school environments to accommodate immigrant students. In addition, educational practitioners are uncertain of how to positively integrate immigrant students into the school ecology, thereby limiting students' experiences and participation in schools.

### **Critical Assumptions**

School leaders must want to address to myriad of topics that are inherent when addressing the needs of immigrant students and families. It is important for educational leaders to acknowledge that they have different lived experiences as others and not assume they understand the lived experiences of their students – this is inherent in the dignity work of school leaders. Educational leaders are faced with the important tasks of: (1) seeing and mediating the contradictions and indignities that exist in education and the larger world; (2) acting as inclusive leaders; and (3) prioritizing diversity. Those leaders who are able to do all three in their personal lives often have leadership practice characterized by deep collaboration, which is a marker of dignity.

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## **Introduction**

Former Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan stated: “If we want to maintain the trust of parents and communities in our schools, we must start by treating our children with respect and human dignity.” Dignity is an essential human condition, defined as self-respect, a sense of pride in oneself, and being worthy of respect by others. One concern for educators is how to work with communities where children grow up, learn, and live in spaces and places where they experience multiple assaults to their sense of dignity (Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010).

This chapter focuses on dignity as an emerging leadership practice in schools, focusing most closely on how the phenomenon looks from the viewpoint of school



leaders and their leadership regarding immigrant students. Immigrant populations comprise a significant segment of the population in urban areas, and increasingly in rural areas in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2019). However, research has highlighted the troubling trend that the longer an immigrant is within the new society, the worse their quality of life and schooling appears to be (Alegría et al., 2007). In the United States, the immigrant population is 42.1 million, with over 11 million students from these households in public schools (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). A troubling trend is that most US policies directed at managing immigration generally focus on race and ethnicity, and these policies affect immigrants through the institutions that have an impact on their lives, such as the educational, housing, and health care systems.

Based on preliminary data explored, the idea emerged that dignity is an important part of inclusion, especially for immigrants, and the way leaders manage inclusion for immigrant students are often scaffolded by where, how, and with whom they receive information about particular groups, such as immigrant groups. However, seeing immigrant students as individuals with dignity was often informed by leaders' own information grounds (IGs) (Pettigrew, 1998, 1999, 2000). Information grounds are locations and sources where people get information formally and informally, often through interaction with the social world (Fisher & Naumer, 2006).

To date, there is no research examining the influence of IGs on educational administrators' leadership practice and as critical constructs of leadership. Research suggests that teachers and principals are unsure of how to adapt classroom and school environments to accommodate immigrant students (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1994). In addition, studies suggest that educational practitioners are uncertain of how to positively integrate immigrant students into the school ecology, thereby limiting students' experiences and participation in school (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993). Moreover, as immigration is a highly racialized notion (Umansky, Hopkins, & Dabach, 2020), it is important to understand the diverse and highly charged social contexts in which leadership is practiced by drawing from scholarship that has explored such dynamics.

This chapter focuses on the role of dignity as an essential construct of inclusive practice. Principals' schema for inclusion is greatly influenced by their IGs regarding certain groups who are traditionally excluded in schools, such as students of color and immigrants. It is important to note that information ground theory is not the only framework for examining schema and knowledges. However, the authors resonated with IG foci on social interaction, conversation, context, and the inductive analysis offered in a lot of the IG literature. Information grounds offer an opportunity to better understand how leaders' schema regarding immigrant diversity and their treatment of them are scaffolded professionally by where, how, and with whom they receive in/formal information about particular immigrant groups.

Literature suggests that principals shape the culture, conditions, and organization of schools, and these things matter to teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Brooks, Miles, & Buck, 2010). They also influence school improvement processes by promoting a shared vision, building structures and practices to support that vision, and fostering strong relationships with the local community (Scanlan & López 2012). Concomitantly, schools considered "successful" are those where leaders

champion student progress by focusing on social issues like personal, social, and economic student potentialities (Ishimaru, 2013). In summary, the construct of information grounds provides a novel viewpoint on school leadership by identifying where everyday information seeking and sharing occurs.

Formal information structures might include an individual's actions or behaviors such as actively seeking information from articles, research, etc. Informal information structures might be contextual and serendipitous – or information that might occur in everyday information flow in social settings such as barber shops and hair salons, churches, playgrounds, etc. (Pettigrew, 1998). IGs occur across all areas of life yet are brought to bear as people perform tasks in the course of personal and professional life (Fisher & Naumer, 2006). As illustrated, IGs form the basis for schema that impel leadership behaviors and practices. This is critical as organizations like schools reflect the beliefs, assumptions, expectations, norms, and values of the people working with them (Lindahl, 2011).

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## Policy, Politics, and the Narration of Immigration

As the authors are exploring IGs, it is important to highlight the context of US policy, the political climate, and the “narration” of immigration, which all form a significant information context. Political events and discussions often serve as influential information behaviors. The context of immigration is “especially important to consider because immigration is the only component of population change over which the US Congress seeks to extend direct and complete supervision” (Espenshade & Calhoun, 1993, p. 224). In the United States, especially, immigrants carry significant emblematic weight in the narrative of America (Smith, 2003). However, policy related to immigrants is mediated by United States' fears and insecurities rather than an understanding of immigration itself (Tichenor, 2002) and thus circulating discussions that pose to be harmful IGs. Although the United States might be thought as “a nation of immigrants,” there have been dogged attempts to restrict newcomers since the founding of the colonies. In the 1800s, there was a significant increase in the numbers of immigrants coupled with an economic recession that stimulated negative perceptions of immigrants. During this time, there was also a promotion of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority (Polyzoi, 1986).

The first restrictions on US immigration were passed during the 1920s which led to the passage of the discriminatory quotas such as those in the Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924. These acts sought to reduce the number of immigrants entering the United States (Massey & Pren, 2012). The first national-level policy to consolidate immigration-related statutes was the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in 1952 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2016; 2021). In general, there was a more relaxed climate for immigration that continued throughout much of the 1950s and 1960s that was reflected in the 1965 amendments to the INA. These amendments, on their face, seemed to signal an increasing acceptance of immigrants by repealing the national origins quotas (Massey & Pren, 2012). In reality,

immigration was simply a background issues in decade focused on civil rights, the war in Vietnam, the sexual revolution, and urban riots.

Since 1965, US immigration policy has become more restrictive, with many attributing this to an increase in illegal migration from 1965 through the late 1970s (Hogan & Haltiner, 2015). The notion of “immigrant threat narratives” (Farris & Mohamed, 2018) are vitally important to understanding subsequent immigration policy responses and perhaps the dynamics of IGs. Politicians, media, and others’ portrayal of immigrants can influence negative attitudes about immigration, leading to more restrictive policy measures (Abrajano, Hajnal, & Hassell, 2017) and contributing to dangerous IGs. Negative images and narratives of immigrants disproportionately emphasize illegality or undocumented status; crime and criminality; and low-skilled professions as part of a threat narrative (Farris & Mohamed, 2018). Research demonstrates that negative portrayals of immigrants often incite perceptions of threat or crisis (Benson, 2013). In addition, immigrant threat narratives disproportionately focus on terrorism or radicalism (Stürmer, Rohmann, Froehlich, & van der Noll, 2019); border concerns (Sowards & Pineda, 2013); criminality (Stewart, Pitts, & Osborne, 2011); “job stealing” (Chomsky, 2007); and some sort of societal danger (Cisneros, 2008).

However, these negative aspects of immigration are often inconsistent with actual or immigrant demographics (Stewart, 2012). For instance, there is no evidence that immigrants increase crime in communities (Gonzalez, Collingwood, & El-Khatib, 2019), yet these false narratives profoundly impact immigrants in all areas of their lives. As another example, politicians place an overemphasis on border security, when in fact approximately one-third to a half of immigrants in the United States arrive legally (Rosenblum & Hipsman, 2016). Moreover, estimates suggest that the number of undocumented immigrants has declined since 2005 (Warren & Kerwin, 2017) signifying that false narratives serve as harmful and dangerous IGs. Over the last three decades, Congress has repeatedly debated immigration reform, and these debates have largely centered on an immigrant threat narrative. Since the events of September 11, 2001, contemporary racial and ethnic discourses define US immigrants (particularly those that are Brown) as sociopolitical “problems,” with Brown representing the de facto color most frequently associated with immigration (Rivera, 2014). In the era of the War on Terrorism, all immigrants become a proxy of “rogues and extremists” (Churchill, 2004) that places “individuals, communities, and youth consistently on the defense about their identities and beliefs” (Ali, 2014, p. 1248). Taken-for-granted understandings or “common metaphors” of immigration hold importance when examining the discursiveness of immigrant exclusion (Santa Ana, 2002). Chavez (2008) contends that by espousing these negative narratives, politicians are able to increase immigrant restriction with new policies created to address “the immigration problem” (p. 9). Schneider and Ingram (1993) contend,

[P]olicy designs reflect the social constructions of knowledge, target populations, power relationships, and institutions in the context from which they emerge and these are conveyed to citizens through the messages, interpretations, and experiences that people have with public policy . . . . Many policy designs contain the footprints of a degenerative form of

politics in which the social construction of issues and target populations are strategically manipulated for political gain. These designs separate target populations into “deserving” and “undeserving” groups, thereby legitimating the conferral of beneficial subsidies or regulations for the former and neglect or punishment for the latter. (pp. 5–6)

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## Immigrant Students

Research has highlighted the troubling trend that the longer an immigrant is within the new society, the worse their quality of life appears to be (Coll & Marks, 2009). In the United States, the immigrant population is 42.1 million, with over 11 million students from these households in public schools (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). Of these students, around 80% speak a language other than English at home. Because of migration, schools all over the globe are serving children of increasingly diverse origins, but not always successfully. This presents a challenge to educators and scholars to develop deeper understanding about immigration, diversity, and various other aspects of schooling.

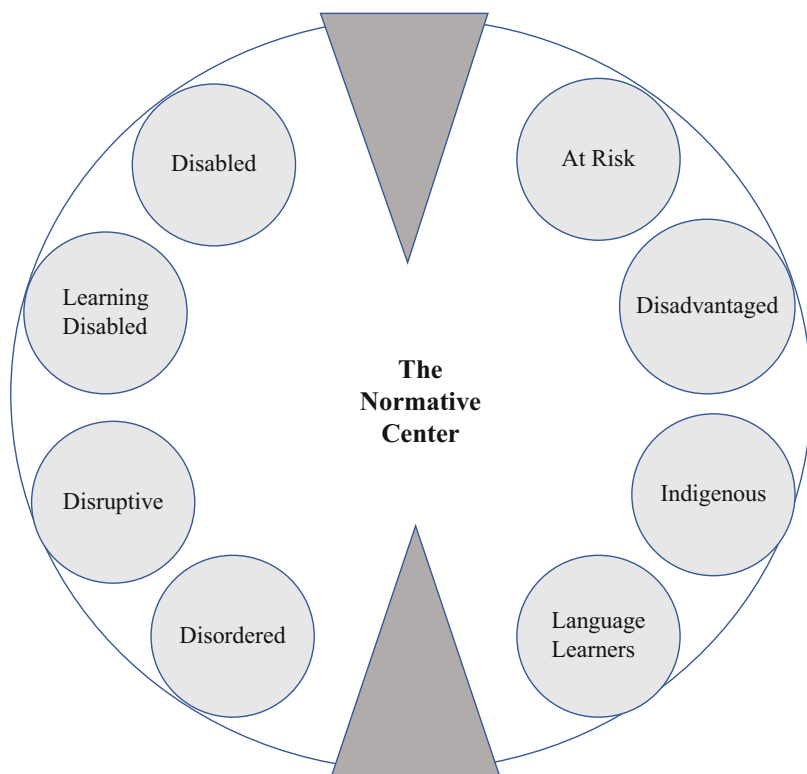
Intentional strides for inclusion are critical for immigrant students. The 1982 US Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) determined that every child in the United States is entitled to an education from kindergarten through high school. *Plyler* determined that undocumented persons deserve equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, which “extends to anyone, citizen or stranger, who is subject to laws of state and reaches into every corner of state’s territory” (pp. 210–216). In their ruling, the Court emphasized the crucial role education plays in one’s life chances, noting that the tremendous “toll of deprivation of basic education on the social, economic, intellectual, and psychological well-being of the individual, and the obstacle it poses to individual achievement” (pp. 216–224).

Immigration increases diversity in society and result in positive benefits for the receiving countries (Weber, Kronberger, & Appel, 2018). Even still, negative immigrant discourses and their outcomes extend to education as well. There is persistent achievement gap between immigrant students and their nonimmigrant peers troubles the educational system in the United States. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2015), immigrant students drop out of school earlier, do not attend postsecondary institutions, and often score lower on education achievement tests. “Factors such as socio-economic status (SES), family resources, and language can only partly explain the systematic underachievement of immigrant students” (Weber et al., 2018, p. 211). Other factors such as school climate and advocacy may also contribute to certain gaps in school (Crawford & Arnold, 2016, 2017).

Students of certain immigrant groups are faced with comprehensive stereotypes of low cognitive achievement, laziness, and low performance motivation (Asbrock, 2010). Research has highlighted the importance of institutions such as schools and community agencies to the development of children in immigrant families (Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). The school as a proximal context plays a key role for immigrant children, because it is often a primary the first social and cultural

institution that immigrant students inhabit outside of their homes (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). However, immigrant students' sense of belonging to school (i.e., the degree to which students feel socially accepted); immigrants' reception (Weber et al., 2018); and increasing immigrant feelings of inclusion (Weber et al., 2018) has a positive impact on their educational success.

Over the years, research has repeatedly revealed that many educators are not well-prepared to work effectively with immigrants (Malatest & Associates, 2003) and lack the required IGs to ensure their inclusion. One of the challenges is the fear of diversity (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005). In addition, many lack knowledge and readiness to approach cultural and religious diversity that comes with immigration (Guo, 2012). Another challenge is the "difference as deficit" perspective (Dei, 1996). This results in the compartmentalization of individuals or groups in certain categories such as those in Fig. 1. In education, this compartmentalization is populated by "so-called target groups for inclusion—disabled children, learning disabled children, disruptive or disordered children, ESL children, disadvantaged and at-risk children, and Indigenous children" (Education Queensland, 2004). In particular, these domains become normalized and serve to confirm or invalidate particular groups



**Fig. 1** Production of domains through the constitutive pressure of normative discourses. (Adapted from Graham and Slee (2008))

of students. These discourses can be drawn as two poles of division. As shown in Fig. 1, there is a normative center around which these categories of students revolve but do not meet. Students in these categories are seen as deficit or something other than normal and become in many ways excluded.

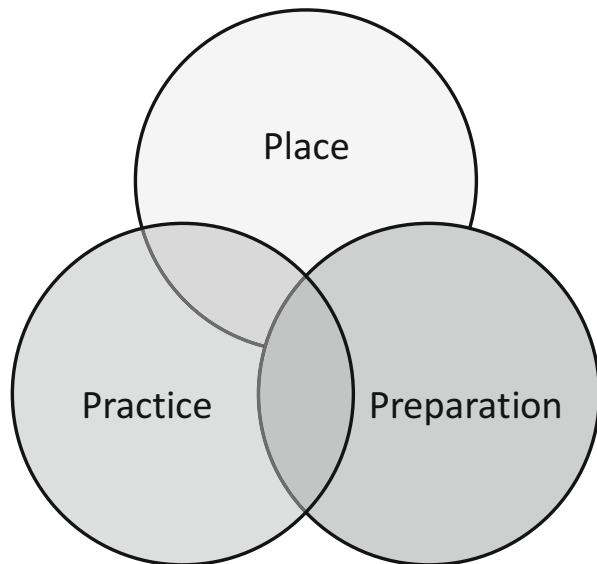
Through socialization, institutional structures, and policies, life is breathed into this figure, emphasizing difference as deficit and reinforcing exclusion. Rather than seeing difference and diversity as an opportunity to enhance learning by using the diverse strengths, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of students and parents from various cultural groups, the ‘difference as deficit’ model sees diversity ignored, minimized, or as an obstacle to the learning process (Dei, 1996). Educators are called to empower and support students, pursue justice, encourage human dignity, honor diversity, and reduce marginalization (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, n.d.).

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## Dignity and Inclusive Leadership

Young and Arnold (2021) calls for a restructuring of educational practices to prevent marginalization, while creating school cultures based on dignity and respect. The emerging framework for inclusive leadership (Fig. 2) focuses on place, preparation, and practice as domains that help leaders cultivate an inclusive culture by clarifying what inclusive leadership means, and the practice needed to develop structures of support that foster inclusive leadership mindsets and practice. The ultimate goal is

**Fig. 2** Emerging framework for inclusive educational leadership



that this framework can be scaled beyond leadership development to larger transformative practices, policies, and activities.

Initiating increase in groups who are historically excluded in education has created challenges for educational leaders at all levels (Arnold, 2020). In terms of attempts to include everyone equitably, leaders have focused on both individuals and organizations being excluded from society because of variables such as (1) having a disability, (2) having a migrant or refugee background, or (3) people with less access to information and facilities because of where they reside (Bortini, Paci, & Rojnik, 2021). The focus for this chapter is on the role of dignity as an essential construction of inclusive practice in schools, with a specific focus from the lens of leaders advocating for immigrant students.

The definition of the term inclusive leadership and what it means to be an inclusive leader varies among scholars and practitioners because of the several ways the terms are applied (Bortini et al., 2021). Many factors should be considered for both terms, including developing inclusive culture and addressing forces that dehumanize people at all levels of educational spaces (Arnold, 2020). Additionally, there are several fundamentals that leaders must weigh as they engage the needs of students such as the political, social, and economic context in which they operate. The unique needs should also and always be considered for students who possess different (or similar) abilities from the majority, and contribute to group outcomes (Toson, 2013).

Inclusive leadership is concerned first with inclusion, then its process and result (Ryan, 2006). The phenomenon is increasingly seen as an essential part of leadership practice and for many, provides a better foundation for academics and practitioners to serve parents, students, teachers, and community members (Ryan, 2007). Promoting and developing inclusive leadership is often a challenge for educational leaders, particularly for students diverse in race, class, and disability, or anyone that are among the community of people who exist outside the traditional norm (Kugelmass, 2003). As a result, educational leaders must focus on the result of implementing inclusive leadership practices and find ways to include everyone in the governance processes and actively pursue inclusive principles (Ryan, 2007). The worth of inclusive leadership is immeasurable since it seeks to value the dignity of every individual as a result of recognizing their needs and acting accordingly, which impacts everyone in the process positively (Bortini et al., 2021). Leaders have the responsibility of acknowledging the diverse abilities of disadvantaged groups, and on a broader, organizational level, leaders can be seen as people who plant the proverbial seeds which lead to more inclusive action (Bortini et al., 2021).

In terms of the motivation for this chapter, which focuses on dignity as an emerging leadership practice and an essential construct of inclusivity, the IGs which certain groups tend to gravitate towards is significant. As stated, IGs offer an opportunity to better understand the motivation of leaders regarding the representation and treatment of immigrant students. However, and unfortunately, there is no research available which examines the influence of IGs as leadership practice or critical constructs of leadership, specifically regarding leadership inclusivity.



## Information Grounds

Coined by Fisher (writing as Pettigrew), information grounds emerged from Pettigrew's (1998, 1999, 2000) fieldwork at community health clinics. Information ground theory focuses on people's information behavior in professional and social settings, ranging from book clubs, gyms, folk festivals, and bus stops to hair salons and supermarket queues. Information grounds serve as locations where people get information formally and informally, often through interaction with others (Fisher & Naumer, 2006). Information grounds are environments created when people gather to do something not primarily about information, but information sharing occurs spontaneously and serendipitously (Pettigrew, 1999). Pettigrew's (1999) original study focused on a foot clinic. Other IGs include places of worship, cafes, and bus stops (Fisher & Naumer, 2006), and virtual environments (e.g., Talip & Yin, 2017). According to Fisher, Landry, and Naumer (2007), IGs not only refer to a concept but more broadly to a research and theories of social interaction and settings in *everyday* information behavior. Information grounds can occur anywhere at any time. "As people visit and engage in social interaction, their conversation about life in general and about specific situations leads to both formal and informal information sharing" (Counts & Fisher, 2008, p. 1). Other times information is shared incidentally, where information might be shared serendipitously or without anyone seeking or needing that information (Erdelez, 2005).

In one characterization of IGs, the concept is characterized as the people–place–information trichotomy (Fisher et al., 2007). Specifically, IGs can be thought of as a social construct rooted in an individual's combined perceptions of place, people, and information. As Fisher et al. (2007) point out, IGs may form in a wide variety of physical places and may be tied to them or move to new locations. The "people–place–information trichotomy" (Fig. 3) organizational strategy was "a first step at organizing information ground attributes for the purpose of informing system design and optimizing information ground settings" (Fisher et al., 2007).

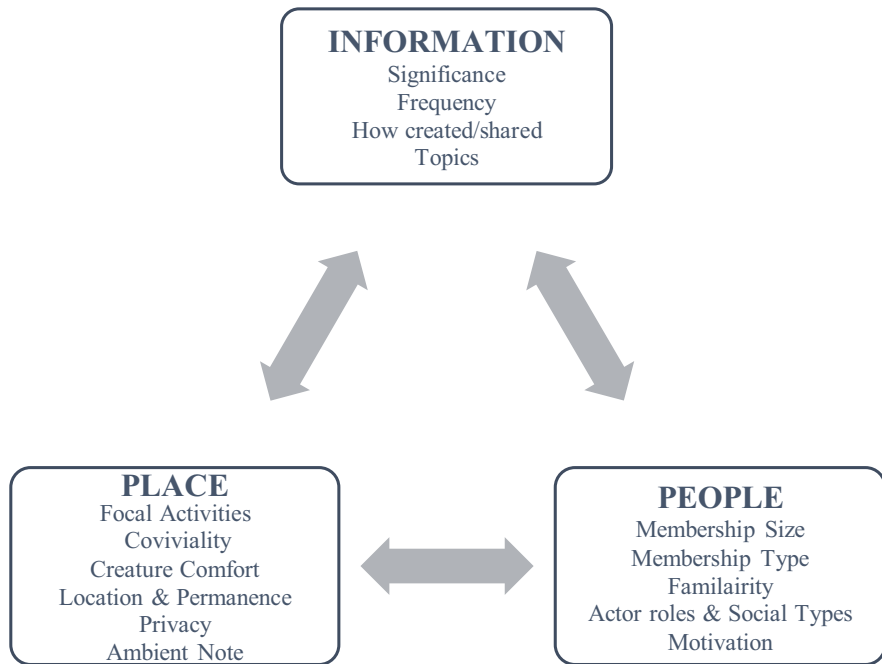
For example, in the people domain, research has found that smaller circles or groups tend to be sources of IGs. The closeness of the tie, familiarity, or intimacy tend to influence IGs. How one self-defined their or others' role and the motivation for the exchange influences IGs.

Information grounds have been elaborated in a series of field studies across varied populations, including library science (Savolainen, 2009), public health (Kelder & Lueg, 2011), medicine (Chew et al., 2019), and business (Gregor & Kalińska-Kula, 2013), and education (An, Na, Zhang, 2019; Fisher et al., 2007). Counts and Fisher (2010) suggested a set of propositions that deepen understanding of the information grounds framework (Fig. 4).

Taken together, these propositions form a grand context (Pettigrew, 1999) and concluded that "the study of information use cannot be considered in terms of an isolated individual or outside a specific . . . social context" (p. 810), and posited that "a challenge for information behavior researchers is to recognize contextual factors and understand their consequences" (p. 814).

According to Savolainen, IGs do not yet have a final definition, as it is evolving as the topic continues to be researched. Information grounds are vital as they form the





**Fig. 3** Information ground people-place-information trichotomy. (Adapted from Fisher et al., 2007)

- Proposition 1: IGs can occur anywhere, in any type of temporal setting and are predicated on the presence of individuals.
- Proposition 2: IGs serve a primary purpose other than information sharing.
- Proposition 3: IGs are attended by various groups serve different roles in information flow.
- Proposition 4: Social interaction is a primary activity of IGs
- Proposition 5: People engage in formal and informal information sharing, and information flow occurs in many directions.
- Proposition 6: People use information obtained at information grounds in alternative ways, and with various benefits along physical, social, affective, and cognitive dimensions.
- Proposition 7: Many sub-contexts exist within an IG and are based on people’s perspectives (Fisher et al., 2004, pp. 756 –757)

**Fig. 4** Information grounds propositions (Fisher et al. 2004)

framework for critical educational leadership practices that can make meaningful impact to the lives of immigrant students. Critical types of leadership include inclusive leadership, trauma leadership, and empathic leadership.

## Information Grounds, Dignity, and Immigrant Students

In this section, the preliminary findings (Arnold, Crawford-Rossi, & Brooks, [in press](#)) of a previous study are discussed according to the types of personal and professional IGs and how they relate to dignity practices and inclusion for immigrant students (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). The authors present themes and insights from the previous study to highlight how dignity intersect along axes leaders' information grounds. It is important to note that as a part of the larger study (Arnold et al., [in press](#)), the researchers conducted an analysis process that examined IGs, inclusion, and immigrant students in professional talk and text, but also *markers* or *descriptors* of these concepts. In the same way, both the markers and descriptors of dignity from that study as well as the literature are discussed. However, when the authors expanded to related words such as culture, there were 92 references. These information grounds mediate how leaders "identitize" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) immigrant students and families as deserving dignity. In other words, school leaders adopt professional practices of in/dignity based on their information grounds. These information grounds are negotiated by various units such as skills, knowledge, and resources; actions and responses; and institutions, discourse, and narratives.

### Geographic Information Grounds

Geographic IGs are those with origins in regions, locales, etc. (Esteban-Guitart, 2012). Space and place fit significantly into discussions of immigrant reception and integration, which can be positive or negative mediators of dignity. Leader IGs may be influenced by the immigration "history" of the sending or receiving community. Schools are the first spaces where many immigrant students are likely to have constant contact with members of the receiving community. It is where students internalize the rules of engagement of their new spaces and places and discourses of reception (Kenway & Youdell, 2011). Negative events or perceptions of a "sending" country can influence how people perceive incomers from that country (Jaret, 1999). Leaders' IGs determine if they are brokers of culture and diversity in schools and the acculturative process, which is a marker of dignity.

### Practical Information Grounds

Practical funds are those that originate from knowledges or activities (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Previous educational or professional experience with immigrant students are also sources of leaders' information grounds. For example, some immigrant students are fleeing traumatic events such as those who are refugees. However, the act of moving to another country can also be considered a trauma event (Arnold et al., [in press](#)). School leaders must acknowledge the

social and emotional needs adolescents bring with them to school, as well as the racial contexts that shape their experiences (Thompson & Schwartz, 2014). Sophia et al. (2018) found in their study that it was important for educators to move past teaching immigrant students to learn to speak English but to be conscious of the trauma the students experienced on a daily basis as well as to “grasp the role of the constrained policy context in creating crises for newcomers” (p. 13). Both formal and informal IGs provide a platform for information important to protect of immigrant students’ dignity and growth.

## Cultural Information Grounds

Cultural information grounds include information originating from symbols, tools, and categories, etc. that characterize, define, and mediate human experiences. These might include social categories such as ethnic group or religious identification. Educational leaders who prioritize diversity in their personal lives or those from their own cultural sources, often have leadership practice characterized by deep collaboration, which is a marker of dignity. Klotz (2006) found that principals who “value diversity in theory and in practice and [who assure that] teaching and learning are made relevant and meaningful to students of various cultures” (p. 11). When the cultural IGs of leaders represent immigrants as disadvantaged in education from the start, this leads negative cultural stereotypes, understandings, images that incline leaders towards indignity practice in schools (Iverson, 2007).

## Social Information Grounds

Social information grounds include significant others such as relatives, friends, or colleagues who have significant importance. For instance, family, mentors, or friends often serve as IGs. However, leaders’ social IGs often are correlated to varying levels of leaders’ empathy (Arnold et al., *in press*). Empathy is correlated to promoting inclusivity in education, particularly when it comes to being empathetic towards immigrant students. The study of Miklikowska (2018) found “programs aimed at reducing anti-immigrant attitudes in adolescence should work more closely with youth perspective taking and empathic concern” (p. 703). This signified that empathy can be correlated to being more inclusive of with immigrant statuses. Being cognizant and empathic towards the experiences of immigrant students is key. Additionally, Sophia et al. (2018) shared that sociopolitical awareness was important for educators to uphold. They indicated that this knowledge resulted in important advocacy work for immigrant students. Ultimately, educational leaders can make a vast difference in the lives of their students and their families if they utilize empathy as a form of guidance for treating them with the dignity they deserve. Holt and Marques (2012) significantly expressed that “empathy is an essential aspect of 21st century leadership and can no longer be ignored” (p. 104).

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## Institutional Information Grounds

Institutional information grounds include structures and mechanisms that control one's behavior. These might include institutions such as policies, laws, mores, etc. Often latent structures re/produce indignity education (Frankenberg & Mani, 1993). For example, institutionalization in education often manifests in discourse surrounding detrimental standards and policy for immigrant students (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Schools have “a set of linked dimensions that include structural advantage” (Frankenberg & Mani, 1993, p. 1). For instance, education policy can contribute to the active structuring of inequity as it relates to immigrant students. When leaders approach institutional IGs with a critical lens, it results in student and family advocacy, another marker of dignity, for immigrant students. Though leader practices may be unintentionally oppressive, it nevertheless perpetuated indignity (McIntosh, 2005). Leaders often still expect immigrant students to conform to attitudes, structures, and institutional practices rooted in assimilationist practice. Even when schools postulate diversity and universality, they may still produce and perpetuate indignity (Watson, 2013).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Discourse surrounding immigrants shows up as nationality-based policy making and policy application highlighting intersections among public policy, space, and race-based difference (Dikec, 2007). These policies materialize as difference and disparities in zoning decisions and school makeup (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). For instance, the specialty schools varied in terms of who could attend them – one specialty school was located in a certain area with a large immigrant population. However, the application process for that school included a lottery system that did not privilege students living in that community.

Literature suggests that principals shape the culture, conditions, and organization of schools, and these things matter to teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Brooks et al., 2010). They also influence school processes by promoting a shared vision, building structures and practices to support that vision, and fostering strong relationships with the local community (Scanlan & López 2012). Concomitantly, schools considered “successful” are those where leaders champion student progress by focusing on social issues like personal, social, and economic student potentialities (Ishimaru, 2013).

Our chapter suggests there is a feasible pathway to uphold the desire of Former Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan in maintaining the trust of parents and communities in schools particularly when it pertains to immigrant populations. This goal can be attained by educational leaders treating immigrant students, their families, and their communities with dignity while being cognizant of impactful IGs that can play both a negative and positive influence on decisions that impact immigrant populations.

Information grounds are important to educational leaders as research indicated that educational leadership are unsure as to how to accommodate immigrant students (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1994). Educational leaders must be intentional in expanding their IGs to create beneficial experiences for immigrant students. Likewise, educational leaders must be cautious of the credibility of IGs they obtain in regard to issues related to immigration, immigrants, and their lived experiences. IGs can be complex as information can be obtained formally and informally within the social world (Fisher & Naumer, 2006) and there is a plentiful amount of inaccurate information continuously being shared.

The political climate of the country serves as an important IG for how people feel about groups of individuals among more. Educational leaders must be knowledgeable of and see past the detrimental IGs in order to provide inclusion and safe environments for immigrant students. In other words, educational leaders must always stand on guard in regard to IGs that spread false and dangerous narratives and educate themselves with accurate and inclusive IGs.

It is important for educational leaders to acknowledge that they have different experiences as others and not assume they understand their lived experiences (Boske, Osanloo, & Newcomb, 2017) but to seek to connect and support them.

As connectedness via globalization and diversity increases, schools and other institutions are becoming incubators of internationalization. Understanding how teachers, leaders, educational entities, communities, and nations get their information and respond to diversity and immigration could shed light on these processes. Moreover, teachers and leaders of schools are faced with the important task of seeing and mediating the contradictions and indignities that exist in education and the larger world (Boske et al., 2017).

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**Part X**

**Leadership and Research**



# Transcending National Boundaries: How Five Educational Leaders Rethought Poverty and Access to Education

# 81

Jennifer Antoni and Susan H. Shapiro

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## Abstract

This chapter investigates five educational leaders who transcend national and contextual boundaries who utilize diverse ways of knowing about poverty, access, equity, the human conditions of schools, and communities across the globe. Each exemplifies the four parameters associated with Papa's concept of an educational leader without borders (ELWB). We apply these four parameters to our five exemplars, Muhammad Yunus, Paulo Friere, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Maria Montessori, and Fredrich Froebel, illustrating the wide- and far-reaching implications that these exemplars have had on increased access to opportunity and peace across schools and communities. Finally, we explore how these leaders influence current and future considerations of educational leadership and educational opportunity for all.

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**Keywords**

Educational leadership · Educational leaders without borders · Kindergarten · Early childhood education · Poverty

**Field of Memory**

Historically, school systems and their leaders have considered economic strife and poverty from the lens of how these problems have impacted the school system. In his history of urban education, Rury (2005) traced the ways that poverty shaped early concepts of school and learning from the period prior to the American Revolution where access to education depended upon social class and gender to societal systems of the Industrial Age when schools were framed as the answer to the perceived problems of immigration, crime and poverty, and extending to contemporary times. Conventionally, for educational leaders, poverty operates as a source of accountability pressure, as a contextual factor that shaped leadership practices and decisions related to curriculum, attendance, and exclusionary practices (Tropea, 2005; Tyack, 1974), rather than a societal ill that could be ameliorated by leadership practices.

**Field of Presence**

In recent scholarship and dialogue, educational leaders are called to broaden their gaze to serve the aims of social justice and cultural responsiveness in their work. These purposes manifest for leaders in leadership practices such as building classrooms that support student identity exploration and self-regulated learning (Kaplan, Bridgell, & Garner, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016) and building knowledge within students using culturally responsive methods (Hammond, 2014).

**Field of Concomitance**

Moving forward, the calls for a sharper focus on anti-racist educational leadership practices will be an important part of the dialogue and scholarship associated with the field of educational leadership.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

School leaders' conceptualization of poverty are primarily framed through school reform efforts to reduce existing disparities in educational outcomes between students living in poverty and those who are not. Well established in research, reform, and policy discussions are considerations of the complexities of the socioeconomic and racial achievement gaps, persisting over decades (Darling-Hammond, 2001; English, 2002; Reardon, Robinson-Cimpian, & Weathers, 2015). Related to these socioeconomic gaps are engagement and attainment gaps, also related to race and socioeconomic status (Heckman & La Fontaine, 2010; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). With this in mind, recent work asserting the need for culturally responsive leadership practices and the rejection of narrow deficit mindsets which constrain leadership

thinking about cultural differences as a viable asset (Hammond, 2014; Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevarez, 2017).

### Critical Assumptions

There is widespread agreement among educational policymakers, practitioners, and scholars that parity, equity, and ethical decision-making are foundational ontological beliefs to the educational leader (Gross & Shapiro, 2016). Though educational leaders may not travel the globe, the ELWB exemplifies thinking and practice that transcends one educational setting or one set of contextual factors. While there are many important assumptions that are critical to a conception of equitable leadership practices and policies, two foundational assumptions speak to the desegregation of schools and the access special education students have to learning.

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## Introduction

While educational leadership scholars have been long committed to the notions of social justice, ethics, and transformation in the work of leadership development, school, like other societal systems, remains socially constructed by those who operate in leadership roles, and therefore reflect and perpetuate the inequities of the broader context. Culturally situated and socially constructed schools are, as Papa (2016) argues, the embodiment of the values of the nation-state, and reflect and reproduce the structural inequities of its society (English, 2002; Giroux, 1981; Levinson & Holland, 1996). The practices and actions of educational leaders – the policymakers, district leaders, and school administrators – shape and define education for students across educational systems, states, and nations.

The use of exemplars in educational leadership can be a powerful tool for practitioners and scholars endeavoring to understand how to transform conventional notions of leadership, to think more broadly about their practices, and to break free from the borders confining and taking over education from achieving more equitable outcomes. Thus, the concept of an educational leader without borders (EDWB) emphasizes the idea of leaders actively breaking out of contextual constraints of their own communities and operating in a way that advances the aims of education for all. Papa (2016) identifies four assertions for what an ELWB believes and enacts in their daily practices:

The first recognition of an ELWB is to come to the realization that the goals of nation state global dominance are not always compatible with the pursuit of becoming more fully human and humane...and some problems fall between the borders of all nation states and are not solvable by any one nation state by itself...A second recognition of an ELWB is the universal element of the ethics both for the common good and by the individual on behalf of all humanity...A third parameter is an ELWB is one who not only understands but lives as a member of an ethical humane society - a community that organizes itself in accordance with democratic standards...A fourth parameter is that an ELWB is found today in what I call sustaining actions, those decisions/actions and their relationship to the power of the nation state global which may be harmful to humanity (p. 2).

This concept of educational leadership without borders applies not just to educational leaders with positional power, but to teachers and community members as well. Gross and Shapiro's (2016) notion of shared responsibility for democratic social improvement that cuts across political and cultural boundaries and is achievable through ethical and equitable leadership represents a fifth belief that is closely related to the concept of Papa's conception of ELWB. As Papa (2016) argues, equitable access to education for children remains an important area of focus for ELWB. In the next section, we provide five concise portraits of influential ELWB, describing their important contributions to transcending the prevailing thought and action of conventional educational leaders to center an array of access and equity considerations for underserved children and families.

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## Muhammad Yunus

The experience of poverty and its associations have been conceptualized by countless influential modern thinkers across disciplines. Paulo Friere (1970), an educational theorist, critiqued a conventional model of education where pupils are vessels to be filled passively disconnected from the construction of knowledge, where students are unaware of the role of oppressors. Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1934) explores the bleak realities of living in poverty and the constraints people experience regarding systemic economic reform. In *The History of Madness*, Foucault (1961) discusses the connections between isolation, lack of activity, and poverty. Beyond conceptualizations that shape assumptions of others in positions of influence, much of this work, and others like it, tends to be disconnected from the experience of people struggling to survive poverty.

One of the components that makes the work and thinking of Muhammad Yunus so unique is its immediacy of connection to the people that were at the center of his work. Some leaders advance ideas that are so important, so life-changing, that they transcend the boundaries that limit the thought and dialogue of multiple fields. Muhammad Yunus is one such leader. Undoubtedly, Yunus, an economist, is best known for transforming conventional business models in unprecedented and far-reaching ways. Indeed, he took on a lofty goal for an educational leader: eradicate poverty and rethink our perceptions of those living in poverty. A volume of work has been done exploring the profound ways Yunus revolutionized thinking around the economics of poverty.

Disenfranchised with conventional thinking regarding helping those living in the highest level of poverty, Yunus aimed to help the problem of widespread poverty in Bangladesh by rethinking the organizational structures that were available and applicable to those living in poverty (Yunus, 2009). Recalling a growing recognition where teaching "elegant" theories of economics to students while countless Bangladeshi people starved and suffered felt "empty," (Yunus, p. 44–45), Yunus felt called to take action to improve the economic conditions of the people. After a few false starts where Yunus attempted to use existing structures to create economic opportunity which continued to leave out the poorest, Yunus created a new concept

for money lending, known as social business, through his interactions with the Bangladeshi villagers who had virtually no access to land ownership or fair banking practices, and as a result, lacked access to education, health care, or security for their families (Yunus, 2009). Advocating with the government to create a new kind of bank, one that operated for the poor and did not require collateral, Yunus's Grameen Bank began to finance the small businesses of Bangladesh's poorest villagers. Once relegated to begging, serving as day laborers and handing over crippling percentages of profits to their landowners, Yunus's clients were finally able to save, finance their own small businesses, and begin to lift themselves out of poverty. In advancing the concepts of social business and microcredit, Yunus's model posed a new way of not only financing, but conceptualizing the initiative and entrepreneurship of some of the world's most underserved communities. Poor people are the world's greatest entrepreneurs, Yunus famously said, attributing the narrow mindsets of the people who misunderstood the aspirations, innovation, and motivation of the poorest people as the most difficult work in eradicating poverty. How leaders operating in important societal systems think about people living in or near poverty matters.

In addition to the broad strokes that Yunus painted across our collective understanding of how to think about and help people living in poverty, both on a systemic and an individual level, there are a few additional ways that Yunus conceptualized the notion of service, on the part of a teacher, to those living in poverty. Rather than operating with a conventional set of action possibilities related to how a professor or university administrator might act, Yunus broke through conventions and taught his economics students through the creation of something that did not exist before: a new banking system for the poor, predicated on a new set of assumptions. People without money are not without the drive to create, to prosper, to share responsibility. By examining and shifting these assumptions, Yunus achieved what Papa and Englis call the leveraging of "institutional force for greater equality and opportunity."

Accordingly, his work indelibly transformed a second field, that of educational leadership. Indeed, beyond business models, Yunus's work can also be looked at through the lens of transformative educational leadership. As a scholar and a teacher, Yunus uniquely focused on the people living in the worst kind of poverty, endeavoring to achieve social change across systems and national boundaries. By providing an alternate concept for addressing poverty, Yunus is not simply an innovative economist and economics educator, but also a transcendent educational leader, an exemplar of an educator embodying the inner sense of responsibility to social development on a world scale (Gross & Shapiro, 2016), working to lift some of that darkness that prevails when people do not have access to education, justice, and hope.

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## **Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire is one of the most prominent transformative leaders of our time. He is widely known for his critiques of society and education and his dedication to societal change.

His landmark 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* explored the connection between education and society and is a groundbreaking work on critical pedagogy which is still relevant today. “The work of Paulo Freire has continually been associated with the themes of oppression and liberation, and his critical pedagogy is visionary in its attempt to bring about social transformation” (Jackson, 2007, p. 199). Freire envisioned the pivotal impact that teaching student to develop critical awareness of the contextual knowledge people bring to learning. Moving away from the conception of teaching and learning as a one-way deposit into an empty receptacle, Freire’s thinking led the way for conceptions of teaching for social justice and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Born in Recife, Brazil, in 1921, Freire worked to erase adult illiteracy in Brazil. His work transcended national boundaries as he fought for positive change and equality in education. “Drawing on his experiences in Latin America and elsewhere, Freire created a theory of education that is closely linked to issues of oppression and struggle, particularly within social relations that center around both ideological and material domination” (Jackson, 2007, p. 199). Breaking with convention, Freire was not content to look at education as a passive experience where the educator imparts knowledge on a student or *banks knowledge* and instead, rethought the process of education stressing the role of the learner as an active participant. Through his exploration of oppression and poverty, Freire created discourse regarding the role that education could play in the eradication of the oppression of those traditionally without access to a better quality of life outcome. Indeed, Freire saw the interconnectivity between the educational system and the perpetuation of systemic injustice.

Freire was influenced greatly by the times in which he was born. During his childhood, the Great Depression was ravaging not only America but many other nations, including Brazil. He witnessed poverty and mass illiteracy among the population. It was during these times that his exposure to a society which fostered poverty and illiteracy piqued Freire to think about the impact that an emphasis on consciousness in education could have on societal change. “Latin American societies are closed societies characterized by a rigid hierarchical social structure; by the lack of internal markets, since their economy is controlled from the outside; by the exportation of raw materials and importation of manufactured goods, without a voice in either process; by a precarious and selective educational system whose schools are an instrument of maintaining the status quo; by high percentages of illiteracy and disease” (Freire, 1998, p. 505). While it is evident that Freire felt school systems could replicate inequity, Freire embodies the fourth parameter of the ELWB in his assertion that this status quo of the nation-state was, in fact, harmful to humanity. Unlike educational leaders interested in maintaining the status quo in terms of societal systems, Freire had progressive, expansive thinking about the role education had the potential to play in social change.

While Freire started his career as a professor of history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife, his influence would span far and wide beyond his own community. After a military coup in Brazil, Freire moved to Bolivia and Chile. He lived in Chile where he held a position at Christian Democratic Agrarian



Reform Movement and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and later, at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. He joined the Workers' Party in Sao Paulo in 1979 where he became Sao Paulo's secretary of education and started the adult literacy project (Freire Institute, 2021). It was through his travels and his views of a changing society that Freire began to write about the impact of education on society and its connection to social change. According to Maviglia (2019), "It is well known that Freire upheld a strong commitment to struggle against all forms of oppression, dehumanization, marginalization, injustice and violence." He believed that education is the fundamental instrument for building a less inhuman world. He was a staunch supporter of education as a "practice of humanization" which overcomes every form of injustice, oppression, and discrimination. He proposed "problematizing education" as a valid antidote able to show humans the path to "humanization" (p. 388). Undoubtedly, while Freire's thinking transcended his own nation's educational system, Friere's ideas transcended borders, influencing educational leaders interested in advancing education as a universal human right, rather than as a means to further the nation-state's goals and purposes (Papa, 2016).

On balance, Freire looked at the way education functioned in society with a critical eye, conceiving of groundbreaking pedagogical practices that he associated with the work of dismantling oppressive societal systems or structures. One such process, praxis, entailed such social action and reflection. A second process, conscientization, was the process of developing in students a critical awareness of social reality through action and reflection (Freire Institute, 2021). Freire knew that only through education there would be freedom from poverty and injustice illustrating the wide- and far-reaching implications he had across schools and communities. Freire maintained that reflection by the oppressed on their oppression and its causes "will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade" (Jackson, 2007, p. 199). Friere's theories and writings regarding educating the illiterate, using education to alleviate poverty and oppression, still heavily influence critical pedagogy today.

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## **Tsunesaburo Makiguchi**

While educational leaders without borders share expansive ideas and efforts that deign to solve the problems that "fall between the borders of all nation states" (Papa, 2016, p. 2), their influence may not be recognized or appreciated in their lifetimes. Goulash and Gebert attribute this widespread notion. Indeed, recent work has begun to illuminate the important influence of one such transcendent leader, Japanese teacher, principal, and scholar Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, connecting his writings to important discourse prevalent today about the goals of education (Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Gebert & Joffee, 2007).

Moving away from a deterministic notion of human decision-making, educational leader Tsunesaburo Makiguchi saw the role of human agency in creating values that would contribute to the individual and collective well-being of people

(Gebert & Joffe, 2007). Believing that a human's pursuit to create value in life was the most important purpose in life, Makiguchi, like Freire, saw the utility of the "authentic" goals naturally associated with education, as a vehicle for this universally important pursuit. By providing opportunities for students to create value, educational leaders and educators would cultivate students that would manifest harmony and happiness. Like Freire, Makiguchi conceived of a school experience where the sharing of knowledge affords more than just individual learning to its students. Rather, humanity, as a whole, could benefit from the individual students responding both aesthetically and through their senses to ideas or experiences. This process constitutes Makiguchi's conception of creating the value of beauty in humanity's pursuit of happiness (Goulah, 2009). Through the beauty that individual students create, Makiguchi asserted, the society is collectively improved through added value that can be shared and manifested continuously. For Makiguchi, like Freire and Yunus, the outputs of education could begin to be realized immediately, even in an imperfect world. Envisioning a symbiotic relationship between the individual student and the good of society, Papa (2016) notes, is a key component of leadership that transcends national borders.

Although Makiguchi had philosophical and religious differences with the political beliefs of his government, importantly, both in his teaching and leading roles, he avoided integrating his own critical beliefs regarding the state into his work with students (Goulah, 2009). While his work with Indigenous, women, and other marginalized people is well established, Makiguchi's school leadership, Goulash argues, placed value on foundational and universal concepts that could benefit them regardless of the sociopolitical context. This kind of an emphasis concerns itself with a pursuit of students becoming "more fully human and humane" (Papa, 2016, p. 2). His leadership, emphasizing the ubiquitous creation of value, cannot be contained to one set of educational systems or one specific setting. Like Freire and Yunus, Makiguchi did not limit his gaze to those with privilege, instead leading with the belief that education had value for all people, and conversely, all people had the ability to create value, beauty, and truth for all of society from the experience of education.

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## **Fredrich Froebel**

Fredrich Froebel was a transformative leader who transcended national boundaries through his work in early childhood education. Born in Germany in 1782, Froebel was not only an educational visionary but uniquely, a social activist and feminist. "He claimed that the health and happiness of the individual, the family, and the state depended on the quality of preschool education at a time when there were virtually no public provisions for it. He invented both the concept and the word kindergarten, and he began programs of training for women" (Weston, 2000, p. 1). His influence has impacted early childhood education in an ever-changing landscape. His ideas and philosophy helped to influence leaders throughout Europe, America, and the rest of the world. The effect of poverty, the lack of opportunities for women, and the

absence of care and understanding of young children had a profound effect on his work and legacy.

During the beginning of the industrial revolution, children often went without care as women and older children worked in factories while the youngest were forced to fend for themselves. According to Weston (2000), Froebel saw the hardships of women and children and responded to societal needs. "Industrialization and economic pressures were leading to increased exploitation of child labour neither church nor state or making any educational provisions for the very young, Froebel became convinced of the need to train capable and gifted women in particular mothers" (p. 14). Froebel's belief that women should be trained as teachers was a modern and shocking idea and one that was often met with derision. "Froebel also advanced the idea of training women as teachers—and he persisted with this idea in spite of the laughter and ridicule the subject evoked when he presented it at an all-male conference in 1847" (Hewes, 1990, pp. 7–8). Undoubtedly, Froebel was a man of deeply held convictions about women as teachers. He believed that women should have training as teachers and that their involvement in early childhood would benefit society at large. By opening training centers for women he allowed opportunities for women away from the dangers and low pay of the factories that previously had been their main means of employment. "On 28 June 1840 Froebel's Universal German kindergarten was formally opened on the 400th anniversary of Gutenberg's invention of printing. It was staffed entirely by women who were not previously well represented in the teaching profession and many women were subsequently trained there as teachers of infants" (Weston, 2000, pp. 18–19).

Like Makiguchi, the development of the individual student was a primary goal for educators. According to Lascarides and Hinitz (2000), "spiritual development of man was Froebel's highest priority in education. He wanted, however, to develop it in harmony with man's physical and intellectual growth" (p. 94).

With an emphasis on the younger child, Froebel broke new ground as it related to access. According to Spodek (1988), before Froebel, "There was seldom a distinction made between programs for young children and programs for older children prior to the 19th century. Indeed, in the first part of the nineteenth century, primary schools had no particular entrance age" (p. 2). Froebel believed that in order to properly educate a youngster, the teacher must match the exact developmental stage of the child with the activities presented in the classroom. Froebel stressed the importance of sharing and community building. According to Baader (2004), "In this perspective, the kindergarten is understood as a microcosm of society, education in kindergarten as democratic" (p. 429). Froebel's dedication to the creation and care for the community was embodied in the term "kindergarten" which he created and which meant *garden of children*. "Each child was given a plot in the garden as their responsibility, as well as being expected to tend larger communal plots (Liebschner, 1991). The aim was for young children to be involved in and knowledgeable about the wider community" (Hoskins & Smedley, 2019, p. 76). Froebel's dedication to the creation and care of community reflects an educational philosophy that embodies a vision of a leader without borders as his work supports not only the individual child but the common good reflecting the emphasis for the common good for all of

humanity that Papa (2016) identifies as foundational for ELWB. His contributions have had a profound impact on the field of early childhood education over time.

Froebel's philosophy guided transformative leadership and his ideas had a huge effect on children in poverty throughout the world. According to Albisetti (2009), Froebel's work with children had a huge influence on reformers and educators in Italy, France, Switzerland, Portugal, and Belgium who wrestled with the idea of supporting children whose parents were taken from the role of caregiving by factories and poverty and not subjecting young children to long hours of rote learning and passive instruction. Ferrante Aporti, an early follower of Froebel, helped to establish some early kindergartens in Europe. "Aporti believed that children needed to start schooling earlier than age 6. Concerned with moral and physical development as well as instruction, he considered the *asilo* (nursery school) preferable to leaving children on the streets, keeping them up in the Italian equivalent of Dame schools or even leaving them in the hands of parents who could not educate them" (Albisetti, 2009, p. 162).

In the USA, visionaries such as Patty Hill Smith, the founder of the National Association of the Education of Young Children, established Froebelian kindergartens for children. Her vision of leadership demonstrated "an ethical humane community—a community which wants to know what is right and good—that organizes itself in accordance with democratic standards and ideals not only because they are good in themselves, but because they are prerequisites for the application of intelligence to inquiry" (Papa, 2016, p. 2).

Patty Hill Smith responded to childhood poverty both during the industrial revolution and the Great Depression. "She was deeply moved by the malnutrition, child labor, and high mortality rate among children living in poverty. She had developed a life-long commitment to democratic ideals and the importance of self-determination in activity—especially in childhood—as a means of empowering individuals" (Liebovich, 2020, March). The influence of Froebel, his kindergartens, and his response to childhood poverty was evident in Smith's establishment of kindergartens in the poorest areas of New York.

Smith-Rosenberg (1985) wrote, "Revolutionaries are rarely trained for their roles. They come forward to answer unexpected challenges, at times when old paradigms prove obsolete and new visions are required" (p. 11). The leaders in the field of early childhood education have reacted to certain societal shifts that are relevant to understand ways in which early childhood leaders have expanded their roles as school leaders and their own philosophy of early childhood education. These leaders are shaped by the field of memory, as they look to past models of the education of young children and have reshaped thoughts of how to educate young children as they responded to challenges and societal shifts that have arisen over time. By the time of his death in 1852, his influence and dedication to the community served "to revolutionize how educators activate their passions, serve humanity through schools and inspire the children in our care to find happiness and fulfillment in their lives" (Papa, 2016, p. 32). The ideas presented by Froebel were molded and shaped to help create structures that supported young children and their families over a long period of time and circumstances. Froebel's influence helped educators to look at young

children not merely as “younger students” but as unique and deserving of an approach that centered on development, community, and play. He moved education from simple rote learning and drills to one that endeavored to develop the whole person both morally and creatively. His dedication to creating access for children in poverty and the elevation of women as teachers was pivotal in the world of early childhood and the larger society and still has influence to this day.

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## **Maria Montessori**

Early childhood education has seen many transitive leaders whose work impacts the lives of women and children who are living in poverty. According to a 2020 report by the World Bank,

Although children make up around a third of the global population, around half of the extreme poor are children...The youngest children are the worst off - nearly 20 percent of all children below the age of 5 in the developing world live in extremely poor households. (World Bank, 2020)

It is well established that poverty disproportionately affects young children. It is this injustice that historically captures the attention of leaders and transforms them from educational leaders into social reformists and revolutionaries. This is the case with Maria Montessori whose revolutionary views helped to shape the lives of women and young children in both Italy and worldwide, expanding.

Born in Rome in 1870, Montessori broke with gender norms by studying engineering and mathematics and later attended medical school, graduating with honors. Once she completed her training, she dedicated her work to disabled children and their families. According to Papa (2016), the first recognition of an educational leader without borders is to come to the realization that the goals of nation-state global dominance are, at times, incompatible with what is ethical and equitable. Gunderman (2020) wrote, “In 1906, Montessori gave up a university chair position to organize the education of low-income children in Rome. Known as Casa dei Bambini (‘Children’s House’), it was here that Montessori began to develop and apply her educational principles” (p. 327). As such, Montessori operated as an educational leader without borders, sharing a vision of education as a liberating force for peace which stayed consistent even though her beliefs often put her at risk, and her path to that vision evolving over time.

While Montessori’s experiences with children in poverty led her to develop her theories regarding early childhood education, her theories had utility for the Fascist party. It was during this time that the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini became enamored with Montessori’s methods of increasing childhood literacy. According to Montessori and Gutek (2004), “Mussolini, of course, was not interested in the freedom of the child to learn but was attracted to a method that instilled discipline and order and in which children learned to read and write at age four” (p. 44). This interest by the government resulted in Montessori being awarded a government post

developing programs related to early childhood education. As such, Montessori's methods were embraced by the Fascist party, but their ideologies were constantly at odds. Whereas Mussolini wanted to use education as a means of control (Ascoli, 1937), Montessori believed that education could help achieve world peace (Baligadoo, 2014).

Importantly, Montessori went as far as to defy the Fascist regime by refusing to allow Fascist propaganda a place in her schools. This division caused Montessori to lose the backing of the government and put her life in danger. Gunderman (2020) explained what happened to her this way:

But beginning around 1930 she fell out of favor, in part because she refused to allow her schools to participate in pledges and songs designed to promote the ruling party's political objectives. Moreover, Montessori was an indefatigable proponent of education as a means of securing peace, which brought her into conflict with Mussolini's militaristic plans. By 1936, the government had terminated its Montessori-inspired educational programs throughout the country (p. 327).

This conflict with the Fascists led to Montessori's dismissal and the need for her to eventually flee Europe in fear of her life. In keeping with the deep commitment that ELWB exemplifies to the universal ethic, Montessori went to India where she continued her work fighting child poverty. Baligadoo (2014) wrote: "Maria Montessori's determined effort to bring peace through education should not be underestimated. She considered education as the best means for achieving peace" (p. 428). Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, 1950, and 1951 (Baligadoo, 2014), Montessori's vision, like Froebel's, would transcend national and political borders to influence global efforts to educate the world's youngest and arguably, some of the world's most vulnerable students. Moreover, Montessori's conception of education as a tool of peace and her dedication to education worldwide as a weapon against childhood poverty makes her a leader operating beyond political and ideological borders. Her work in education, framed by her aim to build peace in communities, exemplifies Papa's definition as someone who works "to create a more socially just world society" (p. 5).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Yunus once described the experience of poverty as the absence of all human rights (Yunus, 2009). This same indictment could include the absence of peace and a feeling of value, as well. For poverty to sustain, the systems in place must support and reproduce the conditions necessary for communities of people to remain in poverty, cut off from their rights as human beings, equitable access to education, and a quality of life required to lift themselves out of poverty. With an awareness of what types of leadership and work might help the underserved, the exemplars of Freire, Froebel, Makiguchi, Montessori, and Yunus each provide insight into the progressive thinking endemic to educational leadership without borders. Indeed, each

significantly advanced the conventional thinking about what educational leadership could accomplish, framed by their ontological beliefs about the importance of equity and access in education, and supported by their expansive thinking on what might be attainable through educational processes, reconceived. Although the discourse of improving equity and access for underserved students and communities in educational leadership is prevalent in the field, making systemic changes in the domain of educational leadership beyond small-scale changes has proven complex and difficult to achieve (English, 2020). Importantly, these leaders each contributed a fresh perspective on how best to serve the underserved in ways that remain challenging and relevant past their particular time frames and beyond their original settings. Certainly, these leaders, philosophers, and thinkers have transcended national borders to continue to challenge today's educational leaders, across nations and systems, to serve all of humanity, in their dialogue, practice, and leadership.

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# The Search for Science and Scientific Standing

# 82

Colin W. Evers

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## Abstract

The search for science and scientific understanding in educational administration and leadership has been shaped to varying degrees by differing views of science. Three such views have had some influence in the field. Positivism, as a form of strict foundationalism, has been perhaps the least influential. It purports to justify a theory of educational administration by deriving it from a secure set of alleged knowledge foundations. The weaknesses in this view are well known, with its influence nowadays confined mainly to accounting for operational definitions and a quest for empirical foundations. Logical empiricism, a modest form of foundationalism, has been of most influence. Expressed most clearly in the Theory Movement of the

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1950s, and later through its application in social systems theory, it sought to justify theories of administration by empirical testability. Observation statements are derived from the theory and are then tested against actual observations. Justification is a matter of securing many confirmations and no disconfirmations.

Both positivism, in this sense, and logical empiricism were primarily employed in a project to build scientific theories of educational administration. Because they placed a premium on law-like generalizations, a form of systems theory such as could be applied to organizations, came to dominate the field, at least until the 1980s, despite known weaknesses in logical empiricism as an account of science.

It was systems theory itself that emerged as problematic. As key features of systems emphasized stability and return to equilibrium, the model proved to be unsatisfactory in accounting for change, especially large-scale systems change as occurred with neoliberal reforms of schooling in the direction of school-based management.

Theories of change, especially those for systemic change within whole jurisdictions, favored leadership as the primary explanatory source in accounting for school reform, and furthermore, for implementing it. As a result, by the 2000s, the role of science had narrowed from providing constraints on theories of organizations, to providing the conditions for evidence-based research into leadership. Logical empiricism as a theory of science had become the epistemological basis for a scientific research methodology in leadership studies.

Known weaknesses in logical empiricism have led to so-called post-positivist accounts of science. An important one of these uses science itself to account for the nature, acquisition, and justification of knowledge. This scientific naturalism favors a coherentist view of justification that can then be used to shape both the content and structure of theories of educational administration, leadership, and how they are related.

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### Keywords

Positivism · Logical empiricism · Naturalistic coherentism · Subjectivism · Critical theory · Humanism · Postmodernism · Causation · Statistical regularity · Pattern · Randomness · Effect size · Correlation · Best fit · Empirical adequacy · Systems theory · Testability · Confirmation bias · Distributed cognitive system · Context

### The Field of Memory

Former key ideas, notably those associated with building a science of administration as envisaged by the researchers of the Theory movement of the 1950s adopted positivism of the 1920s, now linked to the Vienna Circle, and subsequent developments from the 1940s more accurately labeled as logical positivism. Under the influence of logical positivism, administrative theories were construed as hypothetico-deductive structures from which could be derived observation

statements that could then be tested in experimental or natural settings. To meet the requirements of science, these theories were held to be versions of systems theory.

### **The Field of Presence**

Because of problems with logical empiricism as an account of science, an important development in the field, commencing in the 1970s, was to move away from the entire enterprise of science. Instead, many alternative paradigms came to compete with science. Voice was given to subjectivist views, those based on administrative values as central, Critical Theory, and a version of postmodernism that challenged the whole matter of an account of epistemic justification that relied on observation and testability. Traditional science of administration still flourished, but alongside these other competing views.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The outside influences on the search for science and scientific standing have come from philosophy, particularly philosophy of science, and from critics whose ideas are based in Weberian social science and its method of understanding, political philosophy and theories of human emancipation, the philosophy of social science, and research methodologies associated with these different influences.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Most of the field's discontinuities and ruptures have centered first on disputed over the nature of science, and second over whether science, however it is conceived, could function as an adequate basis for educational administration or the justification of accounts of leadership and its effects within organizations. These ruptures may be described, at the most general level, as different paradigms, where in Kuhnian terms, their merits are claimed to be defensible within the terms of each paradigm. This results in the formation of distinct theoretical silos. An alternative to this, naturalistic coherentism, challenges the entire basis for paradigms theory. It argues that if paradigms were truly incommensurable, a paradigm would not be learnable by an occupant of a different paradigm.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The key assumptions of this chapter are that a persuasive account of the nature of science can be argued in relation to rival views, and that this comes with a preferred methodology for justifying claims about organizations and about leadership. However, this requires that the task of justification always be relative to context. In social science research, the difference between controlled and uncontrolled variables is blurred, and that such a science looks for patterns. Since leadership occurs within particular organizational contexts, a feature of the blurring contributes to a more distributed view of leadership. This is more so where the basic tasks of organizations involve characteristic epistemic tasks such as decision-making or problem solving. Leading in organizations can then be construed within the framework of social epistemology. The result is a view of leadership as occurring within a distributed cognitive system that admits of scientific and mathematical modeling.

## Introduction

The quest for a science of educational management and leadership has been shaped by two significant forces. The first concerns views about the nature of science. The second concerns the scope and role of science in building theories in these fields. Ideas about the nature of science have come largely from philosophy, particularly from understandings of positivism and logical empiricism, two distinct notions that are sometimes run together in the educational literature.

Historically, the widest scope for a science of educational administration was proposed in the 1950s, an approach that was called the “Theory Movement.” This was an attempt to develop a systematic account of management theory that conformed to the philosophical canons of logical empiricism. Its central model was systems theory, as it was thought to meet the required philosophical strictures (Culbertson, 1981).

Understanding educational organizations as systems dominated the scene until the mid-1970s when it came under criticism from two sources. The first was a developing skepticism concluding that a traditional science of educational administration was fundamentally inadequate. Arguments for these inadequacies came mainly from the kind of philosophical objections that gave rise to the claim that there were many different paradigms for conceiving management theory, not just one so-called scientific conception.

The second source of objection to systems theory came from a challenge to some of its fundamental assumptions, particularly the notion that systems return to equilibrium. This assumption made systems theory an ill-suited framework for understanding educational change, notably the widespread shift to school-based management that gained momentum across multiple jurisdictions beginning in the 1980s.

The principal force for driving educational system and individual school change was theorized to be leadership. The leadership theories that developed out of this policy trend instantiated a more restricted role for science. There was no demand for a science of leadership as a constraint on theorizing leadership. Rather the dominant role of science shifted to providing justification for claims about leadership. The philosophical ideas of positivism or logical empiricism found a home in research methodology with concomitant support for quantitative research methods. So, too, followed the belief that research methods partitioned into paradigms with some failing to be scientific.

While most objections to a quest for science in educational management and leadership are based on objections to positivist and logical empiricist accounts of science, these philosophical doctrines have been seriously challenged as accounts of the nature of science. It is argued here that the prospects for science in leadership and management are best defended within the framework of a post-positivist (and post-logical empiricist) account of science, one that sees evidence as being more than a narrow view of empirical evidence and sees theorizing not as a quest for law-like generalizations, but rather as a way of expressing patterns in leadership and management phenomena.

As these ideas about science emerged and influenced the field over time, the discussion that follows will as much as possible be chronological.

## Epistemology and Terminology

The role of empirical evidence has always been central to accounts of science, particularly over the question of what counts as justifying a scientific theory. The branch of philosophy that deals with this issue is epistemology, or theory of knowledge. In educational administration, views about a science of administration can be refined and distinguished by attending to their underlying epistemologies. There are, however, both in philosophy and in administration, a number of divergent and sometime conflicting uses of such terms as positivism, logical positivism, empiricism, logical empiricism, science, and scientism. Some of these differences are about how to specify the meaning of terms or even claims. Others, to be focused on here, are to do with justification.

Concerning justification, it is useful to distinguish three main varieties: positivism, logical empiricism, and coherentism. The first two are forms of foundationalism. With strict foundationalism, justification proceeds from observational evidence to theory. Classical empiricism treated observational evidence as sensory experience. However, if theories are formulated symbolically, as sets of interrelated sentences, then sensory experience must also be expressed symbolically as inferential relations, such as logical deduction or induction, are between sentences. In the positivism of the Vienna Circle, the most influential form of positivism, the basic epistemic foundation was protocol sentences. These are first person, present tense, reports of sensory experience, such as “I see a red patch” (Laydman, 2002, p. 152). Justification consists of showing inferential relations between protocol sentences, which form the foundations of knowledge, and all other knowledge claims.

There are many problems with this form of positivism, but two are central to its demise. The first points to the fact that protocol sentences do not actually tell us anything about the world beyond the inner workings of the perceiver’s mind. That is, first person reports of sensory experience are no more than reports about the contents of the mind, not reports of the external world. This is the problem of solipsism. Getting from protocol sentences to justified claims about the world requires a lot of inferential machinery, perhaps in the form of a theory of perception that locates the world as the cause of sensory experience. Unfortunately, the required theory of perception is itself not a sensory experience and so its role in justifying an external world begs the question.

Even if the problem of solipsism could be solved, singular observation reports will not yield what is most characteristic of good science, namely law-like generalizations. This is because of the problem of induction. A finite number of singular observation reports does not permit an inference to a generalization. One cannot go from “all observed ravens are black” to the conclusion “all ravens are black.” Such are the woes of positivism’s strict foundationalism where one is justifying claims by way of inference from a subset of foundational claims.

There are many other uses of the term “positivism” in social science literature, but these are often used simply to refer to science as though it is, by definition, positivist. Traditional versions of critical theory in educational administration make this conflation. The term “scientism” is also used as a pejorative in this and other traditions (Foster, 1986).

Logical empiricism attempts to bypass some of these problems by adopting a modest form of foundationalism, one that sees the inferential status of observation reports as being concerned with confirmation or disconfirmation. Instead of attempting to deduce theories from observations, logical empiricism deduces observation sentences from theories. If the deduced observations are in fact observed, the theory is confirmed, and if not, the theory is disconfirmed (Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Hoy & Miskel, 2013, pp. 1–8). A theory is said to be justified if it builds up many confirmations and no disconfirmations.

Although logical empiricism was initially developed as an account of scientific knowledge, one of its founders, Herbert Feigl, sought to extend its applicability to social science (Feigl, 1953). And it was this view of science that was adopted by the leading figures of the Theory Movement, and later theorists in educational administration. As Griffiths (1959, p. 28) remarks, “Halpin suggests that we accept Feigl’s use of ‘theory’ as the standard and that researchers and theoreticians restrict the use of the word as does Feigl. We agree that this is a needed step.” The needed step continued even into the 1980s and beyond: “Some agreement is apparent in the field of educational administration that the definition of theory produced by Herbert Feigl is an adequate starting point” (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 2). The key point here is that “theory” in this context means “scientific theory.”

So, what does a logical empiricist account of educational administration look like? It is useful to begin with what scientific theories in the field are supposed to do. Four main functions were proposed (Griffiths, 1959). The first was to guide practicing administrators, something that other approaches aspired to but, according to critics, only achieved if at all, in an anecdotal way. The second was to guide the collection of facts, or data, about administration. The third was to promote the development of more theory, and the fourth was to explain and describe the nature of administration.

In order to achieve these goals of theory, logical empiricism imposed four major constraints on the content and structure of theories, as well as their development: (1) theory was a hypothetico-deductive structure; (2) justification for every claim in the theory was by empirical testability, that is by observations that either confirmed or disconfirmed claims; (3) operational definitions of all theoretical terms was required for specifying meaning; (4) as a corollary of these constraints, ethics was to be excluded from administrative theory (Evers, 2003).

Theory conceived as a hypothetico-deductive structure implies that a theory consists of layers of claims, from the most general to those that are particular, linked by deduction. This is Feigl’s “wedding cake” model. At the top are the universal generalizations of physics. Lower down are to be found theories in the middle range dealing with a more context-specific domains of phenomena such as societies or organizations. And further down are the specificities of contingent

initial conditions that help describe states of affairs. A hypothetico-deductive scientific administrative theory would then consist of domain-specific generalizations concerning organizations, or administrative functioning, statements of particulars for specific organizations, and deductions from the theory as to how the organization will behave.

Justification is then a matter of checking deduced observations with actual observations, particularly when it comes to a theory's hypothesized generalizations. The empirical justification of the theory depends on building up many matches between deductions and observations, or confirmations, while discovering either no disconfirmations or only those that can be explained by special circumstances that lie outside the assumed conditions of the theory's context of applicability. Examples of generalized hypotheses would be "The stronger the collective teacher efficacy of a school, the higher the level of mathematics in the school," or "The greater the external pressure from the community on their schools, the higher the level of academic achievement" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 6).

Notice that these hypotheses contain a number of theoretical expressions, for example: "collective teacher efficacy," "external pressure from the community," and "academic achievement." Logical empiricism requires that these be given precise empirical definitions. This is achieved by the use of operational definitions, notably those that specify empirical measurement procedures for each expression. Although this is a feature of logical empiricism's empirical theory of meaning, its importance for justification lies in the fact that the language describing observations must match the language in a theory's hypotheses for there to be a logical relation between the two that is required for testability.

Finally, the reason that ethics is excluded in this kind of science of administration is because of a purported distinction between facts and values. Science is about facts, how they are described, predicted, and explained. They admit of justification by observation, and the theoretical terms that may figure in their description are said to be definable by operational definitions. Ethics, on the other hand, does not admit of any of this, and so has no place in a scientific theory. Since something must drive the quest for good theory, the issue is faced by separating means from ends. The virtues of description, prediction, and explanation are to do with means. The question of what ought to be done, or how it should be done, are the province of ends, or goals, and where ethics enters the picture. The usual way in which logical empiricism gets to evaluating goals is by appealing to the concept of preference. Preferences can be measured, and if they are complete with regard to a set of options, and they are transitive, then a utility function can be constructed for an individual. And if rationality is identified as maximizing expected utility then we get a rational choice of goals. The disconnect with ethics comes when a person's preferences can be decidedly unethical. A weaker version of ethics claims that it is just an affective response to facts.

All four of these central features of logical empiricism have been criticized in the educational administration and leadership literature. Some have claimed that there is no such thing as a science of educational administration and leadership, while others have argued that there is such a thing but that it requires a more philosophically

sophisticated account of the nature of science. Both these alternatives will be discussed later where a coherentist account of a scientific theory will be given and an application to the field sketched.

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## Systems Theory

The administrative theory of choice for the founders of the 1950s Theory Movement was systems theory. Schools were theorized to be systems, possessing a number of common properties. Of more importance for a middle range theory operating in a sea of organizational contingencies were the common properties providing a basis for law-like generalizations. To see how these are possible, consider the case of a simple heating system. It is comprised of a heater and a thermostat that contains a thermometer and a device for setting a temperature goal. The desired temperature is set and the heater begins to operate until the area to be heated reaches the target temperature, whereupon the heater switches off until the temperature falls below what is set. Once in operation, the system is self-regulating and maintains stability. Because this is a basic design principal for a heating system, we can predict its operation regardless of the physical details of the component parts or most details concerning the area of operation. The heater provides the heat, the thermostat provides the system goal, and the thermometer provides the epistemological feedback on goal attainment. This is a single loop system. Others can be made with more complex feedback loops.

Consider a school introducing a new policy on what school uniform should be worn by students. The policy requires all students wear the uniform, and staff measure compliance and provide incentives for the policy to be followed. After the school's best efforts, compliance tops out at 95% with recognition that more extravagant resourcing would be required to reach 100%. A second feedback loop is required to review the system's original goal of full compliance and reset the goal. Scaling this up to a view of the school as a social system results in an extremely complex set of nested feedback loops, measurement techniques, and mechanisms for setting and making adjustments to goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, pp. 1–38). Nevertheless, the systems theory model still provides some basis for abstracting from this detail to characterize key design features. These include systems being comprised of interrelated parts, that they are best conceived holistically, that they are stable possessing a capacity to return to equilibrium after being disturbed, that they are self-regulating, that they are defined by their inputs and outputs and the processes of transformation that lie between, and that they contain multiple interacting subsystems. Even the difference between closed and open systems is sometimes characterized by reference to physical theory: closed systems move from order to disorder in conformity to the second law of thermodynamics while open systems can extract energy from the environment to maintain order (Evers and Lakomski, 1991, pp. 60–75).

Theorizing at this level of abstraction allowed accounts of organizations more closely to fit the requirements of logical empiricism. For example, drawing on



Lewin's (1936) formalism, defining system behavior with precision was attempted in the following way: "Behaviour (B) in the system is explained in terms of the interaction between role (R), defined by expectations, and personality (P), the internal need structure of an individual; that is,  $B = f(R*P)$ " (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p 62). This hints at the possibility of building mathematically precise sets of relations among measured operationally defined variables. Moreover, the model's requirement that organizations return to equilibrium seemed to be unassailable, allowing of course for exceptions that occurred outside operating parameters. And the presence of feedback among interrelated parts also seems obvious. Yet, the model, as an instantiation of logical empiricist theory, ran into some serious difficulties.

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## From Systems Theory to Leadership

Leaving aside, for the moment, the question of whether logical empiricism is an adequate account of the nature of science, systems theory as a model of how organizations operate has its own flaws. For example, by treating the tendency to return to equilibrium, or stability, as a fundamental feature, explanation slides into functionalism which places weak constraints on causal explanation within organizations. This occurs because once stability is seen as the central empirical constraint on explanation, it can fail to rule out multiple possible causes of that stability. Indeed, if return to equilibrium is, by definition, a feature of organizations, then the feature becomes a tautology. However, the real difficulty with this feature of the systems model is that it makes the possibility for explaining change problematic.

Perhaps the biggest change to affect education at the jurisdictional level was the push for neoliberal reforms during the 1980s and beyond (Starr, 2019). This policy emphasis included such features as school decentralization, school autonomy coupled with centralized accountability, schools as participants in a market, and parent choice based on school performance. The transition of state education systems to a form of school-based management was not something that suited characterization in terms of traditional systems theory. As Caldwell & Spinks, (1992, pp. 49–50) argued "a powerful capacity for transformational leadership is required for the successful transition to a system of self-managing schools." Transformational leadership is here understood as instantiating the "four I's" of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, or charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Burns, 1978; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The shift to understanding organizational performance and change in terms of leadership had become so prevalent that by 2004 the journal *Educational Management and Administration* had decided to add "Leadership" to the title, to become *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*. In explaining the change, the journal's editor noted that there were various reasons but that since the late 1990s, "leadership had been in the ascendancy" (Bush, 2004, p. 7).

## Against any Science of Administration

Over the same period of time that systems theory was coming under attack as a model of organizational functioning, attacks were also being mounted against the logical empiricist theory of science, at least to the extent that it could form the basis for any attempt at a science of administration. One line of criticism was directed at purported claims of objectivity. Observations, the source of scientific objectivity, were always interpreted, usually with the aid of theories. That is, observations are theory-laden. This compromises the independence of observation as a source for confirming or disconfirming theories since theories are presumed to be less epistemically secure than observations. The blurring of the theory/observation distinction was thought to undermine scientific objectivity. Greenfield (1975) raised this, and a more substantive issue. Following Weber (1947) he claimed that science was the wrong model for doing social science. Whereas science sees research as aiming for “experimental or quasi-experimental validation of theory,” social science should be concerned with “the search for meaningful relationships and the discovery of their consequences for action” (Greenfield, 1975, p. 7). Natural science looks for causes of phenomena, preferably finding law-like regularities. But when it comes to the study of organizations, which are comprised of people, the focus should be on people’s reasons, on why they choose to act the way they do in the contexts in which they act. It is reasons, not causes, that are central to the study of administration, resulting in a logical empiricist view of science being totally inappropriate for educational administration.

Hodgkinson, a contemporary of Greenfield’s, reached a similar conclusion about the inappropriateness of a science of administration but from a different set of considerations. Hodgkinson (1978, pp. 62–63) accepted logical empiricism’s claim that facts and values were entirely distinct. He also accepted that scientific theories were about facts, about how the world is, its regularities and its anomalies, not about values, how the world ought to be. He endorsed Hume’s claim that one cannot derive an “ought” from an “is” and he accepted Moore’s (1903) argument that any attempt to define moral values in terms of natural properties committed the naturalistic fallacy and was invalid (Evers & Lakomski, 1991, pp. 98–111). On the other hand, administration, especially when it comes to decision-making, is fundamentally steeped in considerations of moral values. Decision-makers cannot avoid navigating choices between moral versus immoral means for achieving moral versus immoral goals. But if administration intrinsically involves values, and if science is intrinsically incapable of considering values, then administration cannot be construed as a science. Rather, it is best construed as a humanism (Hodgkinson, 1991).

Another set of arguments against the possibility of a science of administration during this period came from those Critical Theorists who were influenced by Habermas’s *Knowledge and human interests* (1972). The central argument of the book is essentially of the form of a Kantian transcendental deduction that examines what must be presupposed for something to be the case (Power, 1993). In this case, the question is “what are the conditions for knowledge to be possible?”. The answer from the deduction is that three sorts of human cognitive interests need to be met.

One is knowledge of how to manipulate things in the world, what may be regarded as scientific knowledge. Second is knowledge of how to communicate, or hermeneutical knowledge. The third is knowledge of the conditions for human freedom, or emancipatory knowledge. The implication for a science of educational administration is that such a science is concerned with only one type of knowledge, and when applied to organizations, involves the manipulation and control of people (Foster, 1986). In the literature, this view of science is usually termed “positivist” and often “scientific” but it is more correctly classified as logical empiricism. Lakomski (1987) offers systematic objections to this approach.

During this period of challenges to traditional science of educational administration, a more radical critique emerged, one that seemed to challenge not just the possibility of a science of administration but the possibility of justified knowledge at all. Postmodernism, at least in the form in which it influenced educational administration (Littrell & Foster, 1995; Maxcy, 1993, 2001) offered a perspective that owed much to Rorty’s (1979) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Rorty’s pragmatist postmodernism propounded three central doctrines. The first was anti-foundationalism, namely that knowledge has no foundations. The second, echoed in the title of his 1979 book, is anti-representationalism, namely that our theories are not representations of the world (or aspects of it). Finally, he was anti-essentialist, denying that objects must have certain properties to be the objects that they are.

Attacks on science, objectivity, and the relevance of empirical evidence in relation to the central purposes of education such as the promotion of student learning, successful school administration, and the practice of good educational leadership produced their own backlash in the form of evidence-based research.

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## Science, Evidence-Based Research, and Leadership

With the demise of systems theory and the rise of leadership as the central explanatory resource in accounting for organizational functioning, appeals to science took on a new role. Neoliberal emphasis on performativity in a pseudo-market of educational provision, coupled with leadership’s explanatory focus, created a demand for evidence on how school leadership might promote the performance of school organizations, especially the major educational outcome of student learning. Commenting on changes to the US government’s funding of educational research, Lather (2004, p. 759) observed that “the ‘evidence-based’ or ‘accountability’ movement includes governmental incursion into legislating scientific method in the realm of educational research.” The US National Research Council’s Committee on Scientific Principles for Education also noted that skepticism about educational research “led to proposed legislation that defines what constitutes rigorous scientific methods for conducting educational research” (Shavelson & Towne, 2002, p. 1). The Committee’s response was to identify six “scientific principles” that are needed for rigorous scientific research in education. The principles partly reflect logical empiricist epistemology: The vital importance of empirical adequacy and its determination through testing of

hypotheses via confirmation and disconfirmation links to an overarching theory or conceptual framework, an emphasis on replication and generalization, and a quest for causes of phenomena (Shavelson & Towne, 2002, pp. 3–4). However, they also allow for different methods of research determined by their appropriateness to the research questions to be investigated.

Generally speaking, the most influential so-called scientific research on leadership and student learning has come from quantitative studies, in particular meta-analyses that aggregate multiple studies in a form that produces effect sizes. This section offers a close examination of logical empiricist features of evidence that figure in the justification of claims concerning how leadership promotes student learning outcomes, with a particular focus on quantitative research methods. Of special concern is the relationship between research questions, empirical evidence and the nature of epistemic justification. It will be argued that scientific educational research requires more than logical empiricist standards of justification. The additional requirements are located in a form of coherentist justification.

## Effect Size Evidence

An effect size is a measure, in standard deviations, of the change that can occur in a variable as a result of a treatment, or a practice. In a research design that compares an experimental group to a control group, the effect size measures the degree to which the experiment makes a difference compared with the control group. The simplest formula gives this as the difference between the groups' means divided by the average of the groups' standard deviations. An effect size of 1.0 can mean that the experimental group performs at one standard deviation above the control group. While the above formulation of effect size is in terms of experimental research designs, ex post facto (after the fact) research, that is, research that looks at the statistical structure of ongoing or former practices, with a quest for determining correlations among variables, can also be converted mathematically to evidence of effect sizes.

Quantitative research on leadership typically does not admit of experiments. Most of it reports ex post facto studies (Egalite & Kisda, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Witziers et al., 2003). By far the largest study ever conducted on the effect size of factors that contribute to student learning is Hattie (2008). (See also Hattie, 2012; Hattie et al., 2015.) In *Visible Learning* (2008) Hattie produced effect sizes for 138 possible factors influencing student learning, based on 800 meta-analyses of over 50,000 research studies involving a total of over 200 million students. The average effect size for factors was 0.40. The advice from these analyses was that schools wishing to improve student learning should adopt factors that have the highest effect sizes. Those factors below 0.40 should be avoided. A 2018 update to the list of factors lists effect sizes for 252 factors drawn from 1400 meta-analyses of over 80,000 research studies involving over 300 million students (Hattie, 2018). The effect size for “principal/school leaders” is 0.32, although there has been some meta-analytic research on a small number of studies that suggests the

effect size for instructional leadership is higher than that of transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008).

Although this, and other, effect size findings seem to be rigorously scientific, they depend on a number of assumptions. The first is that findings from the two main research designs, experimental and ex post facto, can be placed on the same scale. This is questionable. Consider the example of finding the effect size of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) on plant growth. An ex post facto design would measure the variability of plant growth against the variability of possibly relevant factors such as multiple soil nutrients, presence of water, sunlight, temperature and climate, altitude, and CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. However, because there is little variability in the proportion of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, the effect size of CO<sub>2</sub> on plant growth would be negligible. On the other hand, with an experimental design, we can haul the plants into the lab and turn up the CO<sub>2</sub>, thus producing a considerable effect size. Research design thus can have a considerable effect on effect size. A lot of factors that have the largest effect sizes, notably those to do with teaching methods, lend themselves to a preponderance of experimental studies, whereas those to do with leadership are mostly ex post facto.

In determining the most appropriate inference from these studies on leadership, we need to do some social science. We need to know whether, as in the case of CO<sub>2</sub>, there is something in the social world of schooling that limits variability. The obvious answer lies in the constitutive and regulative rules that define schooling as a social institution (Searle, 1995). Within the jurisdictions in which much research on leadership is conducted, one does not gain appointment to a leadership position, especially the principalship, without meeting defined appointment conditions usually defined at the jurisdictional level. These are the constitutive rules that define what it is to be a principal. Moreover, once appointed, the role comes with performance standards, the regulative rules that govern principal performance in the job. The aim of these rules is to both limit variability in performance outcomes across the jurisdiction, and to ensure high levels of required outcomes. To the extent that these two sets of rules achieve their goals, a low effect size for principal leadership on student learning outcomes can be compatible with the high performance of principals in achieving these good learning outcomes. Sorting out the truth or falsehood of this inference requires a lot more social science than just the evidence of effect size results from aggregating research studies into multiple meta-analyses.

## **Evidence from Experimental Research Designs**

In medical research, the gold standard is the double-blind controlled experiment. This is one where neither the participants nor the researchers know who is receiving the treatment (the experimental group) and who is getting the placebo (the control group). Despite the possibility of confounding placebo effects, the important methodological distinction to note is that between the epistemic conditions of good research and the causal conditions of good research. However artificial the epistemic conditions between an experimental setup versus those of its real-world application,

what matters are the conditions for the causal efficacy of a treatment. Receiving a vaccine in a clinical trial and receiving it when distributed within the general population should not make a causal difference. In social science experiments, it needs to be argued that the epistemic conditions for good scientific inference do not create a divergence in the causal conditions for efficacy. The issue is whether a pedagogy that has a large effect size in a controlled pedagogical environment has the same efficacy in a relatively uncontrolled natural school and classroom setting. Whatever the result of the experiment, more social science is required to make the inference go through for its wider causal application beyond the epistemic context of research. The messiness of the social world can compromise the validity of inferences from controlled experiments to the contexts of application. Logical empiricist canons of scientific rigor are not suitable for dealing with this issue (Walker & Evers, 1986).

### **Evidence from Ex Post Facto Research Designs**

These designs typically collect data on postulated variables after the fact and analyze statistical relations among them. In the case of structural equation modeling, the statistical structure of the data is usually given in terms of correlation coefficients among pairs of variables, with the total structure expressed as a pattern of multiply linked pairs. The links can be expressed mainly in the form of linear equations. The normative value of these studies lies in the inferences they purport to sustain for good leadership (and other) practices that lie outside the contexts from which data on high performing or improving schools are drawn (Day et al., 2016).

Using these studies to support interventions raises the matter of whether evidence for a statistical structure can function as evidence for a causal structure. The usual test of this is that causal claims support counterfactuals while merely statistical ones do not. For example, the perfect correlation between lightning and thunder is causal because, contrary to fact, if there was no lightning there would be no thunder. On the other hand, if there is a perfect correlation between two people leaving for work at the same time, this may just be a coincidence if one stays at home and the other goes to work. The link may simply be unrelated workplaces having identical starting times.

There are two issues here. The first is that the principle on which successful cases are selected rules out by definition counterfactual cases, namely those for which a normative argument for an intervention could be mounted. Evidence from successful schools is meant to be applied to unsuccessful schools. This means that we do not know if what is revealed by the statistics will support counterfactual cases. The second is that even if the statistics capture the causal structure of the successful schools, a case needs to be made for whether the factors for success can be applied to the counterfactual intervention schools (Meehl, 1970). The causal structure of intervention schools may prohibit an intervention that will yield the expected outcomes.

Solving the application problem requires a different kind of social science approach. It requires an epistemically progressive goal-driven process that begins

with the causal features of the particular intervention school. It starts from where the school is, identifies problems that have normative purchase, proposes tentative theories that are assumed to be those most likely to work in that context, implements them, in the process discovering the extent to which they work, or not, and if problems persist, continue the process, treating problem-solving as a trajectory undertaken within that context and through time. However, this is not a logical empiricist methodology. It is broadly Popperian coupled with the use of coherence criteria for adjusting tentative theories in light of implementation feedback (Popper, 1959, 1979; Chitpin & Evers, 2019; Evers, 2015).

## Fitting Data to Curves

Attempts to describe, explain, and predict phenomena in a scientific way often involve trying to do causal modeling by fitting data to curves, either single curves, or multiple curves in the case of a complex set of phenomena. Curve fitting is one key aspect of demonstrating that data are patterned. (Factor analysis is another.) Suppose we have a set of, say, 1000 points, each described by an  $x$  and  $y$  coordinate:  $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots (x_{1000}, y_{1000})$ . Let us call the 1000 ordered pairs of coordinates a bit map of the data. Then according to the Kolmogorov/Chaitin definition of “pattern,” these data are patterned, as opposed to random, if there exists a description of these data that uses fewer bits than the bit map (Chaitin, 1975; Haig & Evers, 2016). For example, if all the points lie on a straight line  $-y = mx + b$ , then they are highly patterned because they can be extremely compressed into an expression containing very few bits. The line enjoys the virtues of both goodness of fit and high compression of data.

These two virtues raise an issue fundamental to logical empiricism, namely, what counts as empirical adequacy (Bhaktavatsalam & Cartwright, 2017). At first sight, empirical adequacy looks like a condition that is met if all the data points satisfy a theory, or in this case, lie on a curve. That all the points might lie on a straight line is, of course, an idealization in social science research. The notion of “best fit” is more modest. The standard account of “best fit” is that it satisfies a “least squares” criterion. This is a requirement, for a straight line, that the sum of the squares of the perpendicular distances of points to a proposed line be a minimum. For nonlinear curves, the requirement is that the distances to be squared and summed are the perpendicular distances from points to tangents to the curve. This method was first invented by Gauss, although at the time priority of discovery was disputed, and was used by him, in 1801, to calculate the orbit of the asteroid Ceres. Gauss’s first estimate of the orbit was based on just three out of 22 observations, from the astronomer Piazzi, and was then later refined so as to best fit all 22 observations. (There are many online sources for his methods. A brief, accessible classical account is in Bell, 1937, pp. 240–242.)

One feature of obtaining a best fit by the least squares method is that the result is not unique. An arbitrarily large number of curves can satisfy this condition. Gauss did not try fitting to a straight line because he already knew from Newtonian



mechanics that the curve would be an ellipse. This means that an epistemology for determining a best fit should include the requirement to cohere with what best current theory prescribes. Since the formula for an ellipse contains more bits than one for a line, the coherence constraint can override the quest for compression. A good example of this tension is the case of belief/desire theory, or folk psychology, to explain human behavior. The theory vastly abstracts away from all the physical details of human behavior while successfully predicting a huge range of social behaviors. We know this cannot be the full explanatory story because, if so, it would create the “miraculous coincidence” problem (Cussins, 1992). Going to a shop to buy a pizza explained in folk-theoretic terms amounts to the rational coordination of beliefs and desires, in this case believing that the pizza can be bought in a shop and desiring to buy a pizza. That cannot be the whole story however, since a lot of coordinated physical activity is also required to get someone to the shop to buy the pizza. If the explanatory resources of folk theory are independent from those of human physiology, it would be a miraculous coincidence for the body to be doing exactly what is required by a rational coordination of those particular beliefs and desires, namely going to the shop to buy a pizza. In this way a scientific case might be made for preferring cognitive neuroscience to folk psychology despite the loss of the folk-theoretic compression algorithm. Explanatory comprehensiveness thus becomes another epistemic virtue in determining goodness of fit or how adequacy is to be understood when to come to empirical adequacy.

Despite these considerations, the virtues of compression, or what can appear as simplicity, are important. A useful way of noting the utility of a straight line that compresses data, even if no point actually falls on the line, is by the correlation coefficient. If the correlation is high, then the line is useful in predicting, within a range, the likelihood of the next point falling near the line. If least squares goodness of fit is better for, say, a parabola, and we have good theoretical reasons for considering it, then it may be preferred on epistemological grounds. But it is possible to construct a complex curve by Fourier analysis that concatenates multiple sine curves so that the curve passes through every point. Though possible, to do so creates a representation that contains as many bits as the bit map of the data it is representing. The result is that the probability of where the next point will land is random. The formula is functioning like a look-up table that does not include an entry for “next point.” Determining the most suitable trade-off between “best fit” and “data compression” exceeds the epistemic resources of logical empiricism.

Coherence epistemologists sometimes say that theory choice requires more than empirical adequacy. It requires so-called super-empirical criteria such as simplicity, comprehensiveness, and consistency. A scientific, or naturalistic coherentism, also requires coherence with natural science, including a scientific account of the acquisition and dynamics of knowledge, including scientific theory (Churchland, 1985; Quine & Ullian, 1978). The argument above goes further in maintaining that any epistemically useful account of the concept of empirical adequacy itself requires appeal to these further super-empirical epistemic virtues. A scientific evidence-based view of research in educational administration and leadership



will need to appeal to these broader coherentist criteria of evidence for epistemic credibility (Haig & Evers, 2016).

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## **Toward a Coherentist Science of Educational Administration and Leadership**

It is not possible to offer one particular scientific theory of educational administration or of leadership because the appropriateness of a theory is sensitive to the conditions under which it is to be applied. What sort of leadership is appropriate for one school may not be appropriate for another. As organizations, there may exist similarly important differences that compromise the feasibility of one appropriate account of organizations. Of overriding importance is the relevance of context (Evers & Lakomski, 2022; Lakomski & Evers, 2020). In building a good bridge, for example, the properties of the materials remain relatively invariant across different contexts of application. In building a good school, the features of good leadership are not invariant across different school contexts. This compromises the achievement of generalizations in leadership studies, or at least limits their possibility to contexts whose similarity is circumscribed by jurisdictional constitutive and regulative rules, by social and physical conditions, and by cognitive functioning. Rules, resources, and cultures can create divergent contexts. In fact, even the logical possibility of defining a class of similar objects, or states of affairs, depends on the existence of a prior theory that weights some features of these objects or states of affairs as more important than others. Without this prior weighting any two objects will have as many properties in common as they have differences. (This is known as the “Theorem of the Ugly Duckling” and was first formally proved by Watanabe (1969, pp. 362–377) with an earlier, informal demonstration given by Popper (1959, pp. 420–425).)

In view of these limitations, an initial choice of a theory of leadership, or a theory to guide a course of action, is fallible and needs to be improved by adjustments to both its circumstances of application and of implementation. Through a process of successive implementations and error corrections within a context, the theory is improved by a coherentist epistemic process that requires the theory’s development to be constrained by empirical adequacy that includes coherence with natural science, consistency, comprehensiveness, and simplicity. This epistemically progressive process of theory building usually takes the form of a trajectory, through time, of a sequence of problems, trial theories, and attempted solutions. The theories are scientific in the modest sense that they cohere with natural science, and the process of theory building is scientific in the sense that it mirrors much theory building in natural science (Chitpin & Evers, 2012, 2019; Evers, 2015). It is a process that places an emphasis on error correction being driven by falsifying evidence and theory adjustments being driven by coherence considerations (Hawking, 1988, p. 11.). A combination of theory-ladenness of observations, underdetermination of theories by evidence, and the complexity of theory testing, implies a holism in which epistemically progressive theory building

is best done by a scientifically naturalistic coherentism. And the “best theories” that emerge are always relative to context.

Just as the complexity of social systems blurs the distinction between controlled and uncontrolled variables, so the context in which leadership theories are developed blurs the distinction between leader and organization. This is because theory development requires testing through implementation, and implementation in organizational contexts is mostly done by many hands. Theory building in organizational contexts instantiates a social epistemology. This broadening of the epistemic unit for building successful problem-solving theories robs leader-centric accounts of organizational functioning of their default explanatory status (Evers and Lakomski, 2013; Lakomski & Evers, 2017; Evers, 2015).

To see this, consider some modeling of the social epistemology of decision-making under varying epistemic conditions. We begin with a social network of variously connected individuals where the evidence for possible courses of action is ambiguous. Define leadership in terms of the relative strength of a leader’s influence on the course of action that other members of the network have a role in deciding. Under these conditions, strong leadership is an advantage where it is important for the group to make a decision quickly. The downside is that given this influence in the face of ambiguous evidence that could lead to a bad decision, strong leadership strengthens confirmation bias, making it difficult for the bad decision to be easily revised. In the modeling literature this is known as the “royal family effect” (Zollman, 2007). On the other hand, if there is less leadership, more time is required for a decision to be made, but there is less confirmation bias and a bad decision can more easily be corrected (Hutchins, 1995, pp. 260–261).

When it comes to leadership under these conditions there is no default option (Lakomski, 2005). There are just degrees of ambiguity in all evidence as well as of the differing conditions under which speed of decision-making can be traded off against the need to reduce confirmation bias. These conditions lead to different preferred approaches to leadership all contextualized by the nature and purposes of an organization. Inasmuch as decision-making, problem solving, and leadership are interlocked, a good science of organizations will therefore owe much to a rigorous account of organizations as distributed cognitive systems. It thus re-creates the promise of a more general account of organizations to replace earlier attempts employing logical empiricist versions of systems theory. And a scientific account of leadership will reflect coherentist methods of justification from data as contextualized in an organization analyzed as a distributed cognitive system.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The search for a science of educational administration and leadership has been shaped by different accounts of the nature of science and scientific method. Given that the content and structure of theories of administration and leadership are substantially shaped by these accounts, the quest has mattered. Traditional accounts of positivism have had little influence historically, despite the common practice of

conflating positivism with science. Logical empiricism has had the most influence, though has transitioned from being a failed account of organizations as social systems, to a more influential account of evidence-based research about leadership. The weaknesses of logical empiricism are more technical but nevertheless real, contributing much to the weaknesses of leadership studies because of the causal and methodological importance of context. A more recent naturalistic coherentist account of science has attempted to remedy some of these weaknesses (Evers and Lakomski, 2022). So too does recent work on relational accounts of organizations and leadership (Eacott, 2018) and critical perspectives on positivist and logical positivist accounts of science in education (Courtney et al., 2020).

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# The Use of Statistics in Leadership Research: Advances in the Field

# 83

W. Holmes Finch

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## Abstract

Statistical analysis plays a key role in many fields within education and the social sciences. Because of its importance, most doctoral students in these fields take multiple statistics courses, which typically focus on the topics of hypothesis testing, relational modeling, and description of data. While these tools are quite useful in many situations, they also have limitations that make them less than optimal for many research situations. The goal of this chapter is to provide brief introductions to alternative statistical methods that researchers may find useful for situations in which standard methods are not particularly appropriate. These methods include approaches for delving more deeply into the nature of relationships among variables by investigating possible nonlinearities and interactions, opportunities to investigate causal links in observational studies, the incorporation of prior information into data analysis, and accounting for clustering of subjects into groups such as classrooms and schools. This chapter does not provide an in depth discussion of these models, but it is hoped that interested readers will find it a useful starting point from which they can learn more about the application of these methods.

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Statistical analysis · Multilevel modeling · Data mining · Machine learning · Causal modeling · Bayesian statistics

**The Field of Memory**

The term *statistics* was created by Lambert Adolphe Jacques Quetelet (1796–1874) “who organized the first International Statistical Congress (1831) [and] conducted statistical researches on the development of the physical and intellectual qualities of man, formulating a theory of the ‘average man’ as a basic type” (Merriam-Webster, 1983, p. 826).

Prior to 1900 the basic statistical concepts commonly used today were formulated such as the use and reference to the normal curve, the use of percentile norms, correlation, regression, chi-square, reliability, and factor analysis. One of the most common forms of research, still in wide use today, was the use of surveys. The founder of comparative education, Marc Antoine Jullien de Paris designed the first survey of national systems of education in 1817 (De Landsheere, 1988).

In the early 1900s surveys became the method of choice to critique school systems for their lack of efficiency following Tayloristic *scientific management* precepts. Tatsuoka and Silver (1988) aver that “Quantitative methods were introduced to the field of educational administration in the early years of this century, with the advent of the school survey” (p. 677). Callahan (1962) has indicated that, “In the years between 1911 and 1925 hundreds of surveys of schools were made—so many, in fact, that it seems there was hardly a state or school system in America which was not surveyed” (p. 112). Universities sometimes set up special units within schools of education to conduct such surveys. But over time surveys fell out of favor as did the infatuation with *scientific management*.

**The Field of Presence**

The application of measurement in education “has been practiced for more than a millennium in China and for centuries elsewhere” (Keats, 1988, p. 253). However, it was not until the early twentieth century that researchers became fully aware of measurement methods (Keats, 1988).

In contemporary times Tatsuoka and Silver (1988) label the period 1950 to the early 1970s as “the heyday” of quantitative research. Studies in this time frame were overwhelmingly statistical (Chapman, Sackney, & Aspin, 1999). Tatsuoka and Silver (1988) classified four basic types of methods for treating quantitative data. They were (1) *survey-descriptive methods*; (2) *analysis of variance methods*; (3) *correlational methods*, and; (4) *casual methods*. In *survey-descriptive methods* the data “are reported in terms of central tendencies, frequency distributions, and simple tests of differences between groups” (Chapman et al., 1999, p. 91). In *analysis of variance methods* the data are reported as comparisons of differences between groups. In *correlational methods* data are reported as a comparison of relationships. Tatsuoka and Silver (1988) note that a related correlational technique is that of factor analysis

“which uses a correlation matrix as its starting point, over half of all studies in educational administration are correlation based” (p. 689). Finally, in *casual methods* the data are revealed in regression and path analyses as well as true experimentation designed to indicate cause and effect.

In 2010, English and Papa examined the abstracts of 1, 027 doctoral dissertations completed in educational leadership between 2006–2008 as listed in ProQuest. 33% were classified as quantitative, 53% as qualitative and 12% as mixed methods. The remaining were classified as “other”. The number of Ph.Ds was 476 and Ed.Ds 551. When the type of institution awarding those degrees was calibrated, it was determined that over 60% of them were earned at either a R1 (very high research activity) or R2 (high research activity) universities. A troubling statistic was that slightly less than 20% were awarded by on-line for profit non-traditional universities many with a dubious record for quality and rigor. Five criteria were recommended to judge the adequacy of dissertation research: (1) explicit theoretical grounding, (2) differentiated concepts and terms; (3) advances the content and boundaries of the field; (4) rigorous methods; (5) strong implications for improving practice.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

The modern concept of science in educational research originated in experimental psychology. De Landsheere (1988) explains that contemporary research practices did not originate in the social sciences but rather, the natural sciences. He indicates that it was Darwin in his *Origin of Species* (1859) who connected research on humans “with physics, biology, zoology, and geography” (p. 10). The approach was clearly interdisciplinary. In 1869 Sir Francis Galton (1822–1911) wrote among other things *Hereditary Genius* and “applied statistics in the study of human phenomena and began work on the concepts of standardization, correlation, and operational definition” (De Landsheere, 1988, p. 10). Galton is also credited with the creation of percentile norms and in “1875 he drew the first regression line, and developed the concept of correlation in 1877” (De Landsheere, 1988, p. 12).

Later experimental psychology was the field from which experimental pedagogy sprang “in German physics laboratories by scholars with a strong philosophical background” (De Landsheere, 1988, p. 10). Among the most influential was Wilhem Wundt (1832–1920) who established the first psychological laboratory premised on the principle that psychology must be centered on experience. Many rising American academics studied in German universities at this time and Wundt’s ideas were widely disseminated, among them Raymond Cattell and G. Stanley Hall.

So the wellsprings of quantitative research in educational administration began in psychology, later shifting to pedagogical psychology before there was even a recognized field. Many of the concepts derived from these early years remain highly influential in present times.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Early use of quantitative approaches in educational administration were tied to a larger effort to produce a science of administration in what came to be called “the



theory movement” in the field (Fusarelli, 2006). This effort “was founded on an intellectual paradigm borrowed from social psychology, management, and the behavioral sciences and emphasized empiricism, predictability and scientific certainty” (Fusarelli, 2006, p. 1016).

According to Chapman et al. (1999) the challenge to this perspective and the rise of what has been identified as “interpretivist accounts of phenomena” occurred in educational administration in the 1970s and 1980s. The flashpoint rupture was a paper given by T.B. Greenfield, a Canadian scholar, who presented a paper in Bristol, England, in 1974 at the Third International Intervisitation Programme. Greenfield challenged the prevailing paradigmatic view of the field which was then anchored in positivistic science. Greenfield himself had been a “true believer” in that perspective. His Ph.D. dissertation was entitled, “System Analyses in Education: A Factor Analysis and Analysis of Variance of Pupil Achievement” (Barlosky, 2006, p. 439). In his seminal paper Greenfield did not repudiate the statistics he used, but rather the framework in which they had been applied. The dominant belief at the time, encapsulated in the theory movement, was that a science of administration was both desirable and possible. Such a science would be “objective, quantitative, and value free” (Greenfield, 1993, p. 145).

Greenfield (1993) eventually came to reject the entire project to create such a science arguing that, “A science of administration limited by the assumptions of positivism can produce experts in technique, not experts in value” (p. 147). He later lamented, “We should ask ourselves why a flawed science persists. Why a science that does not work is still hailed as science” (p. 251). The reason he averred was that this view of science promised a world which was largely conflict free and cheerful. One result was that the use of quantitative methods, so much a part of the theory movement, was diminished and even eclipsed by the expanded application of qualitative approaches. Only now has that position for expanding the use of quantitative methods once again become ascendent. Some of these approaches are described in this chapter.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Kaplan (1988) defines measurement as “the mapping of numbers to a set of elements in such a way that certain operations on the numbers yields results which consistently correspond to certain relations among the elements” (p. 90). Then he goes on to indicate that, “The conditions specifying the mapping define a scale; applications of the scale produce measures which correspond to magnitudes. Just what logical operations on the numbers can be performed to yield empirical correspondence depends on the scale” (p. 90).

This harmony is assumed to be the case in the statistical procedures described in this chapter. It is further assumed that, “there exists a mind independent reality ‘out there’ that is, to some extent, knowable” (Husen, 1988, p. 30). By using disciplined procedures around such concepts as “internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity—the quantitative researcher increases the likelihood of discovering something important about that reality” (Husen, 1988, p. 30).

However, it is not assumed that the application of statistical procedures and processes are in situ “neutral” or value free. Statistical methods exist in a context of values, sometimes contradictory and contestable and open to a number of different interpretations depending on the situation. While reality is discernable it is not necessarily unequivocal, unitary or unidimensional.

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## Introduction

The field of statistics is at once central to educational research and at the same time ancillary to the training of many researchers in the field. Individuals receiving doctoral training in education are typically required to take multiple statistics courses, and often conduct dissertation research using statistical methods for data analysis. The statistics courses that doctoral students take as part of their programs generally focus on traditional methods of hypothesis testing and estimation of linear models. More specifically, students learn how to use software packages such as SPSS, SAS, Minitab, Stata, or R, in order to obtain descriptive statistics, compare group means using analysis of variance (ANOVA), and fit linear models to data in order to gain insights into relationships among variables (correlation, regression). In some cases, researchers with a particular interest in statistical analyses and quantitative methods may also learn about more complex modeling approaches such as multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA), discriminant analysis, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling.

Despite their popularity and utility in many situations, there are cases where the approaches that are taught in a traditional statistics sequence are either not appropriate for addressing the research questions of interest, or not applicable because the assumptions underlying them are not met. The purpose of this chapter is to describe from a largely conceptual point of view, statistical methods that may be more appropriate in some situations than are the approaches that most non-statisticians learn. These techniques provide leadership researchers with a set of tools that can be used to address a wide array of questions that are not amenable to standard statistical methods. This chapter does not present an exhaustive description of the methods described herein, but rather is intended to provide the reader with an introduction to techniques that may serve useful for specific research problems. The interested reader is referred to the references for a more detailed description of how the methods can be applied in practice.

## Traditional Hypothesis Testing Methods

Researchers frequently are interested in testing specific hypotheses about a population of interest using a sample drawn from that population. As an example, an educational psychologist may wish to know whether a new method of teaching mathematics is more effective than the traditional approach. In order to address this question, they

could randomly sample 30 students, half of whom would then be randomly assigned to the new instruction condition, with the other half being randomly assigned to the traditional method of teaching. At the conclusion of the instruction, she would then administer a math exam to all of the students. In order to answer her research question regarding which instructional method is most effective, the researcher would compare the mean scores from students assigned to each of the conditions using some form of a hypothesis test, such as a  $t$ -test. In statistical hypothesis testing, research questions are framed in the form of null and alternative hypotheses. The null hypothesis is what will actually be tested, and in the current example would be that there is not a difference in the groups' mean math test scores. The alternative hypothesis in this example would simply be that there is a difference in the means. The null ( $H_0$ ) and alternative ( $H_A$ ) hypotheses are formally expressed as:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_A : \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

Here,  $\mu_1$  is the population mean for the first treatment, and  $\mu_2$  is the population mean for the second treatment. So, when the hypotheses are tested, questions about the population are being answered. In practice, however, sample data are used in order to test these hypotheses because the entire population of interest cannot be accessed.

There is one additional issue that should be addressed when thinking about hypothesis testing. Specifically, the alternative hypotheses about the population means can be directional or non-directional. In the previous example, the alternative hypothesis was non-directional, meaning that it did not state ahead of time which group was expected to have the higher mean. Rather, the alternative simply stated that the means would differ from one another. Alternatively, if the mean math test score of the group receiving the new teaching method ( $\mu_1$ ) was expected to be higher than mean score for the individuals receiving the traditional instruction. In that case, the null and alternative hypotheses would be:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 \leq \mu_2$$

$$H_1 : \mu_1 > \mu_2.$$

Regardless of the directionality of the hypotheses, the test will be about the likelihood of the null hypothesis holding true. In the current example, testing of the null hypothesis can be done using a  $t$ -test or analysis of variance (ANOVA), both of which are commonly used methods in education and the social sciences. The details of these methods is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the interested reader is encouraged to examine Thompson (2006) or Warner (2008). Regardless of the statistical method used, if there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis it can be concluded that it is likely to be false, and that the alternative is likely to be true. On the other hand, if there is not sufficient evidence to reject the null, it can be concluded that it is definitively true, but rather simply conclude that there is not sufficient evidence to be rejected based upon the sample data.

## Effect Sizes

A weakness of using only a hypothesis testing approach to understanding the nature of population parameters, such as mean differences, is that it does not provide information regarding the magnitude of the effects under study. For example, if the results of a *t*-test are statistically significant for our math achievement example, it could be concluded that there was likely to be a difference in the population means of the treatment and control groups. However, this result does not reveal the actual magnitude of this difference. It is certainly possible to examine the means to get a sense of the magnitude of the difference descriptively. But using this approach, there is unlikely to be a sense for what constitutes a large or a small difference. To address this question regarding the actual magnitude of the statistical result, effect size statistics can be used. There are a number of effect size statistics that can be used with the selection of the appropriate one being dependent on the nature of the research problem at hand. Three of these will be reviewed in this chapter.

Perhaps the most common effect size measure used in practice is Cohen's *d*, which is used to characterize the difference between two means and is calculated as:

$$d = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{s_p}$$

where

$\bar{x}_1$  = Sample mean for group 1

$\bar{x}_2$  = Sample mean for group 2

$s_p$  = Pooled standard deviation for both groups

Cohen's *d* represents the difference between the groups' means on the measured variable expressed in terms of the number of standard deviations. The mean math score for the treatment group in our example was 9.75, whereas the mean for the control group was 3.44. The pooled standard deviation was 3.70. Using these values, the value of *d* is

$$d = \frac{9.75 - 3.44}{3.7} = 1.71.$$

This would be interpreted as meaning that the treatment group mean was 1.71 standard deviations greater than that of the control group.

In terms of characterizing a *d* value as small, medium, or large, the suggested guidelines appearing in Cohen (1988) can be used:

Small:	0.2–0.5
Medium:	0.5–0.8
Large:	0.8+

An alternative approach for characterizing *d* values is to compare them with those reported in the literature. Thus, if a review of the literature reveals that typical treatment effects result in *d* of 1.2 or less, then it could be concluded that the

treatment instruction is very effective. Conversely, if this other work reveals  $d$  values in the 2–3 range, then it could be concluded that the treatment is somewhat less effective than is typical.

When there is interest in examining relationships between two variables, either correlation or regression can be used. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) reflects the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables and ranges between  $-1$  and  $1$ , with a value of  $0$  indicating that the two variables are unrelated to one another. In contrast, Pearson's  $r$  of  $1$  or  $-1$  indicates the variables are perfectly related to one another. Correlation coefficients that are closer to the extremes indicate a relatively stronger relationship between the two variables, as compared to relationships for which the value is closer to  $0$ . It is important to keep in mind that a correlation value that might be considered large in one context might be seen as relatively small in another. Cohen (1988) developed some very general guidelines for interpreting the magnitude of correlation coefficients that are helpful in practice. Cohen (1988) suggested that  $r$  between  $0.1$  and  $0.3$  indicate a weak relationship between the variables, whereas a value between  $0.3$  and  $0.5$  indicate a moderate relationship, and values in excess of  $0.5$  indicate a strong relationship. As with Cohen's  $d$ , these are really just rules of thumb, and should be used only as general guidelines for understanding the correlation values.

Regression is another statistical methodology for exploring relationships between variables. It is very similar in many ways to correlation. However, with regression, one of the variables must be denoted as the dependent or outcome variable ( $y$ ), and the other as the independent variable ( $x$ ). As with correlation, regression can be used to estimate the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. In the population, the linear regression model relating  $x$  and  $y$  is written as

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where

$y_i$  = Value of the dependent variable for subject  $i$

$x_i$  = Value of the independent variable for subject  $i$

$\beta_0$  = Intercept

$\beta_1$  = Slope relating the independent variable to the dependent variable

$\varepsilon_i$  = Random error for subject  $i$ .

The slope reflects the amount of change in  $y$  that is associated with a 1 unit change in  $x$ . The intercept tells us what the value of  $y$  will be when  $x$  is  $0$ .

In addition to estimating the nature of the relationship between two variables through the slope, it is also possible to measure the amount of variability in the dependent variable that can be directly attributed to the independent variable. The statistic that is typically used to express this quantity is the squared multiple correlation, or  $R^2$  value.  $R^2$  ranges between  $0$  and  $1$ , with larger values indicating a greater proportion of the variance in  $y$  being explained by  $x$ . It is one way to express the effect size for a regression model, with larger values representing a larger effect. Unlike with  $d$  and  $r$ , there are not readily agreed upon guidelines for what constitutes small, medium, and large values of  $R^2$ .

**Table 1** LDA weights for variables differentiating students who have been suspended and those who have not

Measure	LDA weight
Days absent	0.67
Days tardy	0.35
Grade point average	0.14
Discipline referrals	0.89

## Data Mining and Machine Learning

### Linear Discriminant Analysis

Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) is a very widely used and effective technique for understanding the differences between two or more groups on a set of predictor variables (Huberty & Olejnik, 2006). In this context, we have groups of individuals on whom we have collected data for several variables. LDA then finds a weight for each of these predictor variables so that the linear combination of them maximally separates the groups from one another. Variables with larger such weights are more important in terms of differentiating the groups from one another.

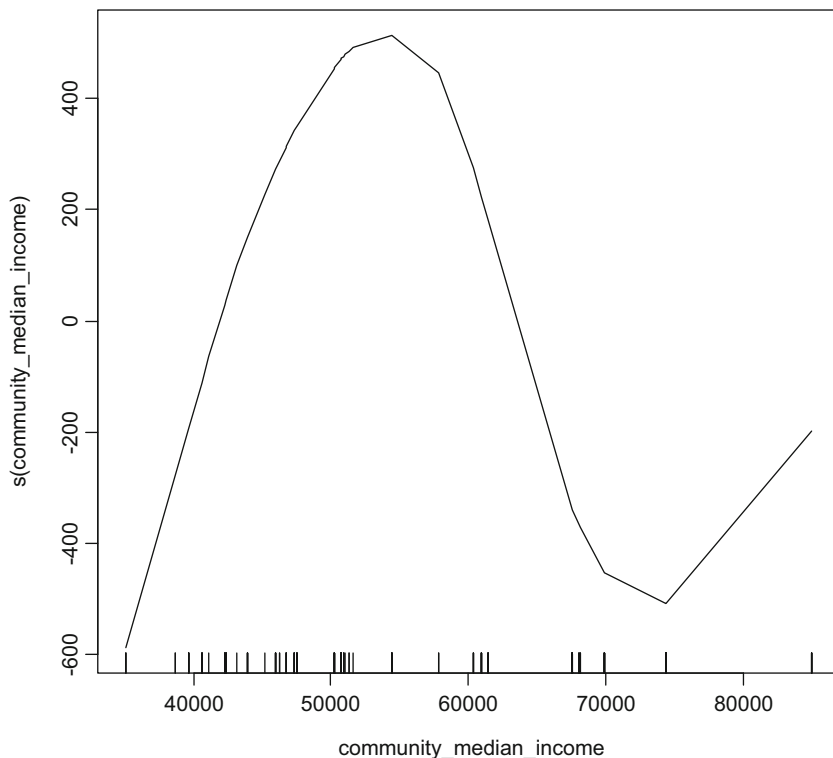
As an example, a researcher has collected a variety of measures for individuals who have been suspended from school and those who have not. We are interested in the extent to which each of these measures can differentiate between students who have been suspended and those who haven't been. Table 1 displays these variables along with the weights obtained from LDA.

These results suggest that the most important variable in terms of predicting whether a student will be suspended from school is the number of discipline referrals, whereas the GPA was the weakest predictor of suspension.

### Generalized Additive Models

Many statistical methods, such as LDA and regression, are limited to addressing situations in which the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear in nature, unless the researcher explicitly includes nonlinear terms in the form of interactions or squared main effects. Obviously, when the relationship between one or more predictors and the group is not linear in nature, this model will be of limited utility (Wood, 2006). An alternative approach that is available to researchers working in such conditions is the Generalized Additive Model (GAM), which relates the outcome variable with one or more independent variables using nonlinear equations, and does so automatically (Hastie & Tibshirani, 1990).

There are a number of nonlinear functions that can be used in order to estimate the nonlinear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. GAMs are particularly useful in situations where the researcher believes that  $x$  and  $y$  are related to one another in a way that regression cannot adequately capture. For example, consider the case in which prior work has demonstrated that the development of reading skills in children is nonlinear with respect to age, such that between years 5 and 6 the ability to read increases very quickly, but that between years 6 and 8 this increase in skill slows. Therefore, if we want to estimate the nature of this relationship, standard linear regression will not accurately capture this change in the



**Fig. 1** GAM for relationship between community median income and the rate of dog adoptions

developmental trajectory. However, GAM will automatically identify this nonlinear pattern, and is thus a better choice than regression in this case. This introduction to GAMs was intended to be brief. The interested reader is referred to any of several excellent sources that describe GAM in more detail, including Wood (2006), Hastie, Tibshirani, and Friedman (2009), and Hastie and Tibshirani (1990).

In the following example, the relationship between the median income in towns is related to the number of adoptions from dogs at a local animal shelter. This relationship was modeled using a GAM, and the relationship was found to be clearly nonlinear. From Fig. 1, it can be seen that as the median income rose so did the number of dog adoptions. However, at a community median of approximately \$55,000 there is a decline in the dog adoption rate. However, there is an increase in the adoption rate for the wealthiest communities. Note that the y-axis is on a standardized scale and does not represent the raw data values.

### Classification and Regression Trees

A potential drawback of GAM is that while it does not restrict the relationships between predictors and response to be linear, it does not automatically include

interactions among the independent variables. Indeed, popular statistical techniques such as regression do not accommodate interactions either, unless researchers explicitly include them. One set of methods for regression and classification that does not require the researcher to prespecify anything about the nature of the model, except the predictor variables are those based on recursive partitioning. One of the earliest such method to be described in the literature is classification and regression trees (CART), which were first outlined in detail by Breiman, Friedman, Olshen, and Stone (1984). CART is a nonparametric method (not assuming any particular form of the relationship linking predictors and the outcome variable) that arrives at predicted group membership given a set of predictors by iteratively dividing individual members of the sample into ever more homogeneous groups, or nodes, based on values of the predictor variables.

Essentially, CART builds a decision tree for predicting the dependent variable  $y$  using a set of independent variables  $x$ . This model starts by placing all subjects into a single group, called a node. It then searches the set of predictor variables to find the value of one of those by which it can divide the individuals and create two new nodes that are as homogeneous as possible with respect to the dependent variable. Once this optimal split in the initial, or root node is found and the individuals are moved into one of the two resulting daughter nodes, the predictors are once again searched for the optimal split by which the observations can be further divided into ever more homogeneous groups, again with respect to the dependent variable. This process continues until further division does not yield decreases in within node heterogeneity (i.e., the dependent variable variance cannot be made smaller), at which point the tree stops growing. At the conclusion of the tree growing process, the final or terminal nodes are then categorized as belonging to the group which has the largest value of  $p_{mk}$  therein. New cases can then be introduced to the tree in order to obtain a group classification. Their predicted group is equal to the plurality group for the terminal node into which they are placed based on the predictor splits identified by CART.

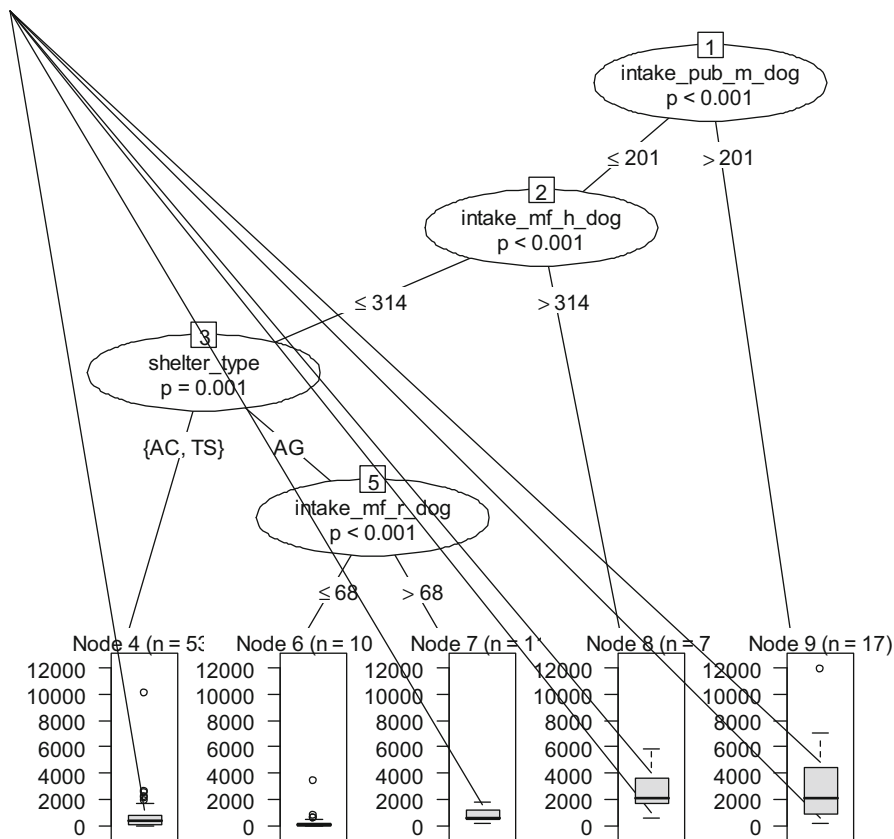
The dog adoption data can be used to demonstrate the utility of CART. In this case, what is desired is to predict the number of dog adoptions using a variety of independent variables. The resulting tree appears below (Fig. 2).

It can be seen that the important variables for determining the number of dog adoptions were the intake rate of dogs in public shelters, the intake rate of healthy dogs, the type of shelter, and the number of dogs returned to the shelter. It can also be seen that the larger number of dog adoptions appear on the right side of the graph (i.e., the boxplots in the rectangles at the bottom show this higher rate). Thus, more dog adoptions were associated with shelters that had larger number of dog intakes and larger numbers of healthy dog intakes. In contrast, the lowest rates were associated with higher numbers of returned dogs.

### Random Forests

A major weakness of CART that has been identified in the literature is the potential instability of trees across samples from the same population, due to its sensitivity (Breiman, 2001). At the same time, research has also shown that an individual





**Fig. 2** CART results for number of dog adoptions

CART tree does produce unbiased predictions, so that averaged over a number of individual trees, the resulting predictions for an individual should be quite accurate (Bauer & Kohavi, 1999). Given this fact, researchers have developed alternative methods for developing predictive models based upon CART. One of the more popular of these is Random Forests (RF; Breiman, 2001), which relies on a technique known as bootstrap resampling to overcome the problems associated with a single CART analysis. Specifically, both methods select a large (e.g., 1000) number of individuals from the original sample and apply CART to each of these. These bootstrap samples can either be drawn with replacement (i.e., an individual can be selected multiple times) and be the same size as the original or without replacement and represent subsets of the original sample. The results of these trees are then averaged together in order to obtain both variable importance information and to predict an individual's value on the dependent variable. RF also randomly samples the independent variables as well, thereby using a subset for building each tree. Thus, for each RF tree  $B$  bootstrap samples of subjects and predictor variables

are used. Because the trees used by RF are diverse than those produced by CART, it can be shown that its averaged results are also less sensitive to sample specific variation and thus potentially more generalizable than are the CART results (Breiman, 2001). In addition RF provides more information than CART regarding the true importance of individual predictors.

## Neural Networks

The data mining method to be discussed in this chapter is Neural Networks (NNETs; e.g., Marshall & English, 2000; Garson, 1998). NNETs identify predictive relationships between the dependent variable and one or more predictors using a search algorithm that includes multiple subsets of the weighted predictor variables and their interactions. Typically, a large number of such competing variable subsets are compared with one another by the computer algorithm based on some measure of model fit. In addition, so as to reduce the likelihood of finding locally optimal results that will not generalize beyond the training sample, random changes to the variable subsets, not based on model fit, are also made. Most frequently the measure of model fit used to decide on the final coefficients for the main effects and interactions is a form of the familiar least squares criteria, i.e., the best fitting model is one that minimizes the difference between the observed and predicted outcome values. This method of ascertaining fit in NNET is known as back-propagation, where the difference between actual and predicted outputs is used to adjust the weight values.

There are a number of NNET models available for use, with perhaps the most common of these being the feed-forward back propagation network with one hidden layer (Garson, 1998). This particular NNET uses the least squares minimization method described above in order to obtain weights for the inputs, which are the predictor variables. This model includes what is known as a hidden layer, which is very much analogous to one or more interactions in the more familiar regression context (Garson, 1998). It should be noted, however, that nodes in this hidden layer can be much more complicated than the interactions one might see in a standard linear model, involving complex combinations of the weighted predictor variables (Schumacher, Robner, & Vach, 1996). Finally, the inputs and hidden layers are used in conjunction with the weights in order to obtain the predicted outputs, which, in this case is group membership, leading to the use of the logistic form of the model.

A potential strength of NNET models is that they can identify complex interactions among the predictor variables in the hidden layer that other methods will ignore (Marshall & English, 2000). Indeed, NNETs not only search for optimal weights for the main effects just as happens with standard regression, but they also examine various combinations of the predictors beyond the simple interactions typical in the regression context, which most of the other methods included in this study do not do. Therefore, whereas in regression it is common to express the interaction of two predictors simply as their product, or to square or cube a single predictor variable if its relationship with the response is believed to be non-linear, a NNET will create hidden nodes as weighted products of potentially several variables, some of which are also raised squared or cubed, for example. This construction allows the hidden

nodes to be influenced by the predictors in varying degrees. If, for example, two variables interact and none of the others play a role, then the hidden layer would be represented by large weights for each of the two and near 0 weights for the others. On the other hand, a hidden layer could be thought of as the combination of several of the predictors with some contributing slightly more and thus having slightly larger weight values. As was true for CART and RF, NNETs are particularly useful for identifying interactions without the researcher having to prespecify them.

## **Bayesian Statistical Analysis**

Bayesian statistics marks a major departure from the standard framework that underlies much statistical analysis, and certainly the standard courses that graduate students in leadership are likely to take. This standard approach to thinking about statistics, which is called the frequentist paradigm, is based upon a basic assumption about the nature of the variables of interest. Specifically, in frequentist statistics, it is assumed that for a variable of interest there is a static population mean and variance. For example, if the interest is in estimating the impact of a new method of teaching reading, students could be randomly assigned to classrooms in which the new instructional method is used, and an equal number assigned to classrooms in which the traditional approach to reading instruction is used. After an appropriate amount of time, reading tests are given to all of the students, and the effectiveness of the new instruction method vis-à-vis the traditional approach is estimated as the difference in the mean scores for the two groups. The actual interest is in the difference of mean reading scores for all students in the population of interest (e.g., all students in the district). It should be noted that in nearly all real world cases, the population of interest is a theoretical construct and cannot actually be measured in any realistic way. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, inferences can be made about the population using the sample and statistical tools such as ANOVA.

Perhaps the most fundamental assumption underlying the frequentist framework described above is that, although it can't actually be measured, there is a population mean difference between the treatment and control groups. This single number is known as the population parameter, and is estimated by the sample mean difference. An alternative way to view this problem is by conceiving of the parameter of interest as a distribution of values, rather than as a single number. This distribution is made up of two distinct pieces of information: (1) the data that we collect from our sample and (2) prior beliefs about the likely effectiveness of the new method for teaching reading. These beliefs are referred to as the prior distribution for the parameter of interest, and is combined statistically with information from the data itself to create the distribution for the parameter of interest (e.g., the difference in reading score means between the treatment and control groups), which is referred to as the posterior distribution.

There are two primary practical differences between the frequentist and Bayesian approaches to statistical estimation. First, Bayesian modeling relies on both the data and prior information (usually referred to as priors) that the researcher brings to the

problem. In contrast, frequentist estimation only uses the data. The incorporation of priors allows the researcher to acknowledge prior research directly into the analysis process, and thereby potentially provide a more accurate estimate of the parameter space of interest. In addition to the possibility of including information from previous research into the analyses themselves, Bayesian modeling has also been shown to be particularly useful with small samples and/or complicated statistical models due to the incorporation of the prior information (Kaplan, 2016).

In the context of Bayesian estimation, the model parameters are estimated using a technique known as Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC). The technical details of this methodology will not be reviewed here, but the interested reader is encouraged to learn more in the many good technical references that are available (Kaplan, 2016; Kruschke, 2015; McElreath, 2016). However, it is worth understanding the basic concepts that underlie MCMC, as they are what make the Bayesian estimation approach so flexible and powerful. Essentially, with MCMC the computer uses the observed data and the priors to estimate a distribution of the parameter of interest. This process involves of joining the prior distribution with the data using a simple computer algorithm known as a sampling procedure. One of the more popular of these, the Metropolis Hasting algorithm works as follows:

1. An initial value is randomly generated from a proposed distribution, such as the standard normal.
2. The value from step 1 is assigned a probability of acceptance, given the prior distribution assigned by the researcher and the values of the observed data.
3. The probability of acceptance for the candidate value is then compared to a random number between 0 and 1.
4. If the probability from step 2 is greater than the value from step 3, then the candidate is accepted into the posterior distribution, otherwise it is discarded and a new candidate value is drawn.
5. Steps 2 and 3 are repeated a very large number (e.g., 100,000) of times.
6. The posterior distribution is created from the retained values obtained from step 4.

The posterior distribution generated in step 6 serves as the final estimate for the parameter of interest (e.g., achievement test score for a population of students). If a single number is desired to estimate the variable of interest, the mean or median of the posterior can be used. Finally, an important point to note here is that this sampling procedure ensures that a poor initial selection of the prior distribution will almost certainly be overcome so that the final posterior distribution accurately represents the actual population of interest (Kaplan, 2016).

As an example, take the case where a researcher would like to use a Bayesian approach to estimate the proportion of students in a school who would receive a passing score on the advanced placement mathematics test. Based on prior years, the school leader believes that approximately 35% of the students should receive a passing score, and in the best year 53% of the students received a passing score on the exam. In the current year, 32 students took the test and 18 (55%) received passing scores. Thus, the performance was somewhat better than was the case in previous

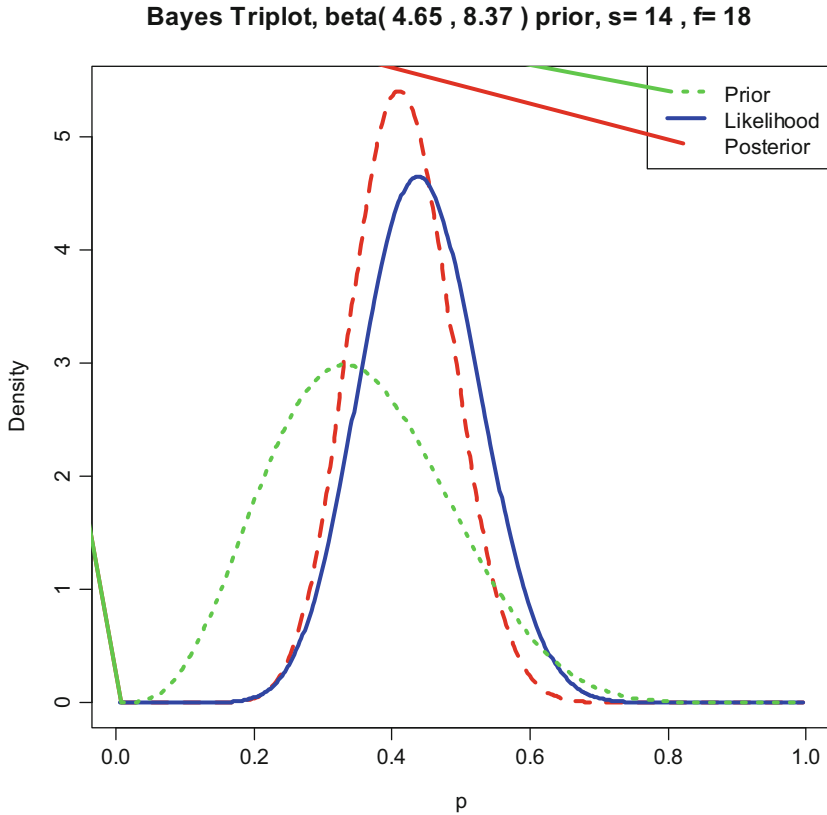
years. In the Bayesian context, an estimate of the proportion of individuals passing the test as a distribution is used rather than a single number. The prior distribution is employed which is based on the results from previous years, and then combine it with the data in order to obtain the posterior distribution. The distributions for the prior, the data, and posterior all appear in Fig. 3 below.

It can be seen that the prior distribution is centered on approximately 0.35, which is based on prior results for the school. The data (likelihood) are centered on 0.55 reflecting performance for the current year. Finally, the posterior is centered on approximately 0.50. The posterior incorporates both the prior information as well as the data itself. If the interest is in evaluating the performance of the school's AP math instruction, then the Bayesian posterior may be a more accurate measure because it incorporates not only the single sample from this year, but also information from previous years. Thus, a single anomalous result will not serve to bias the estimate of program effectiveness as much as would be the case if we use only a single year's data.

## Causal Inference

Frequently, when researchers compare group means on some variable, their questions are implicitly causal in nature. For example, a program evaluator comparing the mean math achievement scores between a group of students taught using a new method of instruction versus those taught using the standard approach. The underlying question in this problem is, does the new method *cause* higher math achievement when compared to the traditional instruction approach? Traditionally, in order for researchers to make any such causal statements they must first randomly assign individuals to the two conditions prior to the beginning of instruction. The fact of this random assignment renders group membership ignorable with respect to any factors other than the teaching method. In other words, if students are assigned randomly to the treatment condition, we are breaking any relationships between membership in the group and all other variables that might impact math achievement test scores (e.g., age, family income, inherent math aptitude). Because these bonds have been broken through random assignment, any differences in the mean achievement scores between the groups can be inferred to be caused by the method of instruction.

Although in many situations researchers would like to make causal statements but they cannot randomly assign subjects to the groups. For example, if intact classrooms are used in the math instruction evaluation study, group membership is not ignorable, meaning that variables other than instructional method that might influence math achievement performance are not controlled for. Therefore, if there are group differences in the mean math test scores, it cannot be concluded that this difference is due only to the intervention status. Thus, if a standard hypothesis testing method is used to compare the groups' means and differences are found, the evaluator can only conclude that the intervention *may* have some relationship with the group difference, but not that it is the only (or primary) cause of the difference.



**Fig. 3** Distributions for the prior, the data, and the posterior for proportion of examinees receiving passing scores on the AP mathematics exam

Because random group assignment is often quite difficult to accomplish in practice, statisticians have worked to develop methods that allow for causal statements to be made using observational data. Perhaps the most famous of these was articulated by Rubin (Rubin, 2005; Sekhon, 2008) who developed a paradigm for causality around the notion of counterfactual claims. Referring back to the math achievement example, imagine that each child could be assigned to both treatments simultaneously. Of course, in reality that can't be done, but it can be imagined as possible. Now consider a single student named Kelly. Kelly's achievement test score in the treatment conditions can be denoted as  $y_{iT}$  and their score in the control condition can be denoted as  $y_{iC}$ . The treatment effect can be calculated as  $\tau_i = y_{iT} - y_{iC}$ . If  $\tau_i < 0$  then it can be concluded that receiving the new form of instruction results in lower math achievement, whereas if  $\tau_i > 0$  then it is known that the new method yields higher math achievement. Finally, if  $\tau_i = 0$  then it can be concluded that the method of instruction doesn't have any impact on math achievement.

Of course, in reality Kelly can't be in both treatment conditions, so it can't be calculated  $\tau_i$  directly. In the case, where random assignments are used for treatments, it can be estimated  $\tau$  because the process of randomization has rendered all variables unimportant with respect to group mean achievement differences other than the method of instruction. But in observational studies, which are very common, an alternative to random assignment is needed. Rubin (1974) posited that if one could account for the impact of these other variables on group membership, then one could estimate  $\tau$  using an observational study design. In other words, Rubin proposed that statistical methods be used to remove all of the variability in group membership that is associated with external variables that are not of interest. Accounting for these variables is not a simple matter, of course. Not only is there a need to develop an appropriate statistical model to account for the variance in group membership, but there is a need to also identify all of the relevant variables. Indeed, this latter issue is probably the most difficult part of applying together Rubin's causal model.

In actuality, Rubin's approach to causal modeling is simply an exercise in matching individuals in the groups using a potentially large set of variables. There are a number of ways in which this matching can be done, but all have in common the use of a set of variables that are believed are important with respect to the treatment effects of interest. In the current example, the goal is to identify individuals in the treatment and control groups who have very similar values on a set of variables that are believed to be likely to be associated with performance on the achievement test. One of the most popular approaches that researchers use for the purposes of matching participants in the groups is called propensity score matching.

In order to illustrate how propensity score matching is used in practice, assume that there are only three control variables that are associated with scores on the math achievement test, and that each of them is accessible for all of the students in our treatment and control classrooms. The variables are family income, score on a mathematics aptitude measure, and age. Propensity score matching involves the use of a type of regression where the dependent variable has only two categories (e.g., treatment or control) and independent variables can be related to the probability of being in one or the other of these. Once the statistical model is estimated for the data, an estimated probability of each person can be obtained of each person being in the treatment condition based on the set of independent variables (income, math aptitude, age). Once this probability is obtained, which is known as the propensity score, individuals can then be matched in the treatment and control groups. It is known that individuals with exactly the same propensity score have the same values on the set of variables used in the logistic regression. There are a number of ways to actually do the matching and these are beyond the purview of our discussion here. Suffice it to say that all of these methods serve to identify one or more individuals in the control group who have very similar propensity scores to each member of the treatment group. If any treatment group members do not have a match in the control group, they are removed from further analysis. After the matching is completed, a standard approach for comparing the treatment and control group means (e.g., ANOVA) is used, accounting for the matching.

## Multilevel Modeling

Standard statistical models such as regression or ANOVA rest on a variety of assumptions, with one common one across them being the assumption of independently distributed error terms for the individual observations within the sample. This assumption essentially means that there are no relationships among individuals in the sample for the dependent variable, *once the independent variables in the analysis are accounted for*. In many research scenarios, the sampling scheme can lead to correlated responses on the outcome among individuals. For example, a researcher interested in the impact of a new teaching method on student achievement might randomly select schools for placement in either a treatment or control group. If school A is placed into the treatment condition, all students within the school will also be in the treatment condition – this is a cluster randomized design, in that the clusters and not the individuals are assigned to a specific group. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to assume that the school itself, above and beyond the treatment condition, would have an impact on the performance of the students. This impact would manifest itself as correlations in achievement test scores among individuals attending that school. Thus, if a regression model is used to assess the relationship between achievement test scores and treatment condition with such cluster sampled data, there would likely be a violation of the assumption of independent errors because a factor beyond treatment condition (in this case the school) would have an additional impact on the outcome variable.

The data structure described above is referred to as nested, meaning that individual data points at one level (e.g., student) appear in only one level of a higher level variable such as school. Thus, students are nested within school. Such designs can be contrasted with a crossed data structure whereby individuals at the first level appear in multiple levels of the second variable. In our example, students might be crossed with after school organizations if they are allowed to participate in more than one. For example, a given student might be on the basketball team as well as in the band. In the case where data are nested, the appropriate approach involves multilevel models in which students (level-1) are explicitly nested within schools (level-2). An excellent reference on this topic is Bickel (2007).

In cases where individuals are clustered or nested within a higher level unit (e.g., classrooms, schools, school districts), it is possible to estimate the correlation among individual's scores within the cluster/nested structure using the intraclass correlation (denoted  $\rho_I$  in the population). The  $\rho_I$  is a measure of the proportion of variation in the outcome variable that occurs between groups versus the total variation present and ranges from 0 (no variance between clusters) to 1 (variance between clusters but no within cluster variance).  $\rho_I$  can also be conceptualized as the correlation for the dependent measure for two individuals randomly selected from the same cluster. It can be expressed as

$$\rho_I = \frac{\tau^2}{\tau^2 + \sigma^2}$$



where

$\tau^2$  = Population variance between clusters

$\sigma^2$  = Population variance within clusters

Higher values of  $\rho_I$  indicate that a greater share of the total variation in the outcome measure is associated with cluster membership; i.e., there is a relatively strong relationship among the scores for two individuals from the same cluster. Another way to frame this issue is that individuals within the same cluster (e.g., school) are more alike on the measured variable than they are like those in other clusters.

When researchers apply standard statistical methods to multilevel data, such as regression, the assumption of independent errors is violated. For example, if there are achievement test scores from a sample of students who attend several different schools, it would be reasonable to believe that those attending the same school will have scores that are more highly correlated with one another than they are with scores from students attending other schools. This within-school correlation would be due, for example, to having a common set of teachers, a common teaching curriculum, coming from a common community, a single set of administrative policies, among numerous other reasons. The within school correlation will in turn result in an inappropriate estimate of the of the standard errors for the model parameters, which in turn will lead to errors of statistical inference, such as  $p$ -values smaller than they really should be and the resulting rejection of null effects above the stated Type I error rate, regarding the parameters. If the standard error is underestimated, this will lead to an overestimation of the test statistic, and therefore statistical significance for the parameter in cases where it should not be; i.e., a Type I error at a higher rate than specified). Indeed, the underestimation of the standard error will occur unless  $\tau^2$  is equal to 0.

In addition to the underestimation of the standard error, another problem with ignoring the multilevel structure of data is that important relationships may be missed involving each level in the data. Recall that in the example, there are two levels of sampling: students (level 1) are nested in schools (level 2). Specifically, by *not* including information about the school, for example, we may well miss important variables at the school level that help to explain performance at the examinee level. Therefore, beyond the known problem with misestimating standard errors, an incorrect model is proffered for understanding the outcome variable of interest. In the context of multilevel models, inclusion of variables at each level is relatively simple, as are interactions among variables at different levels. This greater model complexity in turn may lead to greater understanding of the phenomenon under study.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss an array of statistical methods that serve as alternatives for researchers when more standard methods are not appropriate given the data at hand and research questions of interest. Methods that are particularly useful for situations in which standard approaches may not be optimal

were reviewed. Effect sizes are a necessary accompaniment to any hypothesis testing results because they reflect the magnitude of the statistical effect, above and beyond the simple question of statistical significance. A variety of statistical models that collectively fall under the heading of data mining were examined. These approaches are particularly useful for researchers who are interested in delving deeper into their data than is possible with linear models such as regression. Such models can automatically identify nonlinear relationships (GAM) and/or interactions among the independent variables (CART, RF, NNET). Thus, if it is possible that interactions are present, or the researcher would like to investigate whether they exist, these models may be most appropriate. Bayes estimation, which stands as an alternative to the standard frequentist approach, was presented. The Bayesian paradigm is particularly useful when the researcher wants to incorporate prior information about the problem at hand. In addition, Bayesian methods are particularly useful when samples are small. The discussion then turned to causal modeling when random assignment is not possible. The chapter concluded with a review of multilevel modeling, which is important to use when data are clustered together, such as students in classrooms or schools.

The goal of this chapter was to introduce readers to the plethora of alternatives available for data analysis. It is hoped that they will use this work as a platform off which they can jump into more in depth works for each of these. The reference list contains a number of excellent resources for the interested reader. There are many useful and powerful statistical tools available to researchers, and modern computer technology allows for relatively easy application of them.. Their use will allow researchers to more deeply interrogate their data and thereby gain greater insights into the topics of their investigations.

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# The Rise and Fall of Evidence-Based Research

# 84

Bev Rogers

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## Abstract

The idea that teaching practices should at least, be informed by evidence, continues to capture the imagination of many politicians and policy makers. Most recently, in Australia, the report – *Through Growth to Achievement (Gonski 2.0)* – recommends the formation of a National Evidence and Research Institute.

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Despite the body of work that has raised questions about the feasibility of the idea of evidence-based practice in education (Biesta, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29:491–503, 2010b), there is growing acceptance of the discourse of neoliberalism making further in-roads into the classroom as well as narrowing what is viewed as “good” educational research. This chapter argues for a strengthening of the case for teacher judgment and the role that research can play for professional action in the ambiguous circumstances of teaching. Research can only indicate what *has* worked, not what *will* work, which means that the outcomes of research cannot be translated instrumentally into rules for action. Teachers can build an investigative stance to teaching, which involves reflecting on, and theorizing what is happening in their classrooms, schools, and neighborhoods. It takes up the question of local differences as well as a realistic approach to what constitutes actual school improvement.

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**Keywords**

Evidence-based practice · Teacher professionalism · Judgment · Engineering model

**The Field of Memory**

Image of teacher professionalism was of teachers possessing a high degree of autonomy justified by their expertise. Nature of professional judgment is moral rather than technical. This does not imply that professional judgment might not be *informed* by the outcomes of educational research. Teacher judgment favors contingency, openness, and relationship. Pedagogical relationships are reciprocal in some way. They are also ethical. The situated nature of the teacher’s ethical responsibility cannot be resolved in terms of rational analysis.

**The Field of Presence**

Diminishment of the value of teacher professional judgment in the dominant discourses concerning teacher quality. The current age of compliance, “being good” as a teacher is evidenced by engagement with dominant conceptions of the “good teacher” described through standards and evidence-based practice. Advocacy for evidence-based practice is a wish for certainty and predictability, measuring educational outcomes with scripted causes, which can be implemented without question, as “best” practice or “what works.” Based on idea that teaching ought to be based on research evidence. The engineering model of the practice-research connection assumes that the transition from research findings to policy or practice is a straight-forward process.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Background of evidence-based practice is the improvement of “diagnosis, inference, treatment” based on a medical evidence model. Also described as Engineering

model. Proponents of evidence-based practice highlight the need, in education, for a progressively generated knowledge base similar to fields such as medicine, agriculture, transportation, and technology.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Through the 1980s and 1990s criticisms of the lack of a research base for teaching was used to strengthen the idea that the medical model of “evidence-based” interventions could be transferred to education to give “certainty” about student learning. A significant debate critical of evidence-based practice arose in the UK but receded in the dominance of neoliberal performativity. While the use of “evidence-based” or “research-based” practice in conjunction with education was relatively new around 2000, “the idea that teaching ought to be based on research evidence has a long history” (Hammersley, 2002, p. 14). Australia took up the “evidence-based” push in relation to the establishment of the Australian Curriculum and Teacher *Standards* from 2011 enmeshed in a policy suite for the next 8 years. COVID-19 has brought a changed emphasis on the capacity of teachers to adapt to circumstances using their judgment potentially rupturing the “evidence-based” discourse since March 2020.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Purposes of medical evidence and educational judgment are different. Arguing that the nature of professional judgment in educational practice, is moral rather than technical, does not imply that professional judgment in education might not be *informed* by the outcomes of educational research, but contextual judgment needs to occur. For Dewey “intelligent action . . . [with] the intervention of thinking or reflection” (p. 395) involves “the dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action” (Dewey, 1922, p. 132). What *informs* intelligent action is not knowledge gained about the world but about the relationships between our actions and their consequences *in this particular situation*.

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## **Introduction**

Through the 1980s and 1990s criticisms of the lack of a research base for teaching was used to strengthen the idea that the medical model of “evidence-based” interventions could be transferred to education to give “certainty” about student learning. The chapter identifies the present situation in Australia with a policy suite and the Gonski Review supporting the claim for evidence-based practice and a research-based for teaching. The connection with previous calls for evidence-based practice and the idea of a research-based profession in Britain is discussed. The chapter shows how the evidence-based practice is connected to the “effective teacher” paradigm and suggests an alternative for teacher professionalism which takes into account current COVID-19 potential ruptures to dominant discourses.

## Background

During the 1970s, the prevailing image of teacher professionalism was of teachers possessing a high degree of autonomy justified by their expertise. Policies developed since then have reconstructed what it means to be a teacher and the nature of teacher professionalism. The overall result has been a diminishment of the value of teacher professional judgment in the dominant discourses concerning teacher quality (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2010). In the current age of compliance, “being good” as a teacher is evidenced by a “willingness to adopt and interact with” (p. 12) dominant conceptions of the “good teacher” described through standards and evidence-based practice.

The idea of evidence-based practice for the teaching profession has been a part of education policy discourses and debates since the 1990s in many parts of the world; however, in the last decade, in Australia, there has been a tightening policy convergence of *Teacher Standards* (AITSL, 2011b), Australian Curriculum and government reports focused on improving teacher quality. This is thought to be a key strategy for improving student results on international tests. In July 2020, a National Evidence Institute was established in Australia (funded by \$50 million over 4 years from the Australian Government and States and Territories). This was a key recommendation of the Gonski 2.0 review (Gonski et al., 2018), in the identification of a structure to support “evidence-based” teaching. The Federal Education Minister claims that the “institute will research and collate effective teaching and learning practices and share them with teachers, principals and educators to help drive further improvements in Australia’s education system” (Ballantyne, 2018a).

In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, schools in various parts of Australia have been shut-down for periods of time, with teaching moved to distance learning, or in some cases, hybrids of face to face and online. This has brought a resurgence of faith in teacher professionalism and a broader understanding of what teachers do as a result of significant numbers of parents who were either working from home or undergoing changed work arrangements, involved in home schooling. The current times have created the circumstances for possible ruptures and discontinuities within the current push for evidence-based practice.

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## Gonski Review in Australia

In July 2017, the Australian Government established the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (the Gonski Review). The final report, *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, was released in March 2018 and recommends evidence-based practice in schools and a National Research Institute to bring about a “return to being one of the top education systems in the world” (Gonski et al., 2018, p. viii). In the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) blog *EduResearch Matters*, Rowe and Gale (2018, p. 4, emphasis added) argued that

Australia is “already producing world-class independent educational research,” but they agreed with the Review that *the real problem* is how to “encourage the uptake of educational research in our schools and universities [through ensuring that research] . . . is *readily translatable to classroom practise* (sic) for time-poor teachers.”

According to the Public Education Foundation (Hetherington, 2018), student performance in the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), in Australia, has declined by 21.3 points for students in the bottom 10% between 2009 and 2015. They also claim that inequality and the decline in educational performance in Australian education has cost \$118 bn (Ballantyne, 2018b). The Gonski Review argues that the current decline in student outcomes in International tests is “compounded by a lack of research-based evidence on what works best in education, [and] the *absence of classroom applications readily available for use by teachers*” (p. ix, emphasis added). Gonski et al., (2018) argue that currently “no national body is expressly charged by governments with the task of *delivering into teachers’ hands* the practical results of this evidence and research” (p. 104, emphasis added). The suggested work of the National Evidence Institute is referred to as a “‘bottom-up’ evaluation of effective education policies, programs and teaching practices” primarily for translating research evidence “*into practical advice* for teachers, school leaders and decision makers” (p. 103).

A report commissioned by the review called *Promoting evidence uptake in schools: A review of the key features of research and evidence institutions* (Clinton, Aston, & Quach, 2018) developed what they called a “rapid synthesis of existing evidence” which drew upon findings from Australia, the USA, the UK, and the EU in the areas of education, health promotion, public health, mental health, and tourism to make claims about *evidence informed practice in education*.

Most included studies were in the public health sector, focussing on sanitation and hygiene, preventive health interventions and disease prevalence monitoring and the development of practice and policy guidelines to support healthy lifestyles. About *a quarter of included studies were based in education* . . . Most studies were conducted in the USA, with *15% based in Australia* . . . (Clinton et al., 2018, pp. 4–5, emphasis added)

The authors acknowledge that evidence in education, is limited and that the “evidence that exists has stemmed from improved outcomes in clinical medicine” (pp. 1–2). The authors also argue that *evidence-based* practice may be better described in settings that are social and less structured like education, as *evidence-informed* practice, which values to a greater extent, the role of professional judgment and values. Clinton et al. (2018) argue that *evidence-informed* practice involves the process of synthesizing, combining and applying evidence to “guide decisions and practice in a way that also incorporates their professional judgement and expertise” (p. 1). Unfortunately, the inclusion of professional judgment is limited to the initial discussion and does not really feature as a key aspect of the *Evidence into Action* model developed in the report. Overall, they acknowledge the “paucity of literature documenting the efficacy of evidence-informed practice in education” (p. 35) with 75% of the included research in the fields of health promotion, public health, mental health and tourism instead of education. The Gonski et



al. report (2018) itself, does not reflect the uncertainty in relation to “evidence” and continues to use *evidence-based practice* as the dominant term.

## Certainty and Predictability Rather than Uncertainty

The Gonski review (2018) claims that its two key purposes were to “recommend ways that Australia could improve student outcomes, *return to being one of the top education systems in the world*, and ensure that school systems and schools *truly prepare Australia’s young people for an ever-changing world*” (p. viii, emphasis added). At the heart of the report is a discourse of standardized testing for measuring schooling success and a strengthened demand for linear models of “managed” learning, where teachers have what amounts to *evidence-based scripts*. Reid (2018, p. 65) argues that “the desire to reaffirm a controlled, rationalist, linear and managerial approach to education policy and practice can only compound the complexity and ambiguity that educators face.”

At a time when . . . humans are facing significant challenges and exponential change, the dominant official educational response has been to resort to the safety of standardised testing, education markets, league tables and scripted teaching . . . At the heart of this regime of certainty is an obsession with data, often manifested and justified under the banner of evidence-based policy. (Reid, 2018, pp. 8–9)

There is a history to the call for evidence-based practice, which is revisited here to highlight the similarities and differences with what is currently suggested.

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## History of the Call for Evidence-Based Practice 1995–2010 in the UK

Educational research has been criticized by both governments and practitioners alike for not providing “an unequivocal ‘answer’ to pressing practical concerns” (Rogers, 2003, p. 65). In the UK, a position about evidence-based practice for a *research-based teaching profession* was promulgated in a lecture to the Teacher Training Agency by David Hargreaves (1996). This was, at the time, a proposition that “[t]eaching is not at present a research-based profession” because it does not have a “research base” (p. 1). When Hargreaves (1996) first used *evidence based practice* in relation to “education” (Hammersley, 2002, p. 14) there was significant advocacy in Britain (Davies, 1999; Hargreaves, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001a, 2001b) for more research focused on the classroom and a simplistic view of how educational research might influence teaching. The argument was that quality educational research would provide the best available evidence for teachers to “change their practice from x to y” (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 5), by modelling the research process on that of medicine. Hargreaves (1996, 1997, 1999) suggested that if research was indeed valuable, it would, in itself, be sufficient to demonstrate “conclusively that if teachers change

their practice from x to y there will be a significant and enduring improvement in teaching and learning” and also convince “teachers of the benefits of, and means to, chang[e] from x to y” (p. 5). A range of debates followed (Davies, 1999; Edwards, 2000; Hammersley, 2000, 2002; Hargreaves, 1997; Marston & Watts, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Slavin, 2008b).

While the use of “evidence-based” or “research-based” practice in conjunction with education, was relatively new around 2000, “the idea that teaching ought to be based on research evidence has a long history” (Hammersley, 2002, p. 14). Hargreaves (1996) argued that if there was a substantial body of research which was “disseminated and acted on by teachers, [it] would yield huge benefits in the quality of teaching and learning” (p. 5).

Hargreaves adopts a narrowly instrumental view of practical relevance: that research should be able to tell practitioners, which is the best technique for dealing with a particular kind of problem. In this respect, though his analogy is with medicine, he seems to be committed to the “engineering model” of the relationship between research and practice. This portrays research as directed towards finding or evaluating solutions to technical problems. [There is] the question of whether educational research can supply the sort of knowledge assumed by the engineering model . . . there is also the issue of whether the problems that teachers face are of a kind that is open to solution by research; in other words, whether they are technical in character. (Hammersley, 2002, p. 22)

The engineering model of the practice-research connection assumes that the transition from research findings to policy or practice is a straightforward process. The purpose of research in this model “is to tell us what works and why and what is likely to be most effective” (Rogers, 2003, p. 72). As Hodgkinson (2000) points out, what is demanded here is unmistakably a positivist conception of research which claims to enable prediction and control, increase certainty and avoid risk (p. 3). The implication that “valued” research evidence can be accumulated into a knowledge base, can be disseminated, is implementable, and can be transferred *into practice* is unquestioned.

In Hargreaves’ (1996) lecture, there is a strong claim for “a radical change both in the kind of research that is done and the way in which it is organised” (p. 1). At the time, Hargreaves (1996) blamed researchers rather than teachers for the lack of connection of research to practice. He argued that “current educational research is neither sufficiently cumulative nor sufficiently relevant to practical concerns for it to make the contribution required of it” (Hammersley, 2002, p. 15). It is interesting that at the time, Hargreaves (1996) also proposes the establishment of a National Educational Research Forum, which would sponsor research, so that it is cumulative and relevant to practice.

In the period since the debates in Britain about evidence-based practice, in Australia, there has been a steady growth in the number of government policies and reports which assume, and build on the idea of evidence-based practice. The next section includes a brief overview of the policy context in Australia which is critical to understanding how the recent Gonski review (2018) positions itself as a document of consensus and certainty.

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## Policy Context in Australia

Since 2011, Australian schooling has seen the development of an interlinked suite of policies and standards published by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2018) which include the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011b) and the *Professional Standard for Leaders* (later updated to include leadership profiles) (AITSL, 2011a). The process has also included the Australian Curriculum released by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in 2010, all of which has provided a series of linked discourses about the importance of teacher quality, “evidence” and leadership. Throughout the period, there were dominant narratives reinforced through each project and document:

Evidence shows that *quality teaching can overcome location* and other disadvantages and is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement. (Council of Australian Governments, 2008, emphasis added)

The link of decontextualized “teacher quality” to improvement in student achievement was central to the establishment of the *Standards*. In the early years of this century, there was a repeated claim about national and international evidence that a teacher’s effectiveness has a powerful impact on students (Hattie, 2003), with broad consensus for teacher quality as the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2005). The link between teacher quality or effectiveness and student achievement is not questioned and in fact underpins, throughout the next decade, the suite of government policies. It is no surprise that in 2016, the *National Education Evidence Base Report* (Productivity Commission, 2016) identifies that Australia needs to improve “the use of data and evidence to identify, and then apply, the most effective programs, policies and education practices” through creating an evidence-based approach to education policy and teaching practices and turning best practice into *common practice*, once again, decontextualized.

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## Teacher Professionalism

Policies developed in the last two decades in the UK, USA and Australia have reconstructed what it means to be a teacher and the nature of teacher professionalism. The overall result has been interventions in the detailed processes of how to teach, as a form of “managed” professionalism (Furlong, 2005, p. 130) resulting in a diminishment of the value of teacher professional judgment in the dominant discourses concerning teacher quality (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2010, p. 9) which is in inverse proportion to the rise in valuing of standardized testing and the “codification and quantification of teachers’ knowledge and practice via professional standards” (p. 9). Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2010) argue that the call for “evidence-based” practice is “predicated on a positivistic understanding of ‘evidence’ as

leading to scientific certainty in relation to ‘what works’” (p. 27). The discourse of “what works” has been criticized (Atkinson, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Hammersley, 1997) for limiting possibilities in understanding education and for failing to capture the complexity of the educational field.

There are different conceptions of teacher professionalism, but the “effective teacher” is implicit in policy and government calls for evidence-based practice. In 2010, a literature review on teacher education in the twenty-first century was commissioned by the Scottish Government (Menter, Hulme, Elliot, & Jon, 2010). What emerged from the review, were differing conceptions of teacher professionalism underlying policy and research literature. These were summarized in four influential “paradigms” of teacher professionalism: the *effective* teacher, the *reflective* teacher, the *enquiring* teacher, and the *transformative* teacher (Menter et al., 2010, pp. 21–24).

### **The Effective Teacher: Standards and Competences**

The paradigm of the *effective* teacher has emerged as dominant in official government discourses across the developed world over the last 30 years. It is embedded in accountability and performativity and closely aligned to the view that teachers need to “prepare pupils to take their part in making their respective nations’ economies a success (e.g., DfEE, 1998)” (Menter et al., 2010, p. 21).

### **The Reflective Teacher**

The paradigm of the *reflective* teacher has philosophical roots in the work of John Dewey and underpins the development of action research/practitioner research or inquiry linked with professional development through practice. It particularly demands that teachers pay attention to the learning needs of their students and perhaps challenge what is taken for granted. Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, and Whitty (2000) found that “about 70% of teacher education programmes led from universities and colleges were informed by some version of ‘reflective teaching’” (Menter et al., 2010, p. 23).

### **The Enquiring Teacher**

The origins of the notion of “teacher as researcher” goes beyond reflection to the nature of inquiry and is usually associated with the work of Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), who argued that teachers should take a research approach to their work. The paradigm of the *enquiring* teacher encourages teachers to undertake “systematic enquiry in their own classrooms, develop their practice and share their insights with other professionals” (Menter et al., 2010, p. 23).

## The Transformative Teacher

The paradigm of *transformative* teacher builds on the *reflective* teacher and the *enquiring* teacher, bringing an “activist” dimension (Sachs, 2000, 2003). The activist dimension identifies the teacher’s role as contributing to social change and preparing students to contribute to change in society, rather than just transmitting knowledge and preparing students for work in an existing world.

## The Dominance of the Effective Teacher

The paradigm of the *effective* teacher has come to be most dominant in the last decade, “where teaching is largely defined in terms of a range of technical skills” (Menter et al., 2010, p. 24). In current times, teachers need to “produce students who perform highly on international rankings in PISA (and TIMSS, PIRLS, etc.) in a context of increased neoliberal governance led by “big data” and policy as numbers (Grek, 2009). When students perform at levels below national aspirations, it is their teachers who are deemed to be at fault” (Gale & Parker, 2017, p. 521) and “ineffective.” Gale and Parker (2017) argue that there is an *underpinning logic*, driven by assumptions about underperforming students, a cause-effect relationship between student and teacher “performance,” and a sense of crisis about the quality of teachers. “This logic is particularly evident in nations such as Australia and the UK, with increasing emphasis on professional standards, measures of competency and teacher effectiveness” (Gale & Parker, 2017, p. 521). The presumed linear, causal link between teacher and student “performance” draws “a ‘straight line’ between teacher practice and student outcomes, ‘controlling’ for and ultimately dismissive of other possible influences” (Skourdoumbis & Gale, 2013, p. 892). A reductive element of the narrative is what is implied by evidence-based practice – that good teaching in one school is also good teaching in another, which strips teaching of social context (Skourdoumbis & Gale, 2013). Context is forgotten in “the rush to attribute student achievement solely to what teachers do” (Mills & Gale, 2010, p. 30). Gale and Parker (2017) comment about the striking similarity of this discourse across nations. Within the framework of performativity, teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who must improve their productivity, through “evidence-based pedagogical approaches” (TEMAG, 2014, pp. xiv, 10), and “up-to-date, evidence-based teaching practices” (TEMAG, 2014, p. 15). The *effective* teacher paradigm (Menter et al., 2010) underpins various government documents, which potentially “privileges performativity and ‘practical’ knowledge over theoretical, pedagogical and subject knowledge” (McNamara & Murray, 2013, p. 22).

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## Double Transformation

Historically, the push for evidence-based practice in education, partially came as a result of critical reports about educational research in Britain (DfEE, 1998). The key criticisms were that research did not provide educational professionals with clear

guidance for their work, that “it was fragmented, non-cumulative and methodologically flawed, and that it often was tendentious and politically motivated” (Pring, 2000, p. 1).

On the one hand it was argued that educational research should not be left to educational researchers, but should be subject to centralized agenda setting, both with respect to its contents and its methods, so that it can become *more practically relevant*. On the other hand, it was suggested that *educational practice should not be left to the opinions of educators*, but that their work should be based on research evidence. The call for a *double transformation* of both educational research and educational practice lies at the very heart of the idea of evidence-based education (Davies, 1999, p. 109, emphasis added).

The idea that research in education should be able to tell us “what works” was already articulated in the 1980s. The assumption of a causal link between experimental research about “what works” and improved student achievement remains dominant (Slavin, 2002, 2004, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) since then. Proponents of evidence-based practice highlight the need, in education, for a progressively generated knowledge base which “has characterized . . . fields such as medicine, agriculture, transportation, and technology” (Slavin, 2002, p. 16). The key change required to do this is proposed to be a more rigorous approach to evaluating research evidence, particularly the randomized controlled trial which can establish “beyond reasonable doubt the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of treatments intended for applied use” (Slavin, 2002, p. 16). Opponents of the idea of evidence-based education have raised many questions about the appropriateness of the evidence-based approach for the field of education. Some have questioned the homology between education and medicine (Davies, 1999; Pirrie, 2001; Simons, Kushner, Jones, & James, 2003). Others have questioned the positivistic assumptions and have criticized the narrow conception of research entailed in evidence-based practice (Atkinson, 2000; Berliner, 2002; Elliott, 2001; Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002; St Pierre, 2002). Still others have criticized the managerial agenda of evidence-based education and its linear, top-down approach to educational improvement (Davies, 2003; Hammersley, 2000; Ridgway, Zawojewski, & Hoover, 2000), and the lack of an acknowledgment of the crucial role of values in educational research and practice (Davies, 1999; Elliott, 2001; Hammersley, 2000).

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## Critique of Evidence-Based Practice

Biesta (2014) argues that the idea of evidence-based practice favors a technocratic model in “which it is assumed that the only relevant research questions are questions about the effectiveness of educational means and techniques” (Biesta, 2010a, p. 392). As a result, it limits the conception of teacher professionalism and judgment, making it difficult for “educational practitioners to make such judgments in a way that is sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualized settings” (p. 392). Biesta (2014) critiques the extent to which, the practice of education can be compared to the practice of medicine; how research informs professional practice; and the role of research that is implied in the idea of evidence-based practice.

## Comparison to Medicine

The spread of evidence-based practice from medicine to most other health fields, has also been advocated and adopted in fields such as social work, probation, human resource management and education. There is a question about whether evidence-based practice can be applied to education because it brings the view of professional practice (Elliott, 2001; Hammersley, 2001) as *intervention*, and asks from research that it provides evidence about the *effectiveness of interventions*. Evidence-based practice relies upon a causal model of professional action (Sanderson, 2003) – the idea that professionals administer a treatment, they intervene in a particular situation – in order to bring about certain effects. Evidence-based practice assumes that the ends of professional action are given, and that the only relevant (professional and research) questions to be asked are about the most effective and efficient ways of achieving those ends. In this respect, evidence-based practice entails a technical model of professional action.

## Professional Judgment and Practical Epistemology

Concluding that the nature of professional judgment in educational practice, is moral rather than technical, does not imply that professional judgment in education might not be *informed* by the outcomes of educational research. The question is about how the *informing* process works. For Dewey, knowing is not about a world “out there,” but concerns the relationship between our actions and their consequences (Biesta, 2004). “Using” knowledge can be seen as “the ability to intelligently plan and direct our actions” (Biesta, 2014, p. 395). For Dewey “intelligent action . . . [with] the intervention of thinking or reflection” (p. 395) involves “the dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action” (Dewey, 1922, p. 132). What informs intelligent action is not knowledge gained about the world but about the relationships between our actions and their consequences *in this particular situation*. Research provides us with information about *possible relationships between actions and consequences*. Biesta (2014) argues that research can only indicate what *has* worked, *not what works* or *will* work, which means that the outcomes of research cannot be simply *translated* into rules for action.

## The Practical Roles of Educational Research

Research can also inform practice “by providing different interpretations, different ways of understanding and imagining social reality” (p. 396). Research can help educational practitioners to see and imagine their practice differently. The idea of evidence-based practice focuses on the production of means for *given* ends and reduces research questions “to the pragmatics of technical efficiency and effectiveness” (Evans & Benefield, 2001, p. 539). If practice is conceived as “context-free technical problem solving,” the emphasis is placed on reducing *uncertainty* through evidence. On the other hand, if practice is conceived as “context-dependent practical action,” the emphasis is placed on dealing with *ambiguity* as well as uncertainty



through communicative processes of dialogue, argumentation and social learning. The nature of teaching is best understood as a practical, ethical, and relational activity, dependent on judgment, rather than as just a technical activity.

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## Possibilities of Research-Informed Practice

Research undertaken beyond school settings can facilitate *informed* discussions between teachers and researchers which “become both ‘research-informed’ and ‘research informing’” (p. 716). Lingard and Renshaw (2010, p. 27) argue for teachers having a “researchly” disposition which fosters “genuinely inclusive . . . truly educative – stances among teachers, and their students” and therefore uses a broad “ecumenical definition of education research” (Hardy, 2010, p. 716). Imagining the *research-informing* process as *joint work* (Little, 1990) enables us to understand that a space in which *research-informing* processes occur is a collegiate and collective space. This has been evident recently in school shutdowns and the move to distance learning or in some cases hybrid learning with face to face and distance as a result of COVID-19. The key aspect of making that possible was teachers working to support and share with each other (Norman, 2020).

teachers . . . have become even better at their craft thanks to the strength of their professional communities and their school’s meaningful approach to professional learning. (Norman, 2020)

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The idea that teaching practices should at least, be informed by evidence, continues to capture the imagination of many politicians and policy makers. Most recently, in Australia, the report – *Through Growth to Achievement (Gonski 2.0)* – recommends the formation of a National Evidence and Research Institute. Such a body is to be “charged by governments with the task of delivering into teachers’ hands the practical results of this evidence and research . . . in an accessible format that can be readily translated into classroom use” (Gonski et al., 2018, pp. 104–105). Despite the growing body of work that has raised questions about the feasibility of the idea of evidence-based practice in education (Biesta, 2010b), there is growing acceptance of the discourse of neoliberalism making further in-roads into the classroom as well as narrowing what is viewed as “good” educational research.

The call for evidence-based practice in teaching is not new. The 2018 reinvention of this call in Australia also includes the call for a double transformation which makes educational research both more “practically relevant” and focused on government agendas. However, reports of growing inequality in education (Hetherington, 2018) and the impact of COVID-19 on teachers (Norman, 2020) has strengthened the case for teacher judgment in context and the role that research can play for professional action in the ambiguous circumstances of teaching. Research can only indicate what *has* worked, not what will work, which means that the outcomes of research cannot be translated instrumentally into rules for action. Teachers can build an investigative



stance to teaching which takes up the question of local differences as well as a realistic approach to what constitutes actual student learning and school improvement. Such a stance is essentially a collective activity. Given that in recent COVID-19 times, we have seen the inventiveness, judgment, and collective support of teachers dominant at a time when the ability of any system to describe “what works” is impossible. We have possible ruptures in the operation of the National Evidence Institute from 2021 as it may never have been imagined because the general public has a much greater idea of the messiness and responsiveness needed in teaching through personal experiences in COVID-19 times.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Is a Science of Educational Leadership Possible?](#)
- ▶ [The Intervention of Paradox in the Constitutive Politics of School Leadership](#)

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Lawrie Drysdale and David Gurr

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## Abstract

Given the established importance of leadership to effective and successful schools, this chapter explores the identification, preparation, and development of future school leaders. The chapter explores the strengths and weaknesses of preparation programs and outlines current policy and practice. Comprehensive programs that provide traditional and alternative career pathways, which can identify potential leaders early, provide a range of authentic activities that can

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help assess their capabilities and support their development, and prepare them for the role is now the conventional wisdom. The chapter also highlights the problematic nature of the identification of effective leaders and how they are selected to the job. It draws on research from a range of jurisdictions around the world.

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**Keywords**

Leadership preparation · Leadership development · Succession planning · Identifying leaders · Leadership standards · Leadership capabilities · Measuring leadership performance · Recruiting and acquiring talent

**The Field of Memory**

The current focus on identifying and developing leaders is a refutation of the early focus on leaders as being born and not made. Within the last 100 years we have seen a shift from leadership as an endowed quality, through the democratization of leadership by the identification of traits of leaders across different sectors and industries, a focus on what effective leaders did (the behavioral movement) and how this was impacted by context (situational and contingency leadership views). In the 1960s and 1970s contingency theory and situational leadership were mainstream. What leaders did, and in what circumstances, determined leadership effectiveness. This was then replaced by more specific industry-related views. In education, the three dominant views of leadership over the past few decades have been instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership. These views have a strong leadership development focus – an individual can learn to become an effective leader.

**The Field of Presence**

Identifying, developing, and selecting school leaders at various levels in educational systems and schools are the focus of many jurisdictions across the world. This is because of evidence that leadership matters in building organizational capacity and improving student and school outcomes.

Who the aspiring leaders are and how they are identified varies significantly across jurisdictions but formal and informal preparation and leadership development programs are common across the spectrum. Some programs are attached to licensure and certification of principals, as is the case in North America, but this is not common across the world. While there has been criticism of preparation programs, the knowledge about quality, comprehensive programs is evolving and they are increasingly being shown to be effective in preparing leaders for the principalship.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Personnel management and human resource management provide frameworks for management of people at work. They include policies governing the organization, workplace planning, recruitment, selection, placement training and development, performance management, working conditions, and termination. Other human

resource terms used include people management, employee management, and management of human capital. The objective of human resource management is to make the most effective and best possible use of people within the accepted social, economic, and ethical frameworks and standards of the culture. Strategic human resource management (SHRM) integrates these areas, rather than treating them as separate functions. SHRM considers the importance of the environment and context in shaping an organization's human resource strategy. Another important contribution is "talent management," again derived from the business world. Talent management is now accepted as a mantra in both for profit and not-for-profit organizations around the world. It is defined as the acquisition, development, and retention of talent. Educational leadership has tentatively adopted both strategic human resource management and talent management to influence policy and practice.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The role of school leader has changed and is viewed as being more complex. Leadership theory has progressed and continues to evolve as we attempt to understand leadership in context. Identifying and selecting leaders based on potential is a discontinuity compared with selection based on performance.

### **Critical Assumptions**

The assumption is that effective leaders can be identified, developed, selected, and retained. Preparation programs will continue to improve and impact positively on leader performance.

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## **Introduction**

Famous individuals who we labeled "leaders," have been identified throughout history as people with certain characteristics that distinguish them, and they were known for their great accomplishments. They were the rulers, kings, emperors, commanders, or heroes. They were mainly born and not made. Some of the ancient heroes were mythical in the sense they descended from the Gods (Fry, 2018). Many were heroic because they won battles against the odds (e.g., Alexander the Great). The word *leader* comes from the Old English word "laedan" or "to go before as a guide." and was first used in England in the fourteenth century to describe a person in charge. The term became more common in the nineteenth century (MacMillan Dictionary blog). Until the beginning of the twentieth century, leaders were more likely to come from aristocracy or inherit their positions. The Great Man Theory that was based on heroic leadership persisted into the twentieth century. Biographies of great men were used to teach leadership as a subject. The Trait Theory superseded the Great Man Theory (Stogdill, 1948). While largely discredited by academics since the 1940s, the Trait Theory persisted (Stogdill, 1974; Zaccaro, 2007). While individual traits can't be applied to predict an effective leader, Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) argued that effectiveness can emerge because of a combination of traits. Today, most educational jurisdictions have adopted a more systematic approach to identifying, developing, and

appointing school leaders based on a range of capabilities, personal dispositions, training, and experience, although research shows there is still need for improvement.

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## Effective Leadership

In the field of educational administration, the effective leader label applies to leaders at various levels in the school and/or educational system. We can include teachers, those in middle level positions like department or year level heads, assistant principals, principals, superintendents, those in district or system roles, and chairpersons on educational boards and councils. These leaders can have very different roles and expectations depending on their position (Drysdale, Gurr, & Goode, 2016). The focus of research has mainly centered on the school principal or equivalent (e.g., Head teacher in England). Often school principals are the people in the middle of an educational system. In nonsystemic schools, they may be the head. There is increasing development of leadership programs for middle leaders (Gurr, *in press*; Lipscombe, Tindall-Ford, & Lamanna, 2021) and emerging interest in programs for pre-service teachers (Acquaro, 2019). In this chapter, we focus on programs related to the principalship.

To identify and promote effective leaders it is important to define what is meant by effective leaders. The concept of effective leaders in educational administration has progressed through various theoretical approaches including the behavioral movement from the 1940s where particular behaviors were identified as being important for success; leadership styles in the 1950s and 1960s where a combination of task and maintenance (people skills) were identified; contingency and situational leadership in the 1970s that identified different styles of leadership were more effective in different situations; and transactional and transformational leadership in the 1980s where transformational leadership was seen as more effective than transactional leadership (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). These shifts in the history of leadership largely mirror the business administration literature. From the 1990s we can see three major trends in educational administration that were used in conjunction with effective leadership – transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and distributed leadership (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). More recently, leadership for learning is emerging as a *why* to combine these views (Townsend, Berryman, Gurr, & Drysdale, 2020).

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## The Importance of School Leadership

Leadership is important in schools and the principal role is the one that has the most responsibility, expectation, and opportunity to exercise leadership. It is therefore vitally important that those with the potential to be outstanding principals are identified early in their careers, and then supported to develop appropriate characteristics, qualities, skills, and knowledge. It is generally reported that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that contribute to student outcomes (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).



One of the challenges of identifying and promoting effective leaders currently is that the definition of effective leaders continues to change. For example, Roza, Celio, Harvey, and Wishon (2003) in addressing the supply and demand for principals argued that demand is driven by the need for new and different kinds of principals. The deficit is the lack of high-level leadership skills. A further challenge is to what extent do aspirant principals need to already demonstrate leadership effectiveness, or is identifying “potential” for this sufficient? Added to this, there is consensus among scholars that the role of school leaders is becoming more complex and difficult, and is having to respond rapidly to major context changes (Clarke, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2020).

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## Preparation and Development Programs

In reviewing school leadership development programs across 11 countries, Hallinger (2003) identified seven global issues critical for the preparation of school leaders in the future:

- Evolving from passive to active learning
- Creating systemic solutions that connect training to practice
- Crafting an appropriate role and tools for using performance standards
- Creating effective transitions into the leadership role
- Evaluating leadership preparation and development
- Developing and validating an indigenous knowledge base across cultures, and
- Creating a research and development role for universities

It will be shown in this chapter that nearly two decades later, while there has been some progress on these issues, there is still much to do.

Preparation programs are now a common approach to identifying, developing, and promoting aspiring leaders to principal positions. While most providers are universities, programs are also provided by colleges, private and government institutes, professional associations, and commercial enterprises. The number and diversity in providers has meant that there have been concerns about the quality of some of the programs. In the next section, we address these concerns by describing critical research from several countries that exposes limitations and criticisms of the preparation programs.

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## Limitations and Criticisms of Preparation Programs

### The United States

University-based leadership preparation programs are common in the United States and have the responsibility for preparing candidates to serve as school principals and in other leadership capacities. There has been general criticism that many programs do not adequately prepare leaders.

At the time of the Hallinger (2003) review, there were various US reports that highlighted problems. The United States Department of Education (2003) argued that traditional preparation programs lacked vision, purpose, and cohesion. Major criticisms came from Elmore (2000) and Levine (2005). Levine (2005) contended that most principal preparation programs ranged from inadequate to appalling and suggested that the programs were “engaged in a counterproductive race to the bottom in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework and offering faster and less demanding degrees” (p. 1). Farkas, Jean, Duffett, Foleno, and Foley (2001) studied principal preparation, and found 69% of their respondents believed traditional principal preparation programs were not in touch with the true challenges of the principalship. In a later study, Hess and Kelley (2005) argued that graduate schools lacked the capacity to make changes to programs. In further research, Hess and Kelley (2007) confirmed the concerns raised about the quality of preparation programs when they collected and analyzed the syllabi from 31 programs and found that they did not meet the needs of candidates and were divorced from reality.

A decade after Hallinger’s (2003) review, and across two special issues in the *Journal of Planning and Changing* (2012, Volume 43, issues 1/2), several authors outlined the positive and negative aspects of preparation programs in the United States. The overall conclusion was that while leadership preparation programs provided some practical experiences and new skills, they did not provide sufficient preparation. Soon after these issues, the Wallace Foundation (2016), in conjunction with American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the School Superintendents Association, the American Institutes for Research, and the University Council for Educational Administration, stated that as many as 700 university-based programs in the United States may be falling short in their goal to prepare principals adequately. The report noted five areas that required attention:

1. The quality of principal preparation programs was a concern for District leaders.
2. Strong district partnerships were often absent.
3. Preparation programs were not related to the real work of principals.
4. University policies and practices were often a barrier.
5. Many state authorities were ineffective in improving preparation programs.

They argued that preparation programs needed to be redesigned based on research and high quality models and learning experiences that reflected the role of a principal; there should be stronger connections between universities and districts; and, state policy makers should actively encourage high-quality programs.

## **Other Countries**

As noted previously, criticism is not confined to the United States and here are several examples.

## **International Study of Principal Preparation**

The International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) was an international collaboration between scholars from Australia, Canada, England, Jamaica, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, Turkey, and the United States. The authors explored preparation in their own countries and then compared across countries. Overall, the research questioned the effectiveness of current programs. For example, Cowie and Crawford (2007) reported on policies for preparation and standards-led approaches in England and Scotland, and questioned the effectiveness of the programs in addressing the needs of special populations. Wildy, Clarke, and Slater (2007) compared principals' preparation programs in England, Scotland, Australia, and Mexico. Their findings showed that the apprenticeship model used in Australia and Mexico provided inadequate training and preparation. Clarke, Wildy, and Pepper (2008) reported on a qualitative study of five novice principals in Western Australia that showed how the training and support provided was not sufficient to make them feel adequately prepared for their roles. Continuing this line of research, Clarke, Wildy, and Styles (2011) reported on a survey developed for phase three of the ISPP in Western Australia and given to 45 novice principals. The survey explored the most severe challenges experienced by principals in the first 3 years in the role and to what extent preparation programs had prepared them for the challenges. They found that there was a lack of formal and appropriate preparation programs to meet the needs of beginning principals. Slater, Garduno, and Mentz (2018) found that preparation programs failed to adequately consider the context in which leaders were training. They argued that leadership programs must understand the broader social, political, and economic forces affecting students. These studies demonstrate some of the program limitations identified by candidates from several countries.

## **7 Systems Leadership Study (7SLS)**

Harris and Jones (2015) led the 7SLS that explored leadership preparation and development programs in Australia, England, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Russia. The research was published in a special edition of *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (2015 Volume 35, issue 3). Four diverse country examples are provided here, with the remaining covered briefly later in this chapter.

### **Indonesia**

Sumintono, Sheyoputri, Jiang, Misbach, and Jumintono (2015) explored the perspectives and experiences of principals' professional preparation and development in different parts of Indonesia. They reported that principal preparation programs had evolved considerably with the introduction of a standardized training program in 2007 and a certification process to become a principal in 2009. Their study focused on the experience of 18 secondary principals involved in a principal preparation program. This program focused on student management, human resource management, curriculum development, school development planning, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication technology in school. The program also included an internship involving two school placements. While the respondents

reported that there were valuable outcomes from the program, and that their experience in placement was most rewarding, there was a major disconnect between completing the training and selection as a principal. Selection was not based on merit or qualification, but on political expediency – through candidates having political connections, or the favor of the mayor of the local district. There was also criticism that the program did not deliver all that was expected and failed to address topics such as system leadership and change leadership.

### **Russia**

Although there are Russian national standards (Federal State Standards) that govern preparation programs for principals, training and certification are the responsibilities of regions or municipalities. Interestingly, almost all principals in Russia have a higher degree in education and have graduated from a pedagogical university. Unfortunately, there is little empirical research that explores preparation for principals in Russia. However, as part of the 7SLS project, Bysik et al. (2015) conducted a survey that evaluated their experiences with preparation of 300 principals across four regions. Preparation mainly focused on education law, management, and finance, which supported the notion that the role of the principal was that of a manager rather than an educational leader. Another important aspect was that training mainly took place after principal appointment. The study showed that the principals valued that the content was easy to implement in practice (34%), personal and interpersonal management skills were improved (21%), they obtained new knowledge (11%), and experienced self-improvement (9%). Less effective aspects were that training was not personalized to their context, there was too much theory and too little practice, and the program was delivered by people who did not understand schools. The general recommendations were that training should take place prior to appointment, there should be more regional and district support for ongoing training, there should be a refocus on collaborative leadership compared with command and control styles, and there should be a re-definition of the role of the principal in improving lasting educational outcomes.

### **Malaysia**

Jones et al. (2015) outlined recent changes in the educational system in Malaysia that highlighted the strategic intention to equip all schools with high-performing school leaders who will be pivotal players in improving student outcomes. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education initiated the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, to prioritize training and development of principals, which was evidenced by a new mandatory qualification (National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders) for all new principals. This was a substantial improvement from past experience when principals were appointed on seniority and performance as a teacher. The new program included adhering to competency standards that included policy and direction, instruction and achievement, managing change and innovation, resources and operation, people and relationship, and personal effectiveness. The program was in its early stage and the authors claimed that results were encouraging as the principals saw themselves as changing their practice. However, their study did show that there was no significant difference in principals' practices between those

who attended professional preparatory training and those who had not, which provided a challenge for the nature of the program and its delivery in the future.

### **Australia**

Gurr and Drysdale (2015) described the Australian situation. Australia is an example of a country where there has been considerable research on principal preparation programs. The process contrasts significantly with US requirements, as Australia has no mandatory certification process for school principals. There are, however, national and state/territory leadership standards, which provide guidelines for teachers in government and nongovernment systems. Generally, aspirant leaders must navigate their own career pathway and self-identify as a leadership candidate. Unfortunately, the self-managed process offers little guidance to judge preparedness for the principalship. There was a variety of leadership preparation and development programs available; however, only a third of principals in a survey reported having a formal leadership qualification or accreditation, and of these 47% were issued by universities, 23% by employers, 15% by professional associations, and 8% by teacher registration authorities (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014).

While there were numerous quality programs offered by universities and systems (Matthews, Moorman, & Nusche, 2007), there was minimal evidence of the impact of these programs (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015, 2016). For example, Russell and Cranston (2012) explored professional learning offered by a system and found that while principals and aspiring principals used these programs, they believed they had little impact on school or student outcomes, and that their professional learning needed to be supported by other activities such as networking, mentoring and coaching, access to university expertise, and that activities needed to be related to school tasks.

In a commissioned report for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Watterston (2015a) conducted a comprehensive environmental scan of principal preparation programs that covered all eight government school systems, ten nongovernment systems or associations, seven commercial providers, two universities, and six national principal associations. While the programs included a comprehensive range of topics and activities, and had sound processes in place and the ingredients of quality programs (e.g., trained mentors, small cohorts, networking, pathway clarity, rigorous selection, principal support, feedback), there was little clarity about how the readiness for principalship was measured. Jensen, Hunter, Lambert, and Clark (2015) did a desk-top review of best-practice leadership development programs in education and other sectors and concluded that programs needed to take account of the developmental needs of participants and form part of a larger development continuum.

The four examples show that countries understood the importance of principal preparation and described their efforts to introduce new policies and practice to build the capacity of aspiring principals and principals to lead school improvement and change. However, the evidence showed that while there was improvement in helping candidates to be more ready for the job, there was more that had to be done.

## Changing Nature of Preparation Programs

While there has been significant criticism of preparation programs, there is research that shows that preparation programs are addressing many areas of concern identified by Hallinger (2003) and others. Many programs have been redesigned to reflect better identification of candidates, better learning experiences, curriculum that is related to the real job, and partnerships with stakeholders.

Caldwell (2015) outlined significant changes in preparation programs over the past two decades. He noted that early development programs focused on management subjects such as change management, finance, human resource management, leadership, organizational development, planning and policy at the expense of the core work teaching and learning, support for teaching and learning, and curriculum and pedagogy. He also noted there were stronger partnership between school, school systems, and universities.

Noting the positive aspects of preparation and development programs, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) found that effective programs tended to be research-based, had curricular coherence, provided experience in authentic contexts, used cohort groupings and mentors, and enabled collaborative activity between the program and area schools. There were multiple pathways for leadership development described with programs run by universities, districts, third party providers, and in partnerships between stakeholders. There is also now good evidence about the worth of these programs (e.g., Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Michelle Young, the Executive Director of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), claimed that it is known what effective leadership preparation looks like and what it can do (Young, 2015). A special issue of the *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* provided descriptions of two exemplary programs (Cosner, Tozer, Zavitkovsky, & Whalen, 2015; Merchant & Garza, 2015). Features of these programs included strong program cohesion and focus; rigorous student recruitment and selection; a substantial number of faculty teaching in the program (including academic and clinical personnel); close partnership with districts; rigorous and high expectation curriculum linked to leadership standards; active, evolving, and collaborative pedagogy centered in practice, extensive and meaningful clinical practice, and evidence of program success that includes work placements, personal development, and a demonstrated impact on the learning outcomes of students (Jacobson, McCarthy, & Pounder, 2015).

Editing a special issue of the *Educational Administration Quarterly* (2010, Volume 47, issue 18), Orr and Orphanos (2010) studied exemplary leadership preparation programs and found they had a positive impact of leadership knowledge and practices and school improvement. Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2009) confirmed previous research on effective programs and found that successful preparation programs included aggressive recruitment; close ties with schools in the community; on-the-ground training under the wing of expert principals; and a strong emphasis on the cutting-edge theories of instructional and transformational leadership.

More recently Anderson et al. (2018) claimed that Levine (2005) and Hess and Kelley (2007) exaggerated the criticisms citing significant errors in the research. They studied data from the *Initiative for Systemic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership* (INSPIRE). This included 97 principal preparation programs affiliated with the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) programs. Anderson et al. (2018) found that quality programs aligned their curriculum and assessment design to national standards, actively engaged in formalized partnerships with districts, engaged their candidates in a variety of assessment practices for formative and summative purposes, and worked to offer coursework that bridged classroom assignments to field-based experiences.

The current approach to preparation moving forward is to have a comprehensive approach. Young and Perrone (2016) noted that in the mix, leadership standards, licensure preparation, program design, and accreditation are integrally related. In a literature review of preparation programs, Crow and Whiteman (2016) noted several critical elements that influenced preparation programs. The changing context, in which more internal and external forces impact on schools, have increased the complexity of preparation programs. They noted licensure, certification, standards, and changing state policies as examples of the external forces that were impacting preparation programs.

While we know what makes up an excellent preparation program and that there has been significant progress, several challenges are ongoing: recruitment of candidates, admission processes, curriculum cohesion and content (equity, social justice, and diversity issues), design and delivery, pedagogy, effective internships, and assessment of programs and candidates. In the next section, we explore some of the common elements of excellent preparation programs.

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## Internships, Coaching, and Mentoring

Common elements of preparation programs are internships, and coaching and mentoring. These concepts are interrelated and often coaching and mentoring are used interchangeably. As important ingredients of preparation programs they are worth commenting in more detail.

### Internships

Internships are commonly integrated into preparation and development programs. While they might vary in duration and type of activities, overall they provide valuable on-the-job experience. Typically, they provide an opportunity to work and learn from more experienced school leaders and attempt to link theory and practice. Activities can include shadowing leaders or getting immersed in the day-to-day activities of principals. In many jurisdictions, activities are highly structured, linked to standards, and are monitored by program supervisors, coaches, or mentors.



While the overall research underpins the value of internships, it is important that the internship activities are authentic. While it is not in the scope of this chapter to provide thorough accounts of research studies on internship, in summary, internship activities are most effective when candidates can practice skills and translate theory into practice (Havard, Morgan, & Patrick, 2010; LaPlant, 1988; Wilmore, 2002), change perceptions of the principalship (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; White & Crow, 1993), focus on instructional leadership (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008), deal with real job demands (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012), collaboratively design internship activities (Geer, Anast-May, & Gurley, 2014), and, have strong mentors and coaches (Clayton & Myran, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

What the research definitively shows is that quality of internship matters. To improve the experience during internships, candidates require depth in practicing the new skills and knowledge required (Barnett, Copland, & Shoho, 2009; Davis et al., 2005) and they need quality coaching and mentoring (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012).

## Coaching and Mentoring

There is general agreement that coaching and mentoring are important elements of leadership development because it helps candidates understand the role and supports ongoing development. Crow and Whiteman (2016) did a literature review on studies in the United States and noted that design, delivery, program resourcing, mentor quality, and effective mentor/mentee interaction were areas of concern. Programs were more effective when mentoring and coaching were well resourced and the programs increased the confidence of candidates, developed instructional leadership skills, focused on community building skills, and created a culture of continuous development (Daresh, 2007; Mitgang, 2007; Woolsey, 2010). Overall, Crow and Whiteman's (2016) review noted the positive aspects of coaching and mentoring, but concluded that "[r]esearch on mentoring and coaching still lacks rigorous examinations of the effectiveness and outcomes of mentoring programs" (p. 137). Lewis and Heckman (2006) noted that issues of selection of suitable coaches and mentors, coach-principal match, and long-term commitment were key challenges.

Kappler-Hewitt, Von Dohlen, Weiler, Fusarelli, and Zwadyk (2020) suggested that coaching should continue into the initial years of administration with internal and external coaching. However, they also argued there was little evidence of how coaching influenced interns' leadership practice. Hayes and Burkett (2020) advocated for strong partnerships with district and universities to support coaching if it were to be more effective.

It is worth noting that within other educational jurisdictions in other countries, research has valued the importance of coaching and mentoring. In a review of preparation programs in Australia, Gurr and Drysdale (2016) identified several studies that supported mentoring and coaching and which extended to activities such as networking and the use of critical friends (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; O'Mahony & Barnett, 2008; O'Mahony & Matthews, 2006; Russell & Cranston,



2012). Degenhardt (2013) coined the term, “professional companioning,” to describe these support roles, and suggested that ex-principals might be able to take on this role because of their knowledge and experience. Van Nieuwerburgh, Barr, Munro, Noon, and Arifin (2020), in a study of 14 aspiring principals receiving external coaching in a leadership preparation program in Australia, reported that having time to reflect, focusing on personal needs, and being in a safe environment produced positive emotions in the coaching program.

In the next section, the emerging area of talent management is considered.

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## Talent Management

Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, and Michaels (1998) published a paper in the *McKinsey Quarterly* entitled, *The War for Talent*. They argued that leadership talent would be the biggest challenge for the next 20 years as the demand for talent went up and the supply went down. Corporations around the world quickly embraced and implemented talent management strategies. The importance of this did not miss education, and early in the 2000s there was accumulated evidence of a pending shortage of teachers and school leaders into the future (Davies & Davies, 2011). The crisis for talent came into sharp focus with studies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom noting the shortage of principal applications (see below). This later spread to Europe. To compound the challenge was the perceived view that the nature of school leadership was more complex and challenging. The challenge was to reframe school leadership and a talent management strategy was recommended by several scholars (e.g., Macbeath, 2006). Despite the advocacy for a systematic approach to identifying, selecting, and developing school leaders, there is a limited amount of research into talent management in school education. Some of the research is reported next.

## Examples of Successful Implementation of Talent Management

There are some examples of success. A report by Hull, Supovitz, Newman, and Prociw (2011) from the *National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Leadership Development Study Group, Successful Leaders for Successful Schools, Building and Maintaining a Quality Workforce*, focused on a talent management approach. The report underlined the importance of programs that articulated talent management frameworks or leadership development pipelines. Hull et al. (2011, p.7) defined school leadership development as “identifying, recruiting, developing, monitoring, compensating, and retaining talented school leaders.” They stated that:

For a leadership development system to be effective, it must be based upon a uniform and well-articulated set of leadership standards. These standards comprise the expectations and required competencies for school leaders and therefore drive all other components outlined in the framework (Hull et al., 2011, p. 12).

In another study, Robinson, Horan, and Nanavati (2009) outlined a strategy for attracting, developing, and sustaining educational leaders in Ontario, Canada. They outlined the “MentoringCoaching” program as an example of program designed to increase the number of aspiring principals.

Using the term “pipeline,” Groves (2007) provided a model that integrated development and succession planning and identified and codified leadership talent, assigned developmental activities and developed pervasive mentoring relationships. They noted the model could be used in multiple settings.

Hitt, Tucker, and Young (2012) proposed building leadership capacity by identifying, recruiting, inducting, and developing educational leaders. Interestingly they found that years of experience as a teacher was more strongly correlated with effective leader practice than other types of experience.

A more recent example of success was Gates, Baird, Master, and Chavez-Herrerias (2019) who explored the outcomes of the Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI), an initiative sponsored by The Wallace Foundation to describe a range of talent management activities used to help prepare school leaders. Gates et al. (2019) described the principles of a pipeline in six districts who implemented a pipeline strategy organized around leadership standards. Its aim was to guide pipeline activities, pre-service preparation opportunities, selective recruitment, on-to-job induction, and evaluation. They concluded that PPI components were important for success in improving schools.

## **Grow Your Own**

“Grow your own leaders” is another approach to talent management. Rhodes, Brundrett, and Nevill (2008) reported on a program funded by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England to explore talent identification, development, succession, and retention of leaders in primary and secondary schools in England. The aim was to encourage long-term planning and recommended that schools improve their in-house training to grow one’s own leaders. It put the responsibility in the hands of schools to lay the ground for leadership development, supply, and continuity. Sun (2017) reported that in an intensive, test-oriented environment like that in the United States, there was a need for schools to grow their own leaders and this was best achieved using on-the-job mentoring and coaching. As evidence of the effectiveness of “grow your own,” Thompson (2010) explored pathways for assistant principals in Victoria, Australia, and found that strategic planning of leaders on their careers through internal development processes were more valuable than external processes.

## **Progress to Date**

As noted previously, there has been some progress, but there is little to confirm the widespread adoption of talent management strategies. Behrstock (2010) reported

from a literature review that compared with the private sector, strategic talent management approaches in the educational sector lagged. Formal succession systems that effectively identify and promote individuals are rare (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011). Odden (2013) argued that the scene was changing and that the strategic management of educational talent was making slow progress in policy and practice agendas. Odden (2013) outlined several promising initiatives in some states in the United States, but his research acknowledged significant challenges.

In exploring talent management in Academies in England, Davies and Davies (2010) argued that to survive, Academies needed to develop leadership talent. Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) argued that districts in the United States were not doing enough to foster talent management. Fusarelli, Fusarelli, and Riddick (2018) recommended creating strategic, long-term leadership growth plans that could build leadership capacity and help identify and develop effective leaders.

In Australia, Watterston (2015b) reported that identifying and nurturing talent was not the norm. She recommended a systematic approach that would identify and nurture talent through structured, transparent career pathways and clear selection prerequisites for promotion.

To sum up the research on talent management as a means of identifying and promoting effective leaders, a review of the literature by the George W. Bush Institute (2016) stated that the policies and practices to ensure effective leadership development are commonly incoherent. Most systems struggle to recruit, develop, and retain great school leaders. There was also little evidence that policy, programs, and practices targeted toward candidates prior to certification have any impact of student achievement.

Sadly, the early rush to embrace a talent management strategy in the hunt for school leaders appears to have dissipated. In the two decades, since “The War for Talent” by Chambers et al. (1998) was published, research shows that, when compared with industry, educational jurisdictions, systems, and groups of schools have failed to exploit the potential that talent management can offer to identify and develop effective leaders.

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## Identifying and Assessing Effective Leaders

Clearly, the focus of research has been on preparation programs. While formal programs appear to be the traditional path to school leadership, there has been relatively little research on the identification and selection of candidates for these programs. What we can say is that identifying who are the most effective leader candidates for school leadership differs greatly across jurisdictions around the world.

Gurr and Drysdale (2017) conducted research on the identification, selection, and development of aspiring leaders in several countries as part of larger project for the Victorian Department of Educational Leadership Institute (Bastow Institute of Education). The overall project aimed to create several measures (instruments and tools) to determine aspiring school leaders’ readiness for principalship and to identify professional development needs. Gurr and Drysdale (2017) provided background

information on what was occurring in different jurisdictions. This was important because for the first time it gave a snapshot of processes in jurisdictions across the world. The questions were:

1. Who are the people who are identified as aspiring principals?
2. How are they identified?
3. What are they being assessed on?
4. What are the methods used to assess them?
5. How is the assessment used?

The methodology used a modified Delphi of two rounds where questions were sent to academics representing Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States. Table 1 provides a summary from 12 jurisdictions taken from the data. An early summary was included in an unpublished report, which formed part of the early stages of the larger project (Gurr & Drysdale, 2017). Except for England, which has been updated, Table 1 is based on information collected and analyzed in 2017.

## Summary of Delphi Process

### 1. *Who the aspiring principals were.*

In most jurisdictions, aspiring principals were self-selected teachers in schools or within an educational system. In three cases, non-teachers or people outside education could apply. In other systems, the focus was on candidates who were in leadership positions, or had completed a specific qualification such as a Master's degree. The ability to attract suitable candidates was challenging in some contexts (especially in remote locations).

### 2. *How they were identified*

Table 1 shows that in most jurisdictions candidates were self-selecting. Often they were encouraged, tapped on the shoulder, nominated, or recommended by significant others (supervisors, principals, administrator, academics) because they demonstrated potential or showed leadership skills. Many candidates came from leadership positions within the school. Candidates could emerge through participation in formal or informal leadership programs. In some cases, candidates completed a qualification to demonstrate their potential. In Singapore, potential leaders were identified early and put on a leadership track where they could complete a series of assessment activities toward accreditation. Most systems offered leadership programs and preparation programs to build aspirant leadership capacity. While there was an advantage in identifying talent early to ensure a pipeline for the principalship, others were encouraged to apply for a range of leadership positions in the school (middle leadership and assistant principals) to build their experience before considering the principalship. Jurisdictions often recognized latent talent that might emerge at any point in a teacher's career. In some systems (Sweden and Brazil) training took place after candidates had been

**Table 1** Summary of responses that identify and assess candidates for the principalship in 12 jurisdictions, Gurr and Drysdale (2017)

Country	Who are the participants being assessed?	How are they identified	What are they being assessed on?	What is being used to assess them?	How are the results of the assessment being used?	Suggestions
Australia (Queensland)	Mainly system identified and focused on middle management – deputy principals, acting principals, and middle leaders like Heads of Departments	The Queensland Education Leadership Institute (QELi) is supported by the government, Catholic, and private systems to provide professional learning programs for school personnel. QELi relies on school/system nomination and self-selection so that candidates have already reflected on their desired career progression and value an aspirant leadership development program	Attributes assessed are usually derived from the performance plan of candidates and aligned to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, (AITSL) principal capabilities. Queensland does not have a formal assessment process or standards requirement for aspiring principals, and when applying for a principal role, candidates are evaluated against the AITSL principal standard	Queensland does not have an assessment process for aspiring principals	No response.	No response
Brazil	Self-Selected and individuals who are career focused	60% elected by staff and community Small percentage appointed by district	No standards Some courses available but not compulsory	Preferable for training to take place before appointment	No response.	No response

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Country	Who are the participants being assessed?	How are they identified	What are they being assessed on?	What is being used to assess them?	How are the results of the assessment being used?	Suggestions
England	Self-identification Certification is no longer mandatory. Anybody who is a teacher can apply	How are they identified or region based on personal knowledge of supervisor or both	Most training takes place after the appointment although these are not compulsory Areas addressed include: a range of hard and soft management skills	Demonstrate leadership learning and leadership practice Organization fit (matching skills with school needs) Provide references from current or previous employer Qualifications are still important	Aspiring Head teachers need to satisfy the selection criteria of the school. Selection panels can use various methods to test candidates. Methods may include: presentations, leading discussion with students, conducting a learning walk, completing an in tray exercise, personality profiling, case studies, observation of a lesson	Introduction of Head teacher standards in 2020 by Department of Education

Hong Kong	Variable across various types of schools. Commonly assistant principals or teacher with significant leadership responsibility one rank lower than AP. They are identified either internally or externally	Self-identification. Teachers with Certificate for Principalship are qualified to apply for the job. This is open to anyone who aspires to be a principal. Internal promotion and external recruitment is common. Appraisal systems operate in government schools	To attend a Certificate for Principalship, candidates are assessed on six capacity areas. Candidates create a portfolio that is evaluated externally or internally by the school	Strengths and weaknesses are identified through a needs analysis during the enrollment in the certificate. Candidates. They complete a portfolio that integrates six core leadership areas. Some School Sponsoring Bodies design their own development program	The Certificate Program is required for appointment	Principals have expressed concern that Certification program does not address the realities of a changing context
Mexico	Targeted at teachers, middle leaders or assistant principals, but those without a strong education background can also sit the principal certification test as the minimum requirement is 2 years of experience working in the education system	Self-selection. Teachers apply to enter and take the test to access a position. A teacher's experience and knowledge are evaluated also. No recommendation from a senior educator is needed to be able to sit for the test	Anyone aspiring to be a principal will be assessed through a test that includes five factors (knowledge, aptitude, seniority, discipline, and punctuality) and across five management competency dimensions	A knowledge test validated by the National Institute for Evaluation for Education (INEE). The exams included qualitative and quantitative sections	Candidates are scored highest and lowest, and available places allocated accordingly with the results reported by the INEE. Knowledge of legislation and educational principles are important	No response

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Country	Who are the participants being assessed?	How are they identified	What are they being assessed on?	What is being used to assess them?	How are the results of the assessment being used?	Suggestions
New Zealand	Aspirants are generally regarded as those that are Heads of Departments in secondary schools, Syndicate Leaders in primary schools, and Assistant and Deputy Principals	Self-identification is the main pathway. Promotion into one of the middle or senior leadership roles indicates a degree of preparedness and may indicate interest in the principalship	Complete one or more support programs to identify leadership potential. Programs are based on leadership standards. These can be commercial or government programs	Assessed on a variety of methods – learning blogs, active participation with online communities, learning modules focused on the role of the principals, personalized coaching, shadowing, contribution to professional learning communities, projects		
Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, and Sweden)	Self-selection. Teachers, middle leaders, or assistant principals. For example, in Norway, there is no base qualification to become a principal. Aspiring principals chart their own career path. Legislation leaves it	Self-selection or encouraged by administrators to apply. Sometimes administrators will support prospective candidates	No leadership standards are used. Applicants are required to meet principal selection criteria by demonstrating experience and qualities. Universities offer a range of courses with different	Training qualifications are required after selection and not before. Upon appointment, principals are either required to complete a course or recommended to do a course. For example, in	As there are no systematic or required assessment processes	No response



Scotland	<p>open for anyone to be a principal. No courses are compulsory</p> <p>Aspirants who hold a school leadership role and can evidence significant leadership practice and experience relevant to their own context and want to commit to continued development in the role of headship</p>	<p>Aspiring school leaders are encouraged to apply for headship by colleagues, line managers, or employers, or can decide for themselves that they feel ready to apply by completing an application and is endorsed as being ready</p>	<p>Demonstrated competency in a range of skills: self-evaluation, communication, people management, leading change, policy, legal, and legislation responsibilities</p>	<p>Sweden, principals are required to complete a 3-year program</p> <p>University assessments, multiple choice test, verification of demonstrating a strategic change initiative in their school. (interviews and site visit)</p>	<p>University assignments and professional verifications are used to evidence successful completion of university modules. And scores from online modules to be awarded qualification for headship</p>	<p>No suggestions</p>
Singapore	<p>The Ministry of Education has a leadership career track for teachers. Those who join the track will be considered for various leadership responsibilities and appointments, including for principalship</p>	<p>Aspiring principals are required go through three formal processes of appraisal: yearly appraisal system (Enhanced Performance Management System), interview with Ministry officials, assessment center</p>	<p>Competencies include self-leadership, creating a vision for the future, managing people, inspiring others</p>	<p>Aspiring principals are required to satisfactorily complete an interview, pass an assessment center, and complete a leadership program at the National Institute of Education Singapore</p>	<p>Assessment will determine remuneration, promotion into leadership track, complete an interview and assessment center, and complete a leadership program</p>	<p>(continued)</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Country USA – California	Who are the participants being assessed? Teachers, middle level leaders, or assistant principals who have 5 years of teaching experience, and a Master's degree in educational administration. The experience and qualification leads to a state credential that qualifies them to serve as a principal	How are they identified Applicants to the program are largely self-selected. They may be teachers or assistant principals who are encouraged to apply by their supervisors	What are they being assessed on? Pass six California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSEL): visioning, instructional leadership, managing learning the environment, community engagement, ethics, and policy and context	What is being used to assess them? Completing a Master's degree using a range of assessments based on the CPSEL standards	How are the results of the assessment being used? The rubric results for each class are compiled by the College Assessment Office. These results are returned to the program area for review. The program area writes a report and outlines areas of improvement to be addressed	Suggestions Need for more diversity and cultural sensitivity Address equity issues, for example, scholarships Include as a Ed. D with formal mentoring
USA – Indiana	Teachers with some leadership experience and assistant principals who are self-identified or "tapped" by current administrators (principals and/or superintendents)	Self-identified and tapped by current administrators. Usually they are identified by demonstrated expertise in teaching, e.g., curriculum development, instruction, classroom management	Leadership skills (interpersonal, communication, strategic thinking, etc.) Public speaking Public relations and community relations Classroom management/discipline Curriculum	Usually the assessment is informal and passed along orally by those who know the aspirant. Also through success in educational leadership courses (mostly determined by grades). Less often used are portfolios outlining	Sponsor uses the results to recommend aspirants Universities sometimes use the results for admission decisions into educational leadership programs	Use of assessment centers has increased but not totally supported. New developments in great partnership universities and districts Use of attributes, dispositions, and identities is emerging

<p>USA – Texas</p>	<p>Aspiring principals from the teacher, middle level, and senior leadership areas To be eligible for a Texas Principal's Certificate, educators must have at least 2 years of teaching experience, have completed an accredited Master's degree program, and pass a state assessment (TExES Principal Examination)</p>	<p>Self-select and/or be nominated/encouraged by a colleague. For some programs a letter of support from their principal is required For admission to degree candidates are assessed on specific criteria that includes: teaching experience; rationale for applying, commitment for working in complex cultural settings, to school improvement; demonstrates leadership potential</p>	<p>development Teacher evaluation Use of data for instructional decision making Budgeting</p>	<p>experience, achievements, references from community</p>	<p>Assessment of a range of course leadership activities: visioning, equity audits, teacher observation, data analysis, community projects, leadership inventories, self-reflection Develop a learning experience capstone to demonstrate, for example, an improvement in learning, address an urgent school problem, lead and improvement process</p>	<p>Assessment of assignments not only results in course grades for students, but also provides them with opportunities for self-growth as well as products and documents they can utilize when applying and interviewing for administrative positions</p>	<p>Suggested move toward field-based internships Develop a "fitness to lead" policy where faculty can recommend removal of a candidate</p>
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appointed to the principalship. It appears that various systems are keen to develop more cohesive and strategically aligned processes focused on aspiring principals as a component of their leadership development programs more broadly.

3. *What they were assessed on.*

Some systems had licensure or certification processes that were based on a set of competencies, principles, or standards. Standards are the common approach in North America but not in European countries and South American countries (Brazil and Chile). England, Australia, and New Zealand are more complex as they have standards but these are not compulsory for principal selection. Many systems have developed their own leadership frameworks, which guide leadership programs and, in some cases, selection criteria. Some systems required completion of compliance modules prior to or during the first year of principalship.

In jurisdictions where there were no identified standards, desirable criteria for training after selection included: understanding rules and regulations, finance, human resources, and a range of “soft skills.” In most jurisdictions, whether there are standards or not, there is an expectation that aspiring principals demonstrated a range of intra-personal, personal, and interpersonal skills; knowledge of the system (rules, legal requirements, and accountability measures); educational/instructional leadership (teaching and learning and curriculum); community relations and cultural awareness; school administration and finance; and human resource management.

4. *Assessments methods used*

Some jurisdictions required aspiring principals to be licensed by completing an examination or approved formal program (doctoral or Master’s program). Standards were often applied to selection of candidates for pre-licensure programs (leadership screening and assessment centers). In the United States principal licensure based on standards was common across the states.

How candidates were assessed varied, and added together they combined to form a complex and often disparate set of measures. The ability of candidates to demonstrate the necessary requirements to be ready for principalship was underdeveloped in most systems. The following summarizes the various measures used:

1. Application for principalship: Demonstrate in application that they have the qualities, knowledge, competencies and experience to meet the selection criteria
2. Complete formal licensure program: Examination assignments and field work, practicum; written and oral exercises administered by state officials, portfolios (mentoring, formal tasks, coaching) and assessment based on rubrics
3. Formal qualification (Master’s or doctoral program)
4. Assessment centers (leaderless group, in-basket, fact finding, interview)
5. Formal and informal interviews
6. Inventories (paper test)
7. Artifacts from previous leadership programs
8. References
9. Assessments that combine university and school district attributes and assessment processes

10. Online elements that may be assessed by multiple choice tests, video observation and analysis, case study analysis, vignettes
11. Portfolios of practice based on practice in own or other schools and as part of a group or solo portfolio
12. Internship experience throughout the year
13. Coaching and mentoring as part of induction program

There appeared to be consensus that multiple assessment tools were necessary to determine readiness.

#### 5. *How the assessments were used*

Results were used to determine readiness to do the job, whether it was through certification, licensure, formal qualification, or demonstrated competences on a test. This would allow candidates to apply or be appointed as principal. Often candidates will be selected based on qualifications, applications, practice experience, personal disposition, and capabilities.

The Delphi results shows the range of approaches and challenges to identifying and promoting effective leaders. Each country does provide leadership development programs before, during, and after principal appointments. The greatest challenge remains in identifying the best talent to appoint to the role.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

With research clearly identifying the impact of school leadership, and principal leadership in particular (Grissom et al., 2021), and the belief that leadership can be developed, identifying and promoting effective leaders has become a priority in many educational jurisdictions across the world. Despite this focus, it remains a developing area with different views on how to do it and uncertainty of program impact, even in those systems that have a considerable history of doing this.

There has been a focus on leadership preparation programs to manage the process. Despite criticisms and shortcomings of these programs, there is considerable knowledge about what works. The evidence is that the programs have evolved to the extent that we can now identify the characteristics and qualities of exemplary programs. These are comprehensive in content and process. The best programs take place over time and focus on relevant curriculum content that combines theory and practice and is aligned to the job of principal. Assessment is normally based on some form of leadership standards or demonstrated competencies. Activities typically include mentoring, coaching, and practical on-the-job or field-based experience (internship). Evaluation is both formative and summative. Licensure and certification are common in many jurisdictions although not all systems see the need for licensure.

However, there are several challenges that remain. Many systems struggle to identify and support potential leaders early in their careers. In terms of the principalship, determining when a candidate is ready for the principalship remains a challenge in most jurisdictions. While there are standout programmatic examples, such as Singapore, most efforts are somewhat ad hoc and often rely on self-identification and self-management. Education systems seem reluctant to adopt best practice from other areas. For example, most systems are yet to adopt and implement a long-term talent

management strategy. One of the hurdles to greater adoption of support programs is that the impact of programs on improving student and school outcomes remains unclear. We know that proper resourcing of appropriate programs and support is important and many of the stand-out programs are expensive to run. We also know that this resourcing is variable across jurisdictions, and so while identify and developing educational leaders is acknowledged as important, often this is not matched by appropriate resourcing.

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## Abstract

All states in the United States made education compulsory for students in 1918. For students with disabilities, compulsory education was not enforced and they were often denied access to an education with their peers. The move in a positive direction in providing special education services to children with disabilities would take a series of events centered around litigation, legislation, advocacy, and research. That is how this chapter is organized by the authors. Issues with monitoring compliance with disability law, interpretation of legislation, distribution of resources, family involvement, access to individualized education programs, and inclusion of students with disabilities continue even today. The role of advocacy cannot be understated in ensuring access and acceptance of student with disabilities. While effective treatments for students with disabilities have been

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established, this knowledge and training on effective interventions is often not filtered to and within states and to more rural schools. Research-based interventions should be taught, implemented, and supported by all administrators and staff and parents should be equal partners in the education process as the field evolves.

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**Keywords**

History of special education · Litigation · Legislation · Research · Advocacy · Effective interventions · PBIS · RTI · MTSS

**The Field of Memory**

As *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) set precedent in the education of students of color in public schools, the passage of Public Law 94–142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975) established the public educational rights for students with disabilities. The global shift from a medical model (focused on what a person cannot do) to a social model (focused on changing norms and providing accommodations) began in the United States in the 1970s and influenced schooling, community living, employment, and social interactions of individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities went from exclusion to inclusion in school, community, employment beginning in 1972 through a series of initiatives surrounding litigation, legislation, advocacy, and research. Individuals with disabilities went from being seen as a disability first (autistic person) to a person first (individual with autism) as a result of the shift to person-first language.

**The Field of Presence**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its updates and revisions have established the current educational rights and lexicon that special educators must meet for students with disabilities including the terms and practices of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Individualized Education Program (IEP), and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Least Restrictive Environment for individuals with disabilities means placement as close to peers without disabilities as possible, enhancing social awareness and acceptance for both groups. Special educators are leaders in their schools. They are considered the special education and disability experts. The requirement for professional development informs current practices based on peer-reviewed research. Ensuring educational benefit (*Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, 1982; *Andrew v. Douglas County School District*, 2015) going from minimal progress to appropriately ambitious goals.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Least Restrictive Environment – the need for structure and issues with academic development and challenging behaviors exists alongside the right to educational benefit in an inclusive environment. Many research-based interventions were developed through the discipline of psychology, specifically the field of applied behavior

analysis (ABA). These include reinforcement, prompting, positive behavior supports, visual supports, behavioral momentum, choice and preference, and modifications of demands that enhance inclusion in school, community, and employment. Ensuring educational benefit (*The Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, 1982; *Endrew v. Douglas County School District*, 2015) moved from minimal progress to appropriately ambitious goals.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Least Restrictive Environment stopped exclusion from school and exclusion from activities with peers toward more inclusive strategies. From exclusion to inclusion, from disability first to people first. Barriers were removed in schools as a result of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The concept of minimal progress (*Rowley*, 1982) was superseded by the requirement to an education program that is appropriately ambitious (*Endrew*, 2015). Litigation, legislation, advocacy, and research forced US education to include students with disabilities in the public education process. Barriers are systematically being broken and disrupted. The move from a medical to social model of disability fosters inclusion as rupture to the existing social norms of the 1960s. Access for those with disabilities means access for all since each of us has potential to be injured or ill subject to a need for accommodations.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Individuals with disabilities were a marginalized population in education. Disability rights rose out of the Civil Rights movement. Concepts that rose from the Civil Rights Movement include inclusion/access to public spaces and employment as mandated by law. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) assumes that inclusion is the default placement for all students. Those needing differentiated instruction and accommodations are provided them based on assessments and data from a multi-disciplinary team of educators and specialists. Inclusion assumes that accommodations level the playing field for all students (with and without disabilities), including English-language learners, and those from other underserved populations.

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## **Introduction**

The history of special education in the United States evolved out of educational and civil rights litigation, legislation, advocacy efforts by families, and through research in the field. At one time persons with disabilities were considered useless and worthless, with no future. Because of this perception, children with disabilities were kept at home and denied an education.

Even with compulsory education legislation sweeping through state legislations (beginning in Massachusetts in 1852) and the passage of The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA; 1975; Public Law [PL] 94–142), children were often excluded from a public education because of disabilities or conditions. The right to a public education in the United States is not mentioned in the US

Constitution; and the 10th Amendment to the Constitution states that powers not specifically granted in the Constitution are reserved for each state. Therefore, public education in the United States is the responsibility of each state (Yell, 2012). The perception of disability and implementation of legislation have differed based on state resources and the involvement of families as advocates in the policy-making process.

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## History of US Special Education Litigation

Until the 1950s, many students with disabilities were excluded from attending public schools (which was a legal option) and those who did attend often dropped out. The state court upheld this exclusion practice in *Beattie v. Board of Education* (1919), which ruled to exclude a student with a disability because his presence was harmful to best interests of the school (his physical condition was seen as distracting and nauseating to other students and adults), even though he could do the work and keep up with peers (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). Students with more significant disabilities were excluded, often institutionalized or remained at home (Pardini, 2002). Even when schools accepted students with disabilities as part of their responsibilities, they were usually segregated in separate classrooms and schools (Heward, 2013). In the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights movement impacted changes in educational practices for children with disabilities. The landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) challenged race segregation; it was determined that separating children in separate schools without resources by race was not equal. Added to that were the emerging women's movement and the disability rights movement as well as veterans returning from Vietnam returning with disabilities. As a result, parents of students with disabilities also asked why the principles of equal access to education did not apply to their children (Bagenstos, 2003; Heward, 2013; Yell, 2012).

Prior to the 1960s, most students with disabilities were educated in special facilities (e.g., Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet's American School for the Deaf in Hartford, founded in 1817, and the Perkins Institute and Massachusetts School for the Blind in Boston, founded in 1823). By the 1960s, a larger number of children with disabilities who attended public schools were housed in substandard academic programs and separated from the general student population in special education classes, which were often located in basements or boiler rooms, or portables away from regular classrooms. School officials often regarded special education as disability daycare (Phillips, 2008).

It was not until the 1970s that special education as a civil right for individuals with disabilities was practiced. Disability rights advocates worked to change the concept of disability in the United States from a medical model of disability (focused on what a person could not do) toward a social model of disability, which focuses on how existing social arrangements and norms exclude individuals with disabilities and how they could be changed. Special education grew out of the disability rights movement's objectives (Bagenstos, 2003; Heward, 2013). The exclusion of students

with disabilities, because they would not profit from the public education system, was challenged in the 1972 court cases *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education*. These class action cases challenged the exclusion of exceptional children from public schools and the parents prevailed. The passage of EAHCA in 1975 changed the dynamic of the education exclusion of students with disabilities legally and lead to a shift in litigation focus.

Nationally, while earlier litigation addressed access to school, the issue became ensuring educational benefit. For example, since the passage of PL 94–142, a number of cases have focused on educational attainment for students with disabilities and how far should school responsibility go. The *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* (1982) addressed this issue. Amy Rowley, a fourth-grade student who was deaf, received special education services with a sign-language interpreter in the classroom. After a few years, the school terminated this service when it was determined that she was proficient at reading lips. The school argued that Amy was making adequate educational progress while the parents maintained that special education services should maximize her potential educational growth. The US Supreme Court ruled in favor of the school and determined that Amy was making progress and gaining adequate educational benefit. The school was no longer required to hire a full-time interpreter (Heward, 2013; LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Yell, 2012). Thirty-five years after *Rowley* (1982), the Supreme Court determined in *Endrew F. V. Douglas County School District* (2017) that minimal progress (i.e., *de minimus*) was not enough. They determined that the individualized education program (IEP) must be “appropriately ambitious in light of his (the student’s) circumstances” (*Endrew*, 2017; p. 14; Prince, Yell, & Katsiyannis, 2018; McKenney, 2017; Stevenson & Correa, 2019). This case extended the requirements for schools to utilize more effective interventions, ensure more than minimum progress, and calculate IEPs that are rigorous in nature.

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## History of US Special Education Legislation

The passing of Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 motivated disability rights and special education advocates. Section 504 prohibited any and all discrimination on the basis of disability within federally funded programs. It also set the stage for a shift in the way society viewed disability from a medical model of exclusion based on a disability to a push for social accommodation. This contributed to a realization that public school systems should accommodate students with disabilities and was a factor in the evolution of modern special education (Phillips, 2008).

Along with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and on the heels of the *PARC* and *Mills* cases in 1972 came passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. At its core, the EAHCA was the first piece of legislation to mandate that students with disabilities are granted to the right to public education and made exclusion from education due to disabilities illegal. As parents, schools,

and advocates began applying to the law into practice, several reauthorizations and amendments would be needed to improve and clarify the law. Thus leading to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2012), The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The first set of reauthorizations and amendments (IDEA, 1990; IDEIA, 2004) established the principles of a) zero reject, b) nondiscriminatory evaluation, c) appropriate education, d) least restrictive environment, e) procedural due process, and e) parent and student participation (IDEA, 1990; Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogruen, 2013). All of which have been the crux of education law for students with disabilities since the 1990s. In addition to the base principles, IDEA gives every qualified child in the United States access to special education from age 3 until they turn 21. Advocacy for these individuals must be in place to ensure they receive program benefits and services as required by IDEA. It falls to the adults to identify a disability, to evaluate the student for eligibility for individualized services, and to individualize that education to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE; Phillips, 2008). See Fig. 1 for a list of 13 eligible categories for special education services.

At turn of the century, The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001) was passed and required increased accountability by schools to include a) increased parental choice, b) site-based management, c) research-based teaching methods, and d) highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals in order to receive federal funding (Hill & Hill, 2012; Yell, 2012). NCLB had both supporters and opponents in the special education community. Some applauded the law for addressing achievement gaps for students with disabilities and requiring school accountability in standardized testing and teacher qualifications (Berwick, 2015). Others note that the law requires an exceptionally high hurdle for special educators to be considered highly qualified and that assessment provisions may not be fair to students with disabilities. NCLB was dogged with controversy throughout its existence. However, the passage of the ESSA (2016) made NCLB obsolete.

## IDEA 13 Disability Categories

Multiple Disabilities	Autism
Orthopedic Impairment	Deaf-Blindness
Other Health Impairment	Developmental Delay (ages 3-9)
Specific Learning Disability	Emotional Disturbance
Speech/Language Impairment	Hearing Impairment (including deafness)
Traumatic Brain Injury	Intellectual Disability
Visual Impairment (includes blindness)	

**Fig. 1** Disability categories as identified by the individuals with Disabilities Education Act



Along with IDEIA, the ESSA (2016) is the current major educational legislation and as such impacts all students including those with disabilities. State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) can define their standards with flexibility, control their assessments, and adjust their standards of discipline for failing schools (ESSA, 2016). Under ESSA, state departments are expected to manage more duties in developing and implementing mandatory state accountability plans. They are now responsible for intervening in low-performing schools, crafting and executing new state report cards, and imposing teacher-evaluation systems (Burnette, 2017). Dulgerian (2016) examined the impact of ESSA on rural schools and sees ESSA as an improvement for them, which is important, since rural schools make up around 50% of all the districts in the United States. She indicated that ESSA helps rural schools balance a proper education with meeting federal and state standards, resolving the burdensome administrative requirements under which they once suffocated. See Fig. 2 for a timeline of significant legislation and litigation in special education.

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## Advocacy and Support for Children with Disabilities

Advocacy is an important component of the complex special education process (Burke & Goldman, 2018). A good special education advocate is well versed in the law, parent rights, and education of students with disabilities. These advocates (parents and teachers) educate and empower parents in the special education process (Mueller, 2015; Wakelin, 2008). Parents themselves play a key role in ensuring the rights of students with disabilities and are instrumental in orchestrating changes in policy. Many families find that having a formal special education advocate to support them in navigating the special education process important to meeting the needs of families impacted by disability (Wakelin, 2008). The Family Navigator model was formalized and evolved out of the rise and need for advocacy for children with disabilities. A family navigator has the *lived experience* navigating systems on behalf of a child with disabilities. They meet specific qualifications and are hired by many local and state education and other agencies to assist families in this process (Weiss & Sweeney, 2019).

People with disabilities have worked hard to secure federal legislation protecting them from discrimination in all areas of life. Today, this movement constantly struggles to ensure enforcement of these rights. State laws still discriminate against people with disabilities, often people with mental disabilities, in areas like family law, voting, commitment proceedings, and the provision of benefits (Waterstone, 2014). Phillips (2008) questioned one of IDEAs key assumptions: that parents possess the tools to advocate for their children in special education matters. She argued that many parents need assistance in the IEP process because of the complexity of disability and the formal requirements of the system. She also discusses the need for external advocacy in special education for families of students with disabilities. Policymakers have understood the importance of an adequate education. Congress recognized that public education should not exclude children with

**Fig. 2** Important events impacting the evolution of special education in the United States.

<b>Timeline of Important Special Education Decisions</b>	
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>LEGISLATION/LITIGATION</b>
1919	*Beattie v. Board of Education (upheld the exclusion of a student with a physical disability from a public education).
1954	*Brown v. Board of Education (civil rights case regarding exclusion of students from public education because of race).
1972	*PARC V. Pennsylvania (challenged the exclusion of students with disabilities to public education).  *Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education (challenged the exclusion of exceptional children from Washington, DC public schools).
1973	**Rehabilitation Act, Section 504 (made it illegal for any activity or program receiving federal financial assistance to discriminate against a person with a disability; most schools receive federal funding).
1975	**Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA; Would later become IDEA).
1982	*The Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley established adequate minimal progress was acceptable
1990	** Americans with Disabilities Act (extended Section 504 to private companies, public services, accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications).  **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; includes the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with peers without disabilities).
1999	*Olmstead v. L. C. (addressed the disability rights movement's goal of moving people with disabilities out of institutions and into the community).
2001	**No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (increased federal funding for public schools as long as schools employ "highly qualified" teachers and make adequate yearly progress).
2004	**Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA; updated and reauthorized).
2015	** Every Child Succeeds Act of 2015 (states manage more duties in crafting and executing the mandatory state accountability plans, intervening in low-performing schools, state report cards, and teacher-evaluation systems).
2017	* Endrew F. V. Douglas County School District (determined that the IEP must be "appropriately ambitious in light of the student's circumstances")

*Note:* \*Litigation, \*\*Legislation

disabilities by passing IDEA, and thereby extended the benefits of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to a class of children who, prior to the 1970s, had been drastically underserved. Congress also recognized that advances in special education have vastly improved the educational prospects of children with disabilities, but without effective advocacy the requirements of the law are often overlooked.

The *Mills* and *PARC* decisions were class action lawsuits brought by 20 sets of parent advocates between the two cases. The results of this litigation found that children with disabilities have the same rights to public education as do other children. These cases served as powerful tools for the special education movement and the strength of advocates when they build coalitions. By 1975, lawyers in many states were basing their arguments on the *Mills* and *PARC* precedents and led Congress to recognize a child's right to special education (Phillips, 2008). *PARC* and *Mills* were important because they gave parents the opportunity to participate in the educational decision-making process for the first time. Prior to the development of special education laws, many parents begged for educational services for their children with special needs but lacked legal rights. Unfortunately, even after *PARC* and *Mills*, many parents were still intimidated by school professionals or misinformed about the education of students with disabilities (Phillips, 2008).

IDEA recognized parents as the most effective representatives of their children's general interests. Parents are child-specific experts most qualified to assess and pursue their children's educational needs. IDEA resolved to involve parents at every step of the process, from diagnosis to the development of an individualized education program (IEP). The responsibility of parents in the IEP process can be overwhelming. Some have argued that there is a need for external advocates to supplement their efforts in order to achieve results in the best interest of the child (Burke, Rios, & Lee, 2019; Phillips, 2008). Many parent advocacy groups exist and grew out of grassroots efforts and are registered as 501c3 nonprofit organizations at the local level, and some are authorized through state legislatures, or funded by federal law such as Public Law 106-402 through the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD, 2020).

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## Research and Training Special Education Professionals

In the United States, 13 separate categories under IDEA exist since its reauthorization in 1990 (Hulett, 2009; Vaughn & Boss, 2011; Yell, 2012) and interventions to support them have been researched and examined for efficacy. These interventions can benefit all students, especially those who might be culturally and linguistically diverse (Boutot, 2017; Heward, 2013). Special education teacher training programs (pre- and in-service) incorporate research-based interventions in university coursework and workshops. While states are required to provide access to services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities, research was being conducted to determine which interventions work best for students with disabilities. Using a framework described as Multi-Tier System of

Supports (MTSS), state educational legislation has mandated schools use these frameworks to address student needs in the areas of academics and behavior. Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), both considered MTSS frameworks, apply research-based interventions, are trained to teachers, and utilized school wide by local education authorities (LEAs). RTI is used to address academics and PBIS is used to address behavior with both designed to work for all students, not just those identified for individualized instruction through the IEP process (Shapiro, 2015). Sugai and Horner (2009) describe common elements that most MTSS frameworks share including (a) multiple tiers of intervention that increase in intensity, (b) universal screening for early of needed supports, (c) data collection, (d) data-based decision making, (e) valid implementation integrity, and (f) guided instruction and placement based on assessment.

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## Multi-tiered Systems of Support

With the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), LEAs are required to use research-based interventions as part of the evaluation process for special education services. Previously, to receive special education services in academic areas, students were referred after they displayed a gap between IQ score and achievement score and if they met a discrepancy threshold (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). This was termed the “wait to fail” method since students were far behind their peers when identified. RTI was seen as a proactive method to reach students before they fail. Prior to referral for special education, interventions designed to help all students at risk for failure must be implemented, data collected, and decisions for placement made based on the information collected through the RTI process in conjunction with other assessments. Additionally, general education, special education, and specialists (e.g., speech, occupational therapy) collaborate in the RTI process. Some students “catch up” when RTI is implemented and are not referred for special education.

While RTI focuses on the academic arm of an MTSS framework, PBIS (now more commonly seen as School-Wide PBIS; SWPBIS) is applied for students with behavioral challenges. SWPBS is a 2- to 3-year process that a trained leadership team (i.e., MTSS team) implements throughout the school setting that evaluates data to make intervention decisions regarding behavioral supports for students (Horner, Sugai, & Andersen, 2010). SWPBS incorporates a number of elements and principles to form the conceptual model for implementation. See Fig. 3 for a list of components for SWPBIS.

A key component of MTSS (whether RTI or SWPBIS) is the use of a tiered model of intervention. Most MTSS frameworks use a three-tiered model with each tier increasing the level of intervention intensity based on the student needs and data (see Fig. 4). The interventions in this tiered framework describe quality and intensity of the intervention level, not necessarily the place where the intervention occurs. At Tier I, it is expected that 75–80% of students will be successful. This is generally considered a universal tier in that all students who need supports will begin here. The interventions introduced here are universal that will either apply to

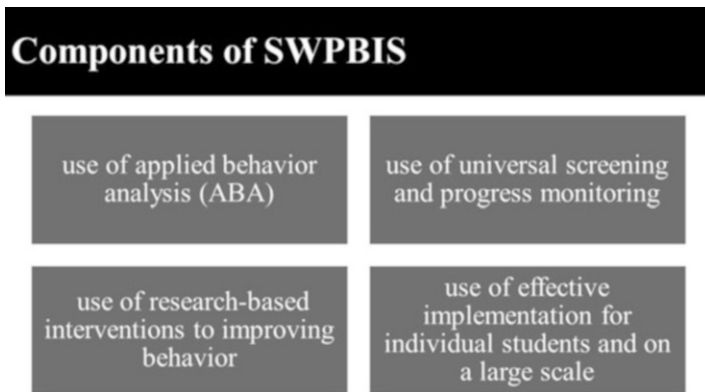


Fig. 3 Components of school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports

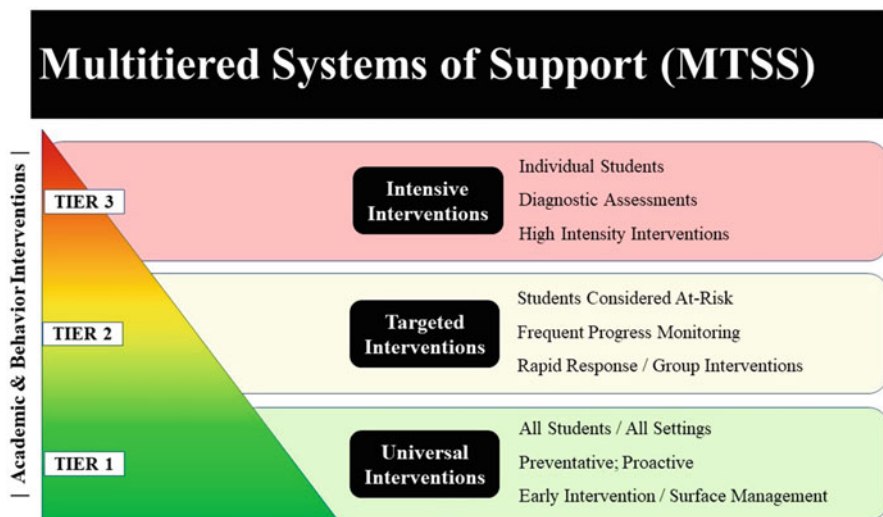


Fig. 4 Multi-tiered systems of support

most or all of the students in the school, whether identified for special education services or not. When students fall below the benchmarks or objectives for Tier I they are considered at risk for failure, and they receive small group instruction (generally up to 8 other students), in the area of need (based on assessments during Tier I). Tier II instruction can occur inside or outside the general education classroom depending on the instructional intensity and the teacher training level or personnel capacity. Tier II is aligned with Tier I instruction, but at Tier II they are differentiated, scaffolded based on assessed individual student need. Tier III is designed for students not responding well to Tier II interventions and delivered by a highly trained teacher (typically a special educator) in that area of instruction

with specialized materials and intervention strategies. Tier III interventions differ from Tier II since they typically take place outside the general education classroom. They also differ in the amount of time devoted to instruction. Students referred for special education services are generally in Tier II–III academically and/or behaviorally (Shapiro, 2015).

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## **The Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Inclusive Education**

As specified by IDEA, students with disabilities are entitled a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). For most students, this is the inclusion setting (general education classroom with peers without disabilities). When an individualized education program (IEP) is developed for a student with a disability, the IEP team (including teachers, administrators, parents, professionals who provide related services, and the student when appropriate) determines the LRE for that student closest to the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate where the student can make satisfactory educational progress in his or her individualized program (Heward, 2013; Yell, 2012). LRE can occur across a continuum that includes (from least to most restrictive): a) general education classroom, b) general education classroom with consultation from a special educator with additional instruction/related services, c) resource room where the student is pulled out for specialized instruction for part, but not the majority of the day with smaller groups, d) separate classroom where services are provided by a special educator and paraprofessionals, e) separate school with specially trained staff in a separate facility during the school day, f) residential school where the student receives education and care 24 h a day, and g) homebound or hospital where services are provided in that setting for a portion of the day (Heward, 2013; Yell, 2012).

Inclusion for students with disabilities in general education settings with supports can benefit not only the student with a disability but typical peers in the classroom through interaction and acceptance by peers without disabilities. Parents have both supported and rejected the inclusive setting (Havey, 1999). Supporters of inclusion focus on maintaining the intensity of services required as a separate piece of inclusion. They see inclusion as a right, with the extent of restricted placement being based on the student's need to make educational progress without sacrificing the right to a free, appropriate education as close as possible to that of students without disabilities. Placement should be reexamined on a regular basis as the student makes progress toward educational, behavioral, and social goals. Inclusion fosters collaboration between general and special educators and should include regular training on how to differentiate (individualize) instruction for all students. Accommodations made for students with disabilities can benefit all students (Heward, 2013). Accommodations can include peer tutoring, structuring the classroom, providing scaffolded assignments, and grading rubrics, which enhance learning for all students. Visual supports help culturally and linguistically diverse students

as well as students with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Inclusion fosters awareness and acceptance by peers without disabilities.

Carefully planned interventions and classroom structure can help students with disabilities navigate the classroom successfully. Some antecedent interventions include use of behavioral momentum, providing choice, incorporating preferences, prompting and cueing which can subsequently be faded, environmental enrichment, modification of task demands, teaching rules and expectations using specific, observable examples, seating, proximity and adult presence, errorless learning, thematic activities, interspersal of preferred, non-preferred activities, modeling correct demonstration of a task, peer training and peer modeling, graphic organizers, story-based interventions, video modeling, scaffolding assignments, teaching self-management, visual prompts, and schedules incorporating pictures (National Autism Center, 2009).

There are times when the inclusion setting (or general education classroom) may not be the best placement for a student. The multidisciplinary team must weigh the factors that impact setting and student progress toward goals.

Another influential aspect of LRE placement (i.e., inclusion in general education classrooms) and academic interventions for students receiving special education services is behavior. An additional legal mandate from IDEA (1990) is the use of Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) which led to the development of Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP). FBAs are usually conducted at Tier III of an SWPBIS if a student is not receiving special education services. It is designed to determine the function of a student's behavior (i.e., what is the purpose for a behavior) and developing BIPs to address the behavior and appropriate replacement behavior that are effective in the context of daily life. FBA/BIP procedures are behavior analytic in nature and incorporated into SWPBIS. The BIP might include changes to events that precede the behavior, teaching effective replacement behaviors that serve the same purpose as the inappropriate behavior, and changing reinforcement from inappropriate to appropriate behaviors by the student (Cipani, 2018; Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2013).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The history of special education in the United States evolved through litigation, legislation, advocacy, and research efforts. Compulsory education and the civil rights movement helped make an education of those with disabilities mandatory. All states within the United States had compulsory education laws in place by 1918 (Yell, 2012) but equal access for students with disabilities would evolve over the century. From the foundation of the Civil Rights Act of 1954 and seminal court rulings in favor of children with disabilities and their parents (e.g., *PARC vs Pennsylvania Board of Education and Mills vs. the District of Columbia Board of Education* [1972]) came the opportunities for students with disabilities to receive public education commensurate to and with their peers without disabilities. Since those initial waves of educational progress, students with disabilities and their advocates have continued to fight for educational rights.



The future history of special education is still being written. The pillars of change that shaped special education (litigation, legislation, advocacy, and research) will continue to shape its future. While progress was made for students with disabilities and the field of special education as whole, advocacy for rights and resources still and will continue to be the foundation of change. Parents and advocates demanding the best for students with disabilities are needed to drive positive change. History will also show an increase in self-advocacy by individuals with disabilities as they receive that training. Since those initial legal victories, there have been court cases addressing every aspect of education for students with disabilities, from types of services students should receive to where should they receive them and how often. This trend will undeniably continue alongside broad educational shifts. Legislation regarding educational progress will also shift and change with the broader educational goals of local, state, and national elected officials. Updates and revisions to existing mandates will occur, however, future legislation will be necessary to improve the educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Lastly, positive change in the outcomes for students with disabilities will be effected by research. Research provides us with evidence of what works, how well things work, and what works best for whom. Research has always been necessary to help students with disabilities maximize their progress. Looking back at the history of special education continues to inform the future. As history is still being written, advocates will continue to push for improved outcomes for students with disabilities through legislation, litigation, and research.

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### Abstract

Critically considering the history of educational assessment, this analysis problematizes the way in which certain constructions of assessment have achieved privileged status over others in the past two centuries in Western discourses, particularly in the US educational landscape. The analysis adopts the position that a centralized, authoritarian control through various government mechanisms has resulted in the gradually diminishing power of school leaders and teachers, who once had the responsibility of not only designing learners’ assessment tasks, but of presenting or “exhibiting” their outcomes to the public. It traces the *épistémès* of both *thought* and *practice* and the way in which standardized testing has become an end in itself rather than a means of assessment and improvement; an “unquestioned” social-educational norm, capturing state agents’ push for quantitative measures that do not fully appreciate the complexity of teaching and

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learning. In the name of neoliberal agendas and economics, these calculative power discourses have shaped public understandings of educational “performance,” identifying standardized tests as the key tool to control funding entitlement and other incentives. Using the Foucauldian framework of archaeology, the analysis portrays the ideas, assumptions, beliefs, ideologies, and theories which have formed, evolved, and ultimately normalized the ruptures and discontinuities resulting in reductive standardized assessment. In developing an intellectual archaeology of evaluation, the analysis offers the concept of *reproductive power* as a way to capture the circularity of mechanisms intended to centralize the power for decision-making and administration in the hands of state policy actors. It concludes with commentary on future trends in evaluation and assessment.

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### Keywords

Assessment · Evaluation · Foucault · Archaeology · Discourse · Épistémès · Teaching and learning · School leadership

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements.

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977, p. 304)

### Field of Memory

This analysis identifies and discusses the historical circularity of assessment practices in the US educational landscape over the past two centuries. It unpacks the memorable use of *visible* “exhibition”-based emulations, often seen as “examination” procedures, intended to assist various state agents capture and present the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the growing schooling system. Portraying the rise of standardized testing mechanisms as governing reflections of a centralized controlling authority, the analysis illuminates subtle transitions from a visual and communal exhibition to a detached and scientific approach of examination. Within this restructured space, calculative power discourses were born, (re)shaping public understandings of “quality education,” and social actors’ perceptions of what constitutes “useful” or “effective” assessment of educators’ practices. With powerful state agents promoting logocentric beliefs and insisting on a stable and unmoving set of positivist rules as to what constitutes reliable and valid schooling assessment, *épistémès of thought and practice* have mediated new educational knowledges. Such knowledge, while notably criticized, corresponds with widespread neoliberal approaches heavily tied to the logic of markets – amplified in the field of presence.

### Field of Presence

Scientific approaches of examination are part and parcel of contemporary teaching and assessment discourses, capturing discursive processes and governing initiatives

of *reproductive power* in the US educational system. In the name of “quality” education, state agents have been refining measures and controlling tools, calculatedly reproducing their own hold on power in the process. History repeating itself, practices of “exhibition” resurface to assure visible educational success, highlighting a focus on assessment as an exercise of power, rather than an authentic examination of the outcomes of teaching and learning. Subject to somewhat familiar critical scrutiny, new educational knowledge is then produced and assessed in processes of reciprocal collaboration of state agents as well as nonstate commercialized and “scientifically” driven actors. Such complex collaborations not only mirror the blurry lines between public and the private interests, but help refine long-existing, memorable, and sophisticated controlling initiatives of assessment – now outsourced almost completely to nonstate agents to assure powerful governing and success. These processes, in turn, have created new *épistémès* of thought and practice that sustain networks of power and privilege under the guise of accurate schooling assessment.

### **Field of Concomitance**

Connected to broad policies promoting ideals of economy-incentivized society – assuming that standardization and commercialization can help achieve better outcomes – the educational landscape thus becomes entrenched in mixed discursive spheres that negotiate between individuals’ day-to-day practices and state agents’ exercise of power and control. In an effort to extend the latter, memorable communal authority resources are now accompanied by nonstate sources of power, seen as the driving force behind different social systems and authorities that are subordinate to the needs of the individual (the student, in this case) as a customer. Reinforcing practices of control in the name of “quality,” social systems (e.g., schools, higher education settings, hospitals) are thoroughly implicated within a political economy that extends the governing control of some social actors while diminishing the power of others. Internalizing expected ways of thinking and behaviors, practitioners ultimately adopt, adapt and accept new discourses that are powerful enough to create positions that lead them and other individuals to give assent to the realities they face. Promoting rigorous practices of assessment for the sake of “excellence” can help establish a well-oiled system that extends the power of those in control and lead to practitioners’ self-influence and influencing others in more subtle ways.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Illustrating the shifts in the metanarratives of assessment and schooling, as “stories which not only tell a grand story. . .but also claim to be able to legitimate the story and its claims by an appeal to universal Reason” (Smith, 2001, p. 354), this analysis portrays the discontinuities in practices of visible communal exhibition; moving towards a more scientific driven, widespread approach of examination that reproduces power and control that support neoliberal agendas. In this space, *épistémès* of both thought and practice reflect the way in which standardized public/private tools become an end in themselves rather than a means of assessment and improvement.

### Critical Assumptions

In light of the above philosophical positions, then, this analysis situates the chronological development of the way assessment ideologies have been conceptualized, put into practice, and legitimized through successive historical power structures and controlling groups. In doing so, vested interest groups at different times have adopted positions that framed the concept and exercise of assessment to their own interests. This has marginalized other positions, “defining” them as either unethical, illegitimate, or impractical. The analysis, therefore, considers a holistic view of the conflicting metanarratives that in their totality represent discursive struggles in attaining visibility, and acceptance.

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### Introduction

For years, US public schools have been using and reporting student standardized test scores. Similar testing schemes take place in other Western nations such as Australia and the UK, rigorously promoting one-size-fits-all evaluation mechanisms, intended to assess, calculate, test, and (re)define schools’ “success” through regulatory state systems and national measures – becoming a main source of concern for educators (e.g., Keddie, 2017; Lingard, 2010). Conversely, “standardized practices” have been playing a significant role in shaping policymakers’, educational leaders’, teachers’, and families’ discourses. It is only the recent, unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that stopped at once (for now) the engagement with this “monotonic,” yet persistent, exercise of control, leaving policymakers and politicians in awe and anticipation for the right and suitable time to revive this long-standing convention of evaluation.

The current analysis draws upon, and critically considers, William Reese’s (2011, 2012, 2013) historical framework of educational evaluation and assessment in US schools. It seeks to problematize the way in which certain institutional controlling constructions have achieved privileged status over others in Western discourses. The analysis adopts the position that a centralized, authoritarian control was achieved through assessment mechanisms, obscurely used as a means to diminish the power of educators and school leaders who once had the responsibility of designing “examination” or “exhibition” tasks for students, and presenting or “exhibiting” their outcomes to the public. It traces the conceptual power history of standardized tests and the way they have gradually assumed the role of a normalized apparatus in US educational settings. Highlighting Foucault’s metaphor of archaeology, the analysis unpacks the power dynamics and ideologies that remain embedded in “normative” standardized apparatus. Developing an intellectual archaeology of evaluation, it suggests the concept of *reproductive power* – capturing the circularity of mechanisms intended to centralize the power for decision-making and administration in the hands of state policy actors – to comment on future trends in evaluation and assessment.

As a way of beginning, the analysis outlines the adopted methodology, discussing the Foucauldian approach of archaeology. In tracing the *épistémès* of school-based assessment in the US over the last two centuries, it conducts an archaeological

analysis. Specifically, the analysis delves into the gradual shifts from exhibition-based emulations of learning achievement, to written forms of assessment, to comparison-based systems, to statistics and quantitative measures – embedded within frameworks of state-sanctioned and controlled mechanisms of greater standardization and control. Next, the analysis assesses contemporary realities of evaluation, characterized by market-oriented controlling mechanisms and extensive involvement of outsourced nonstate providers. It concludes with an account of the *épistémès* that are likely to become more conspicuous in the future.

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## Methodology: Discourse and Archaeology

This analysis adopts the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse which anchors around the notion of a specific form of “systematicity.” Within this notion, rules govern which objects, concepts, norms, and voices are legitimated and accepted and which are not. In this sense, discourse refers to recurrent and persistent patterns of knowledge, codified and institutionalized over time, and manifested through disciplinary structures connecting knowledge and power. Foucault further extends this in his description of archaeology, adopted here as the core of methodology:

Discursive practices [have] a type of systematicity which is neither logical nor linguistic. . . [They] are characterized by the demarcation of a field of objects, by the definition of a legitimate perspective for a subject of knowledge, by the setting of norms for elaborating concepts and theories. Hence each of them presupposes a play of prescriptions that govern exclusions and selections. (Foucault, 1994, p. 11)

In the context of this analysis, the “field of objects” constitutes government machineries, such as policies and regulations that legitimize certain views of assessment as valid and truthful, at the cost of marginalizing and dismissing others. Such machineries also set norms in terms of what can be said (or cannot be said), or, in other words, what can be heard and what remains unheard. Historically then, forms of acceptance appear to eventually be taken for granted and become normalized, soliciting unquestionable acceptance.

However, such framing of discourses does not preclude the formation of *counter-discourses* or alternative views. Foucault’s later work on technologies of the self-proposed ways in which subjects (in this case, US schoolteachers) can still negotiate and “craft” their actions by engaging in practices of freedom (Mansfield, 2000, pp. 54–59). Within discourses, therefore, Foucault (1972) argues, multiple meanings are possible, because a discourse also potentially “contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings” (p. 118). For agents who operate within discursive structures, such plurality of meanings offers opportunities in which individuals can construct opposing views. In this respect, Gramsci’s conceptualization of hegemony (1999) can assist in further extending this analysis. Ideology, which can be difficult to distinguish from discourse (Määttä, 2014) and is “acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through

discourse” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 115), is a site of antithetical struggles, allowing for the possibilities of resistance while offering spaces for counter-ideology or counter-hegemony through which dominant ways of acting can be compromised by the subordinate class. Although Gramsci refers mainly to *cultural* hegemony, his frame can help unpack discourses constructed by institutes and individuals in power to establish certain values as dominating over others.

This analysis entails clusters of discourses, namely, “*épistémès*” (Foucault, 1977) of assessment within which historical configurations of schooling performance are embedded. *Épistémès*, which Foucault defines as historically contingent structures of thought and ways of thinking, allow us to establish priori beliefs that accommodate and normalize discourses in a particular historical period as normative and routine. It is the codification of such routines that makes us conform and uncritically accept “unconscious” structures underlying the production of “scientific” knowledge in a particular time and place. *Épistémès* are the *totality* of discursive practices of a society at a particular point in time, while archaeology is the methodology that Foucault uses to identify *épistémès*, adopted in this analysis.

The analysis in the following section broadly relies on Foucault’s archaeological method, used as an analytical tool, that helps deconstruct the discourses that at different times established themselves as dominant and normative by state machineries, and to an extent by teachers and educational leaders. Such an archaeological analysis also reveals how power and knowledge come together in the formation of established discourses in school assessment which remain unquestioned until the benefit of retrospection allows any possibility of counterargument. Unlike a critical analysis which concerns an exploration of “hidden meanings,” archaeology is premised on the principle of exteriority, allowing the analysis of discourse as amorphous and historically discontinuous. In doing so, it aims to unearth the bases on which knowledge and truth were formed at different historical periods, within what space of order reality is (and can be) known and the shifts in between *épistémès* where new knowledge can be created.

Archaeology in this sense is not so much about history, as it is about a spatiotemporal discovery of frames within which knowledge is constituted. Indeed, it is a “systematic rejection of historical analysis. . . postulates and procedures” (Foucault, 1972, p. 138) which aims to focus on the specificity of statements within particular discourses. By designating general descriptive themes which question the already-said at the level of its existence, it qualifies the enunciative function that operates *within* it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs. In short, an archaeological analysis situates discourses as practices specified in the historical archive of multiple and discontinuous sayings (Foucault, 1972).

As alternative forms of speech, Foucault (1990) proposes the notion of invisibility and silence which can embed layers of hidden power and resistance. Such silences of utterance (in the formation of discourses) can accommodate the “unspeakable,” or in van Manen’s (1990) terms, the “epistemological silence” beyond the palpability of discourses. Therefore, drawing “binary divisions” (p. 27) between what is said and what is not said, may fail to capture all utterances. Foucault



proposes the discovery of alternative ways of engaging with such unuttered sayings, which can be done through an archaeological analysis.

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## **An Archaeological Excavation of School Assessment in the US**

### **Between “Exhibition” and “Examination”: Complexities of Emulation**

The idea of school evaluation and student testing does not represent a new tradition. Standardized tests’ origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when US policymakers reflected on the great success of the previous generation to create a free, compulsory elementary public schooling system where all American children can attend. This “double-headed” system was comprised of reading schools (focused on liberal arts such as geography, history and spelling), mostly taught by female teachers, and writing schools (focused on commercially oriented subjects such as arithmetic, penmanship, and bookkeeping), having children spend the morning in one and the afternoon in the other.

Although reforms triggered by the state-controlled standardized testing No Child Left Behind (NCLB) came into operation only about 20 years ago, student testing in the US dates back almost 200 years. In 1838, US reformers initiated the conditions that would see, for the first time, formal and measurable assessment of student achievement. The following decades saw rapid extension of official written testing replacing oral examinations – which coincided with the massification of American education. Before the more “formal” state tests came along, school *exhibitions* or festivals of learning were used as a tool for parents and citizens – taxpayers – to judge the effectiveness of teachers and accomplishments of students in the growing educational system. Once the days of exhibition were announced, principals’, teachers’, students’, and even parents’ (some with minimal schooling, themselves) feverish preparations began, eager to impress the public with their great knowledge and high achievements. Similar to students’ taking high or low-stakes tests today, students were focused on the task at hand, memorizing topics and reciting ideas to impress the crowd. Impressions did not only rest upon students’ public performance, but the teachers’ appearance or ability to successfully discipline their students as well (Reese, 2011).

These school exhibitions brought teachers, members of the school committee and trustees, Common Council, legislators, invited clergy, and politicians who distributed prizes for meritorious achievement. While in the case of small schools, exhibitions were held in churches, town halls, rented rooms, or other locales, exhibitions in large schools often attracted many people, to the extent that an overflow crowd caused a school building in Malden, Massachusetts to collapse in 1802. As William Reese eloquently described in his prominent book *Testing Wars in the Public Schools*, similar accidents occurred, for instance, in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Being entertaining, such exhibitions became so popular that they were often reported by the press, lifting community pride, and morale (Reese, 2013). With this “social obsession,” it is therefore, not surprising that the students, at



times, were more worried about their appearance on stage than about their knowledge. This questionable approach, and the way students seemed to embrace *emulation* for the crowd, was noticed by many observers who condemned the *theatricality* at many exhibitions, speculating the almost invisible line between theater and schooling.

Theoretically speaking, the concept of “exhibition” was often used interchangeably with “examination.” While the examinations were mostly oral (i.e., students were quizzed, asked to recite and exhibit memorization and understanding skills), they often happened at the same time as the exhibitions where students’ copied books, drawings, and embroidery works were assessed. In other words, exhibitions and examinations were inseparable, hindering efforts to gather reliable statistics that could help compare learners and schools. Over time, written examinations became more common in large schools, while recitations and oral performance remained the bread and butter of exhibitions in rural areas. Critical voices, such as those of journal editors and other citizens, lamented how examinations measured students’ mental acquisitions, whereas exhibitions served as a social means of entertainment (rather than a determination of academic achievement).

By the 1840s, observers urged to start testing and examining students in a more “critical” manner than a “simple exhibition” (Reese, 2013, p. 35). The superficiality of such competitive exams and the mounting “rehearsals” undertaken by so many social agents to secure public recognition – preparing to the exhibition or the “show” – were criticized as promoters of unethical behavior that pushed aside Christian values of community for competitiveness and (deceiving) appearance.

## **Pencil and Paper Exams: Moving Beyond Social Impression**

Over time, “examiners” began asking students to explain their answers fully, seeking to counter widespread criticisms about students’ inability to redefine what they memorized or recited to the crowd. But something had shifted with the opening of high schools in the 1820s. Students wishing to apply had to take written admission exams – set locally, varied from year to year – intended to generate numerical scores that move beyond social impression. Some students found themselves taking written tests from both their classroom teachers and external examiners, as the spirit of emulation soared. While the number of students was scarce, it was the first time that numerical test scores assisted, and prompted, educators to compare student performance; leading to some speculation (but no consensus) about why some students from certain elementary schools performed better than others. The process was the beginning of deliberations over raising high school admission standards as a way to enhance elementary schooling quality (Reese, 2012).

With Boston’s impressive commitment to schooling – establishing the prestigious Latin grammar school and Harvard University – it was only a matter of time until different agents began questioning the idea of separate committees and governance of the various schools in the district. It is true that admiration for these institutions abounded in national media outlets, and Bostonians stood high and tall, proud and

pleased, when “crowned” as having the best national schooling system of all. However, fundamental questions also swirled around quality and effectiveness. What makes one school “better” than other/s? What makes excellent teaching? How can we identify change in teacher practice and student learning? And what does it even mean to be an effective educator? Visiting and examining committees seemed to lack the tools to wrestle with such and related complex queries, yet the need for such tools was increasingly felt.

Obscured hostilities of power swirled. Boston schools were governed by different distinguished boards, operating with very high levels of autonomy. They were highly praised for their well-educated head teachers (“masters”) and teachers (“ushers”), who were men of distinction, equipped with social and cultural capital, capturing not only very close connections with School Committee but much influence on curricular and textbook development.

As such, they had very high levels of control of their schools, being able to even decide who enrolled from the primary schools. While the committee physically visited its assigned school at least once a month to “observe” the manners and progress or to deter negligence and immorality of the master, and whereas it helped the master identify students who deserved academic medals, municipal policy leaders were keen in asserting more control over head masters. After all, they possessed more power than the administrators higher up in the schooling system (Schneider, 2017).

## **(Re)assessing American Schooling: Utilitarian Suggestions to Reclaim Power**

With every school controlled and navigated by its own master, a counter discourse of a “united assessment” approach emerged, calling for a novel strategy that could help (re)assess the comparative degree of schools’ quality. Samuel A. Wells, a prosperous trader who established and headed a Committee of a nonclassical English high school, suggested building a cohesive schooling system, where students learn with other students their age and take the same annual exam (on the same day) to measure their achievement and their master’s instruction. Students who do not pass the exam, Wells argued, should not advance until they do (Reese, 2012).

However, how to better measure educational outcomes in practice, compare schools, and determine the best instructional approaches seemed somewhat impossible unless the grammar schooling system was to reorganize – wishful thinking given complex realities (Reese, 2013). In other words, by that time, it had become clear that the educator is vital to academic success and the features of effective teaching should be “identified and widely imitated” – an essential notion in the “emerging ethos of testing,” as the education policy historian William Reese observed (Reese, 2013, p. 46).

At this stage, it may be safe to say that confrontations of power had bubbled. School Committeemen sought to assert more control over masters and ushers, replacing in some cases, male masters with female teachers who were cheaper to

employ and held less social power. On their end, masters drafted and published lengthy reports, refusing to let reformers' voices stand as the final word on teaching and learning. However, critics loomed over masters being arrogant, practicing careless teaching methods, neglecting a range of topics, assuming vicious corporal punishment practices, and "performing" to the observer-visitors. Newspapers highlighted horrific maltreatment cases of students of color in segregated schools, noting heightened criticism of the lack of accumulated statistical records of corporal punishment, with records being destroyed after a quarter. The public was left in the darkness of pure facts, questioning if African-American children received a decent education in Boston's segregated schools. These and the superficiality of the annual exhibitions and their unclear worth were good enough reasons for the politically driven School Committee members to expand their power in the educational realm. Mimicking their colleagues in medicine, these well-educated wealthy fellows, some of whom had won nominations for political offices or ran on a political ticket, sought to create rigorous scientific and systematic mechanisms to education. And so, they surprised Boston schools in 1845 with what became a testing controversy.

That summer, a strong politically moderate group had not only given a unified written test to the highest classes, but it also "ranked the schools from best to worst, embarrassing many teachers and pupils alike" (Minutes of the Boston School Committee, 1845, p. 225). This was a well-planned move by the reformer Horace Mann of Massachusetts who together with other legislative leaders such as Samuel Gridley Howe, William B. Fowle, and William Brigham, were hoping to restrict corporal punishment, set up clear and high teaching and learning standards, promote ideas of age-graded classes increasingly taught by female teachers, improve pedagogical methods, and tighten up supervision of educators by hiring a superintendent.

With an ongoing public battle between the masters and the reformers, Howe and Mann decided to put an end to this façade of the masters being god-like once and for all, believing that external exam results would shame the masters. Articles were planted in advance in various newspapers, urging immediate reform in Boston schools where masters have no say in student exams. Questions were secretly drawn for the students' test and the staff protocol including direct questions to the masters (e.g., How often did they strike children? Did they whip students for poor recitations or hit them on the head? Did they spend time with parents, if at all?) (see Reese, 2013, p. 95). Yet, assuming practices of resistance, masters and ushers did not engage with such questions, refusing to cooperate with the ongoing scrutiny from the reformers.

## **Resistance, Cheating, and Statistics**

Materializing in 19 grammar schools in the last week of June 1845, reformers made sure that students had only one hour to complete their answers on a blank answer sheet. Covering at first the subject of Geography (every day was devoted to a different subject), the new examiners observed student cheating in action. Stressed out students not only looked for the right answers in their textbooks, but also shared

their responses with classmate peers and passed along questions to their friends in neighboring schools. On their end, shocked masters confronted examiners, blaming them for not only stressing out, scaring, and discouraging students, but using them for their own political desires/ends. They also shared their fierce criticism with other masters across the city, adding fuel to the master/reformer discipline battle fire. The new reality of competitive, written (rather than oral), consistent exams that offer statistical configurations and the quantification of teaching and learning became the center of a forever debate about the politics and the meaning of testing.

With newspapers owned and edited by the politician-reformers, their published reports helped situate teachers in the public gaze. Harsh criticisms lamented the low performance of Boston school students, revealing how Howe's committee had given its tests to several schools outside the city, ridiculing the masters who now genuinely feared for their jobs. A tsunami of condemnations included anonymous citizens sharing disturbing images of masters sadistically flogging helpless students. On their end, masters and ushers – known for their social, economic, and cultural capital – displayed their resistance, refusing to complete a survey on their perceptions on corporal punishment or the taught textbooks. Instead, they sought to use their higher up connections to prevent the reformers from promoting ideas of eliminating the double-headed system, hiring a superintendent, and the prevalence of this written examination saga; knowing that many influential citizens had a vested interest in maintaining the reputations of their old schools.

Amazed by the intellectual developments and the complex statistical practices assumed by educators in the UK, Mann tutored Howe on how to present numbers and figures in ways that help illustrate the association between test scores and school quality. Both strongly believed that statistics could, and should, buttress reform. Like other reformers, they promoted written examinations, among other ideas, as a means to not only “reveal hidden truths about the nature of schools,” but to “undermine outmoded forms of school organization” and hold teachers and students accountable (Reese, 2013, p. 129).

Responding to masters accusing them of immoral behavior that mitigates teaching and learning to gain control and authority, the reformers stressed their wish “to have as fair an examination as possible; to give the same advantages to all; to prevent leading questions; to carry away, not loose notes, or vague remembrances of the examination, but positive information, in black and white; to ascertain with certainty, what the scholars did not know, as well as what they did know; [and] to test their readiness at expressing their ideas upon paper” (p. 131). Ultimately, while the reformers acknowledged their own limited quantitative assessment expertise and the written tests limitations in providing a rich picture of each and every single school, they initiated the quantitative revolution in American schools.

## **Standards and Control**

Seeking to create a strong system of governance that would give them direct control over schools, and specifically, help them shift the autonomy of masters to their own

hands, the reformers designed new testing tools. These novel examination instruments were devised to capture a range of educational aspects that moved beyond student recitation and memorization, enabling reformers to interrogate the complexity and strength of masters' instruction. While most of the exam questions aligned with the textbooks' problems – many of which were written by masters who strongly resisted the reformers – some questions sought to inspect students' ability to understand, apply, and analyze what they have memorized. These abilities were now seen as an essential part of the masters' work.

As the reformers expected, exams' scores depicted an unfortunate picture where masters repeated "textbook knowledge," disregarding students' need to understand, apprehend, and build on the material. Simply put, the exams' results assisted the eager reformers to pile up alarming evidence against the masters. There were enough data to suggest that despite the increasing funding support to masters and schools, and notwithstanding the overwhelmingly positive impressions the schools received throughout the years, students' achievements, in fact, remained poor. Pointing a blaming finger to the masters, Horace Mann of Massachusetts stressed, "hearing recitations from a book, is not teaching" (Reese, 2013, p. 136), adding to other reformers' statements on the need to stick to scientific facts and numbers instead of social views and personal opinions.

### **Glossy Statistics**

The road to American scientific policy, then, one that fascinates the nation with glossy statistics seizing the conception that teachers make the crucial difference in student achievement, had now been paved. With the tests becoming a key ingredient in the educational discourse, hunger for more knowledge of statistical methods grew. The examiners, for example, did not acknowledge that girls often performed better than boys. They also failed to account for the range of students' ages. Combining these tests with observations (impressions) to achieve a clear, well-rounded schooling picture seemed inevitable. Having connections in the American Statistical Association definitely helped the reformers in presenting the data and using it tactically as part of well-planned (and ultimately successful) political campaigns.

Accused for ruining the "strong foundations" of the Bostonian educational system by neglecting children and facilitating deplorable education, some masters were shamefully fired. Master campaigns blaming the textbooks for problematic scores did not help much. Reformers had already moved on to the next phase, lobbying for permission to hire a superintendent devoted to uncovering the actual conditions of the schools. By the 1850s, reformers won the battle against the double-headed system, which helped them, with a superintendent in place, push out more masters of the system as they saw fit. With time, written examination results became part and parcel of the educational assessment discourse in US schools, particularly in urban areas – moving far beyond Horace Mann and his colleagues' imagination. The tests' instrumental power helped promote various pedagogical and organizational reforms, including abolishing racially segregated schools and expanding superintendents' authority.

As much as the written exams' analysis was daunting and overwhelmingly exhausting, detailed configurations of student score responses were the bread and butter of the reformers' work who sought to incorporate statistical tables and figures that enabled marking/ranking educators and students to centralize authority and impose uniform practices. The tests assisted controlling not only issues of teacher promotion and leave but also high school acceptance and graduation, eroding pedagogical approaches and shaping individuals' pathways.

### **Novel Forms of Assessment**

It seemed as if every desired educational change involved, at some point or another, some kind of written competitive testing, followed by public scrutiny. In many places, written tests became an integral part of the teaching certificate standards; requiring preservice teachers to engage with new forms of assessment if they wished to properly join the educational system. In some cases, these exams played a key role in a holistic assessment plan that included external observation visits, check-ups over uniform textbooks and other pedagogical instruments (e.g., globes, blackboards), and, where necessary, additional written tests.

Some superintendents blatantly required principals to implement more and varied types of written tests. The tests, turning over time into a printed instrument involving questions which could not be aided by books or other communications, appeared to be a mere reflection of practices of control. These depicted an ethical apparatus intended to raise the education standards for everyone. That did not prevent teachers from expressing their resistance or growing anger over the exams as an untrustworthy school ranking instrument that undermined the educational system and the teaching profession. But there was no way back – American schools had already transformed into statistical, measurable entities. As Reese (2013) concludes, “competitive testing arose in an age of reform marked by deep social, racial, and political conflicts, and the debates and controversies of the nineteenth century and of our own times bear an uncanny resemblance” (p. 230).

In this respect, one would contend that the 1930s and 1940s particularly felt the rapid entrenchment of multiple-choice tests in schools. Critics, like Dewey, argued back then that such tests encouraged rote learning and guessing – diminishing creativity and critical thinking in the name of objectivity and to the advantage of teachers involved in assessing their students. In 1929 Dewey (p. 486) expressed his concern at testers gaining the upper hand with quantitative tests:

Our mechanical, industrialized civilization is concerned with averages, with percents. The mental habit which reflects this social scene subordinates education and social arrangements based on averaged gross inferiorities and superiorities.

And to this day, for many policymakers, reformers, families, and students, high or low-stakes test scores are synonymous with effective schooling. Thus, such assessment tools unsurprisingly became an inseparable part of a global, corporate business.

## **Reproductive Power: Contemporary State Mechanisms of Control and the Rise of Edu-Business**

Student standardized test scores are tightly woven into the fabric of contemporary American schooling and society. Reforms of the No Child Left Behind, legislated and pursued by George W. Bush in 2002 (initiated by Bush senior in 1991), and the Every Student Succeed Act issued by Barack Obama in December 2015, for example, promoted the idea of test-based accountability as a crucial element of academic competence and school success (e.g., Baker & Wright, 2017; Polikoff & Porter, 2014; Schneider, 2017). Describing this “obsessed number-driven” culture as a “testing charade,” Koretz (2017) lamented the unethical implications of a system driven by standardized scores. He referred to Don Campbell – one of the founders of the science of program evaluation – and his enlightening observation that extensive use of quantitative indicators for social decision-making may be subject to corruption pressures. According to Koretz, teachers’ and principals’ resistance to policymakers’ relentless exercise of control is reflected in ethically questionable practices such as score inflation, struggling student exclusion (from taking the test) and cheating.

On their end, to reproduce their power, policymakers have been engaging with practices of reallocation, namely, focusing on improving the “controlling” measures rather than on enhancing processes of teaching and learning. They have also been lowering standards to assure their own “success”, and putting much emphasis on coaching, that is, focusing test prep on incidental (rather than important) characteristics for accountability. History repeating itself, public criticism of the “score-oriented” educational system has been an integral part of the American schooling discourse (e.g., Pizmony-Levy & Green Saraisky, 2016), highlighting discursive rules that acknowledge and (re)define evaluation as an exercise of power, rather than authentic assessment of teaching and learning.

Interestingly, despite the mixed implications, policymakers have tended to avoid criticizing the overuse and the over emphasis of standardized testing in US schools. In fact, they appear to “combine powers” with private, nonstate agents, in what looks like a paradoxical means to centralize their own authority further. With dominations of testing capturing a major commercialized industry – providing plentiful nonstate actors a foot in the door of state schools by the early 1920s (Schneider, 2017) – the somewhat ubiquitous bond between school reformers and edu-business necessitates further elaboration.

### **Assessment Reflections in Philanthropic/Reformer Initiatives**

It was not that long ago that reformers partnered with the Bill & Melissa Gates Foundation which invested nearly \$215 million in a project promoting an extensive use of observations and standardized-based Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) – with the hopes of evaluating and improving school quality. Fully committed to the philanthropic initiative, at least theoretically, participating districts supplied matching funds, with the total cost coming to \$575 million (Stecher et al., 2018). Encountering numerous challenges, including navigating time constraints and the



underlying tensions or “confusion” between assessment for improvement (formative) and assessment for judgment (summative), some schools found themselves extensively “examined” or “inspected” by external administrators. This is despite teachers’ ongoing resistance, acknowledging that while this very expensive initiative succeeded in measuring teaching effectiveness, it failed to improve student achievement – which is the “declared” purpose of such initiatives.

Working closely with policymakers and spending over \$3 billion since 1999, the Gates Foundation has (re)shaped educators’ and millions of students’ lives. The Foundation’s scientific practices, discursively woven and celebrated in education policy enactment, highlighted the materiality of contemporary American testing discourses. Exhibiting exceptional collaboration, states and districts developed and implemented, together with the Foundation, multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems, including observational and/or student feedback surveys and standardized measures of teaching quality (e.g., Polikoff, 2015). This is despite, for example, a growing criticism over observational measures as practices that can not only generate teacher and student discomfort and mitigate teaching and learning but may also compromise students’ privacy and teachers’ ethical reasoning (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2016). Capturing a form of social representation or domination, some former Gates Foundation staff ultimately assumed high positions in the US Department of Education, putting their ethical-professional standards and the way they form policy agendas in question (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2021).

In other words, blurring the lines between the public and the private, contemporary controlling initiatives of evaluation and assessment are now often outsourced almost completely to the private sector. Reformers’ reproduction of power is reinforced with the help of nonstate, commercialized, and so-called scientifically driven companies such as Pearson – a UK based company that successfully secured a five-year testing deal contract worth more than 30 million dollars, with the state of New York. Heavily promoted by education policymakers, the company also secured a nearly half a billion-dollar testing contract with Texas state schools, marking another industrial revenue success (see, for example, Strauss, 2015).

### **Intensification of Power Relations and Control**

These deals are only a drop in the ocean of state and edu-business collaborations (see Chowdhury & Ha, 2014; Sidhu 2005). Other “inspection initiatives” include the use of student feedback surveys to evaluate teachers (see in Hanover Research, 2013; The Colorado Education Initiative, 2019), with 17% of the largest American districts administering some form of such surveys (Steinberg & Donaldson, 2016), entangling mixed responses from teachers (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2020a; Gehlbach, Robinson, Finefter-Rosenbluh, Benshoof, & Schneider, 2018). Survey companies like the Tripod Education Partners (2019) help reformers assess and evaluate school quality, assisting them in governing from afar and present their “normalized” calculation of effective education through the lens of consumerism and commodification (Ball, 2004). Simply put, reformers seem to strengthen their own power with



the assistance of edu-business institutions that offer a well calculated, scientific approach to assessing and evaluating educators across the US.

It is no secret that education systems, including in the US, have been gradually shaped by marketization ideas with an allure of commercialization and devolution of governance that perceive schools as increasingly accountable for self-management and “client” recruitment (e.g., Chowdhury & Ha, 2014; Clark, 2009; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Sattin-Bajaj, 2016; Savage, 2011). Similar to other nations promoting ideas of school choice, “buy education” and school privatization (e.g., Kabir & Chowdhury, 2021; Adonis, 2012; Olson Beal & Hendry, 2012; Scott, 2013), the Trump administration, for instance, has long believed that the federal government should assist nonstate agents in evaluating (or controlling) schools, molding educators’ practices in the process (Meckler, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak only highlighted the administration’s push for “the parent power revolution” (Fabian & Wingrove, 2020; Hilton, 2020), where educational systems are “observed,” and their quality is heavily “examined,” by the public.

A quick reminder of the history? Indeed. Equally, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has been rigorously promoting ideologies of school choice and privatization, urging parents and communities to take more control to their hands. Imagining privatization as vital for social progress, DeVos announced in the midst of the pandemic that the US Department of Education will award “at least \$85 million over the next five years for disadvantaged students from families with lower incomes in Washington, D.C., to attend private schools of their choice, as part of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program” (USDE, 2020). The reformers’ message here is crystal clear: let the crowd judge. Such intensification of power relations and control in schools – constraining educators’ autonomy – can not only shape educators’ practices and the self (Ball, 2003), but generate particular norms that may become a “mini-public” ideology that feed into patterns of morally complex acts of educators’ self-preservation (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2020b).

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## Concluding and Reflections

Archaeology is not so much concerned with probing or uncovering the “intent” of actors; it focuses on the identification of the taken-for granted norms that shape “the limits and forms of what is sayable,” utterances that eventually “enter human memory, ritual, pedagogy, publicity, circulation” (Foucault, 1971, pp. 12–13). At the same time, archaeology identifies which utterances disappear and re-appear, how they are circulated and thereby legitimized, by which vested interest groups and, crucially, to what ends. This analysis used archaeology to identify statements repressed and subjugated by groups. By establishing the “limits and forms of memory,” it can also advance the analysis of discursive formations – identifying statements which are valid or invalid, abandoned, and excluded.

Postmodern theories, such as the discussed Foucauldian framework, have allowed designing an analysis that investigates the complex discursive connections or *épistémès* between viewing and discussing the world. Foucault’s works have

problematized these connections, showing that interactions between individuals, institutions, subjects, governments, and populations can be contradictory when looked through the lens of discourse. Subsequently, discourses “constitute knowledge... social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). Drawing upon Foucault’s archaeology, this analysis enabled unpacking the historical complex formation of assessment in US schools over more than a century. It illustrates how *épistémès* are not only developed and produced historically, but they can be, and have been, contested by individuals and groups in the way of creating new knowledges and practices. Further, the analysis sheds light on the way discursive constructions can be nonlinear and circular, often repeating themselves through newer configurations of rationalizing premises.

Such historical changes in discourse are accompanied by attendant modifications in the language that embodies them, which in turn provide a clue to “the discontinuities and thresholds that appear” (Foucault, 1972, p. 41) within the discourses of a particular historical moment. They “map the first surfaces of their emergence” of new discourses. In relation to the history of school-based assessment, for instance, the analysis describes how perceptions have changed over time, reflected in the changes in terminology and attitude from emulation and exhibition, to tasks, to written tasks, and finally to summative measurable assessments. Such shifts in naming provide a new way of constituting knowledge and frameworks that explain the link between constructions of power and subjectivity (Chowdhury, 2015; Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2020b).

An archaeological analysis has allowed capturing these *épistémès* as historically contingent sets of social practices through which “reality” is made comprehensible, albeit still remaining vulnerable to negotiation and contestation. Resolving such tensions requires an engagement with power, which can only be done by further ongoing analysis of the historical configurations of these *épistémès*.

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# Assessment, Accountability, and Contextualization

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## Dilemmas in Comparative Education and Educational Leadership

Petrina M. Davidson and Kadia Hylton-Fraser

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### Abstract

Tests were first designed for student assessment and advancement at the individual level and have since expanded to national and international accountability (Smith WC, *Educ Policy Anal Arch* 22(116), 2014). Assessment and accountability are central to both comparative education and educational leadership. Dilemmas include the conflict between accountability and contextualization and the innovation that has occurred as a result of such stringent guidelines. Relying on Foucault's fields of memory, presence, and concomitance, this chapter explores these intersecting phenomena by considering how assessment and accountability movements have spurred an increased focus on contextualization. The field of memory is characterized by the mass expansion of assessment and accountability, while the field of presence is characterized by movements toward

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contextualization. Outside of the field of education, economics, particularly human capital theory and neoliberalism, has played a significant role in perpetuating global norms associated with assessment and accountability, which is described in the field of concomitance. The chapter concludes with a discussion about future possibilities of contextualization in comparative education and educational leadership.

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**Keywords**

Comparative education · Educational leadership · Assessment · Accountability · Contextualization · Education reform · Neoliberalism · Standardized testing · Comparison · Education policy

**The Field of Memory**

Tests and assessments were first designed to measure individual student understanding at the classroom level; however, they have since expanded in scope and significance. Assessments have been increasingly linked with teacher, administrator, school, and national accountability in education.

**The Field of Presence**

While assessments for accountability are still a dominant narrative, there is push back by educational researchers and practitioners to differently assess students and reshape how assessments are linked with professional accountability.

**The Field of Concomitance**

The assessment and accountability movements in education have been influenced by human capital theory, national economic development, return on educational investment, neoliberalism of education.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

Contextualization, or pushes to shift control of education policies and practices to the local level, such as the “opt-out” movement, disrupts the dominant assessment and accountability narratives. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for these movements to become embedded in education structures and reshape understandings of assessment and accountability.

**Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

Education reform, specifically movements toward increased assessment and accountability, has shaped the field and practices of comparative education and educational leadership. The indirect objects of our discussion, then, are countries that actively participate in the global neoliberal agenda.

## Introduction

The field of comparative (and international) education has been fraught with controversy since its beginning, which itself is debated (Kandel, 1936; Passow, 1982). Such controversies include epistemological, theoretical, and methodological debates. One area around which debates have persisted is an understanding of comparison. Whereas some scholars define comparison explicitly, with two or more boundaries across which similarities and differences can be analyzed (Raggatt, 1981), other scholars argue that comparisons may also be implied through the researcher or reader examining places beyond their own (Ragin, 1989).

Similarly, educational leadership has its own set of contentions surrounding the lack of consensus on defining the field (Bush, 2007; Gunter, 2004). The very notion of leadership has been contested and changes depending on the context in which leadership is exercised (Hockin, 1977; Lee & Hallinger, 2012). Researchers have argued that seeking to define leadership may unnecessarily limit its “thought and practice” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p. 13). Regardless of how leadership has been defined, however, the consensus within education is that it involves setting direction, building relationships, and developing people, which are essential components to stable and productive educational institutions (Bush, 2007; Cunningham, 1985). Interestingly, though, educational leadership has remained largely a separate field, not making smooth transitions across borders, cultures, or contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2000).

Comparison occupies a key position in both comparative education and educational leadership. Despite challenges to define each field and its characteristic parts, they are innately linked through the use of comparison in the forms of assessment and accountability (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Therefore, international comparisons are important in both educational leadership and comparative education. Debates about comparison are particularly relevant in neoliberal systems, where there is a heavy focus on measures of accountability, often through standardized tests at state or national levels (Smith, 2014). Large-scale international tests, such as TIMSS and PISA, rely on comparisons, as evidenced by a focus on league tables and the occurrence of PISA shock in countries around the world (Waldow, 2009).

Although numerous alternatives to large-scale standardized tests have been presented, including pre- and post-assessments, portfolios, and project-based learning, standardized tests remain the primary method of measuring students’ success and determining school quality (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012; Popham, 1999; Sacks, 1997). Student data has even been taken a step farther, to assign grades and rankings to schools and districts (Figlio & Lucas, 2004). Standardized tests rely on comparison, whether by comparing students to other students (norm-referenced) or to criteria (criterion-referenced), these tests rely on comparisons to be useful to teachers and administrators (Popham, 1999). Even when comparison is not explicitly stated as a target or outcome, it is inherent in the discourse of accountability and assessment (Sjøberg, 2016). Therefore, comparative education and educational leadership overlap on the use of comparison as a tool for accountability.



While the narrative around such measures of accountability has changed over time, especially in the United States in the last five years, as evidenced by parent-led anti-testing movements (Pizmony-Levy & Cosman, 2017), standardized tests remain a primary measurement tool (Morgan, 2016). Within the United States, test scores are increasingly used to grade and rank school districts within states, beginning with the oft debated A+ Plan for Education in Florida (Figlio & Lucas, 2004). In addition to signifying which school systems are the most desirable (e.g., Finland, Singapore), participation in international assessments can signify legitimacy (Addey & Sellar, 2018). This legitimacy seeking is not only a reflection of national systems of education but is also closely linked to economic and political systems as well, as education is positioned as a vehicle for individual and national development (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). Despite much resistance since the initial PISA tests, such assessments have maintained their position as primary measurement tools for accountability (Addey & Sellar, 2018; Kamens & McNeely, 2009; Wiseman, 2013).

Educational leaders and policy makers are faced with the challenge of providing students with requisite skills for the job market (problem solving, team work, etc.) but who are also expected to perform well on standardized tests (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Smolin & Clayton, 2009). Furthermore, the use of standardized tests to rank and compare the strength of countries' school systems is part of the neoliberal imaginary that the value of such measures of accountability will allow a country's citizens to compete more effectively at the global level (Rizvi, 2017). Though there is the argument that globalization has increased and intensified the connection between countries (Block, 2008), there is a counter argument that the implications for education have been dire, creating greater levels of inequality, competition, self-interest, and mistrust (Rizvi, 2017).

Over the last 50 years, changes in education, including community demands, as well as local, national, and global pressures to perform and increase accountability, have complicated the educational environment. Furthermore, policy changes have created "the kinds of leadership that seriously damage teachers, teaching and student learning" (Blasé & Blasé, 2004, p. 245; Hutton, 2011). Educational leadership is often tied to building and district administration, which is then linked to local and state test scores for funding and recognition (Sacks, 1997; Smolin & Clayton, 2009). Therefore, administrators are forced to address comparisons both within their schools by identifying the best teachers via class test scores and across comparable schools and districts to ensure they remain competitive in meeting federally imposed achievement standards (Turner, 2009).

Subsequently, comparison causes contention, and the more levels of comparison, the more divisions (Bray & Thomas, 1995). Within the field of comparative education, and education more broadly, comparison has caused conflict, as exemplified by debates about accountability, test scores, and school ranking systems. Diane Ravitch is one example of such conflict, as she originally was a major proponent of school choice and accountability, and now advocates against the very ideas of which she was once a major proponent (Ravitch, 2010). Throughout the history of the field of education, conflicts between theories, methods, and their relationships to education in practice have occupied a central space (Bush, 2007; Day, Harris, & Hadfield,



2001; Kandel, 1936; Ragin, 1989). More recently, debates within comparative and international education have become more epistemological, with questions around what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts (Nguyen, 2016). The intersection between comparative education and educational leadership, then, can be considered through a Foucauldian perspective, as his methodological approach to examine historical development highlights such moments of conflict.

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## Foucault's Methodology

Foucault's (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* presents an alternative methodology to discourse analysis, stating that rather than examining "discourse as document," an archaeological method seeks to examine discourse as "monument" (pp. 137–138). Rather than "transform[ing monuments] into documents" (p. 7), Foucault argues that monuments should reveal "discourses as practices" (p. 131). According to Foucault's conceptualization, monuments represent stand-alone objects which were built upon previous understandings of the world. In applying an archaeological approach, as Foucault defines it, "comparison does not have a unifying, but a diversifying, effect" (p. 160). These two elements: the focus on documents as monuments and embracing discontinuity are central to the analysis presented in this chapter.

Within his archaeological methodological framework, Foucault (1972) identifies three "enunciative fields in a discipline" (p. 57), including the field of memory, the field of presence, and the field of concomitance. These three fields create boundaries on which to focus the archaeological examination of assessments and accountability. The field of memory focuses on "statements that are no longer accepted or discussed" (p. 58) but whose echoes can be heard in current discussions and practices in the discipline. The field of presence includes "all statements...acknowledged to be truthful, involving exact descriptions, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presuppositions" (p. 57). This field is not exclusive to statements which agree and affirm the status quo, as it also includes statements which are "criticized, discussed, and judged, as well as those that are rejected or excluded" (p. 57). The inclusion of such contradictory statements alludes to the discontinuity Foucault embraces and which is very present in the field of comparative education. The third field is that of concomitance, which includes statements external to the discipline but which have made their way into comparative education and educational leadership.

Foucault (1972) addressed comparison and contention through discussions of the discontinuity of history, where he advocated for the acceptance of such ruptures to understandings. Whereas many approaches attempt to smooth over or connect disparate thoughts about a field or discipline, Foucault seeks to embrace these differences and use them to further understanding, which aligns with his way of defining terms through explanations of everything they are not.

Foucault acknowledges that understandings of the world and words change over time. Comparative education is one example of this, as understandings of the field

have been in flux since its beginning (Kandel, 1936; Passow, 1982). Additionally, understandings of assessment and accountability have likewise changed over time, and while they may not move in a linear fashion, new understandings build upon or react against previous ones. Drawing on these tenets, this chapter will examine large-scale assessments and their associated accountability and their relationship to comparative and international education and educational leadership. The monuments considered are large-scale international and national assessments which have been leveraged as tools of accountability, causing disruption as the fields of comparative and international education and educational leadership have developed. These disruptions have led to the current dilemmas that continue to influence both comparative education and educational leadership, specifically debates about the role of contextualization in local and global policies and practices.

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## The Field of Memory

While Foucault's (1972) field of memory represents understandings which may not be commonly accepted, they are necessary to examine, as all current and future understandings draw on this foundation to establish new definitions. According to Foucault's understanding of knowledge, discrepancies and discontinuities are particularly important to fully understand monuments. This section, then, will examine how understandings of assessment and accountability have changed over time.

While tests started at the classroom level so teachers could measure students' learning, their purposes have since expanded beyond the classroom. Smith (2014) identified several common uses and targets of testing throughout history. These approaches include testing for assessment, which describes traditional classroom tests given by teachers to their students in order to evaluate students' mastery of a subject, as well as testing for advancement, which includes high stakes tests that determine if students should progress to the next level of education. While testing for assessment and advancement are both student focused, recent trends in testing have shifted to holding teachers, administrators, districts, and states accountable for students' educational progress (Smith, 2014). While such assessments may have started with the best of intentions, they have since been weaponized to create crises of education and shift control to the national level. As the international assessment scene has expanded, testing trends have shifted from focusing on systemic measures of educational effectiveness to holding local actors accountable for students' progress (Smith, 2014) and as an impetus for driving education policy reform (Sjøberg, 2016).

Large-scale international assessments are multiple choice tests in core subjects, such as math, science, or reading comprehension, which are administered cross-nationally. Such tests consist of measuring certain subsets of students as outlined by assessment organizations, then participating countries – or sections of countries – are charged with implementing the testing procedures and protocols with fidelity. These assessments have two potential roots which cater to two specific subsets of countries. Many such assessments were positioned as ways to measure equality and quality in

international education development programs which were designed to meet initial EFA and MDGs of promoting access to primary education and gender equity and then the SDGs promoting access to secondary education and quality education (Smith, 2014). These assessments were also positioned as a way to objectively measure the quality of education in participating countries (Pizmony-Levy & Bjorklund, 2018).

Standardized testing, from its inception until present day, remains fraught with controversy (Linn, 2001). The varied use of testing, whether to achieve grade level promotion or to access tertiary education, or purportedly to contribute to a country's economic growth, has been the recipient of both critique and approval for several decades (Cronbach, 1975; Komatsu & Rapple, 2020; Resnick, 1982; Sjøberg, 2016). Though the utility of testing within the twenty-first century has shifted, it remains "a tool for improving efficiency" (Linn, 2001, p. 29). Sacks (1997) opines that standardized testing has been used as an implement of meritocracy in the United States to differentiate students who are "academically worthy" from those who are not. Similarly, when a school scores high on standardized achievement tests, it is more likely to be evaluated as successful or effective (Popham, 1999). This is problematic, since students' test results do not accurately depict the quality of instruction being received, school resources available, difference in curriculum between schools, etc. Importantly, the creators and owners of standardized tests are forced to contend with different educational objectives at the district and state levels (Popham, 1999). Ultimately, standardized tests become a "one best way" (Taylor, 1911) of evaluating not only student achievement but also teacher effectiveness and school quality. At the international level, PISA has assumed an apparent ubiquity through its acceptance "as a reliable instrument of benchmarking student performance worldwide" (Breakspear, 2012, p. 4).

This ubiquity is evidenced by a 50% increase between 1995 and 2012 in participation in international assessments, including TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS, and a 16% increase in schools which participate in more than two standardized tests in a year (Smith, 2014). However, despite this growth, nations have taken different approaches to how information and data from such tests is used to inform policy. For example, Australia's mediocre performance on TIMSS and PIRLS in 2012 spurred an initiative to move Australia to the top five places on international assessments (Gorur & Wu, 2015). Despite performing relatively well on PISA assessments, some countries, including Canada and Finland, used the results to make changes to the education systems (Baird et al., 2016). Regional comparisons resulted in the implementation of shared indicators across provinces and territories in Canada, and PISA scores were cited as contributing to a move to coordinate the core curriculum across the Finnish education system (Baird et al., 2016). Therefore, across participation and results, participation in these international assessments encouraged similar structures of education around the world (Wiseman, 2013).

On the other hand, the United States' response to their initial performance on PISA did not result in any change in national education policy as there was the prior expectation and recognition of "its poor educational outcomes" (Breakspear, 2012, p. 6; Dobbins & Martens, 2010). By contrast, the UK had already implemented

widespread educational reform and was perhaps buttressed from the PISA shock that Germany experienced, although their performance was considered moderate. Interestingly, the OECD, through the administration of various international assessments, such as PISA, has been instrumental in influencing national education reform, but more critically, perpetuating the need for “quantitative evaluations of national education systems” (Niemann & Martens, 2018, p. 268).

Despite varied approaches to international assessments, many countries continue to implement high-stakes testing at the national or state levels, such as the National College Entrance Exam in China, which not only serves as a selection tool for higher education opportunities, it also assesses educators for accountability purposes, linking students’ achievement with teachers’ financial benefits (Emler, Zhao, Deng, Yin, & Wang, 2019). Influence of international assessments has also been observed outside of the Global North, with the South African case providing a unique example. After disappointing results from the country’s participation in the TIMSS and PIRLS, South Africa withdrew from international testing and subsequently intensified its own national testing structures and began participating in regional assessments (Spaull, 2013; Thulare, 2018). South Africa’s history with international assessments and high-stakes national tests are reflective of the neoliberal influence that accompanies assessment and accountability, namely centralizing decision-making and decentralizing responsibility for performance (Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002).

Ultimately, though countries may opt out of international assessments, organizations such as the OECD have been successful in promoting human capital development as central to a country’s ability to compete globally. Particularly for countries in the Global South with small-scale economies, their ability to implement large-scale educational reform is often contingent upon rules and regulations instituted by international organizations (Niemann & Martens, 2018). Therefore, testing has been co-opted as a neoliberal control mechanism (Kamens & McNeely, 2009). Formerly, testing was utilized as an element of ensuring educational efficiency, similar to concepts of business (Linn, 2001). Currently, the shift in focus is presumably on raising standards for *all* students through accountability measures and quality control mechanisms. Interestingly, this is creating greater disruption in the field of educational leadership as there seems to be an almost insatiable occupation with “improving” the education system through high-stakes testing.

Although heavily critiqued, assessment and accountability have arguably progressed education and drawn attention to issues and challenges facing educators around the world. More precisely, increased accountability (Hess & Kelly, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2013) and accountability frameworks (Miller & Hutton, 2014; Styron & Styron, 2011) across global education systems have generated increased demand for educational leaders. Subsequently, school leaders’ responsibilities have expanded to include, among other things, student discipline, safety and security within and across school buildings, relationships with staff, students, and parents,

evaluation and supervision of staff, test scores, and meeting adequate yearly progress goals (Hoerr, 2007, p. 84; Stronge, 1993).

This “work intensification” (Grace, 1995) has caused educational leaders to rethink school goals and priorities. This greater demand for more competent educational leaders has also created a need for improved professional development programs, which have been criticized for their failure to produce leaders who are able to turnaround schools and improve student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Levine, 2005). The public and policy makers are requiring educational leaders to be better while simultaneously expanding their scope of responsibilities, which highlights the dichotomy of this movement, resulting in both improvements and increased challenges.

The accountability movement which really took off in the United States in the 1990s has backfired. Standardized and high stakes tests have created an environment of accountability that has been untenable for educational leaders. Rather than improving students’ academic growth and inspiring teachers to innovate in their classrooms, education grew singularly focused on meeting yearly test score requirements causing teachers and administrators to abandon compelling instructional practices to “teach to the test,” a method which has been critiqued for foregoing creativity and curiosity in lieu of how to select the best answer on multiple choice tests (Longo, 2010; Olivant, 2015).

Accountability, in itself, is not bad; however, accountability which defunds and de-professionalizes educators works against the original intent of such policies. This accountability movement has also created a culture of fear, where educators must produce results at the threat of losing their jobs or their schools losing federal funding (Smolin & Clayton, 2009). Failure to do so could result in schools being labeled as failing (Baltodano, 2012; May & Sanders, 2013) or removal from leadership positions. This fear has resulted in district leadership in cities such as Washington, DC and Atlanta coming under fire for changing individual students’ answer sheets (Straus, 2015).

Once schools are labeled as failing, they are unable to deliver the contextualized education that would most benefit the student population, both on state or national assessments and in their longer educational careers. Such accountability movements purportedly to promote educational equity and quality often result in mounting divisions between schools across socioeconomic lines. After decades of assessments and accountability, there have been increasing calls for greater contextualization both within the United States and internationally. Within the United States, these movements may take the shape of parents and students protesting standardized exams by refusing to participate. Internationally, contextualization is apparent through movements focused on indigenous education and considers countries’ cultural, social, and political norms (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Such policies and practices are gaining increasing traction in the current realm of education especially with the flawed premise of “a universal conception of success and . . . set of skills” (Sjøberg, 2016, p. 111).

## The Field of Presence

The second field through which to consider the implications of assessment and accountability in comparative education and educational leadership is the field of presence (Foucault, 1972). The field of presence is in a constant state of evolution. Understandings change over time, as evidenced by the changing nature of comparative and international education and educational leadership. The field of presence focuses on the most current understandings, whether or not they agree with one another. This discontinuity is central to Foucault's archeological approach. It includes both advocating for and pushing against assessment and accountability narratives. The following section examines how movements toward contextualization have influenced assessment and accountability. For the purposes of this discussion, we refer to the contextualization of education as policies and practices which move the control of education back to local communities (Wiseman & Chase-Mayoral, 2014).

The field of memory shapes the ever-changing field of presence (Foucault, 1972), and in the case of assessments and accountability, decades of reactions against the education reform movements, including globalization and neoliberalism, have shifted the focus toward contextualization (Mitra, Mann, & Hlavacik, 2016). While local has always been included in "global to local," recent trends in both comparative education and educational leadership have drawn attention to physical and individual contexts, including how to authentically discuss positionality in relation to research (da Costa, Hall, & Spear, 2016; Vickers, 2019), as well as the inclusion of indigenous research methods (Sumida Huaman, 2019). While these themes have existed for decades, their prevalence has grown in recent years, as evidenced through special issues and conference themes.

This shift toward contextualization developed, in part, as a reaction against education reform movements, which have promoted and enforced a culture of testing, testing, and more testing (Pizmony-Levy & Cosman, 2017). Therefore, contextualization occurred through grassroots movements led by parents to push back and "opt-out" of testing requirements for their children. We define this as contextualization as it represents individual families' reactions against one-size-fits-all assessment strategies and the negative impacts of such assessment strategies on students' overall educational experiences (Pizmony-Levy & Cosman, 2017), as well as protests against judging teachers by students' scores and the privatization and capitalization of education (Pizmony-Levy & Saraisky, 2016). Ambiguity between the initial No Child Left Behind/Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and its subsequent reauthorization as the Race to the Top/Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provided more leeway for parents to interact with – and against – education policies (Mitra et al., 2016). Additionally, pushback against testing has come from educators who have been increasingly in favor of other types of assessments to evaluate students' competencies in terms of what they can do, rather than an almost unitary focus on their ability to take and pass tests (Sacks, 1997).

Despite parental involvement, research suggests that these movements do not, in fact, work against the equity issues that assessments and accountability were

designed to correct (Mitra et al., 2016). A parent who identifies with the opt-out movement is typically “highly educated, white, married, politically liberal parent whose children attend public school and whose household median income is well above the national average” (Pizmony-Levy & Saraisky, 2016, p. 6), thus indicating that those students who “opt-out” represent the privileged elite. High-stakes standardized tests are critiqued for enhancing inequalities; however, movements which have gained traction against such assessments have not increased educational equity or quality. Moreover, education within the United States is steeped in standardized testing despite backlash, leading Sacks (2000) to comment, “like a drug addict who knows he should quit, America is hooked. We are a nation of standardized testing junkies” (p. 25).

Interestingly, the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 enforced opt-out policies as all 50 US states were excused from end of year assessments required by ESSA (Gewertz, 2020). In addition to eliminating required tests, states could apply to pause procedures labeling schools as needing improvement or failing (Gewertz, 2020). Likewise, the OECD postponed the PISA 2021 and 2024 assessment cycles (OECD). Several European countries, including France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, cancelled their school-leaving exams; however, such cancellations were not the case worldwide, as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Germany chose to continue their school leaving exams (Henley, Giuffrida, & Burgen, 2020). CollegeBoard’s Advanced Placement tests continued, although in a greatly modified and at home format (CollegeBoard, 2020). In response to these cancellations, many colleges and universities modified their admission requirements related to qualification exams (Gewertz, 2020; Henley et al., 2020). Therefore, a movement that started slowly through parental-led protests was carried to completion as a result of natural causes. However, while the short-term implications of this forced anti-testing movement are positive to many assessment and accountability critics, only time will tell the long-term implications of these rapid and drastic policy shifts.

Against the backdrop of testing and accountability, the movement within educational leadership has been to prepare leaders with the requisite skills and competencies to be able to assess student learning, but not within the narrow confines of standardized tests (May & Sanders, 2013). Levin (2013) has asserted, though, that the current era of standardized testing and accountability demands greater skills from educational leaders, “making the task seem impossible for ordinary mortals” (p. 5). Student achievement and knowledge can no longer be based on prior eras or rote learning and memorization but needs instead to be couched in twenty-first century skills of critical thinking, problem solving, and communication (Smolin & Clayton, 2009).

An additional element in current leadership discourse has been issues of equity and social justice. Standardized tests by their very nature are difficult to apply equitably as there have been debates around leaders engaging in unethical practices such as providing answers for students during testing (Smolin & Clayton, 2009) in a bid to deliver results and improve school performance (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). Research has shown that despite funding provided for schools that serve historically marginalized populations, African American and Latino students continue to be at a



disadvantage in terms of their performance on standardized tests, when compared to their white counterparts (Williams & Parker, 2002). This dependence on high stakes tests then furthers the education gap between white and non-white students as they are increasingly viewed as “tools for racializing decisions about children, schools and communities” (Knoester & Au, 2017, p. 5). Subsequently, contextualized education becomes more important as a viable response to reducing such inequities.

Context has been a dominant narrative in comparative and international education since the field’s beginning (Crossley, 2009). However, there is a disconnect between the ideals advocated for in the academe and practical implementation. Often the comparative side is cited as relying on large-scale, decontextualized data to compare and rank systems-level educational achievement, while the international side is connected to the implementation of development programs worldwide as well as trends in student movement in higher education (Epstein, 1994; Wiseman & Matherly, 2009). The international side is sometimes considered the practical side with the comparative side connected with theory (Epstein, 1994; Wiseman & Matherly, 2009). Interestingly, however, both the theoretical and practical sides critique one another for not sufficiently embedding data collection and analysis – of all types – in the context. Additionally, the entire field, encompassing both comparative and international education, often relies on organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, and UNESCO for funding while simultaneously critiquing these organizations for the lack of contextualization in their projects and data (Vickers, 2019). These continuous internal debates are examples of how discontinuity characterizes both the memory and presence of comparative and international education.

Assessment and accountability play significant roles in the work of international development organizations, such as UNESCO and World Bank, and are often critiqued for disseminating an economics-focused narrative veiled under educational equity and quality (Heyneman, 2003). As stated by Smith (2014), some international expansion of large-scale assessments stemmed from an organizational desire to prove programs were achieving their equity and quality goals. Such assessments and accountability – often referred to as monitoring and evaluation in the development sector – have historically relied heavily on quantitative indicators (Tilbury, 2007), although there has been much controversy around this issue, as many researchers and practitioners advocate for the inclusion of qualitative data, especially from the voices of participants, for more holistic understandings of evaluations (Cullen & Coryn, 2011; Hayward, Simpson, & Wood, 2004). This theme, which connects the field of memory and presence, is ongoing in the field, as researchers and practitioners seek ways to include contextualized knowledge and outcomes in program evaluations.

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## Field of Concomitance

The final field to consider from Foucault’s (1972) archaeology of knowledge is the field of concomitance, which considers how external factors have contributed to understandings of assessment, accountability, and contextualization in comparative



education and educational leadership. While this chapter considers how these phenomena have developed in education, they occur in tandem and as a result of numerous external factors related to economic, social, and environmental systems. Policies, beliefs, actors, and phenomenon outside of schools influence what happens in classrooms, sometimes to a greater extent than administrators, teachers, or students (Bereday, 1964). A discussion of the field of concomitance may be quite expansive; however, in this section we will focus specifically on how economics – especially human capital theory and neoliberalism – has influenced the rise of assessment and accountability (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Kamens & McNeely, 2009). Likewise, just as contextualization in education has developed as a reaction against these policies, contextualization has also occurred outside of education as a reaction against the increased privatization and capitalization pushed by neoliberal policies.

Such influence has contributed to interactions between education and numerous other fields. The interdisciplinarity of comparative education has been critiqued for lacking unique theories or methods (Manzon, 2011), rather drawing on fields across the social sciences, including sociology, political science, economics, anthropology, psychology, and education (Davidson, Park, Dzotsenidze, Okogbue, & Wiseman, 2018). Educational leadership is similarly interdisciplinary, drawing from fields of management and organizational behavior, sociology, psychology, and public administration, among others (Riggio, 2011). However, researchers in educational leadership have agreed that though it may draw from several disciplines, educational leadership's ultimate focus has to be on the aims and goals of education (Bush, 2007).

Education has been influenced by other disciplines such as human capital theory, which existed in economics before its application to education. Human capital theory developed as a method to delineate various kinds of capital such as education, computer training, and even medical care, and how investment in these areas would redound to a nation's productivity and efficiency (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1971). When free and compulsory education was rapidly spreading starting in the late 1800s (Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992), it was considered the responsibility of the state or individual families. However, in the post-World War II era, education was linked with economic gains, with numerous scholars attempting to quantify the returns on investment in education (Resnik, 2006). While this has occurred at an individual level, education has been considered a key factor in national economic development (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). UNESCO and the OECD are major players in the economics of education, with UNESCO's 1960 adoption of a resolution which directly linked economic development with technical training and education provided by international organizations and national governments, a move which opened the doors for international development money for education projects (Resnik, 2006).

As an extension of human capital approaches, the neoliberalism of education also is not a new phenomenon, and much research has examined how this agenda moved into educational spheres (McKenzie, 2012). Neoliberalism has been viewed as a tool that has compromised public education (Baltodano, 2012). Similar use of standards

has also impacted educational leaders who have been fearful of reprisal for failing to meet state imposed standards, another product of neoliberalism (Pinto, 2015).

Just as assessment and accountability have been used for multiple purposes, so too has the neoliberal narrative played out differently in different contexts, but with similar end results. Through the publication of various reports and studies, citizens within the United States were fed the narrative that public education was broken, precipitating the “need” to fix the perceived ills and focus instead on creating productive citizens (Hurst, 1987) who have successfully met the imposed standards (Turner, 2009). Similar narratives can be found across Western European countries, including Germany (Waldow, 2009). Similarly, neoliberalism in the Global South has been characterized as a tool to promote equality. Neoliberal policies are couched as promoting equality and quality, although evidence demonstrates that such policies continue to perpetuate inequalities (Wiseman, 2008). Organizations, such as the IMF and the World Bank, further exacerbate the impact of neoliberalism (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The previous exploration of the links and overlap between comparative and international education and educational leadership through assessment, accountability, and contextualization provide one example of how these fields and phenomena are rife with conflict and discontinuities. However, as has been argued for decades, these tensions do not decrease the value of educational researchers and practitioners in both fields; rather, they provide space for growth and an opportunity for engagement. While additional conflicts will continue to emerge, academic discussions about the roles and relevance of assessment, accountability, and contextualization will continue to be central to the evolution of any education discipline, including comparative education and educational leadership. The echoes of critiques of education reform movements can be seen beyond assessment and accountability policies and practices, as movements toward are also apparent in other areas of comparative education and educational leadership.

As the field of memory and the field of presence continue to evolve, new and additional points of contention will develop. This can already be seen in the theme of the Comparative and International Education Society’s 2020 Conference theme, “Education Beyond the Human.” This conference sought to include a wide spectrum of responses, including both considerations of education during and after the Anthropocene, which is the current geological era characterized by the dominance of human influence on global ecology (Crutzen, 2006), as well as the influence of augmented and virtual reality and artificial intelligence on education systems. These two perspectives represent two very different sides of the epistemological and theoretical spectrums.

The implications for such continued contentions and disruptions invariably shape the expansion of the field of educational leadership. Educational leadership research has focused on aspects such as ethics, courage, and managing emotions (Goleman,

Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Gu & Day, 2013), various leadership styles (Bush, 2007) to an understanding of the importance of context in the exercise of leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Leithwood & Levin, 2008; Murphy, 2005). While high-stakes testing has highlighted the need for more equitable practices in education, the push toward “new levers to improve school performance and education quality becomes particularly critical in a context of increasing global competition and tight fiscal constraint” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 12). These shifts have also determined how new educational leaders are prepared as they need to be taught to manage and solve complex problems. The multiple definitions and concepts of leadership continue to support the notion of the inherent tension within the field of leadership, but undeniable is the acceptance that the current demands of globalization, information technology, and a knowledge-based economy – itself a social phenomenon with political intent (English, 2006) – has had concomitant impacts on leaders, leadership development, schools, and how schools need to be led (Clarke, 2016).

The futures of both comparative education and educational leadership currently hang in the balance as the COVID-19 pandemic may serve as a tipping point to move education back to local contexts, where those who are at the level of practice have much more say in policy development and implementation.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [International Perspectives on Successful School Leadership](#)
- ▶ [National Leadership Standards and the Structured Silence of White Supremacy](#)
- ▶ [The Global Challenge of Educational Reform](#)
- ▶ [The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the “Neoliberalization” of Educational Leaders](#)
- ▶ [Transcending National Boundaries: How Five Educational Leaders Rethought Poverty and Access to Education](#)

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# International Perspectives on Successful School Leadership

# 89

David Gurr and Lawrie Drysdale

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## Abstract

Since the turn of the millennium there has been sustained interest in successful school leadership, beginning as an attempt to expand the focus of effective schools research. This has included research dedicated to exploring the area, and the repositioning of other research to contribute to understanding successful school leadership. This chapter provides a history of the development of the area, and explores findings from key studies and reviews to give a sense of the development and possibilities of the study of successful school leadership. This review consists of two parts. The main body of the chapter reviews nine influential studies/projects, and this is supplemented with a reflective commentary that draws on a variety of research to expand on the areas of effective and successful schools, effective and successful school leadership, sustainability of success, and leadership and context.

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**Keywords**

Successful school leadership · Successful schools · School effectiveness · School improvement

**The Field of Memory**

Successful school leadership, as an area of study within educational leadership, has a substantial history of only two decades (although there are traces back at least 50 years). Within that time there are no ideas from the early formation that have disappeared. Rather they are continuing to evolve, and the area of study remains in the early stages of conceptual development.

**The Field of Presence**

It is an emerging area of study that includes within and between country research groups and utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with an emerging preference for mixed-methods. There is agreement about key leadership areas – setting direction, development people, developing the organization, and improving teaching and learning – and description of several other important areas such as engaging with the multiple contexts within and surrounding schools.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Successful school leadership draws from school effectiveness and improvement research, and from the three major educational leadership areas of instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

From the discussions in the sixties about whether schools made a difference to student outcomes beyond student circumstances, to researching effective schools and effective school leadership, the study of successful school leadership was a shift to consider broader ideas of effectiveness and to consider the quality of schools. The development of an evidence-based exploration of school and leadership success has led to important and trustworthy understandings about general and contextual leadership ideas and the sustainability of success.

The study of successful school leadership evolved from school effectiveness research through studying schools that were effective in more than the traditional areas of literacy and numeracy performance. It also follows a tradition that begun in the sixties.

**Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

As in all areas that explore leadership there are assumptions that leadership exists and is a knowable phenomenon. There is also an assumption that leadership matters to schools and students. While these are listed as assumptions, the overwhelming evidence, some of which is presented in this chapter, is that not only does leadership exist, but that its impact on schools and students is significant.

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## Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium there has been interest in successful school leadership, beginning as an attempt to expand the focus of effective schools research. Since then, there has been research dedicated to exploring the area, and the repositioning of other research to contribute to understanding successful school leadership. This research has been international in scope. This chapter provides a history of the development of the area, and explores findings from key studies and reviews to give a sense of the development and possibilities of the study of successful school leadership. This review consists of two parts. The main body of the chapter by Gurr reviews nine influential studies/projects, and this is supplemented with a reflective commentary by Drysdale that draws on a variety of research to expand on the areas of effective and successful schools, effective and successful school leadership, sustainability of success, and leadership and context. Gurr and Drysdale have both been involved in the study of successful school leadership since 2001.

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## The Search for School Effectiveness

There are well rehearsed histories of the search for effective schools. These typically begin with the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* report (often referred to as the *Coleman Report*) in the mid-1960s (Coleman et al., 1966). This report, led by an influential sociologist Coleman, was the product of a requirement from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to

...conduct a survey and make a report to the President and the Congress, with two years of the enactment of this title, concerning the lack of availability of equal opportunities for individuals by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin in public educational institutions at all levels in the United States, its territories and possessions, and the District of Columbia. (Coleman et al., 1966, p. iii)

The report that resulted from this request is a complex document of a large-scale survey of students, teachers, school leaders involving thousands of schools, principals, and teachers, and hundreds of thousands of students. Halfway through the report of 737 pages, there is an often cited statement that "...schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context..." (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 325). With provocative statements like this, the report proved to be hugely influential with debate ensuing for several years about its merit. For example, Jencks et al. (1972) did a reanalysis of the data and argued, among other matters, that equalizing the quality of schools and increasing resources was likely to have minimal impact on student learning. In response to this, the *American Journal of Sociology* provided a review symposium

by Coleman, Pettigrew, Sewell, and Pullum (1973), in which Coleman provided a severe rebuttal. Whilst one interpretation of these findings was that schools had only a small impact on student learning, there was ambiguity and complexity with, for example, Coleman et al. (1966) noting that schools in challenging contexts had a far greater influence on student learning. Nevertheless, it was widely interpreted that schools did not matter. A response to this was the birth of the effective schools movement and the research that continues today to understand the qualities and features of effective schools and how effective schools can be constructed (the parallel and intertwined school improvement movement). An early pivotal moment for the effective schools movement was Edmonds' (1979) short summary of the knowledge about effective schools. The six claims about the characteristics of effective schools are well known and while most writers will summarize these, it is perhaps more pertinent to use Edmonds' own language:

I want to end this discussion by noting as unequivocally as I can what seem to me the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools: (a) They have strong administrative leadership without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together; (b) Schools that are instructionally effective for poor children have a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement; (c) The school's atmosphere is orderly without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand; (d) Effective schools get that way partly by making it clear that pupil acquisition of basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities; (e) When necessary, school energy and resources can be diverted from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives; and (f) There must be some means by which pupil progress can be frequently monitored. (Edmonds, 1979, p. 22)

While these qualities retain great relevancy 40 years later, what is overlooked from this important paper is Edmonds' call to action:

It seems to me, therefore, that what is left of this discussion are three declarative statements: (a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (Edmonds, 1979, p. 23)

This is a powerful refutation to all those who challenge how much schools matter. In essence Edmonds is saying that there is no reason all schools cannot be effective and that if we do not strive for this then we are giving away the main tool governments have for quality and equitable education.

In the decades after Edmonds' statement, instructional leadership took over as the main view of educational leadership because it was linked tightly to effective schools; it was the "strong administrative leadership" that provided direction and coherence to the activities that promoted high expectation and "orderly environments," with targeted use of "energy and resources" that supported the "the instructional business at hand" to ensure that "acquisition of basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities" and in which student progress is "frequently monitored"

(Edmonds, 1979, p. 22). Models of instructional leadership were developed with the view of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) becoming the most well-research version. Their model included three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and creating a positive school climate. It also included ten instructional leadership functions across the dimensions: framing and communicating clear school goals; supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress; protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning. While this remains an important view, too often the research was linked to improvement on standardized test of English and mathematics; and remember that Edmonds focus was on basic skills acquisition.

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## Interest in Successful School Leadership

At the turn of the millennium there was increasing interest in moving beyond the narrow outcome focus of effective schools to include schools that were focused on a broad range of student outcomes beyond basic literacy and numeracy skills (e.g., Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; MacBeath, 1998; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004). While the language used often still described effective schools, there were the beginnings of a move to describe successful schools and successful school leadership. Three important studies highlight this shift.

The first was a study of English Headteachers by Day et al. (2000). Commissioned by the National Association of Headteachers, this study employed multiple perspective case study methodology to explore the leadership of 12 Headteachers who were regarded as effective; the use of this methodology was to become important for future research on successful school leadership. The views of head teachers, deputy head teachers, governors, parents, students, support staff, and teachers were sought from schools that included small primary schools through to large secondary schools, and including a specials schools. The study was focused on the personal qualities and professional capabilities of the Headteachers of effective schools. The notion of effectiveness was broadly defined in that school selection was based on positive school inspection reports, above expected improvement over time in student outcomes on national tests and examinations, and acknowledgement by professional peers of effectiveness as a leader. The headteachers were found to be able to manage many competing tensions and dilemmas, were people centered and exercised what was described as values-led contingency leadership. This is principal leadership that has personal and organizational alignment in visions and values, in which the principal is seen to act with integrity, works well with internal and external contexts through being adaptive and balancing involving other and taking individual action, and fosters professional development of others and self. It was clear from this study that these principals were more than effective, and so when Day went forward with another research project, he decided to study school and leadership *success*. In 2001, Day created the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP),

which is described below in some detail. One of the founding members of this project was Leithwood, who is one of the authors in the second study mentioned below.

At the time of the creation of the ISSPP, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) were Commissioned by Division A (Administration, organization and leadership) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to provide the first major review of successful school leadership. Considering evidence mainly from published quantitative and multiple or systematic case study research, they arrived at six claims about successful school leadership, which are worth describing in detail (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, pp. 9–36):

Claim 1: Successful school leadership makes important contributions to the improvement of student learning.

Claim 2: The primary sources of successful leadership in schools are principals and teachers

Claim 3: In addition to principals and teachers, leadership is and ought to be distributed to others in the school and school community.

Claim 4: A core set of “basic” leadership practices are valuable in almost all contexts. These are: setting directions; developing people; redesigning the organization.

Claim 5: In addition to engaging in a core set of leadership practices, successful leaders must act in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which almost all work, which includes market, decentralization, professional accountability and management accountability.

Claim 6: Many successful leaders in schools serving highly diverse student populations enact practices to promote school quality, equity, and social justice such as building powerful forms of teaching and learning; creating strong communities in school; nurturing the development of family’s educational cultures; expanding the amount of students’ social capital valued by the schools.

These claims have had an enduring and substantial influence in two ways: as foundational to a four-element school leadership view that evolved later (see claim 2 from Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, 2020); and, establishing a “defensible claim” orientation to research about school leadership which has been seen in many papers since (Day et al., 2010; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2020). While Leithwood has usually described it as a transformational leadership model (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), it is perhaps best described as a transformational/instructional educational leadership framework. Later versions of the framework added the instructional leadership focus of improving teaching and learning to the list of basic leadership practices (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). These later versions also added related practices, which included the transformational leadership practices of contingent reward and management by exception active, passive and total (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The model has been used as the basis for major systemic reforms, such as the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (Leithwood, 2012).

The third study is the *Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes* (LOLSO) project. This was being conducted at the same time as the previous two studies. While not as influential as the previous two studies, it is a compelling study in terms of how it connected complex leadership ideas of transformational leadership, teacher leadership, and organizational learning, with a broad view of student outcomes that included student participation, engagement, and academic achievement. This was a large survey-based study exploring leadership, organizational learning, and student outcomes (Mulford & Silins, 2003; Mulford et al., 2004). The research gathered survey responses from 3500 students to 2500 teachers in 96 government secondary schools in two Australian states, South Australia and Tasmania (including all of the eight secondary schools in Tasmania at the time). The research demonstrated that leadership made a difference in schools in an indirect manner: “leadership contributes to organizational learning, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of school – the teaching and learning” (Mulford & Silins, 2003, p. 183). In a model describing the findings, principal transformational leadership, impacted on teacher leadership and administrative team leadership to influence organizational learning, which in turn influenced teacher work, and through this the three student outcomes. School size, home educational environment, and socioeconomic status exerted influence on the variables. For example, larger school size negatively influenced principal transformational leadership, teacher leadership, and student participation, but positively influenced academic self-concept. Mulford (2007) noted that this model placed much less emphasis on organizational, managerial, and strategic elements, and more on dispersed leadership and organizational learning cultures to improve student outcomes.

Both Mulford and Leithwood were engaged with the beginning work of the ISSPP, and the LOLSO research helped to inform the ISSPP research, especially regarding the construction of principal and teacher surveys. Mulford used these surveys in primary and secondary schools in Tasmania, Australia (see Mulford & Edmunds, 2009; Mulford, Kendall, Kendall, Edmunds, Ewington, & Silins, 2008) to construct a successful school leadership model that described how principals and teachers influenced student academic achievement, social development, and student empowerment (Mulford & Silins, 2011).

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## Two Major Short-Term Studies on Successful School Leadership

Following on from these early studies, in this section the focus is on two studies, one from the UK which is well known, and one covering six countries that is perhaps less well known, but still important. These are examples of complex research projects exploring successful school leadership.

The first study is a large mixed-method study conducted in England. The authors of the research report of the project claimed that the “Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project is the largest and most extensive study of contemporary leadership to be conducted in England to date” (Day et al., 2009, p. 1); Day, Sammons, and Grogan (2020) labeled this as the IMPACT project.

The aims of the study were to:

i) establish how much variation in pupil outcomes is accounted for by variation in the types qualities, strategies, skills and contexts of school leadership, in particular those of heads as “leaders of leaders”; and ii) to determine the relative strengths of the direct and indirect influences of school leadership, especially that of the head, upon teachers and upon pupils’ outcomes. (Day et al., 2009, p. 6)

The research involved a literature review to frame the research, analysis of national test results to select schools that were effective and improving over a 3-year period, two surveys of headteachers and key staff, and 20 case studies conducted over 2 years with interviews of headteachers, key staff, and stakeholders, observation, and a survey of year 6 (10 primary schools) and year 9 (10 secondary schools) students (as appropriate) in each of the 2 years.

While it is labeled as a study of effective school leadership, the focus of the study on a wide variety of student outcomes (e.g., student academic achievement, behavior, attendance, motivation and engagement) and school outcomes (e.g., teacher motivation, school improvement pathways), and a mixed method research design, means that this study fits well with the focus in this chapter on successful school leadership.

The *Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project* was a partnership between the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) with researchers from the University of Nottingham, the Institute of Education, University of London, and the University of Toronto. The project produced government research reports of the literature review (Leithwood et al., 2006) and project outcomes (Day et al., 2009), with companion summary journal articles (Day et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008, respectively); a book of the project was also produced (Day et al., 2011). More recently, three of the researchers have revisited the seven claims made in the original literature review (Leithwood et al., 2020); it is curious that the findings of the *Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project* (Day et al., 2009, 2010) had only two citations in this revision paper.

Table 1 provides a summary of the major claims arising from the literature review and research phases of the project.

There is not space in this chapter to explore these findings in detail and it must suffice to say that this large study of English school leadership has many powerful findings to inform school systems worldwide, such as support for the basic leadership practices of: building vision and setting direction; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organization; and managing the teaching and learning program. Importantly, as Leithwood et al. (2020) showed, the findings can be updated and built upon as new evidence appears. The findings are similar to the conclusions arrived at through the successful school leadership review of Day et al. (2020) which is considered below.

While perhaps not as well-known as the study just discussed, Caldwell constructed an international project to explore successful school leadership (Caldwell & Harris, 2008). Unlike the previous research, Caldwell was concerned to find knowledge



**Table 1** Summaries of findings from the Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
<i>Seven strong claims about successful school leadership</i> (p. 3) Leithwood et al. (2006) Leithwood et al. (2008)	<i>Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited</i> Leithwood et al. (2020) (Revised claims in italics)	<i>The impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes</i> Day et al. (2009)	<i>10 strong claims about successful school leadership</i> Day et al. (2010)
“School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 4)	<i>Revised claim: “School leadership has a significant effect on features of the school organization which positively influences the quality of teaching and learning. While moderate in size, this leadership effect is vital to the success of most school improvement efforts” (p. 6)</i>	“The Primacy of the Headteacher Headteachers are perceived as the main source of leadership by school key staff. Their educational values and leadership practices shape the internal processes and pedagogic practices that result in improved pupil outcomes” (p. 183)	“Headteachers are the main source of leadership in their schools” (p. 3)
“Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: - building vision and setting direction - understanding and developing people - redesigning the organisation - managing the teaching and learning programme” (Leithwood et al., 2006, pp. 6–7) 14 leadership practices described	“Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: - set directions - build relationships and develop people - develop the organization to support desired practices - improve the instructional program” (pp. 7–8) 22 leadership practices indicated, although only 19 are listed in Table 1, on page 8 of the chapter	“Basic Leadership Practices Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership values and practices. However, there are differences in the time and attention which heads give to elements within these” (p. 183) Setting Directions, “Developing People, Redesigning the Organization and Managing the Teaching and Learning Programme” (p. 183)	“There are eight key dimensions of successful leadership: – ‘define their values and vision to raise expectations, – set direction and build trust – reshape the conditions for teaching and learning – restructure parts of the organisation and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities – enrich the curriculum – enhance teacher quality – enhance the quality of teaching and learning – build collaboration internally – build strong relationships outside the school community” (p. 4)

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
<p>“The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work” (Leithwood et al., 2006, pp. 8–9)</p>	<p>“The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work” (p. 9)</p>	<p>“Synergistic Improvement The growth and sustained improvements in pupils’ outcomes are associated with and likely to be a consequence of a synergy of heads’ beliefs, dispositions and qualities and their timely diagnosis of need and application and management of context specific strategies over time” (p. 184)</p>	<p>“Headteachers’ values are key components in their success” (p. 7) “Successful heads share certain attributes and hold common core values” (p. 7) “Successful heads see pupil achievement as having behavioural, academic, personal, social and emotional dimensions” (p. 7)</p>
<p>“School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions” (Leithwood et al., 2006, pp. 10–11)</p>	<p><i>Revised claim:</i> “<i>School leadership improves teaching and learning, indirectly and most powerfully, by improving the status of significant key classroom and school conditions and by encouraging parent/child interactions in the home that further enhance student success at school</i>” (p. 10)</p>	<p>“Leadership Influence - Motivation and Commitment School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions” (p. 185)</p>	<p>“Successful heads use the same basic leadership practices, but there is no single model for achieving success” (p. 8) “Successful heads draw equally on elements of both instructional and transformational leadership” (p. 8) “Their ability to respond to their context and to recognise, acknowledge, understand and attend to the needs and motivations of others defines their level of success” (p. 8)</p>
<p>“School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 12)</p>	<p><i>Revised claim:</i> “<i>School Leadership can have an especially positive influence on school and student outcomes when it is distributed</i>” (p. 12)</p>	<p>“Contextual Enactment Successful leaders enact the basic leadership practices in contextually appropriate forms” (p. 185)</p>	<p>“Differences in context affect the nature, direction and pace of leadership actions” (p. 9) There were differences in principal behavior depending on school improvement stage, socioeconomic context,</p>

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
			principal experience, and time in post
Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 13)	<p>“Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others” (p. 13)</p> <p>“Both the patterns of leadership distribution and how leadership practices are enacted, when distributed, influences organisational performance” (p. 13)</p>	<p>“Leadership Levels - Four Levels of Leadership Influence Effective leadership operates through four levels of influence to promote improvement in school conditions and pupil outcomes” (p. 186)</p> <p>L1: “Setting Directions’, ‘Re-designing the Organization’, Head Trust’, ‘Use of Data’, ‘Developing People’, and ‘Use of Observation’” (p. 186)</p> <p>L2: Leadership distribution – senior leadership team, staff</p> <p>L3: “Teacher Collaborative Culture, Assessment for Learning, Improvement in School Conditions, and External Collaborations and Learning Opportunities” (p. 186)</p> <p>L4: “The achievement of High Academic Standards, Improvements in Student Motivation and Learning Culture, improvements (change) in Pupil Behaviour, and Improvements (change) in Student Attendance” (p. 186)</p>	<p>“Heads contribute to student learning and achievement through a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions . . . [such as]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– influencing pupil outcomes and improvements in school conditions, such as an emphasis on raising academic standards</li> <li>– assessment for learning</li> <li>– collaborative teacher cultures</li> <li>– monitoring of pupil and school performance</li> <li>– coherence of teaching programmes</li> <li>– the provision of extra-curricular activities” (p. 10)</li> </ul>
“A small handful of personal traits	<i>Revised claim: “While further research is</i>	“A Phased Approach - Building and	“There are three broad phases of leadership

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
<p>explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness” Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 14) “This evidence warrants the claim that, at least under challenging circumstances, the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (eg in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), resilient and optimistic” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 14)</p>	<p><i>required, a well-defined set of cognitive, social and psychological ‘personal leadership resources’ show promise of explaining a high proportion of variation in the practices enacted by school leaders</i> Cognitive resources (problem solving expertise, domain-specific knowledge, systems thinking) Social resources (perceiving emotions, managing emotions, acting in emotionally appropriate ways) Psychological resources (optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity)” (p. 15)</p>	<p>Sustaining Improvement Effective heads prioritise combinations of strategies and manage these within and across three broad phases of ‘success” (p. 187) Early: physical environment, student behavior, senior leadership team, and performance management and professional development Middle: leadership distribution, use of data for student learning Later: personalizing and enriching the curriculum, leadership distribution</p>	<p>success: early (foundational), middle (developmental) and later (enrichment)” (p. 12)</p>
		<p>“Layered Leadership Strategies – The Growing of Success Effective heads make contextually sensitive judgements about the selection, application and continuation of strategies that optimize the conditions for effective teaching, learning and pupil achievement within and across the three broad development phases” (p. 188) Seven features (p. 188)</p>	<p>“Heads grow and secure success by layering leadership strategies and actions Effective heads make judgements, according to their context, about the timing, selection, relevance, application and continuation of strategies that create the right conditions for effective teaching, learning and pupil achievement within and across broad development phases” (p. 15)</p>

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defining and communicating vision</li> <li>2. High expectations of student behavior, teaching, learning and achievement</li> <li>3. Complementary systems of academic and pastoral support</li> <li>4. Schoolwide pedagogy</li> <li>5. Teacher quality improvement through professional learning targeted at individual and school needs</li> <li>6. School community relationships</li> <li>7. Relationships outside the internal school community</li> </ol>	
		<p>“The Progressive Distribution of Leadership There are associations between the increased distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities and the continuing improvement of pupil outcomes” (p. 189) Leadership distribution depended on: principal judgment on what was right for the school, staff preparedness for leadership, organizational trust level</p>	<p>“Successful heads distribute leadership progressively. . . – leadership distribution is common in schools but patterns of distribution vary – the distribution of leadership responsibility and power varies according to local context” (p. 16)</p>
		<p>“Leadership Trust – A Key to Improvement Trust is a pre-requisite for the progressive and effective distribution of leadership. It is closely associated</p>	<p>“The successful distribution of leadership depends on the establishment of trust” (p. 17) “. . . effective distributed leadership depended upon five</p>

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
		<p>with a positive school ethos, improved conditions for teaching and learning, enhanced sense of teacher classroom autonomy and sustained improvement in pupil behaviour, engagement and outcomes” (p. 189)</p>	<p>key factors of trust:                      – values and attitudes: beliefs that people cared for their students and would work hard for their benefit if they were allowed to pursue objectives they were committed to                      – disposition to trust: experience of benefits derived from previous trusting relationships                      – trustworthiness: the extent to which others trusted them                      – repeated acts of trust: enabling the increasing distribution of leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and broadening of stakeholder participation                      – building and reinforcing individual relational and organisation trust: through interactions, structures and strategies that demonstrated consistency in values and vision and resulted in success” (p. 17)</p>
		<p>Leadership Differences by Improvement Groupings                      “The categorization of schools into three distinctive improvement groups i.e. Low Start, Moderate Start and High Start, reveals that there are</p>	

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Literature Review phase</i>	<i>Revisiting claims</i>	<i>Research phase</i>	
		statistically significant differences in certain leadership practices between each group” (p. 190)	
		Leadership Difference by Socioeconomic Context “There are relationships between the extent of the disadvantaged context of schools (FSM band) and the amount of change in leadership practice reported by primary and secondary heads” (p. 190)	

across countries about successful school leadership practice. The *International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools* focused on schools that had been transformed or had sustained success. The research included a literature review to construct a five-element framework (intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital, and financial capital, and achieving alignment through outstanding governance), a survey to explore the framework, administration of the survey in 22 workshops across nine countries, and multiple-perspective case-studies of five schools in each of six countries (Australia, China, England, Finland, the United States, and Wales). Table 2 summarizes the key findings for each of the capitals and governance. The leadership of principals was central to all common practices identified.

The project provides international support for many of the findings from the English study of Day and colleagues, and provides emphasis for the importance of leadership *and* governance. More international evidence comes from the ISSPP discussed next.

## Major Long-Term International Studies on Successful School Leadership

Apart from the study by Caldwell and Harris (2008), the studies described above have been centered on particular country contexts. The ISSPP provides a truly international perspective to research on successful school leadership. It is a continuing project that has been going for 20 years and involving research groups from over 20 countries focused on exploring the characteristics and practices of successful

**Table 2** Common practices in the successful schools (Caldwell & Harris, 2008, various pages)

Domain	Domain description	Common Practices
<b>Intellectual capital</b>	The level of knowledge and skills of those who work in or for the school	Local staff selection and staff professional development, especially in-house sharing
<b>Social capital</b>	The strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving the school and all individuals, agencies, organizations, and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school	Strong relations with other schools (especially feeder schools), and other organizations
<b>Spiritual capital</b>	The strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs, and attitudes about life and learning	Clearly defined values, with student well-being as a priority
<b>Financial capital</b>	The money available to support the school	Receive government funding, as well as funding from other sources
<b>Governance</b>	The process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital, and aligns them to achieve its goals	Led by valued and visionary leaders in locally appropriate leadership structures, with high levels of freedom for day-to-day management

principals in successful schools. With four project books, eight special journal issues and more than 300 chapters and journal articles, it is by far the most substantial research project on successful school leadership. The project has conducted multiple perspective cases studies, multiple perspective observational cases studies, surveys of principals and teachers, and principal identity interviews. Several research groups have revisited principals after 5 years to explore sustainability of success, and some groups have explored leadership in underperforming schools in advantaged and less advantaged contexts. With more than 200 case studies reported across the many and varied publications, it is a difficult project to fully understand, although several models have been created to help (Gurr, 2015). During 2021, the first synthesis of the corpus of publications is being conducted by ISSPP members, led by Jingping Sun. In the meantime, the best articulation of the overall findings of project can be found in the synthesis chapter by Gurr and Day (2014) of the fourth project book (Day & Gurr, 2014) which included 15 chapters devoted to describing the work of successful principals from the project. The synthesis of these chapters was developed from a thematic review of the chapters and connections with previous research findings from the ISSPP. The main features of successful principal leadership included (Gurr & Day, 2014, pp. 194–208):

- High and reasonable expectations for all.
- Pragmatic/active leadership approach: No single model of leadership satisfactorily captures what successful principals do.
- Not transformational or instructional leadership, but transformational and instructional leadership.



- Leadership distribution.
- Core leadership practices, plus. . . Setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning, plus: use of strategic problem solving; articulating a set of core ethical values; building trust and being visible in the school; building a safe and secure environment; coalition building; promotion of equity, care and achievement.
- Heroic/post-heroic leadership: challenging, risk taking but with the support of others.
- Capacity development – people centered and focused on staff development.
- Trust and respect.
- Continuous learning.
- Personal resources: for example, Acumen, optimism, persistence, trust, tolerance, empathy, alertness, curiosity, resilience, benevolence, honesty, openness, respectfulness, and humbleness, and driven to provide the best educational environment they can for all students.
- Context sensitivity: context sensitive, but not context driven.
- Sustaining success includes elements such as establishing direction consensus, balancing competing discourses, and having a positive attitude to change.

The project continues to evolve, and the research synthesis being conducted in 2021 will mesh with a new complexity/system theoretical orientation that will mean that the project will likely explore leadership broadly (system, principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, students, parents) and utilize mixed method inquiry more often.

Over the first two decades of the millennium there are other major international educational leadership projects that have been conducted and some of these have findings relevant to the successful school leadership. For example, Gurr, Drysdale, and Goode (2020) provide an overview of the ISSPP, the International Leadership Development Network (ISLDN), Leadership for Learning (LfL), and International Study of the Preparation of Principals, while Gurr, Drysdale, and Goode (2021) update this by also considering some more recent emerging projects: 7 System Leadership Study (7SLS), Asia Leadership Roundtable (ALR), and the World School Leadership Study (WSLS). While these studies have much to offer, they do not exclusively explore successful school leadership. There is not space to explore the findings of these projects in this chapter. The interested reader can follow these projects through the overview publications noted above, which provide concise summaries and references to project publications.

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## Other Reviews of Successful School Leadership

Since the first major review of successful school leadership by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), Day and Sammons (2014) have also provided a review of successful school leadership, which was updated in Day et al. (2020). For the purposes of this chapter, only the later review is referred to. In the review, the authors focused particularly on

evidence about transformational, pedagogical/instructional, and distributed leadership, the leadership of principals and others, and overall sought to “increase knowledge and understanding of school leadership and its relationship with school improvement and student personal, social and academic outcomes” (Day et al., 2020, p. 8). After reviewing evidence related to transformational, pedagogical/instructional, and distributed leadership, they reviewed the *Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project* described above, before exploring findings from international research projects, such as the ISSPP, and findings on leadership values, before returning again to explore further findings from the *Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project*. As an overall summary the report described key dimensions of successful school leadership as:

- Defining the vision, values and direction
- Improving conditions for teaching and learning
- Redesigning the organization: aligning roles and responsibilities
- Enhancing effective teaching and learning
- Redesigning and enriching the curriculum
- Enhancing teacher quality (including succession planning)
- Building relationships inside the school community
- Building relationships outside the school community
- Defining and modeling common values
- Ensuring students’ well-being and providing equitable access to support for all students.

(Day et al., 2020, p. 6)

This list is similar to the findings from *Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project*, and this is not surprising given the dominance of this project in their review at the expense of other projects that could have been given more prominence such as the ISSPP. While the review seemed to be centered on the English research, it covered many areas related to successful school leadership and, with over 120 references provided, connected with a substantial literature base.

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## Other Research

Much as Day et al. (2020) reviewed literature about transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership as part of their successful school leadership review, this chapter could include several other research strands. Space does not permit this, but a brief connection with some of research from the Wallace Foundation (<http://www.wallacefoundation.org>) is worthwhile. This philanthropic US organization has produced many papers and research reports about school leadership. Here I briefly highlight three papers that, considered together, provide a clear statement of the importance of educational leadership in general, and principal leadership in particular.

As the precursor to a major national mixed-method study, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) conducted a literature review on how school

leadership influences student learning. This was the report that first made the often cited claim that:

Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction. Furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances (e.g., schools “in trouble”) in which it is most needed. This evidence supports the present widespread interest in improving leadership as a key to the successful implementation of large-scale reforms. (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 70)

They also produced a ten-element model that related school leadership indirectly to improved student learning. This report reinforced the worth of studying successful school leadership in projects like the ISSPP. The study involved surveys and case studies across the USA and the final report reinforced the importance of school leadership:

In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. Why is leadership crucial? One explanation is that leaders have the potential to unleash latent capacities in organizations. Put somewhat differently: most school variables, considered separately, have only small effects on student learning. To obtain large effects, educators need to create synergy across the relevant variables. Among all the parents, teachers, and policy makers who work hard to improve education, educators in leadership positions are uniquely well positioned to ensure the necessary synergy. (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010, p. 9)

More recently, Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021) built on the review of Leithwood et al. (2004) and provided a systematic synthesis of the impact of principals on students and schools over the previous two decades. They reviewed 219 studies from nearly 5000 considered sources. They showed that the differences between a below average principal compared to an above-average principal can be as much as 3 months of learning in mathematics and reading, with this being comparable in size to teacher effects on student learning. They also noted that effective principals impact on other outcomes such as improved attendance, improved teacher satisfaction and working conditions, and reduced teacher turnover. They make the powerful observation that:

Principals really matter. Indeed, given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership. (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 43)

Principal success was related to three primary skill areas (people, instruction, and organization) and four domains of high leverage behaviors (engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers; building a productive climate; facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities; managing

personnel and resources strategically). They also emphasized the importance of leading with an equity lens to be culturally responsive.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The study of successful school leadership has emerged in the two decades since the turn of the millennium. It is an area of study that has several notable research papers and projects, but which also has conceptual and empirical overlap with other areas of educational leadership (like school effectiveness and improvement). Nevertheless, the focus on broad student and school outcomes, and a variety of research methods (case studies and mixed-method inquiries) is providing rich understandings of what successful school leadership is and what it does. There is not a consistent terminology that defines the study area, and it is necessary to consider research that has other labels, such as effective school leadership. Nevertheless, there are substantial projects, such as the ISSPP, which are helping to establish the area as a legitimate addition to the educational leadership field. Future research is likely to involve large, mixed method projects that explore leadership broadly and include principals and other members of the school (e.g., teachers, students, parents, governors) and the wider context (e.g., education systems, communities). These projects will likely be within and across country contexts. There are exciting possibilities for research over the next decade as the study of successful school leadership matures.

## Commentary from Drysdale

This section offers a reflective commentary by Drysdale and expands on three areas: effective and successful schools and effective and successful school leadership; sustainability of success; and, leadership and context.

### Effective and Successful Schools and Effective and Successful School Leadership

This commentary expands on the use of effectiveness and success in the transition from effective schools to successful schools and from effective school leadership to successful school leadership. It suggests that interest in notions of success rather than effectiveness can be located at least a decade earlier than the turn of the millennium.

The move to success rather than effectiveness was because previous definitions of effectiveness focused on narrow student achievement measures such as performance on standardized literacy and numeracy tests (Goodlad, 1984). Sergiovanni (1991) argued that *successful* should be used because it communicated a broader definition of effectiveness. Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995, p. 7) described effective schools in terms of how much value they added to student outcomes, but they emphasized “a wider range of outcomes (academic and social).” Other writers have elaborated on this and suggested that school effectiveness should comprise a

wider range of factors including outcomes broadly defined, such as tangible and intangible academic and general educational goals, physical, mental, and emotional competencies, behavior, citizenship, employment, community goals, and student values and attitudes (e.g. Day et al., 2009; Mortimore & Stone, 1991; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 1989; Sammons, 2007; Silver, 1994). These views highlight a degree of confusion amongst school effectiveness researchers about what they were studying.

To resolve this confusion, from the 2000s, some researchers focused on “success” rather than “effectiveness” because success as a concept was seen to be more inclusive and broader. It was felt that a focus on success would provide another dimension that was not clearly included in previous definitions of effectiveness. In the ISSPP, to better understand success as compared with effectiveness, the researchers investigated perceptions of success at the school level and explored the contribution of the principal to the success. Typically, the ISSPP researchers defined success as school achievements and milestones, improved student outcomes in range of areas, whole school improvement, and the provision of services, resources, and amenities. In addition to these factors, and how the researchers measured success, schools also defined success in their own terms and within their specific context. Commonly the school leaders and staff defined success far more broadly. Examples of success included: achieving individual potential; student engagement; self-confidence and self-direction; sense of identity; sense of community and belonging; positive school staff morale; a focus on the whole child; prizes and rewards, enjoying learning, and sporting achievements (Gurr & Drysdale, 2016). Furthermore, success was not only centered on student outcomes, but also school, staff, and community. Examples include: school reputation; having a united staff; staff commitment; a positive school culture; enrolment growth; parent support; sponsorship programs; and community and industry partnerships.

Because of strong correlation between leadership and performance, concepts of effective and successful school leadership follow a similar pattern of widening the definition over time. As far back as 1982, Sweeny reviewed research on effective schools and concluded that the evidence indicated that principals do make a difference. He outlined that effective principals emphasized achievement, set instructional strategies, provided an orderly atmosphere, frequently evaluated student progress, coordinated instructional programs, and supported teachers (Sweeny, 1982). As identified earlier in the chapter, the emphasis was clearly on instructional leadership which was the mainstream of the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). However, there was a trend to expand the definition of effective school leadership. Riley and MacBeath (1998) in leading an international research team studying four countries (England, Scotland, Denmark, and Australia) questioned the narrow use of the term “effective” and suggested that while there was no recipe for effective leadership in their study, effective leaders responded to changing contexts. They concluded that effective leaders were “distinguished by their vision and passion and by their capacity to bring a critical spirit into the complex and demanding job of headship, whilst at the same time focusing on staff and pupil performance, and on classroom pedagogy” (Riley & MacBeath, 1998, p. 149).

As has been described in this chapter, whilst there is research on successful school leadership, major studies still refer to the impact of school leadership on performance in terms of effectiveness. Nevertheless, many of these studies are more closely aligned with the broader idea of successful school leadership. For example, Leithwood et al. (2004) focused on the impact of effective leadership on student learning, but also described how effective leaders created synergy of many other elements. Grissom et al. (2021, p. xviii) described how effective principals impact beyond student achievement, such as equity and that overall:

Effective principals orient their practice toward instructionally focused interactions with teachers, building a productive school climate, facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities, and strategic personnel and resource management processes.

Pashiardis and Johansson (2020) argued that it was important for school leaders to be successful and effective. While they distinguished between the meaning of effectiveness and success, they also noted that many key writers in the area use the terms interchangeably. That the terms are sometimes used interchangeably may be justified by the expanded roles and responsibilities of school leaders over the past two decades, with both terms describing the same phenomenon.

While there are numerous references to successful school leadership, the delineation between effectiveness and success is not clear. It appears that the consolidation of successful school leadership as a movement it is still not clearly defined, particularly since the definition of effective school leadership has widened and is more encompassing. The common features of successful and effective school leaders are: they are contextual literate; leadership is distributed; they use transformational and instructional leadership interventions to enhance performance; they are value driven; and manage conflicting goals of equity and student outcomes. In the earlier part of this chapter the authors outline an also identical list of effective and successful school leadership features (Day et al., 2009, 2020). The blurring of effective and success in the literature undermines the claim of separateness and distinctiveness of the successful school leadership movement. Today whether we use effectiveness or success as descriptors may be a moot point.

### **Sustainability of Success**

There was little discussion in the chapter about how school leaders succeeded in maintaining or improving performance over the long term or whether schools sustain their success when the principal departs. Several examples exploring sustainability of success from different perspectives are provided here.

In the research covered in this chapter there are examples of researchers exploring the history of a successful school. For example, as part of the ISLDN project, Okilwa and Barnett (2018), explored the sustained academic success of a USA school over a 20 year period involving four successive principals. There have also been examples of research exploring the improvement pathway of schools. In the Effective Leadership and Pupil Outcomes Project, the 20 school case studies included a process with head teachers and other key staff that asked them to “provide retrospective

perceptions of leadership actions that led to their success over time” (Day et al., 2009, p. 128). This process produced maps of leadership strategies over several years (the map of Eyhampton school went back 10 years: Day et al., 2010, p. 16).

The ISSPP included a dedicated research process to explore sustainability of leadership and school success. In phase 2 of the ISSPP, researchers re-visited many of the first case study schools 5 years after the initial research to explore the sustainability of success. The issue was that while there was strong evidence that successful leaders could significantly contribute to a school’s success, there was a lack of evidence that school success could be maintained or improved. The findings from six countries and eight educational systems were reported in Moos, Johansson, and Day (2011). The findings noted several dimensions to the principals’ leadership which helped to sustain school success. Mostly these were like the factors that helped them achieve success such as their values, qualities, skills, and knowledge that enabled them to influence teachers’ teaching and students’ learning. Relationships were found to be a key factor in sustaining success, both relationships within the organization and beyond. For example, Day (2011) found that in working in challenging circumstances in England, three factors were important: moral purpose and social justice; organizational expectation and learning; and, identity, trust and passionate commitment were the key to sustaining success. Drysdale, Goode, and Gurr (2011) found in schools in Victoria, Australia, that principals’ attitude to change had an impact on the level and type of school success and certainly on the capacity of the school to sustain change. Jacobson (2011), reporting on schools in the USA, found that distributed teacher leadership and professional self-renewal as processes were central to sustaining success, and, in at least one US case, a change in organizational governance was necessary to allow these processes to continue over time. Day, Johansson, and Moller (2011) noted that of the qualities and skills identified, resilience, resolute persistence and commitment were key factors.

In other ISSPP publications, Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011), in an edited book exploring US and Cross-National Policies, Practices and Preparation, suggested that successful principals could sustain their success through being people oriented and demonstrating trust, optimism, persistence, empathy, resilience, humility, honesty, openness, and respectfulness. Notman and Henry (2011), reporting on six primary and secondary school principals in New Zealand as part of the ISSPP, identified critical self-reflection, responsive leadership, building relational trust, and personal resiliency.

Goode (2017) and Gu and Johansson (2013) found that understanding the nature of schools’ internal and external context and how school leaders mediated between these contexts was essential for sustaining performance. They found that school leaders worked successfully to build and maintain a positive school environment and successfully responded to external pressures such as accountability and performativity demands.

Looking more broadly, there are other research programs that contribute to the knowledge about sustainability of school success. For example, Andrews and Conway (2020) outlined findings from two decades of research from the Leadership Research International (LRI) group based at the University of Southern Queensland. They highlighted the importance of leadership in sustaining improvement and confirmed that sustainability required building personal, social and organizational capacity



building if improvement was to be sustained. Capacity building included focused leadership, collaborative leadership with school and teacher leaders, and building a professional learning community.

While there is evidence from international studies of the impact of leadership on sustainability, further research is needed to consolidate the findings.

### **Leadership and Context**

Throughout the chapter there is reference to leadership and context; however, the challenge for future researchers is to do more in-depth studies that explore this relationship.

Numerous writers have challenged the lack of research on leadership and context. In the wider debate on organizational behavior, Johns (2006) points out that context is not sufficiently recognized or appreciated by researchers. Within educational administration, Bush (2018) argues that research on context is limited compared with the literature on leadership. Belchetz and Leithwood (2007) noted that context matters, but they are not sure how much it matters.

The international studies take the position that leadership is a pattern of influence and that leadership is embedded in context, and that leadership is not restricted to formal positions but leaders can influence anywhere in a social system. These studies also recognize that context is multilayered and has a reciprocal relationship with leadership. Context can include diverse external and internal factors or specific aspects of context such as high needs and social justice (ISLDN), or schools in challenging circumstances (ISSPP) (Gurr et al., 2021). Gurr et al. (2006) compared 63 ISSPP case studies and they identified 16 different contexts that were reported on. The ISSPP research reported by Doherty (2008), Gurr, Drysdale, Longmuir, and McCrohan (2018, 2019), and Longmuir (2017) showed how leadership and context can influence each other. The Social Justice Strand of the ISLDN has explored social justice leaders in multiple contexts, for example, in macro and micro contexts (Angelle, Morrison, & Stevenson, 2015b) across countries (Angelle, Arlestig, & Norberg, 2015a; Arar, Beyyoglu, & Oplatka, 2017) and in diverse contexts (Richardson & Sauers, 2014).

The overwhelming finding from an international perspective is that no matter what the circumstances or layers of context, successful school leaders can navigate the situation to improve or maintain improvement. The findings affirm that relationship between leader and context is complex and that it can be reciprocal. This is particularly important when we are exploring multiple levels of context and how each layer or a combination of layers influences leaders and vice versa. More research at a deeper and more nuanced level of investigation needs to happen as there is much about the interchange between context and leadership that remains as a “black box”.

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### **Summary**

The international perspective includes a wide range of writers and themes on successful school leadership. It also includes several international studies and projects. The consolidated data provides a far better understanding of educational



leadership. There is now a better understanding of the characteristics and qualities of successful educational leaders and how they contribute to the success of their schools. There are still areas that need to be resolved. There is confusion with the terms effective and successful in terms of schools and leadership. In many cases the terms are used interchangeably, and the definitions have changed over time. There does not appear to be a delineated pathway for the successful schools and leadership movement. The research on leadership in relation to sustainably of performance is underdeveloped. There is further scope to investigate how schools can sustain their success with the same leader or with successive leaders over time. There is more to understand about the complex relationship between context and leadership.

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**Part XI**

**Leadership Preparation**



# Is a Science of Educational Leadership Possible?

# 90

Izhar Oplatka

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## Abstract

Since the foundation of educational administration as a field of study around 150 years ago, its scholars have employed varied strategies to gain a scientific legitimacy among the social sciences. The aim of this chapter is to debate the meanings of science in EA and the kind of science EA field can be based on an analysis of science constructions and of historical debates in the field’s discourses throughout the last several decades. It is suggested that EA researchers seek new knowledges related to educational leadership and management and attempt to understand the educational reality from organizational and managerial stances. They acknowledge the limitation of objectivity and universality and combine both positivistic and naturalistic methodological paradigms. But, EA is, first and foremost, an applied field of study whose major orientation is to improve EA practice and support the work of educational leaders. Some implications of this type of science are discussed at length in the second half of the chapter.

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**Keywords**

Science · Educational Administration · Fields of study · Applied study · Epistemological analysis

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**An Explanation Under the Following Headings****The Field of Memory**

Pure science, speculative science, the prescriptive nature of the field, the theory movement, logical scientific positivism, objectivity in science. For example, the advocates of the Theory movement in the field of educational administration (EA) during the 1960s–1970s have juxtaposed “science” with positivistic research. In their view, in order to be considered as “science” the research on educational administration ought to be conducted by robust methodologies just like happens in natural sciences. Otherwise, educational administration would likely produce knowledge base that is based on subjective experiences of educational leaders rather than on objective reality.

**The Field of Presence**

Multiple theoretical paradigms, the naturalistic methods, applied science, scientificity is medium in the field of educational administration. For instance, students of educational administration and leadership become familiar with a wide variety of leadership models that have been adopted by scholars of educational leadership, such as leadership for social justice, shared leadership, and instructional leadership.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Disciplinary knowledge, generalizable knowledge base, conceptual rigor, real science, ultimate and universal truth, “Mode 2” knowledge production. For instance, many researchers in the field of educational administration explore the lives and career of educational leaders not only for the sake of pure knowledge, but many times in order to provide prospective and current leaders with practical tools to improve their managerial practice and lead their staff more effectively.

**Discontinuities and Rupture Which Form the Different Viewpoints of the Field**

Pure vs applied science, positivistic vs naturalistic scholarly paradigms.

**Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

The demise of science, an academic knowledgebase in educational administration, lack of regulations regarding the predictability of events in educational administration, the limitations of subjectivism and critical theory.

## Introduction

Since their foundations, many social science disciplines have employed varied strategies to become more scientific; they allied with the “pure” sciences and connected to more scientifically established bodies of knowledge to gain legitimacy and increase their public image. Institutional leaders in the applied disciplines and professions have struggled to help them evolve to science status through the acknowledgment of stakeholders in their developmental process of reaching to a higher status and through the relevance of their knowledge to practice.

The term “education sciences” has appeared for the first time in 1812 in the work of Marc-Antoin Jullien de Paris “*Esprit de la méthode d’éducation de Pestalozz*” (Plaisance & Vergnaud, 2012). Ever since, many scholarly debates in the education scholarship have adopted science as a label and structured their activities as purely scientific (e.g., research design, scientific knowledge). They have borrowed scientific concepts and informed practice in pursuit of scientific development. Thus, a science of education interrogates the other sciences for synthesizing their conclusions under the forms of theories that are intended to inform the education practice (Plaisance & Vergnaud, *ibid*). Yet, the science of education is vast; it is not oriented solely toward pedagogy and teaching, but draws on the dominant social science disciplines to study varied educational issues (McCulloch, 2017).

One of the subfields of education sciences is educational administration (named also “educational management” and in recent years “educational leadership”). From the establishment of educational administration (EA) as a field of study in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, its early scholars have been preoccupied with the definition and philosophical nature of science, debating whether EA is a science or something else. Culbertson (1988), for instance, claimed that the first book about school administration was written by Harold Payne in 1875 and has labeled this period through 1900 as “a quest for a science of education” (p. 4).

Thus, between 1875 and 1900, concepts of speculative science were widespread. Pioneers such as William Payne and William Harris, who sought for an academic legitimacy for the new field, emphasized the need for a scientific approach to school administration in order to better understand the art of running educational systems and schools (Culbertson, 1988; Heck, 2006). In the view of EA founders, science was the basis upon which a new generation of school leaders could be trained and developed (English, 2003). However, the scope of their inquiry, as Culbertson noted, was as broad as civilization, past and present. The result was a transition from the successful-practitioner type of generalized courses in principal preparation programs in the early 1900s toward a more scientifically organized type of instruction, as Callahan (1962) indicated many years ago.

It was only in the mid-1950s, however, that the spirit of logical scientific positivism has emerged in the field. Until that time, EA was substantially oriented to normative concerns, taught by senior practitioners such as superintendents and principals. In their retirement, the former educational leaders delivered their practical knowledge and wisdom to prospective school principals. But, this kind



of knowledge was far from being “scientific”; common dissatisfaction with the prescriptive nature of the field led to the appearance of the “theory movement,” which defined the knowledge in EA in accordance with conventions of a modernist, positivistic, rational-empiricist approach to science (Culbertson, 1988; Griffiths, 1983; Willower, 1996).

In its advocates’ optimistic view (e.g., Andrew Halpin, Daniel Griffiths), an improvement in the administrative practice of educational institutions would be brought about when a stable, cumulative, empirical, and generalizable knowledge base will be used in principal preparation programs and in in-service trainings for current principals. They further believed that the adoption of such a knowledge in the field would increase its academic legitimacy as an area of study underpinned by scientific principles. This, in turn, would lead the field to have an honorable place in the ivory tower. Twenty years later, Getzels (1977) wrote:

The third period in administrative thought has been variously called the theoretical area, the social science era, the behavioral science era, the social systems era, or the social psychological era. . . The essential shift was for conceiving of EA as a domain of action only to conceiving of it as a domain to study also. The shift moved the focus of effort from an orientation based on solutions, where experienced administrators gave answers to questions of ‘how to do it’ to an orientation based on inquiry, where problems were posed and understanding was sought regarding the phenomenal of administration in their own right (p. 9).

According to Halpin (1970), the basic ideas of the “theory movement” were that hypothetical-deductive research is prioritized, that EA cannot be viewed as distinct from other fields of administration, and that the field should draw heavily from insights developed in the social sciences.

In light of the dominance of the “theory movement” in EA field, the field borrowed relevant concepts and theories from social science disciplines, and its programs became more specialized and increasingly theoretical and quantitative (Walker, 1984). Two decades later Willower (1996) commented:

The optimism of those days included the notion that if schools were studied using ideas and methods from developed and relevant specialties, it would be possible to bring about positive changes in education (p. 346).

The belief of many EA scholars in those years was that a knowledge base produced in the disciplines and “translated” into the practice of EA would improve the work of educational leaders considerably.

This conjecture, however, evoked an enormous intellectual controversy in those years. Some scholars have criticized “the trend toward a discipline-based approach to the study of EA” (Culbertson, 1974, p. 7), calling to replace it by trends toward the use of more applied bodies of knowledge. In their view, the field could not be grounded in the social science disciplines due to their low scientific development per se. In this sense, what the disciplines had to offer was not well-validated theoretical principles or empirical laws on which EA field members could base applied procedures (Campbell, 1972; Hills, 1978). Campbell explained:

... We also failed to take concepts and methodologies and reshape them to fit our world. ... we realize that many of the concepts have little utility in the study of administration and those that do may have to be adapted and modified to our purpose. We are more problem oriented and we continue to ask what light the respective disciplines can shed on the problems. . . (p. 14).

Notably, one of the most dominant criticism against the theory movement, i.e., against the attempts to “scientify” EA as a positivistic field of study, came from Thomas Greenfield (1986). In his view, science cannot be equated with positivism because it is too narrow to capture what inquiry is about, particularly the creative aspects of inquiry. Greenfield further explained that inquiry has both creative and critical aspects. The creative aspects include curiosity, speculation, and the invention of concepts, ideas, and explanations. The critical aspect has to do with skepticism, doubt, and the process of verification or falsification, and even efforts to disprove hypotheses. Similarly, willower (1979) indicated that “science” has long been understood to imply a certain standard of experimental or conceptual rigor and of methodological clarity. In this sense, the claim of many social science disciplines to award a scientific status has meant the assertion of some fundamental resemblance to natural science, usually regarded even by social scientists as the core of “real” science – as temporally prior and logically exemplary. This spirit has characterized also the EA field in the early and mid-decades of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, EA scholars seem not to have been concerned with applying strict definitions of science since 2000s, simply because the type of papers advocating EA as a science no longer appears in the field’s books and journals. Likewise, EA scholars accept seemingly notions of EA as an applied field of study rather than a “pure science” (Oplatka, 2020). Some even suggested fundamental flaws to justify the demise of science and its methods in EA. Willower and Uline (2001) responded to this notions:

Our critical inquest on the alleged demise of science demonstrates the value of examining such allegations carefully. In this case, the intimation that science is about to cross the Styx seems fatuous, perhaps an artifact of the wishes of those with that preference. After all, preferences often influence debates in one-sided ways. Science bashers frequently try to make their case by attacking positivism whose demise, in sharp contrast with science, would be hard to deny. That the two just do not equate seems irrelevant to them. All this has given writing about epistemology in educational administration its never the twain shall meet quality, that is, its failure to generate substantive debate (p. 463).

Note, science cannot be juxtaposed with positivism. It is a much broader concept and human activity as I discuss in the next pages. The aim of this chapter is to debate the meanings of science in EA and the kind of science EA field can be. The rejoinders to these ponderings may shed light on the epistemological purposes of the EA field and on the nature of its scholarly and empirical activities.

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## The Meanings of “Science”

The concept and practice of science are not stable and unified. It has evolved over time, with many upheavals and turns, leading, among other things, to a lack of an agreed-upon definition of science (Lui & Burguete, 2014). The word “science”

comes from Latin word “scientia,” meaning “knowledge” or “the pursuit of knowledge,” and especially “established theories” when it first appears (Ferris, 2010, p. 3). Lui & Burguete (ibid) elaborated on this concept:

Science is humans’ pursuit of knowledge about all things in Nature, which includes all (human and nonhuman) material systems, without bringing in God or any supernatural (p. 16)

Generally speaking, the basic goal of science is to enhance knowledge so as to explain, understand, and intervene in a particular reality. More specifically, the objective of all sciences is to understand the world in which we live without appealing to God. Scientists describe what they observe, discover regularities, and formulate explanations in order to reduce our uncertainty about the world such as risk, ignorance, and indeterminacy (Stirling, 2010). For example, the organizational science attempts to describe and explain regularities in behavior of individuals and groups within organizations and organizational scientists “seek general frameworks and basic propositions that provide an understanding of structure and dynamics of organizational life” (Roberts, Hulin, & Rousseau, 1978, p. 23).

In the modern era, the term “science” has been used to characterize a type of knowledge that is neither “common” nor philosophical in character. The word science indicates, primarily, the habitual disposition of those who have devoted themselves to systematic research in a certain domain (Kockelmans, 1979). Research, in turn, means an investigating activity intended to uncover and yield new knowledge, or solving particular theoretical or practical problems (Harman, 2006; Humes & Bryce, 2001). Thus, knowledge has played a significant role in human life as human action has always required knowledge (Stehr & Meja, 2005).

Scientific research commences with the realization that the available repository of knowledge is insufficient to handle certain issues and problems, i.e., at the point where ordinary experience and ordinary thought fail to solve problems or even to pose them (Bunge, 2007). Therefore, a more complete definition of science may construct scientific research as the systematic and socially organized search for and acquisition of application of knowledge and insights brought forth by acts and activities involved in certain arenas (Tranoy, 1988).

It is apparent, then, that science is a dynamic process of developing, through experimentation and observation, an interconnected set of propositions that in turn produces further experimentation and observation (Conant, 1951). In fact, the basic aim of science is to find general explanations, called “theories.” Hoy and Miskel (2008, p. 9) defined theory as a “set of interrelated concepts, assumptions, and generalizations that systematically describes and explains regularities in behavior in educational organizations.”

Inherent to every “good” research, however, is novelty production, originality, and innovation, according to which every new outcome in science must be different from the preceding ones if it is to be regarded as a highly influential contribution to knowledge base (Whitley, 1984). In fact, the innovation brought on by scientists pushing the boundaries of the ever-expanding areas of knowledge is what keeps a university vibrant and relevant, and benefits the public good (Geiger, Colbeck, & Williams, 2007).

Two components of the scientific thought merit highlighting. Firstly, science emphasizes objectivity, i.e., an ideal intention of controlling for biases or being open and explicit about them are common prescriptions enforced by the possibility of peer criticism (Willower & Uline, 2001). But, scientists cannot be sufficiently objective because during the process of doing science they might be influenced by varied factors affecting their judgments, observations, and decisions. Thus, the results obtained by scientists are unlikely to be purely objective, although each scientist makes the best she/he can to minimize external influences upon his/her own interpretations of the research process and results. In fact, scientific results are supposed to be “confirmed” by experiments or practices, or, at the minimum, are consistent with established data (Lam, 2014, p. 23). The New Movement in EA gave social validation to the belief that an objective science for guiding organizations could actually be invented. It was the idea that principals should be trained in the science through programs of study in universities (Greenfield, 1986).

Secondly, although science has been fallaciously claimed to seek ultimate and universal truth, there are no attempts anymore to find final truths, because one of the main characteristics and great strengths of science its self-corrective nature (Willower & Uline, 2001). As opposed to religions, there are no final or universal truths in science. Theories can be assessed using a variety of logical and evidentiary criteria, and are subject to modification or replacement at any time. Science can be seen as open, changing, and growing, not as closed, static, and settled.

To sum up, congruent with our discussion about science thus far, EA researchers seek new knowledges related to educational leadership and management and attempt to understand the educational reality from organizational and managerial stances. They acknowledge the limitation of objectivity and universality and combine both positivistic and naturalistic methodological paradigms. When we analyze the scholarly and empirical activities of EA researchers (Hallinger & Kovacevic, 2019; Oplatka, 2010a, b) we realize that they view science as a style of thinking and acting, a description of science put forward by Bunge (2007). A support in this conjecture we gain from Lui and Burguete (2014). In their view,

Scientists tend to be interested in the nature and the behavior of kinds of things. A scientist is a person who honestly seeks knowledge about the nature without bringing in God or any supernatural. In other words, a scientist is simply a researcher. . . by this definition, apart from the natural scientists and social scientists, the humanists are also scientists, a consequence of the nature which includes human and nonhuman (material) systems (p. 18)

Thus, although administrative and organizational theories are probabilistic and not deterministic, one may conclude that EA field is a science like any other fields of study or disciplines in the university. Admittedly, however, EA is not completely a science in the classical meaning of “natural” sciences, however. It is part of the social sciences, i.e., these disciplines that focus on human beings and social institutions, such as economics, psychology, sociology, and the like.

The social sciences began to exert a strong influence on the field of EA after World War II, and rational ideas of organizational efficiency and effectiveness,

brought up by Nobel Prize scholar, Herbert Simon, have penetrated the EA field's discourse once again. As we saw, the advocates of the "theory movement" assumed that the incorporation of theories, concepts, and methodologies from social sciences into the field's knowledge will increase its scientific legitimacy. To become a science, they focused on predictability, validity, statistical analysis, and so forth.

Critics of this movement claimed, in contrast, that educational models are not able to predict the greatest educational challenges in the society, because of the limited predictive validity in social sciences (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In other words, the scientificity of EA, i.e., the level of its scientific development is moderate. After all, scientificity is high for disciplines in "natural science," medium in social science and low in the humanities (Lui & Burguete, 2014).

Another strong advocate of the critical theory in EA was Foster (1999), who strongly argued that the idea of an academic knowledge base in EA is plainly a myth aimed at justifying the privileged positions of EA professors. In this regard, social scientists cannot develop hard rules and regulations regarding the predictability of events, at least in part because the concepts in these sciences are contested. There are rival explanations of each variant of the concepts, and each rival clashes upon ideological fields for supremacy. Forster explained:

Clearly a number of scholars in the social sciences and in the educational disciplines are both concerned about the basic paradigm within which their "normal" science operates and intrigued by the possibilities offered by alternative conceptions. This means that the social sciences need to consider their moral aspects; the necessary empirical work must be balanced by interpretive and critical understandings, for it is these that distinguish the human sciences from the natural sciences (Foster, 1986, p. 28).

The concepts in EA, then, do not lend themselves effectively to prediction or control and generalizations usually lack statements that tell us the precise circumstances under which the generalization may apply. If a science is to have any legitimacy, then it must be able to say that under certain conditions, *x* will happen, Foster further explained.

In fact, professional disciplines, like EA, are commonly characterized by a lack of well-marked scholarly boundaries, an absence of a clear sense of mutual cohesion and identity, and a greater apparent permeability of the loosely defined border zones that exist between neighboring disciplines. Permeation occurs across the span of a discipline, from frontier to core, and is accounted for by relations with neighboring disciplines, redefinitions of what is considered intrinsic and extrinsic to discipline, making disciplinary research and the epistemological structure of a particular discipline complex (Klein, 1993). In this sense, researchers working in soft applied fields are prepared to follow their problems into any other science whatsoever and to traverse all other sciences in order to investigate a certain phenomenon rather than restricting themselves to a particular disciplinary core (Becher, 1989). I elaborate on this type of academic fields in the remainder of this chapter.

## Toward an Understanding of EA as an Applied Science

The question of whether EA can be regarded as a form of science has attracted the attention of EA scholars since the establishment of EA as a field of study. Among these scholars, Evers and Lakomski's (Evers & Lakomski, 1991, 1993) books merit a particular highlighting. The authors sought to analyze critically the epistemological origins of various theoretical paradigms of EA that competed for supremacy over several decades, and to explore the ways by which EA knowledge was justified. Given major shortcomings in the traditional science approach (e.g., inability of science to account for ethics and for human subjectivity), their intention was to propose an alternative approach to positivism as a basis for a new science of EA. In their words, they suggested "to move ahead to a particular post-positivist theory of science that is broad enough to incorporate considerations of ethics and human subjectivity" (Evers & Lakomski, 1993, p. 141). Accordingly, they made abundantly clear the limitations of positivistic thought and of subjectivism and critical theory, both of which attacked positivism and attained new popularity after long periods of intellectual marginality. Theory in EA, they maintained, is supposed to guide practicing administrators, inform the collection of facts, and explain and describe the nature of administration.

**The Essence of an Applied Field.** Evers and Lakomski's view brings us to discuss a type of science that has become very common in social sciences, in general, and in professional disciplines, in particular – an applied science. Researchers in professional disciplines (e.g., social work, education, management, and nursing) tend to follow their problems into any other science whatsoever and to navigate all other sciences in order to explore a certain phenomenon rather than restricting themselves to a particular disciplinary knowledge base (Becher, 1989).

Scholars in social sciences probed into the meaning of applied knowledge. Gibbons, Levitt, and Lewis (1996) put forward the idea that a new form of knowledge production, "... a distinct set of cognitive and social practices, is beginning to emerge" (p. 3). This set of cognitive practices is what he called "mode 2" knowledge production that can be distinguished from mode 1 (i.e., "pure" knowledge) by being developed in a context of application as opposed to a context governed by a specific academic community, transdisciplinary as opposed to disciplinary, and heterogeneous as opposed to homogenous.

Mode 2 knowledge is usually prevalent in professional disciplines such as marketing, whose scholarly aim is focused, according to Hunt (2002), on problem-oriented research intended to improve decision-making and to marketing management practice in organizations. According to Swanson and Chermack (2013, p. 6) "applied disciplines are realms of study and practice that are fully understood through their use in the functioning world." Thus, the function of a "professional discipline" is more application-oriented. Researchers in the professional discipline are responsible, though, for producing knowledge that can be or has the potential to be applied by practitioners (Hunt, 2002). In this sense, the researcher is seen as a public intellectual with responsibility to contribute to debates on matters of public policy and to the public good (Humes & Bryce, 2001).

Professional disciplines aim also to have some kind of effect on the world and their focus might be clinical. They act as “trustees of categories of practical interests and needs of society and its members” (e.g., the maintenance of health), and “assume responsibility for managing ongoing practical processes and for seeking and finding solutions to concrete, practical and managerial problems” (Hills, 1978, p. 2). This means that applied disciplines are intended, among other things, to generate a specialized body of knowledge that is organized around the problems of practice.

More specifically, researchers in professional disciplines are intended to provide solutions to problems, assist practitioners at work, guide policy, provide insights and understandings, or establish fundamental principles of learning (Nisbet, 2005). Groves (1968), claimed many years ago against the centrality of “pure,” theoretical knowledge and implicitly in favor of applied knowledge production:

Existing knowledge and theory are of little relevance when taught for their own sake; they are important only as they assist in answering questions and solving problems with which we are now faced. Most importantly, each younger generation must continually develop its capabilities to prepare for realities virtually unrecognized by the previous generation (p. 70).

“Mode 2” knowledge production, though, has penetrated the discipline of “education” (Nisbet, 2005). Accordingly, a good research can be used in practice and identifies what works. The significant role of applied scientific knowledge is in meeting the demand for “how-to-do-it” knowledge by many public and industrial agencies (Stehr & Meja, 2005). Thus, academic policy research, according to Dredge (2014), includes a wide range of studies such as “descriptive research” (e.g., describing aspects of policy), “normative research” that provides policy guidance and recommendations, “procedural research” that describes and analyses planning and policy processes, “predictive research” that predicts the consequences of actions and strategies, and “evaluative research” that evaluates the performance of policies and plans.

In addition, due to public pressures for accountability and utility in education, applied research might be given priority over theoretical and long-term studies, which often prove eventually more important in bringing about major alterations of attitude and understanding (Nisbet, 2005). This approach has been debated by EA scholars for many years.

**EA as an Applied Science.** In 1967, Jean Hills asked: “what are the functions of research for educational administration (EA)?” and answered:

For the most part, we have simply assumed. . .that research has important functions both in the training of teachers and administrators, and in the practice of teaching and administration. . .in short, we have defined our problem as one of improving education by getting research into practice without ever raising the question of what it is that research contributes to practice (Hills, 1967, p. 26).

I would like to argue, then, that EA is an applied science that produces knowledge just like any other kind of science. But, this knowledge that is organized around the problems of the educational-managerial practice is assumed to guide education policy-makers, provide professors with tools to better prepare educational leaders,



and assist educational leaders and teachers at work. Notably, EA is an applied field that aims to improve the educational system, in general, and educational policy and leadership, in particular, by scientific means (e.g., research, critical writing). Thus, congruent with social science disciplines, EA aims to describe the reality and explains it as well as to understand and improve this reality, as Foster (1986) indicated. Note, its researched reality is demarcated by scholarly boundaries that define the core knowledge EA researchers are expected (or we better say “allowed”) to produce by their colleagues (the expectations are transmitted many times by editors and reviewers in the field’s refereed journals). Put another way, EA researchers may be regarded as applied scientists whose areas of study are constrained to issues of educational administration, management, and leadership.

Oplatka (2010a) found some examples of applied knowledge production in the field’s journals, such as essays and conceptual papers that were intended to provide policy-makers with practical models and tools to analyze their policy-making process and its implications for schools, normative models of how to conduct teacher appraisal successfully or how to implement school changes effectively, and many descriptions of effective managerial strategies and tools (e.g., Total Quality Management) to be used by school principals. Likewise, works that aimed at exploring the quality and feature of principal preparation programs (PPPs) offered better ways to prepare future educational leaders. Some EA researchers are oriented toward knowledge production of the kind of effective teaching methods in PPPs, learning materials, principles of mentoring, or the best way to organize cohorts in these programs.

It is likely that EA field is the sole responsible within education studies and management studies (e.g., public administration, organizational studies) for the production of knowledge that might contribute to the improvement of the administrative and organizational aspects of the school. Its researchers are committed to explore problems related to improving professional practice (Heck, 2006), through the production of better ways of knowing within the practice of developing longer-term perspectives through the description of practice and an understanding of that practice (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003). Bush (2000) summed up this commitment clearly:

The study and practice of EA in the twenty-first century are likely to take place in the context of stronger links between educational outcomes and economic development. Governments will expect schools, colleges, and universities to help their countries to compete in the global economy. . . (p. 280).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

In its pursuit for academic acknowledgment and legitimacy, EA field has aspired to be a science as much as possible; its researchers have followed the major scientific principles of objectivity and multiple truths and used different theoretical and methodological perspectives in their studies. Consistent with major definitions of “science” indicated above, EA researchers aim to enhance knowledge in order to explain and understand managerial and organizational phenomena in educational



systems and institutions. In this sense, they follow the purposes of science just like any other scientists in academic disciplines, indicated by different scholars in this chapter (e.g., Lui & Burguete, 2014). They also conduct dynamic scientific researches that include observation, interviewing, survey, and the like (Hallinger & Kovacevic, 2019). In doing so, they formulate explanations intended to reduce our uncertainty about educational leadership, administration, and policy, a purpose that reminds the work of scientists in each academic discipline (Stirling, 2010; Tranoy, 1988).

Yet, the EA field faces a host of dilemmas in regard to its theoretical vs professional orientation (Oplatka, 2010b; Ribbins, 2006). On one hand, it aims to develop new theories and concepts that systematically describe and explain regularities in behavior in educational institutions, as expected from any science (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Like any other science, its research should be novel, original and innovative to keep the field vibrant and relevant in the university. Its self-corrective nature is expressed, among other things, by the development of new models and perspectives of educational leadership. On the second hand, however, the EA field is called publically to provide solutions to problems and devise “how-to-do-it” models and tools. One can see EA as an applied science whose core is rooted in fundamental scientific principles but its outcomes are intended to improve the educational arena.

An applied science, nevertheless, faces many shortcomings, both scientifically and practically. Scientific research cannot exclusively be guided for the benefits of a particular group of practitioners (Hunt, 2002), at least in part because knowledge production is far more dynamic in that theory and practice vitally interact and one renews the other (Boyer, 1982). Science is supposed to examine, explore, and understand the reality drawing on theories, models, and concepts (i.e., an academic scholarship) that has been built on a series of scholarly developments and on a sequence of ideas. Every study is expected to contribute to this scholarship, first. Coburn and Stein (2010) indicated that educational research seems to deal with questions deriving, basically, from the researchers’ own interest (i.e., scholarship) rather than from the needs of policy-makers and educators who have limited access to research findings anyway.

Likewise, Boyer (1982) pondered the extent to which scientific knowledge could be responsibly applied to consequential problems and the ways by which it can be helpful to individuals as well as institutions. It seems that many applied research findings are becoming increasingly less useful for solving practical problems, as Rynes, Bartunek, and Daft (2001) noted in respect to organizational science. In EA, the benefits of this knowledge in a form of practical implications for practitioners is highly questioned (Oplatka, 2020), unfortunately.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [History of the Field of Special Education](#)
- ▶ [The Search for Science and Scientific Standing](#)

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# National Leadership Standards and the Structured Silence of White Supremacy

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## Abstract

National standards for educational leaders became a prominent discussion in the mid- to late 1980s as the idea of what administrators needed to know to lead schools evolved. This chapter furthers this discussion and includes an overview of both the national standards and national educational leadership standards. The chapter starts with the dominant historical narrative espoused in the field of education about standards and goes on to briefly review that same narrative about national educational leadership standards. The chapter then interrogates the accuracy of the dominant narratives by juxtaposing the historical realities related to the context of the time and challenges the idea that national educational leadership standards are inclusive and objective.

## Keywords

National standards · National educational leadership standards · Critical race theory · White supremacy · Implicit bias · Racism

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**The Field of Memory**

The idea that there are universal understandings of how to develop national standards for education and educational leadership; the belief that standards are objective measures which provide baselines for school building and districts administrators and that the standards outlined for programs preparing leaders are objective.

**The Field of Presence**

Years of persistent educational reform have yielded mediocre results at best; calls for more accountability on the part of accreditation organizations to better prepare graduates for educational leadership to navigate existing twenty-first century challenges.

**The Field of Concomitance**

It includes anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter Movement.

**Discontinuities and Ruptures**

National educational leadership standards are based on the postmodern view that there are no single, unitary, undisputed views of “reality” (English, 2006); the ahistorical context of education, inclusive of the field of educational leadership, requires critical interrogation of the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism in educational leadership.

**Critical Assumptions**

The inadequacy of national educational standards sustains and maintains opportunity gaps in the field of pre-K-12 education and the white supremacist ontology and epistemology with higher education; the idea that standards are not influenced by an individual’s personal ontological and epistemological beliefs is false; the lack of criticality in the field of education and educational leadership contributes to the opportunity gap; if standards are going to be impactful, standards have to move away from the rigid perception that there is equity within the field and must account for the history of white supremacy and the legacy of racism that continues to impact education and educational leadership.

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**Introduction**

National standards for educational leaders became a prominent discussion in the mid- to late 1980s as ideas about how school administrators should be prepared to effectively lead schools and support teachers, shifted. The idea of “principal as manager” expanded to include responsibilities such as serving as the chief instructional leaders inside schools, and discussions about what principals needed to be prepared to do so also began to expand. There has been a good amount of discussions regarding the scope and roles assigned to teachers and school building administrators over the years and yet there has been limited consideration of how

systemic racism and white supremacy have aided in maintaining inequity in the field of education. In alignment with the current trend of examining curriculum, lesson plans, and resources to ensure these materials are culturally responsive, national educational standards need to be interrogated to ensure alignment with the goal of dismantling white supremacist ideology and interrupting the pathology of racism that plagues the field of education, broadly, and educational leadership.

Infusing criticality, specifically, utilizing critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) can allow one to interrogate the historical gaps, omissions, and misnomers about *who* the “standards” in the field of educational leadership were intended to help. The standards were designed to assist school building and district administrators be able to outline “. . .foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders so they can move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2015, p. 1)” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015, p. 2). Utilizing CRT to examine the standards affords us the ability to consider how the gap between the goals and the outcomes of the standards may be connected to sustaining the legacy of white supremacy and racism in education. This is of particular importance in the field of educational leadership as school building administrators-principals and assistant principals contribute significantly to school climate and culture. It is also important because white supremacy, racism, and hegemony continue to permeate the walls of schools across the USA. Research indicates that these factors directly impact the quality of educational experience and indirectly influence student achievement.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the dominant historical narrative on national education standards and goes on to briefly review that same narrative about national educational leadership standards. The chapter then interrogates the accuracy of these narratives by juxtaposing the historical realities related to the context of the time and challenges the idea that national educational leadership standards are inclusive and objective.

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## Historical Context of National Standards

The history of national standards in the USA dates to 1892 when the National Education Associations Committee of Ten made the case for a standardized high school curriculum or a “national system of education that aims at certain common results and uses certain common means” (Greer, 2018, p. 101). The evolution of the quest for a national set of educational standards is well documented throughout the twentieth century. The goal was to construct a set of standards by which high school accreditations could be granted. This began in 1918 when the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education were drafted, establishing a set of benchmarks students should be able to achieve as high school graduates (Greer, 2018). Establishing standards in education began to take shape in the USA during the twentieth century, partially in response to international developments and domestic educational case law demanding equity for Black children as well as students with disabilities. It was argued that to determine whether inequities existed, there had to be a benchmark by which one

could measure what students should be able to do because of the quality of education they received.

Although the Department of Education was founded in 1867 by President Andrew Jackson, the effort to ensure continuity became a national priority in the 1960s as education is not explicitly mentioned in the US constitution (US Department of Education, 2010). As a result, education, along with many other presumed fundamental rights, was relegated to states. A collective push to develop standards on a national level took shape when the federal government committed to providing resources and establishing an informal but prominent role to influence education sparked by international events such as the Cold War and explicitly the launch of Sputnik. These events ignited a national priority on education and subjects such as science, engineering, and math. The federal government sought to take a more prominent role and in the 1960s and 1970s to influence education in effort to ensure that US citizens could compete on an international level (US Department of Education, 2020).

The evolution of the Department of Education as well as the varying degrees and roles in which the federal government engaged in national governance in education continue today. Reports commissioned by the Department of Education such as the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report in 1966 (also known as the Coleman Report) and *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 continue to influence and drive federal education reforms, which in turn trickle down to both the state and local educational authorities (LEAs). The following are the federal reforms that have emerged in response to one or both reports: The Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) 1965, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1969, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Improving America's School Act 1994, No Child Left Behind 2000, Every Student Succeeds Acts 2015, and Race to the Top 2015. Federal intervention sets the stage for the current standards-based reform movements present in the field today (Greer, 2018). Within the last 40 years, reforms have shifted the focus on exploring the existing levels of inequity in education to seeking to bring national unity on the instructional core in pre-K-12 education. The goal of such national efforts was to develop standards to help "America's students to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (US Department of Education, 2010). In response to these standards, national standards in education leadership were born to help identify the skills educational leaders need to support pedagogues in meeting standards and "improving student achievement [which] is the central responsibility of school leadership" (NPBEA, 2011).

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## Historical Context on National Standards in Educational Leadership

National standards for educational leadership have historically been tethered to national standards on education. The Committee for Advancement of School Administration (CASA) was founded in 1955; this was after the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was established in 1954



(Hoyle, 2005). CASA was the result of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Kellogg Foundation brokering a deal to create a committee within NCATE to develop a set of priorities for the preparation of school administrators (Hoyle, 2005, p. 23). The “standards” created by CASA were published in 1958 by AASA and were “. . .influential in increasing the use of standards of preparation, professional development for school administrators, school board procedures for selected school superintendents and suggestions for needed research in the field (Moore, 1964)” (Hoyle, 2005, p. 24). It should be noted that these standards were used in the accreditation process by NCATE and AASA’s CASA.

Scholars pushed back against the standards challenging the validity of them in the accreditation process, and in the 1970s, CASA revised the standards in response to the feedback from scholars in educational administration preparation programs. In 1982, the AASA partnered with CASA to revise the standards. These new standards came to be known as the new *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* and went on to serve as the benchmark for licensure in several states and were applied by NCATE as the standard for administrator preparation programs from 1983 to 1995 (Hoyle, 2005).

Coincidentally, those who critiqued the standards and the revised *Guidelines* maintained that they relied too heavily on what they believed were antiquated management models. As a result, additional stakeholder groups, which were made possible as the result of new philanthropic investments in the field of education, emerged (Douglass, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). The 1987 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration gave birth to the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA) (NPBEA, 2021). A part of NPBEA’s charge was to reform “. . .preparation programs in educational leadership and developing initiatives to revitalize the profession of educational leadership, including the setting of national school and district leadership standards” (NPBEA, 2021).

In 1994 a new group comprised of current NPBEA members and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) merged to create the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). This body was commissioned and committed to “. . .regrounding the profession” (Murphy, 2003, p. 8). The 1994 ISLLC standards were the inaugural set of national standards for school administrators. There were six standards comprised of common knowledge, dispositions, and performances that the consortium believed all school administrators, ranging from early career to advanced career, should possess and be able to demonstrate. The ISLLC standards were updated in 2008 to reflect “. . .how the six updated standards are grounded in the latest research on instructional leadership, which now finds that setting the school’s direction and culture influences how teachers perform and are the area where principals can make the greatest impact” (CCSSO, 2008).

With the support of NPBEA, the 2008 ISLLC standards were revised by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and presented to NCATE in 2011 because “clearly defining what successful learning or performance looks like has become increasingly evident during the past decade” (p. 5). The NPBEA stated that “without a doubt, the better one understands what excellence looks like, the

greater one's chances are for achieving – or surpassing – that standard” (NPBEA, 2011, p. 5). In 2015 the ISLLC/ELCC standards were updated to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).

The PSEL are the most current standards for educational leaders, and these standards were updated to help leaders navigate challenges in school buildings and districts that may not have exist in 1996 when ISLLC was developed. The following rationale was articulated regarding the need for the 2015 PSEL:

But the world in which schools operate today is very different from the one of just a few years ago – and all signs point to more change ahead. The global economy is transforming jobs and the 21st-century workplace for which schools prepare students. Technologies are advancing faster than ever. The conditions and characteristics of children, in terms of demographics, family structures, and more, are changing. On the education front, the politics and shifts of control make the headlines daily. Cuts in school funding loom everywhere, even as schools are being subjected to increasingly competitive market pressures and held to higher levels of accountability for student achievement. (NPBEA, 2015)

Currently, the 2015 PSEL and the 2018 National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition Standards for Building and District Levels are the most recent iterations of national educational leadership standards.

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## **Discontinuities and Ruptures: Misnomers, Lies, and the Counternarrative: A Case for CRT**

A vast chapter of western thought is thus made to disappear by sleight of hand, and this conjuring trick corresponds, on the psychological or psycho-historical level, to the collective suppression of troubling memories and embarrassing truths. . . The history of imperialism, colonialism, and genocide, the reality of systemic racial exclusion, are obfuscated in seemingly abstract and general categories that originally were restricted to white citizens. (Mills, 1997, pp. 117–118)

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that “racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional in what is cited as a landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* (History.com, n.d., Will, 2019). A year later, 1955, the same year that CASA was established by AASA and the Kellogg Foundation, the Supreme Court ruled on a case referred to as *Brown II* “. . . which remanded future desegregation cases to lower federal courts and directed district courts and school boards to proceed with desegregation “with all deliberate speed” (History.com, n.d.). This case reversed *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, the 59-year-old discriminatory case that legalized racial discrimination based on race in public spaces, essentially ending federal, state, and locally sanctioned segregation based on race in the USA. Understanding the historical context of the time which was that separate but equal was far from equitable, Black communities and communities of color, broadly, were relegated to less desirable facilities and forced to struggle to make do with inadequate resources. The dominant narrative espoused about national standards is framed as coming from an equity-oriented, just, and colorblind perspective; however, the counternarrative is that the individuals responsible for the initial iteration of national

standards attended racially segregated schools and likely had deficit perspectives on the abilities and potential of Black children and children from communities of color. Additionally, the standards published in 1958 were likely not drafted with *Brown II* or any expectation that school integration would be realized.

Given the dominant narrative in the field of education which presumes parity, equality, and access for all along with objectivity, fairness, and meritocracy, it is imperative to highlight the historical context of the time and to chronologically situate or juxtapose how assertions of objectivity, fairness, and meritocracy in education are misguided and false. When Africans were kidnapped, sold into slavery, and brought to the USA in the sixteenth century it was illegal for enslaved Africans to learn to read. In fact, it remained illegal for enslaved Africans to be educated in the USA until the late nineteenth century. Additionally, there was a presumption of superiority and the intent to marginalize and assimilate communities of color that were othered; for example, Indigenous natives were forced to attend boarding schools designed to “civilize” or teach them to assimilate to Euro-American culture.

It is also important to interrogate narratives of history that obscure the role of global white supremacy, to problematize the inconsistencies of the white settler colonial narrative as the foundational narrative of the USA, and to illuminate the role that the hierarchy of whiteness plays in establishing a “White” ethnicity as the dominant culture in US history (Gerber, 1999). West (1993) said it this way “without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be ‘white’ – they would be Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and other engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity” (pp. 107–108). In the field of education, discourse about equity, equality, and opportunity take place in the present day without acknowledgment that the idea of collective or public schooling was conceptualized and designed without Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian communities in mind. Prior to Horace Mann’s and Henry Bernard’s quest to establish and then reform the common schools in the Northeast, education in this country was restricted to White, male, landowners who were wealthy enough to have tutors come to their homes and educate their children (Isenburg, 2016). The common school was established in the nineteenth century for the children of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) who were not wealthy, and their children were largely uneducated or undereducated. These schools also included children of Jewish, Irish, Italian, and other European ethnic cultures that were not considered “White” until they immigrated in mass to the USA in the twentieth century (Brodkin, 1998; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2007).

Yet, discourse about the academic performance of communities of color is disguised in deficit-laden language such as “achievement gap” and terms such as “sub-group.” These words are used to describe children of color, poor children, children from the LGBTQIA+ and immigrant communities, and students with disabilities regularly in districts around the country. There is no recognition or acknowledgment that the current state of education is the legacy of intentional, strategic, and racist policies or that these policies contribute significantly to the conditions of schools and communities around the country. Additionally, the “achievement gap” continues to persist despite best efforts to close it. The reason these policies continue to affect the field today is because they were

implemented with fidelity. If the legacy of white supremacy and racial discrimination were acknowledged it might lead to the much-needed reckoning within the field of education.

“Standards rooted in an epistemological and ontological premise of white supremacy will produce ahistorical and uncritical standards guiding ELPP [educational leadership preparation programs]” (Waite, 2021, p. 15). Unless national standards require ELPPs to confront the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism issues such as inequity, discrimination, and anti-Blackness will continue to prevail in pre-K-12 education. If accreditation granting organizations do not require that the field of educational leadership authentically grapple with and provide explicit guidance for ELPPs these issues will not only continue to persist they will worsen. A lack of criticality in the standards themselves is foundational to sustaining both white supremacy and institutionalized racism in the field. This has been evidenced by lack of acknowledgment of race in the standards themselves.

Gooden and Dantley (2012) proffered that a framework for educational leadership was necessary and salient to both speak to the changing demographics in schools and to address issues of race in the broader social context of schooling. The researchers indicated that the use of race and/or racialized language in preparation programs could be instrumental in preparing aspiring and existing educational leaders feel equipped to engage with shifting demographics within communities that directly impact schools. In *Color-Blind Leadership: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of the ISLLC and ELCC Standards*, Davis, Gooden, and Micheaux (2015) analyzed the language of the ISLLC and ELCC standards along with the accompanying reports using a CRT framework which allowed the researchers to examine the domains and components of the standards for use of race or language affiliated with race.

The researchers found that 2008 ISLLC standards did not use the words race, ethnicity, color, diversity, equity, and social justice at all. The word culture was used in the standards twice, twice in the functions or elements of each standard, and once more in the accompanying report. The word diversity was used twice in the functions or elements of the standards. Similarly, the words race, ethnicity, and color were not used in the ELCC standards at all. However, the words culture and diversity were used three times in the standards, twice in the functions or elements of the standards, and 76 and 40 times, respectively, in the accompanying reports. The words equity and social justice were used once each in the standards, once each in the functions or elements of the standards, and 24 and 14 times, respectively, in the accompanying reports. At the time of publication, the authors acknowledged that they were heartened and encouraged by the inclusion of and explicit use of race and racialized language in the proposed 2015 revisions of the ISLLC and ELCC standards, which would go on to become the PSEL standards. While the proposed 2015 revisions reflected movement toward the guidance offered by Davis et al. the studies published by Johnston and Young (2019) and Rogers and Tienken (2020) suggest that educational leadership preparation programs are still not producing educational leaders who feel their programs adequately prepare them to navigate racial and SES issues related to diversity, equity, or social justice.

Johnston and Young (2019) found that 40% of principals and teachers participants felt that their preservice programs did not prepare them to support Black, Latinx, and low-income students. Among that 40% of participants, they also found that “White principals and teachers had lower rates of agreement that their preservice training prepared them to work with black, Latino, and low-income students compared with their nonwhite peers” (p. 2). The American Superintendent (AASA) 2020 Decennial Survey by Rogers and Tienken had 1218 respondents from 45 of 49 states affiliated with the AASA. The findings of the survey indicated that the participating superintendents reported the following perceptions of effectiveness; they felt most effective enhancing perceptions of the district, managing finance and budgets, and improving school climate. These superintendents felt less effective with improving student achievement, navigating issues of diversity, and supporting social emotional learning. In 2020, presumably prior to covid, superintendents articulated that they felt least effective at improving student achievement. Yet, the purpose of the national educational standards is to provide a first step for state and local education agencies to create “comprehensive, locally tailored approaches for developing and retaining high-quality leaders. . .[and] to raise student achievement” (CCSCCO, 2008, p. 5).

National standards are based on the idea that there is a single, unitary view of reality and that these objective standards reflect it. The belief that standards are, in and of themselves, objective, unbiased, benchmarks is problematic. It is equally problematic that these beliefs are established as fact and that the field of education governs itself under this fallacy. There was dissension among scholars about the validity of standards and the process by which they are developed. English (2006) indicated that the development of national educational leadership standards was “. . .antidemocratic” (p. 463) as “the knowledge base that was fashioned in the political process of creation remains truncated, ahistorical, decontextualized, and most important, immobile” (p. 465). Hoyle indicated that

The development of professional standards in educational administration/leadership is a continuous quest to find consensus among scholars and practicing administrators about a common body of knowledge and a set of competencies, dispositions, and language to seek quality in the professional preparation and development of school leaders. (2005, p. 23)

Using CRT to examine the standards allows scholars and practitioners, alike, to correctly situate the development of educational leadership standards in the historical context of the time. The “standards” published in 1958 and the subsequent updated iteration dubbed the *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* did not explicitly account for preparing administrators to meet the needs of the Black community or communities of color, broadly. In 1892 when the National Educational Association Committee of Ten came together to ponder developing “. . .a national system of education that aims at certain common results and uses certain common means” (Greer, 2018, p. 101), the country had transitioned from the Black codes during reconstruction to Jim Crow laws in which separate and unequal treatment was legal and experienced throughout the country (National Park Services, n.d.). Yet, national standards for educational leadership have historically boasted that

“The [2015] Standards have been recast with a stronger, clearer emphasis on students and student learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership to help ensure that each child is well educated and prepared for the twenty-first century” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 2). Clearly the 1958 standards and *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* were not developed to factor in the education of children of color. If the standards have been in a constant state of revision, how could it be possible that the current iteration of “standards” outline foundational principles of leadership? When the idea of creating a standard was conceptualized in 1892 it was illegal for enslaved Africans to learn to be educated. National education and leadership standards are not and have never been objective and that is largely because there is not one single, unitary perspective of reality. Criticality, and specifically, CRT creates the space for us to ask these types of questions and engage in conversations that can push us toward understanding how our personal epistemologies directly influence our professional praxis.

### **The Necessity of Criticality Within National Educational Leadership Standards**

Organizations developing national educational standards, national educational leadership standards, and national accrediting organizations must acknowledge the role that both white supremacy and racism have played in education. This requires understanding that the history around educating people of color in the USA has been redressed via reforms and interventions rooted in racism and deficit-laden narratives. For African Americans and Black immigrants, the global epistemology in education is anchored in Afro-pessimism or the idea that “Black people exist in the social imagination as (still) Slave, a thing to be possessed as property, and therefore with little right to live for herself, to move and breathe for himself (Gordon, 1997; Hartman, 1997, 2007; Sexton, 2008; Wilderson, 2010)” (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 429). It is this ideology that led the Supreme Court Justices to draft the majority opinion in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896. Four years prior, in 1892, the Committee of Ten began conceptualizing the idea of creating a “standard” in education, at a time when Blacks were seen as second class at best. The legacy of that perspective is still alive and active in schools via data on discipline referrals, referrals to special education, and underrepresentation in gifted and talented and/or honors programs. Afro-pessimism is still present today as evidenced through deficit-driven language used to describe Black students, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and Title I students and their families as “subgroups.”

Low expectations and negative thinking about communities of color have negatively impacted generations of students in the USA. This has been demonstrated in the field thorough “best practices” which have been revised because they were detrimental to student performance such as forcing multilingual learners to only speak English in their homes. Fortunately, the research evolved and demonstrated that multilingual learners who had strong foundations in their native language were able to acquire proficiency in a second language like, English, easily

(Garicá, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2013). Similarly, the growing body of literature on the merits of culturally responsive education demonstrates that strong cultural identity has led to improvements in the academic performance of many aboriginal communities around the world (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). The historical patterns are clear, it is evident that the issue is *not* within communities of color, the issue is the structured silence of white supremacy within national educational and leadership standards. Saad (2020) indicated

White supremacy is a racist ideology that is based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and that therefore, white people should be dominant over other races. White supremacy is not just an attitude or a way of thinking. It also extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold this white dominance. . . . [In this book] we are only going to be exploring and unpacking what white supremacy looks like at the personal and individual level. However, since systems and institutions are created and held in place by many individual people, it is my hope that as more people do the personal inner work in here, there will be a ripple effect of actionable change of how white supremacy is upheld out there. This work is therefore not just about changing how things look but how things actually are – from the inside out, one person, one family, one business, and one community at a time. (p. 12)

As Saad suggested, the work must begin internally and include reflective praxis, particularly for organizations developing guidance for ELPPs which are responsible for the training, development, and endorsement of state credentials for both school building and district level leaders.

National organizations developing national and educational leadership standards *and* ELPPs owe a debt, moral and ethical, to the students and families who have been impacted by the shortcomings of the graduates ELPPs have recommended for state licensure. The practice of graduating and recommending students for leadership who do not feel they leave these programs equipped to “. . . move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes (CCSSO, 2015, p. 1)” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 2) in spite of graduating from a “rigorous” state-accredited program is deeply troubling. “The bold, radical, transformative experiences required to develop culturally responsive school leaders who are actively anti-racist and social justice-oriented are achieved through powerful, transformative learning experiences informed by critical theory” (Waite, 2021, p. 15).

National standards within educational leadership do not require that educational leaders at either the school building or district levels explore how the historical legacies of slavery, racism, and anti-Blackness are tied to some of the challenges faced in present day within schools. School building and district leaders are often not trained to interrogate how these historical events contribute to the construction and development of the communities they serve nor how the inequities of the past create the current environments which impact the condition and the quality of experience inside their buildings and districts. This limits their ability to support the students and the families they serve. However, recent studies indicate that teachers and leaders are graduating from preparation programs across the country and transitioning into teaching and leadership positions feeling unprepared to serve students



from communities of color as well as Title I students. Leaders must understand how the demographics of the families in their schools/districts directly impact school finances and budgets. They should also understand the historical context regarding the resources their schools receive, for example, special funding weights and allocations or specialized programming. If the social capital of family demographics (particularly families with lower socioeconomic standing) is not considered, how can the impact of additional funding be assessed? How can they improve the quality of education for their students without access to financial resources and other supports? How can ELPPs prepare leaders to redress challenges and inequities that exist beyond the walls of the school that influence what takes place inside of schools? Discrimination in housing, employment, access to food, adequate health care, and a host of other factors contribute to the opportunity gap. Racism, implicit bias, and overt discrimination at the federal, state, and local municipal levels are responsible for the marginalization of communities of color and poor communities. However, none of this is addressed within national standards, nor is there a requirement that ELPPs include this information in course or curriculum.

Given the responsibilities of aspiring and current school building and district-level leaders it is vital to infuse criticality and, specifically, to use racialized language explicitly when developing national educational leadership standards. Davis et al. (2015) stated it best:

We understand the need for standards and strongly support having them. However, the absence of an explicit consideration of race and its impact on the thinking and practice of educational leaders is concerning, especially given the well-documented impact of race on teaching and learning in schools. (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006a, 2009; Milner, 2003, 2010, 2012) (p. 337)

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## Conclusions and Reflections

To adequately prepare school building and district educational leaders, the field of educational leadership must examine the historical context linked to national standards. Currently, the external issues directly impacting schools are not viewed as factors within a school's control and the historical gaps about *how* and *why* communities continue to underperform nationally are not examined. In many ELPPs there is little consideration of the context behind the words "historically minoritized communities" in relationship to education and/or how history continues to impact underserved communities in real time. Continuing to ignore the legacy of white supremacy and the reality that there *is* a hierarchy of whiteness maintains impoverished, rural White communities in which poor White children persistently underperform because they, too, are impacted by an opportunity gap as their families lack resources.

The inherent racism, classism, and elitism in education broadly and in the field of leadership, specifically, is exacerbated by the ahistorical context of history in the field. The "bootstrap narrative" or the myth of meritocracy is reinforced by the ideology of colorblindness in education. To be clear, merit is real. However, the idea that in the USA there is equal access to opportunity if you demonstrate a



commitment to hard work is false. This is because national educational leadership standards have been set up to require inequity permanently in society and “. . . within it, fixed schools. For this reason, the standards have been open to the criticism that they have permanently embedded social injustice for marginalized or oppressed groups within them (English, 2005; Tillman et al., 2003)” (English, 2006, p. 465). Without explicit commitments from national accrediting organizations and professional organizations in the field of educational leadership, this cycle will continue to persist. To redress these foundational problems, the field will have to begin interrogating its foundation. That starts by openly and honestly examining and interrogating the misnomers, unintended consequences, and the incongruities of national educational leadership standards. DiAngelo (2021) said it this way:

Take action to address our own racism, the racism of other white people, and the racism embedded in our institutions. Insist that racism get on the table, and work to keep it on the table. Center antiracism work by resisting the pull to include every kind of diversity so that nothing is addressed in depth and racism is sidelined. (p. 192)

It is disingenuous at best for the discussion about national educational leadership standards to continue omitting the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism within the academy (Wilder, 2013). However, Mills (1997) highlights that the white settler colonial narrative perpetuated as the history of this country is necessary to employ the narrative that “the United States was founded on noble moral principles meant to include everyone, but unfortunately, there were some deviations” (p. 122). The counternarrative to this fallacy or lie is that the founding of the USA was made possible via implementation of a “. . . de facto phase of white supremacy” as a global power (p. 122).

Just as CRT rejects “the inherent belief in law to create an equitable society” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 260), this author rejects the idea that the existing national educational leadership standards will guide ELPPs to produce social justice, equity-oriented, actively anti-racist school building, and district-level leaders. White supremacist ideology undergird the policies, systems, and structures that sustain institutionalized racism in pre-K through postsecondary education. Criticality, specifically, CRT, offers a framework and lens through which we may all examine the world and interrogate both our role within education and the role we play in sustaining *or* interrupting the pathologies of white supremacy and racism in school districts across the country. The national standards maintain the structured silence of white supremacy in educational leadership. The question is now, what will be done to interrupt the pattern?

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# Life Writing, Biography, and the Making of Educational Leaders

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Thalia Mulvihill

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## Abstract

Life writing, a collection of writing practices including biography, educational biography, autobiography, autoethnography, oral history, life history, collective biography, prosopography, social fictions, and other variants, has been an understudied area in the field of educational leadership. Reexamining the history of the commingling of leadership concepts with life writing conventions opens up new pathways for understanding how life writing can powerfully propel leadership development. The conceptual history of life writing is traced by using the mapping tools offered by Foucault's (1972. *The archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books) *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourses on Language*, specifically "the field of memory," "the field of presence," and "the field of concomitance." Creating an intellectual archaeology of the use of biography in the field of educational leadership, and other forms of life writing, opens spaces for reimagining theoretical and practical possibilities for impacting the way educational leaders are defined, described, educated, and evaluated.

## Keywords

Life writing · Biography · Educational biography · Autobiography · Autoethnography · Duoethnography · Collective biography · Critical approaches to life writing · Feminist life writing · Educational leadership

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### **The Field of Memory**

What are the statements, ideas, or practices that are no longer in vogue, or discussed, yet still linger as part of the central starting points of understanding the uses of biography and life writing in general and as it has been applied to preparing educational leaders? What are the ideas that must be accounted for before any meaningful dialogue can be engaged, or future discourse can be introduced regarding life writing? What ideas have been pushed aside in favor of different lines of thinking?

### **The Field of Presence**

What are the statements, understandings, concepts, practices, and ideas about biography and life writing that come forth, are considered “truthful,” and yet give little rise to competing viewpoints? What ideas are currently considered to be the most viable?

### **The Field of Concomitance**

What are the statements, ideas, or theories that are prominent in other fields or disciplines that have been, or can be, transported to the field of educational leadership in a way to help transform current understandings of the role of biography in shaping educational leaders? Why are these ideas compelling? How do ideas, or sets of ideas, create ruptures in traditional ways of thinking and knowing?

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

What discontinuities and ruptures have occurred over time that have altered the path of understanding what role biography and life writing may play in conceptualizing educational leadership as well as in preparing educational leaders?

### **Critical Assumptions**

What are the major critical assumptions associated with the relationship between educational biography and the field of educational leadership? Critical approaches to life writing can transform the questions we are willing to ask about how lives are narrated, and by whom, as well as propel new understandings of the conditions that shape lives of educational leaders and others. The following *Ten Proposition About Critical Approaches to Life Writing* (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2017, pp. 10–12) anchor the critical assumptions embedded within this chapter:

1. Critical approaches to life writing understand the constructed nature of the “self” (Bakhtin, 1986, 1992).
2. Critical approaches to life writing privilege and empower individuals to talk and write as critics of oppression. Life writers engage with concepts of voice, ethics, reflexivity, and the politics of representation.
3. Critical approaches to life writing engage with discourses, history, and ideologies to explain and contextualize a life (Kelly, 2013).
4. Critical approaches to life writing work against forms of division and compartmentalization as they create portraits of lives that are meaningful (Kadar, 2014).
5. Critical approaches encourage individuals to counter-narrate or tell counter stories that create meanings of their lives that challenge the dominant discourses of race and class or gender or disability (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Such

approaches confront a singular, dominant understanding of social and political conditions surrounding a life.

6. Critical approaches resemble what other education literatures refer to as culturally responsive approaches. There are many resources to help grapple with the mindset and the actions that educators can take to forge more culturally responsive pedagogies (see for example the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Tyrone Howard, and others). And, in much the same way, researchers engaging in any form of life writing must be culturally responsive researchers willing and able to deeply investigate and understand the context within which a life is lived.
7. Critical life writing projects have the potential to elevate the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge we have about people in meaningful ways, resulting in greater understanding and empathy for the human condition (Baena, 2013; Egan & Helms, 2002).
8. Critical approaches to life writing often foster social justice lenses to be used when interpreting lives. A variety of perspectives are used to examine assumptions, analyze power dynamics as they are played out within particular contexts, and interrogate the processes of how narratives simultaneously make some aspects of the lived experience highly visible and other aspects interminably invisible.
9. Critical approaches are “messy.” Life writers struggle with these choices and communicate their awareness of the consequences of their choices through a process of reflexivity. By engaging in reflexivity, life writers share their decision-making processes and interrogate their own position vis-a vis the project with which they engage.
10. Critical approaches make possible the “compatibility of feminist and post-colonial critical practices” (Moore-Gilbert, 2009).

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## Introduction

Life writing, a collection of writing practices including biography, educational biography, autobiography, autoethnography, oral history, life history, collective biography, prosopography, social fictions, and other variants, has been an understudied area in the field of educational leadership. Reexamining the history of the commingling of leadership concepts with life writing conventions opens up new pathways for understanding how life writing can powerfully propel leadership development. The epistemological assumptions that frame much of the life writing research within the field of educational leadership in the United States of America (USA) have been long standing. The written and oral traditions within the field of educational leadership often conceptualized educational leaders as part of the “great man” tradition where only a select few are exalted as worthy examples of a form of leadership embodied by white males destined to save the community by leading legions of women (the laboring teaching force) with “scientific” proclamations about the way to extract learning from unruly youth.

The conceptual history of life writing can be traced by using the mapping tools offered by Foucault’s (1972) *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourses on*

*Language*, specifically “the field of memory”, “the field of presence”, and “the field of concomitance.” Tracing this history of ideas matters. Creating an intellectual archaeology of the use of biography in the field of educational leadership, and other forms of life writing, opens spaces for reimagining theoretical and practical possibilities for impacting the way educational leaders are defined, described, educated, and evaluated. The first section attends to *field of memory*-related questions: what are the statements, ideas, or practices that are no longer in vogue, or discussed, yet still linger as part of the central starting points of understanding? What are the ideas that must be accounted for before any meaningful dialogue can be engaged, or future discourse can be introduced? What ideas have been pushed aside in favor of different lines of thinking?

Positivism, as a thought-system, has a powerful grip on the conscious and unconscious ways leadership has been studied, understood, and communicated within educational leadership preparation programs. And this way of thinking has permeated the ways biographies of leaders have been introduced on the margins of the curriculum. Most often following the European tradition of biographical dictionaries where profiles are brief and follow a formula. The narrative of the *exalted leader* is an example of how common ways of referring to educational leadership are reliant on the positivist forms of biography applied to educational leaders. The arc of the biography often points out the early life challenges faced by the leader and how they overcame those difficult circumstances in order to give rise to their skills and abilities as an educational leader, including the motivations they hold for enacting the role for which they are destined to carry out. These types of biographies move the reader to understand and agree with the noble and distinguished rise of the leader to meet the sociopolitical circumstances facing communities. The underlying assumption is that the key to positive social change within a democracy is rooted in our educational system and specifically in the hands of the leaders compelled to bring forward a renewed and refreshed version of the promise of democracy. Within the US context the biographies of Horace Mann (1796–1859), known as the father of the common school, and John Dewey (1859–1952), a philosophical pragmatist connecting the school room experiences of children to the larger health of an American democracy, for example, play large in this stream of thinking, as does the more contemporary biographical treatments of such figures as Geoffrey Canada, an African American who grew up in the South Bronx and rose to become a Harvard-educated leader responsible for founding the Harlem Children’s Zone, or Mike Rose, a second-generation, working-class, Italian American who became a University of California-LA graduate, and is well-known for his scholarship on working-class populations and literacy issues, and as the autobiographical writer of *Lives on the Boundary* (1989).

Glaringly absent from the litany of such venerated auto/biographies are women’s contributions as leaders within educational movements and practices, such as the scant treatment often given to the nineteenth-century educators, Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon, Emma Willard and her sister Almira Hart Phelps (Mulvihill, 1999), who built teacher education programs in the new republic. As well as Jane Addams (1860–1935), the social work activist who led the settlement house movement, founded the acclaimed Hull House in Chicago, won the Nobel Peace Prize in



1931, and was credited by revisionist historians as the intellectual grounding for much of John Dewey's influential work. These are just quick examples within corresponding time periods as Mann and Dewey. And other more contemporary US women leaders are likewise not often incorporated into educational leadership curricula such as *Linda Darling Hammond* (Professor Emerita, Stanford University and President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute). Or *Diane Ravitch* (Research Professor of Education at New York University, historian of education, and former Assistant Secretary of Education under President George H.W. Bush, and the Founder and President of the Network for Public Education). Or *Gloria Ladson-Billings* (Professor Emerita of Urban Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison and author of the biographical text *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (1994) and a thought leader related to culturally relevant pedagogies). Or *Christine Sleeter* (Professor Emerita, California State University-Monterey Bay and author of many autobiographical pieces as well as autobiographical social fiction such as *The Inheritance* (2018) and other field defining work in multicultural education). Or *Sonia Nieto* (Professor Emerita University of Massachusetts-Amherst and autobiographical author with her daughter of Nieto, S., & López, A. (2019). *Teaching, A Life's Work: A Mother-Daughter Dialogue*. Or *Randi Weingarten*, (former high school teacher and President of the American Federation of Teachers a member organization of the AFL-CIO). Or *Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot*, (Professor Emerita Harvard University, a Swarthmore College, The Bank Street College of Education, and Harvard educated sociologist who is well known for her development of the research methodology portraiture in *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, with an espoused direct application for studying educational leadership, and the debates it generated (English, 2000), as well as her autobiographical writing in *Balm of Gilead: Journey of a Healer* (1988) and *Reflections on Portraiture* (2005)).

These and many more women are often muted figures within the educational leadership curriculum, even with the important turning point of Heilbrun's (1988) *Writing a Woman's Life*, where she provided a compelling rationale for the correctives needed. This obfuscation is continuous throughout every historical timeframe. The rich tapestry of possibilities for educating the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1987) using curriculum centered on auto/biographies remains underexplored.

The second set of questions pertain to *the field of presence*: what are the statements, understandings, concepts, practices, and ideas about biography and life writing that come forth, are considered "truthful," and yet give little rise to competing viewpoints? What ideas are currently considered to be the most viable?

Conceptual disagreements still abound in the creases where clashes remain active between disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary notions of knowledge construction, knowledge containment, and knowledge dissemination. Critics defending the status quo often parade out the "straw man" or fallacious argument that creating or consuming autobiographical life writing, for example, is "navel-gazing" or a self-indulgent form of "me-search" (where notions of subjectivity and objectivity are scrutinized) and they ultimately argue that life writing has little or no utility for understanding the contours of educational leadership. Life writing, under this view, is linked to dominant ideas about the self as constructed by Freudian



psychology, and is sidelined as ornamental rather than transformative within the curriculum for preparing educational leaders. Alternatively, the explanation provided by Adichie, C.N. (2009) in her popular TED-Talk entitled *The danger of a single story* further highlights the benefits of expanding our awareness and engagement with multiple points of view and perspectives as they are embodied within people. A clear reminder of the notion that ideas are situated and arise amidst particular social, political, cultural, and economic conditions. This includes ideas about the self. Audrey Lorde's (1984) proclamation that "the Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house" further brings home the powerfulness of the interconnecting elements of a hegemonic system that threatens to reduce or eliminate new thinking and related ways of living, and serves to prepare those seeking social change for the realities they will encounter. Under this theory of social change, there is no benefit from the idea that well-meaning people tinkering toward utopia will propel forward the realization of the desired just and equitable society. In fact, this naive belief in incremental change is all a ruse. Instead, wholesale, more radical, forms of social disruption and complete reconfiguration of social relations are needed according to some social change agents. These are examples of the provocative questions and debates that are centered when introducing life writing into the curriculum for educational leaders.

The next set of questions are derived from *the field of concomitance*: What are the statements, ideas, or theories that are prominent in other fields or disciplines that have been, or can be, transported to the field of educational leadership in a way to help transform current understandings of the role of biography in shaping educational leaders? Why are these ideas compelling? How do ideas, or sets of ideas, create ruptures in traditional ways of thinking and knowing?

The impact of ideas from the discipline of sociology, such as those contained at the heart of *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) where C.W. Mills argued for the intersection of history and biography within sociological thinking is a prime example. And, the evolution of the sociological life history method, once highly contested, demonstrated how the surrounding social conditions impact an individual life, and is an approach that notably forged texts such as Thomas and Znaniecki's (1919) *The Polish Peasant* and Shaw's (1930) *The Jack Roller*. This combining of disciplines helped forge new pathways of thinking. It could also be interpreted as a significant rupture from earlier sociological studies determined to amass large (mainly quantitative) data sets in order to establish social patterns of human behavior while eschewing in-depth tales of individual lives which traditional sociologists argued are best left to psychologists who may speculate about concepts such as "motivation" or historians crafting the "great man" tradition.

Another set of important interdisciplinary ideas that are being merged creatively, and impact understandings of the role biography or life writing play in crafting cultural interpretations, can be found in the classic work of Lakoff and Johnson (2003/1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. This book contributed to elevating the awareness of social scientists to metaphors as the central organizers of meaning-making including the liminality contained in metaphorical constructs that provoke both potentially restricting and simultaneously freeing ideas. They often serve as

crucibles of new understandings of how humans make sense of and move through the world. What is also notable is how frequently biographies of educational leaders are laden with metaphorical language from the natural sciences such as making the science of plant/garden growth analogous to the science of democratic progress. Life writing that engages in theoretical and metaphorical analysis can be pedagogically potent for educational leaders.

Fenwick English (1995, 2006) and Gronn and Ribbins (1996) offered correctives relative to how the curriculum used to prepare educational leaders could bend toward an astute reorganization around life writing. English (1995) noted that while biography and other forms of life writing have been identified as pedagogically important for hundreds of years, they have been notably neglected in the curriculum designed to prepare educational administrative leaders. He convincingly argues the root of this neglect is situated in the marginalization of literature not deemed “objective” as well as the persistent problem of conflating the concepts of leadership and management. The tendrils of this context remain active even in light of significant counter arguments. And examples of postpositivist lines of inquiry leading to major shifts in understanding what constitutes best practices for cultivating leadership potential in educational leaders, abounds. English (1995) offered a four-point argument for the reconsideration of the role of life writing and biography within the educational leadership curriculum:

1. “Biography is a superb teacher of context and hence meaning . . . by providing a contextual framework to study leadership, biography provides the basis for discerning the meaning of leadership its hermeneutics can be explored or deconstructed. When a life is considered a kind of text, a biography is a text within a text” (English, 1995, p. 212).
2. “Biography restores the human variable to a study of leadership (by coup d’état) (English, 1995, p. 213).
3. “Biography is a superb way to approach moral leadership . . . [employing] the Kantian categorical imperative . . . [reinforcing the idea of] morals as pre-agreements forming the grounds for ethical cognitivism” (English, 1995, p. 214).
4. “Biography is an unparalleled source for modeling the artistry involved in reflective practice. Reflective practice involves the use of coaching students in educational administration as they strive to solve simulated problems in the field” (English, 1995, p. 214).

Fenwick English is clear that “centering a curriculum with biography or autobiography is quite different from salting the traditional curriculum with short portraits or profiles of leaders. . . . A course centered on biographies and portraits presents organizational theory quite differently” (English, 1995, p. 216). Gronn and Ribbins (1996) claim biography (with an emphasis on how a person’s values framework and workstyle are galvanized) paired with ethnography (with a lens on situational cultural conditions that shape the leader) are two neglected methodologies when it comes to studying educational leadership and making their argument parallel to the one advanced by English (1995).

English (2006) further contributed to building a theoretical and practical bridge between life writing and the field of educational leadership in a way that invites those responsible for preparing educational leaders to dissolve the artificial barriers that previously prevented this type of curricular transformation. Within this chapter by English, readers are urged to carefully examine in particular, Table 1. *Definitions and Examples of 12 Life Writing Forms* (p. 147), Figure 1. *Locating First- and Third-person Life Writing Forms on Indices of Contextual Density and Life Span Scope* (p. 148), and Figure 2. *Positioning Life Writing Forms Within Organizational/Sociological Perspectives* (p. 151). These visual summarizations drive home the central argument English (2006) offered by asserting that “the continued dominance of organizational theory in educational leadership preparation programs works to marginalize the importance of not only leaders as individuals, but of all humans in educational organizations. . . . Life writing is not important as long as lives are not important . . . a full consideration of the benefits of biography and life writing as important sources in understanding leadership will involve a serious re-consideration of how leadership has been reduced to a select set of social science variables and finally earmarked as unnecessary at all in the grand scheme of things. . . .” (p. 152). English has expertly prepared the reader for disrupting the long-held and rarely challenged notions about the relative power of life writing, and the related epistemologies, that ought to guide a radical curricular transformation focused on preparing educational leaders where context erasure does not abound.

Additional permutations are taking shape whereby concepts and ideas from other areas of study are fusing with life writing practices to create new pathways of possibility. For example, Kridel’s (1998) edited collection approaches to *Writing Educational Biography*, and ideas from the field of critical disability studies offered by Couser (2009) and Singh (2016) “have added measurably to our understanding of transgressive possibilities for life writing as a force for social action” (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2017, p. 13). And the work of anthropologist Catherine Bateson, the daughter of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, represents another form of life writing using conversational interviewing among academic women who she identified as her peers to help merge the personal and the communal lessons gained (Bateson, 1989, 2011). And the exquisite work of Laurel Richardson in her innovative *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life* (1997) and her door opening chapter on *Writing: A method of inquiry* (2003) substantially impacted the way academic life writers started to envision their work in new ways.

Another promising example is in the field of feminist geography where prior boundaries between autobiography, autoethnography, and collective biography are dissolved and elements of all three approaches are incorporated into life writing by some feminist geographers interested in a “critical reflexivity sensitive to power relations and an affinity with analyzing processes of subject formation” (Hawkins, Falconer Al-Hindi, Moss, & Kern, 2016, p. 167). This group of feminist geographers opened a portal for new life writing expanses this way: “Collective biography uses researchers’ written memories about a set of experiences as texts for collective analysis. As a feminist approach to research, collective biography draws centrally on the idea that significant memories are critical in the constitution of the self, and

maintains that in analyzing memories collectively, researchers can begin to tap into wider social processes and structures. Though rarely used in geography, collective biography could be useful in data collection and analysis for geographers” (Hawkins et al. 2016, p. 165). Collective biography has also been used to advance notions of collaborative leadership among women leaders in higher education (Mulvihill, 2011), illuminate the opportunities of comparative educational biography (Mulvihill, 2009), and advance the pedagogical possibilities of infusing a biographical approach into the curriculum (Mulvihill and Swaminathan, 2020).

The theoretical work being accomplished around the cultivation of reflexivity by those engaged in life writing offers another productive example of the far-reaching impact reflexive life writing can have on educational leaders. This form of introspection taken up primarily by qualitative researchers is at the heart of knowledge creation aimed at transforming understandings of the human condition. For example, Wanda Pillow explores the “ontological and theoretical investments surrounding reflexivity as a way to map and make sense of what reflexivity does to research. . . [and she uses] Kathy Ferguson’s essay, ‘Interpretation and Genealogy in Feminism,’ as a model for tracing interpretation and genealogy in research reflexivity. Differentiating *reflexivity as interpretation* and *reflexivity as genealogical* identifies unmarked intentionalities in research as well as the irreducible necessity of both approaches in research reflexivity” (Pillow, 2015).

Autoethnography and duoethnography are qualitative research methodologies centered on active reflexivity combined with biographical life writing that have been rapidly developing within the last decade especially within educational research. Autoethnography and duoethnography both (1) require a historical and sociological framing of issues, (2) focus on the interface between people and the surrounding culture, (3) are anchored in the biographical, and (4) aim to make transparent the intellectual and emotional wrestling that takes place when researchers are grappling with the ways in which individuals experience and understand themselves, others, and the subcultures they occupy. There is also great emphasis placed on the storying process or narratives people construct as they are working out pluralistic understandings of their shared reality. Autoethnography refers to a research approach where scholars first self-identify a culture or subculture where they hold membership and then examine the nature of those experiences with others who also self-identify as holding membership in that space. This insider perspective helps illuminate the details of how culture is a shaping framework for all other experiences and often emphasizes the evocative nature of the storytelling that results from a shared examination. Increasing the use of autoethnography within the field of educational leadership would be a tangible way of forging new understandings for educational leaders often in positions to be culture-shapers. For example, McClellan’s (2012) autoethnography of reconciliation provides educational leaders with insights about how she, as an African American educational leader, negotiated her leadership identity in the midst of an educational leadership discourse dominated by white middle class men and women. This dominance was evidenced in the literature about leadership and by those who held positions of educational power and authority. McClellan reports how her race and gender identity played a critical

role in how her educational leadership identity developed and the impact her growing knowledge about Black women leaders and Black feminist epistemology had on her. And the further impacts it had on the research she was conducting about Black male educational leaders. This autoethnographic project led her to ask disrupting questions about the ways in which Black male educational leaders participated in sexism born from insidious impacts of systemic racism. McClellan implores her readers to understand that “Theoretically and experientially, Black women and men should be allies with one another in the fight for equality and justice. Black liberation represents freedom from sexism and racism and embraces a Black female/male partnership . . . Through this autoethnography and by way of my leadership praxis. . . Black men [are challenged] to critique and analyze sexism and gender politics with their peers and colleagues [and] to develop frameworks that situate the condition of Black women alongside that of Black men (see Byrd & Guy-Sheftall, 2001; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003) in an effort to create leadership frameworks and praxis that diminish and destroy interlocking forms of oppression” (McClellan, 2012, p. 96). McClellan demonstrated how participating in an autoethnography can have a direct and lasting impact on a person’s understanding of educational leadership from a vantage point unlike other approaches. More traditional means of acclimating educational leaders to the complexity of their work would not generally include evocative readings and less likely to require educators to directly engage in this form of praxis.

Similarly, duoethnography, a collaboration between two (or more) scholars intent on deeply examining educational problems or issues as they manifest in the lives of the researchers, is ripe for use in by those preparing educational leaders. Duoethnography as defined by Sawyer and Norris (2015) includes four features: “polyvocal/dialogic nature, the examination of life history as curriculum, the intent not to profess but rather to learn and change as the result of the conversation, and the importance of learning from difference” (Sawyer & Norris, 2015, p. 1). The benefit of using duoethnographic processes as a central component of the curriculum to prepare educational leaders is that it provides them with a direct experience with *currere*. Pinar (1975) posited that *currere* is a method that draws connections between a person’s life history, their sense of identity construction, their personal experiences in academic spaces, and their process of actively reconstructing meaning as a result of prolonged and guided reflexivity. From this understanding Pinar developed a writing process to move educators through four stages, namely, (1) regressive (focused on past experiences), (2) progressive (focused on potential future experiences), (3) analytical (focused on the known present), and (4) syncretical (focused on integrating stages one through three). The pedagogical implications of duoethnography are great and easily deployed within preparation programs for educational leaders as a time and resource accessible practice. For example, Guerra and Pazez (2016) two educational leadership faculty members took up duoethnography as a way to further develop themselves as educational leaders and to determine if duoethnography ought to be included within educational leader preparation programs. They posed the question, “How can we effectively prepare aspiring leaders for social justice without making this journey ourselves?”

(Guerra & Pazez, 2016, p. 1755). At the conclusion of these duoethnographic exchanges they emphatically determined that

“If trust is established between the researchers, duoethnography serves as the vehicle of safety where (a) risks can be taken, (b) vulnerabilities can be revealed, (c) tough questions can be asked, (d) uncensored responses can be exchanged, (e) underlying assumptions can be challenged, and (f) deficit thinking can be surfaced, deconstructed, and reframed” (Guerra & Pazez, 2016, p. 1778). These are all useful examples from the literature on autoethnography and duoethnography for those interested in curricular innovations related to preparing educational leaders.

*Discontinuities and ruptures* have occurred over time that have altered the path of understanding the relationship between educational biography and educational leadership. Permutations of educational biography have led to positive disruptions fanning out into a whole array of ways to conceptualize life writing in the singular and the plural. New understandings of “the self” and “the other,” as well as fusions between the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, and qualitative inquiry have propelled new epistemologies impacting the forms and functions of life writing. In addition, the theoretical perspectives offered by constructivism, feminist theories, critical race theories, and theories of social change have further ruptured prior understandings of how to narrate a life story, who is eligible to narrate, what is the difference between “fiction” and “nonfiction,” what are the tools for narration, and how are audiences impacted by narratology (the study of how narrative and narrative structure impacts the creation and experience of culture). Prior definitions of categories of life writing are no longer stable. For example, these new varieties of life writing often infuse novel descriptors/phrases/categories into the lexicon including educational biography, collective biography, prosopography, collaborative autoethnography, auto/biography, social fictions, arts-based educational research, speculative fiction (combining elements of science-fiction and dystopian writing), etc. This evolution of the form and function of life writing holds promise for expanding our understanding as well as placing greater value on human variety. Furthermore, it promotes a deeper introspection of the contextual elements that produce conditions for leadership and for the individuals who arise as leaders within particular contexts. These conditions ought to prompt those responsible for preparing educational leaders to transform the “curriculum” accordingly.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Using Foucault’s work as an advance organizer permits new thinking about the history of ideas and their impact on lived experiences of educational leaders. And, can serve to propel new considerations, and perhaps even new vistas, related to preparing educational leaders as they meet the challenges of our collective circumstances. Below is a list of questions to contemplate when considering the potential impact of the proliferation of biographical methodological approaches, and other forms of life writing, on the field of educational leadership:

1. What varieties of life writing should educational leaders be exposed to?
2. What forms of life writing should educational leaders be engaged in creating?
3. How can biography and other forms of life writing be pedagogically transformative for educational leaders?
4. How might an increased agility with critical approaches that interrogate socially constructed concepts such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, dis/ability, etc. impact the stories created and shared with educational leaders?
5. What new ruptures might be provoked by the increasing ease of multimodal and multimedia representations of a life?
6. How might new technologies such as three- (or four-) dimensional holograms reshape how lives are narrated and the audiences that engage with these narratives?
7. How might film documentaries and podcasts as forms of life writing reshape the curriculum for educational leaders?
8. What additional pedagogical innovations, and related implications, might materialize if educational leaders valued the life writing process and the panoply of products and experiences that might emerge?
9. What new, or recurring, ethical issues might need focused attention?
10. What else may be on the horizon for this area of inquiry as the social, political, economic, and educational landscape evolves?

If critical approaches to life writing and biography can transform the questions we are willing to ask about how lives are narrated, and by whom, as well as propel new understandings of the conditions that shape lives of educational leaders and others, then it is worth considering giving these approaches a more prominent place in the overall curriculum designed to prepare educational leaders.

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# Challenging Leadership Norms: A New Way of Thinking About Leadership Preparation

# 93

Daniela Acquaro and David Gurr

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## Abstract

Images of principals are often of a seasoned educator well into their teaching career, having risen through the ranks, gaining experience in middle- and senior-level leadership, ideally having completed some form of leadership preparation, and given license to lead a school. Their leadership development, most likely self-managed, perhaps including some formal studies, and most certainly including experience in leadership roles, occurs well into their careers as teachers. So, the idea of introducing pre-service teachers to notions of educational leadership in their initial teacher training is far from conventional thinking. This chapter explores new possibilities in leadership preparation arguing that because today's teacher graduates are entering educational settings that are rapidly changing and increasing in complexity, they need to be prepared for leadership early in their careers. Distributed leadership structures are now commonplace with increasing opportunities and expectations for leadership across all levels. Graduates entering the profession can find themselves leading very early in their careers without any

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leadership knowledge, experience, or competencies. This chapter challenges leadership norms by rethinking how we prepare teachers for the profession recognizing the need to better equip teacher graduates for the reality in schools, the changing nature of a teachers' role, and the need to create a pipeline of experienced leaders to lead the schools of the future. After sections describing the changing nature of schools and school leadership, teacher roles, and initial teacher education (ITE), the chapter considers how ITE courses are responding to these pressures through the provision of leadership learning.

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**Keywords**

Leadership in initial teacher education · Teacher leadership · Distributed leadership

**The Field of Memory**

Leadership in schools has historically been associated within rigid hierarchical structures with minimal opportunity for leadership outside of the office of the principal. The focus was on individual leadership, exercised by few. Since the turn of the millennium, the areas of distributed and teacher leadership have developed as a response to, and a reflection of, changes in schools to more collaborative practices in more accountable environments. Incorporating leadership programs in ITE is a recent idea and so it is an emerging field.

**The Field of Presence**

As an emerging field, there are few established ways of proceeding, with universities and other providers of ITE exploring and constructing their own ways to provide pre-service teachers exposure to leadership ideas. As collecting evidence of impact beyond the ITE programs is not common, it will be some time until indication of best practices emerges.

**The Field of Concomitance**

Leadership programs in ITE draw from the wider educational literature. General educational leadership views are dominant (e.g., instructional, transformational, and transformative leadership), albeit that these have mostly focused on the work of principals. But there is increasing development of particular leadership views focused on principals, middle leaders and teacher leaders, and increasing use of views of distributed leadership practice (especially distributed leadership). Non-education views are not strongly evident, but they are incorporated in two ways: mostly in the extent to which these views have influenced some of the educational views used (especially transformational leadership) and, less often, through direct use (e.g., adaptive leadership). Sociological (e.g., personal and organizational capitals), psychological (teacher identity), and activist (social justice) views also contribute to preparing graduate teachers to be leaders early in their careers. There are parallels in other fields to leadership development in ITE, with calls for the

development of leadership skills in other professional programs such as medical and engineering training; there is little overlap between these programs at this stage.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Area or Field**

The field is too new for any major ruptures and discontinuities to have occurred as yet.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

As in all areas that explore leadership there are assumptions that leadership exists and is a knowable phenomenon. There is also an assumption that leadership matters to schools and students and that it is important to expose teachers to leadership training and development as early as possible, and especially in ITE. While these are listed as assumptions, the overwhelming evidence, some of which is presented in this chapter, is that not only does leadership exist, but that its impact on schools and students is significant. Evidence in relation to the impact of leadership learning in ITE is scarce.

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## **Introduction**

Interest in school leaders and school leadership has a long history. Hill (2002, 2019) described how in the early decades of the twentieth century the roles of teachers and school administrators began to separate as the rise of Taylorism led to larger schools requiring principals who could focus on management and administration. For the next decades, the roles remained separated, and it was not until the 1980s that principals began again to have a role in teaching and learning directly; this was the era of the principal as instructional leader (Hill, 2002, 2019).

While there were earlier research endeavors, the formation of school leadership as a field of inquiry can be dated back to the 1950s with the formation of the USA organization, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) in the USA in 1954, and a proliferation of similar organizations in many countries over the next two decades; such as the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration in 1970, British Educational Administration Society in 1971, and the Australian Council for Educational Administration in 1973. From the 1980s, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership have emerged as the most researched areas, but there have been other important areas, such as middle leadership and teacher leadership. Both instructional leadership and transformational leadership have been principal centered. Distributed leadership, however, is a break from principal-centered research, with the areas of middle and teacher leadership providing some overlap with distributed leadership.

As schools continue to evolve, there are increasing demands on new teachers to show leadership early in their careers, both formal and informal. Because of this, many in ITE are now considering how to best prepare new teachers for these demands. This chapter explores the evolution and practice of leadership development in ITE. It provides another chapter to the story and to the history of school

leadership with a “new” way of thinking about teacher preparation. The chapter begins by considering changes in schools related to the rise of distributed and teacher leadership, and changes in ITE, before focusing on leadership learning in ITE.

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## **Changes in Schools: Leadership Opportunities in Contemporary Educational Settings**

The organizational structures of contemporary educational settings are rapidly evolving, making schools dynamic and fluid spaces responding to the twenty-first-century needs of local communities and society at large. Across many nations, schools have adopted more diverse and complex leadership structures to better meet student and school needs (Supovitz, D’Auria, & Spillane, 2019), with decisive moves away from the traditional individual view of leadership residing mainly with principals, to a distributed leadership structure with leadership expected from many more at all levels.

In 1998, Leithwood and Duke provided an influential review of the main ideas in educational leadership and identified six leadership areas. In order of the extent of research, the areas were instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership. Distributed leadership had not emerged substantially although there were hints of it in the participative category. Yet, over the last two decades there has been a surge of literature around “distributed leadership” whereby leadership is no longer centered around the individual school leader.

While in its early development distributed leadership was often interchanged with shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or collective (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) leadership, however, distributed leadership is now well established within the educational leadership literature as an important part of schools and school effectiveness (Supovitz et al., 2019). While principal leadership research remains important, Harris and Jones (2017) suggested that distributed leadership is one of the major research interests in educational leadership, and, alongside teacher leadership, has overtaken interest in middle leaders. Led by researchers such as Spillane in the USA, Harris in the UK, and Gronn in Australia and the UK, distributed leadership has become part of school leadership orthodoxy. Soon after the Leithwood and Duke (1998) article, Gronn (2000) challenged leadership norms by inviting the academy to consider the future of leadership as a result of organizational shifts in schools. Distributed leadership practice allowed for “maximizing sources of information, data and judgement, and spreading the detrimental impact of the consequences of miscalculation and risk” (Gronn, 2000, p. 334). Gronn (2000, p. 334) argued that the “pooling of expertise and sources of advice...affords an increased likelihood of detecting errors in judgement and more attention being accorded feedback...[which amount to]...an overall widening of the net of intelligence and resourcefulness.” Spillane has long argued that a distributed leadership approach can offer dynamic possibilities for collective leadership with multiple actors engaged at various levels as opposed to a more siloed, individual view or more traditional leadership views (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Zuberi, 2009; Supovitz et al., 2019). His view is an

interaction perspective in which the practice of leadership and management is the product of the school leaders, followers, and their situations (Spillane, 2006).

While addressing the logistical and practicable issues of leading in a more networked and connected contemporary school, a distributed approach enables specialized leadership skills and capabilities to be harnessed. Distributed leadership involves both formal leaders and others as needs arise, and so it can value teacher voice, skills, and capabilities through teacher involvement. A distributed approach offers schools greater scope to offer more through a larger number of people leading various portfolios, projects, or activities.

Although somewhat inconclusive, there is emerging evidence that distributed leadership can impact indirectly on student learning and have important organizational effects such as enhancing teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and supporting change programs, but perhaps at the cost of higher teacher workloads, while retaining hierarchical structures (Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). Nevertheless, distributed leadership today has gone from a radical concept to a common way to think about dispersing leadership, and providing opportunities for teachers to contribute to school imperatives, develop individual and collective skills and capabilities, and providing a pipeline for middle and senior school leaders.

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## Changes in Teachers' Roles: The Rise of Teacher Leadership

Just as schools have evolved, so too has the work of teachers. Where the role of a teacher has traditionally focused on the transmission of knowledge to students in a classroom setting, teaching today is far more complex comprising a vast array of responsibilities and possibilities (Zhao, 2018). The focus remains undeniably on teaching and learning, however working with students also requires a focus on the social, emotional, and individual learning needs of students, necessitating an understanding of relevant legislative and organizational policies and collaboration with external professionals. Alongside this, teachers' work also consists of setting goals, motivating, prioritizing, planning, developing courses, creating resources, negotiating, managing conflict, problem-solving, training, mentoring, coaching, assessing, evaluating, and networking. While simply seen to be part of the evolution of the teaching role, one could argue that many of these tasks are indicative of the work of leaders in other professions, and so there has been a focus over the past two decades on the concept of teacher leadership (Harris & Jones, 2017; Webber & Okoko, 2021; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Albeit an established area of educational leadership research, the concept of teacher leadership remains contentious with wide-ranging and competing views (Harris, 2003; Webber & Okoko, 2021; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), from claims that "teaching is leading" (Collay, 2011) to those that describe both the work of teachers in formal leadership positions and leadership by teachers that is informal and not aligned to a leadership position (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Those definitions which assume teacher leaders require specific leadership positions tend to be related to research that is

describing middle leaders rather than teacher leaders (De Nobile, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2017).

While there are definitional issues, teacher leaders are identified as key players in school and system improvement and recognized for the important role that they play in “leading” educational change (Muijs & Harris, 2006; Murphy, 2005). Unfortunately, by the time of Wenner and Campbell’s (2017) major review, there was still no research identified that linked teacher leadership to improved student learning. In the literature there seems to be a belief that if schools utilize a broader set of skills and capabilities of teachers, “leadership” becomes a collective action safeguarding sustainable long-term school improvement. This idea is not dissimilar to Gronn’s (2000) view of distributed leadership (see above) and suffers from a similar lack of research evidence. A more recent review by Schott, van Roekel, and Tummers (2020) noted that while research was exploring broad impacts across teacher, school, and student outcomes, the quality of research meant that a clear sense of teaching leadership impact was still emerging.

In many jurisdictions, teacher leaders are being formally defined. For example, within Australia, teacher leadership is commonly associated to the “Lead Teacher” classification within the national standards that regulate the profession (Acquaro, 2019). Across Scotland and Ireland, both the Scottish Professional Standards for Teaching and the Irish Teaching Council’s Framework for Teacher’s Learning set the expectation for teachers to lead be it in “their own classrooms, their own learning and that of their colleagues through mentoring or induction” (King, McMahon, Nguyen, & Roulston, 2019: 17). However, mostly teacher leadership is associated with broader definitions that also include the spontaneous leadership that can emerge close to the classroom level, through advocacy, teamwork, or collaboration among teachers.

Regardless of the title or recognition associated with teacher leadership, the action of leading lifts the quality of practice in schools through collective teacher effort to improve teaching and learning (Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018). The breadth and scope of formal and informal leadership also opens opportunities for aspiring leaders and creates a pipeline of educational leaders of which there is a documented shortage across many systems (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Thompson, 2021). It is somewhat ironic that the focus on school principals being instructional leaders is now being met at the other end of the continuum with the benefits of teachers acting as leaders supported by a range of middle leaders (Gurr, 2023; Lipscombe et al. 2021). The impact of leaders and teachers independently improving student outcomes is well documented, however the potential of parallel leadership where leaders and teachers work collaboratively to improve instructional practices and student outcomes is yet to be fully explored.

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## **Changes in Initial Teacher Education: Attracting Teachers to the Profession**

The recruitment and retention of teachers continues to be a problem across many countries worldwide (See, Morris, Gorard, Kokotsaki, & Abdi, 2020). Attracting the best and brightest to teaching has been viewed as the answer to lifting student

outcomes (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), however the best and brightest are often opting for more lucrative occupations with career incentives and opportunities for growth. Teaching has typically been associated with women's work, and this is reflected in the gender imbalance in teaching courses with women accounting for the majority of students in ITE (Tani, 2019). While for women average salaries are higher in teaching than other professions and so teaching continues to be an attractive option, for men the opposite is true, with most opting for other professions where the income is higher (Tani, 2019).

The status of teaching is an important element in attracting high-quality students to the profession. Job satisfaction is linked to opportunities for professional development and growth, which are interconnected with leadership opportunities. While we first and foremost should be attracting teachers to "teaching," we should also be recognizing the complexity of schools, the need to engage on multiple levels within the profession, and varied opportunities to "lead" across a career as a teacher.

The role of ITE continues to be scrutinized with poor student outcomes regularly attributed to inadequate teacher preparation (Saavedra, 2021). System-level reviews are regularly conducted exploring what constitutes best practice teacher preparation, and, in the case of reviews in England, a continuing push to move ITE from universities to school-level providers (Clarke & Parker, 2021). Australia is no stranger to reforms in initial teacher education resulting predominantly from concerns about declining student achievement in international testing. In fact, since the 1970s, Australian teacher education has faced over 100 reviews with the latest recently announced in April 2021 aimed at improving school standards which have steadily worsened in the last 20 years (Bahr & Mellor, 2016). The focus currently is on how to attract and select high-quality candidates into the teaching profession, and how to prepare them to become effective teachers. The attention placed on teacher preparation is once again driven by the desire to lift school standards and place Australia in the top group of education nations globally by 2030. Encouraging high-performing and highly motivated school leavers to become teachers has been identified as a means of lifting the profession, however shifting conventional constructions of what constitutes a teaching career is key to achieving this (Zhao, 2018).

To further lift the quality of teachers and initial teacher education, professional teaching standards have been introduced across numerous countries with more countries expected to follow given the recent development of the Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards Education International & UNESCO (2019). The USA, England, Australia, Germany, and New Zealand are among 24 nations that have introduced standards regulating initial teacher education which has resulted in a streamlining of systemic practices and tighter controls around quality assurance through teacher education course accreditation and teacher registration processes. The introduction of professional standards for teaching began in 1964 with the foundation of the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards in the USA whose primary objective was to raise the quality of the profession. Since then, the place of standards continues to be debated globally with great attention placed on top performing countries who prioritize student selection and training in teacher education (Call, 2018).



The introduction of national standards for teacher training and regular reforms may have made a positive contribution toward improving ITE through selection, minimum benchmarks, and consistent assessments, however their introduction has indirectly created a rigid set of requirements which regulate the space sparking debate about the balance between regulation and innovation.

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## Leadership Learning in Initial Teacher Education

Initial teacher education is charged with ensuring that teacher graduates are classroom ready. However, teachers' work extends well beyond independent practice in one's own classroom. Expectations and opportunities in schools often call for teachers to work in teams, lead curriculum development, and support and mentor colleagues, and through these opportunities to be exercising leadership early in their career. Acknowledging the critical roles that teachers have beyond the classroom when entering the profession, the dynamic contexts in which they enter, and the expectations and opportunities around leading practices, underscore the importance of introducing leadership learning during teacher training.

Key priorities in preparing teachers for the profession include competence in subject and pedagogical knowledge, the ongoing role of research, evidence, and evaluation in practice, and the ability to respond to, adapt, and thrive in changing educational landscapes. Central to this is better understanding of the evolving organizational structures within schools and the leadership expectations and opportunities for teachers to contribute to school improvement efforts.

Leadership learning in ITE can be defined as developing the capabilities and knowledge required to understand and practice leadership in schools (Acquaro, 2019). For early career teachers this may revolve around leading oneself, leading others and understanding the impact of collective action for school reform. Leadership learning has also been seen to play a part in cultivating a profession capable of team building, priority setting, problem-solving, and evaluating best practice. The development of graduate teacher leadership literacy is important in developing self-efficacy and resilience, and attracting and retaining leaders within the profession, thereby making them able to navigate the professional expectations and opportunities presented over the course of a teaching career.

Creating a discourse around leadership within initial teacher education has gained momentum with many leading ITE providers globally now highlighting links to leadership knowledge and skill development within their teacher preparation courses and the opportunities for this in creating a more highly skilled workforce.

Table 1 outlines the results of an audit of the visibility of leadership studies within the marketing materials or subject handbook information of ITE programs offered by the top 20 universities in education as per the 2019 QS World Rankings (Acquaro, 2019). At the time of the research, the top-ranking universities were in the UK (3), the USA (8), Hong Kong (2), Canada (2), Australia (4), and Singapore (1). Across the 20 universities, there were 117 initial teacher education courses available,

including diplomas, degrees, postgraduate diplomas, and masters-level courses. The top ten Universities only offered postgraduate teacher preparation programs.

The research demonstrated that 16 of the 20 universities promoted leadership development within ITE courses. Leadership-centric subject content was visible in the subject handbooks of nine of the universities including The Education University of Hong Kong and Harvard University which offered the highest number of educational leadership subjects within their initial teacher education courses.

Acquaro's (2019) research noted: (i) a shift in how initial teacher education is recognizing that teacher training is evolving to better prepare graduates for the organizational and leadership structures of contemporary educational settings; (ii) the importance of developing leadership understandings and skills in pre-service training to build leadership capacity; and (iii) that attracting high-quality students to a profession in teaching may be more alluring if leadership development is offered as part of initial teacher education.

Considering the data presented in Table 1 and other literature on leadership learning in ITE, Acquaro (2019) suggests there are several ways that university ITE providers are building leadership knowledge and skills, including:

- The introduction of leadership concepts through leadership-focused subjects taken as part of teacher training
- Development of leadership skills through specialized pathways to develop competencies required of a subject learning leader (such as literacy or numeracy leaders within elementary school contexts)
- The opportunity to conduct action research on school leadership
- Through subjects which develop a broader understanding of leadership through work-integrated or service learnings

This audit, albeit a snapshot in time, provides some insight into the importance placed on leadership and leading, particularly given the emphasis in the marketing material promoting ITE to prospective students and the shifts in content with the inclusion of leadership-focused subjects across various ITE courses. This research identifies a pivot toward leadership learning in ITE, which suggests that value is being placed on leadership preparation for teacher graduates.

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## Examples of Leadership Learning in Initial Teacher Education

Although in its infancy, research on leadership preparation in ITE is steadily growing. Educational research within early childhood education has impacted on the Australian early childhood policy context with leadership now embedded in the national quality framework (NQF) regulating the early childhood and care settings (Diamond, 2014; Nuttall, Thomas, & Henderson, 2018; Page & Waniganayake, 2019; Stamopoulos, 2015). Leadership training in ITE has been linked to capacity building, collective leadership, and cohesion within early childhood settings (Nuttall et al., 2018) with understandings of how effective leadership practices can impact on

**Table 1** Initial Teacher Education Program Audit

2019 QS Rank	University	Country	Initial Teacher Education Program			Leadership promoted in marketing material	Subject handbook available online	Evidence of Leadership Studies offered in ITE programs
			Undergraduate program	Postgraduate program	Internship			
	University College London	UK		X	X			
	Harvard University	USA		X		X	X	X
	Stanford University	USA		X		X	X	X
	University of Oxford	UK		X				
	University of Cambridge	UK		X		X		
	The University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong		X		X		
	University of Toronto, OISE	Canada		X		X	X	
	University of California, Berkeley	USA		X			X	X
	Columbia University	USA		X		X	X	
	University of California, Los Angeles	USA		X		X	X	
	University of Michigan	USA	X	X		X	X	X

The University of Sydney	Australia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
University of British Columbia	Canada	X							
= 14. Nanyang Technical University	Singapore	X	X	X					X
= 14. The University of Melbourne	Australia		X		X				X
Monash University	Australia	X				X			
University of Wisconsin-Madison	USA	X	X	X					X
Michigan State University	USA	X					X	X	
The University of Queensland	Australia	X	X	X					
The Education University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	X	X	X					X

the provision of high-quality learning (Page & Tayler, 2016). Research in early childhood education has found that effective leaders require expert knowledge of teaching and learning in order to lead best practice (Page & Waniganayake, 2019). Nuttall, Thomas, and Wood (2014) found that understandings of leadership have broadened in early childhood and care services with the introduction of leadership development within early childhood initial teacher education with a shift now evident in how leadership is understood and enacted with greater attention to “children’s pedagogy and adult learning” (Page & Waniganayake, 2019, p. 26).

Across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland, King et al. (2019) investigated the extent to which leadership learning is embedded within ITE across Ireland and Scotland. They found that leadership learning in ITE encouraged graduate teachers to lead from the beginning of their careers, encouraging a willingness to take on leadership opportunities, and instill confidence in exhibiting leadership skills. Graduates demonstrated receptivity toward leadership learning and indicated that “the seeds [of leadership] need to be planted in pre-service teacher education” (King et al., 2019, p. 11). The leadership programs seemed to create in the graduates an expectation to practice leadership from the commencement of their careers, understanding the impact of their individual and collective efforts in supporting student learning and improving the school. Graduates gained a sense of self-efficacy and confidence from the programs and the leadership learning developed leadership “readiness and confidence. . .for occasions when they might encounter resistance or opposition” (King et al., 2019, p. 14). Explicit leadership learning was seen to increase graduate teacher confidence in applying research to practice when entering the profession by developing an awareness and subsequent confidence to share expertise and lead their peers.

In a study conducted by Thomas and Brown (2019), they found that pre-service teachers were able to develop leadership capacity through collaborative inquiry in group activities. Their two-year study analyzed 453 student survey responses and 38 instructor survey responses and identified that pre-service teachers developed the four dimensions of teacher leadership skills: brokering, participative leadership, mediating, and forging close relationships (Harris, 2002) in small groups as they codesigned interdisciplinary learning units. Their research (Thomas & Brown, 2019) found that theory-informed instructional design within ITE has resulted in the development of teacher leadership skills in pre-service teachers. These findings will inform a redesign of ITE at the University of Calgary not only to best prepare graduates for teaching but to broaden their skills for teacher leadership in the profession.

As part of a redesign of all Master of Teaching courses at the University of Melbourne, leadership learning will become one of the key areas in the preparation of graduate teachers from 2022. Pre-service teachers will explore broad notions of teacher professionalism and leadership and develop understandings of the skills and capabilities needed in leading others as well as leading themselves. The new graduate entry courses will look to foster leadership among its teacher graduates in a range of ways, including the introduction of a core stand-alone leadership subject at the early childhood and secondary levels aimed at developing contemporary

understandings of “leadership” and “leading” in educational settings. This introduction of a leadership-focused subject will build on understandings of the role of teachers and explore their capacity to lead at all levels in educational settings. Leadership will be developed through specialized pathways in the primary course where pre-service teachers will develop the knowledge and capabilities required of subject learning leaders (such as literacy leaders and numeracy leaders) in primary settings. Furthermore, all Master of Teaching pre-service teachers will also extend their understandings of leadership and leading through work-integrated learning experiences which will drive their capstone research. The University of Melbourne approach to leadership learning in initial teacher education is aimed at attracting prospective students to a career in teaching by creating leadership awareness and developing leadership competencies in readiness for the opportunities to exercise leadership. Recognition of the importance of presenting a whole of career view of teaching including the role of leadership in centers and schools will better prepare graduate teachers for the reality of the profession as they enter, and hopefully retain them in the profession for the opportunities that lie ahead.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

Leadership in ITE is an emerging field of practice and research, and one that seems to now have a place in educational leadership. There is a continuing mounting of evidence of the impact of school leadership on student and school outcomes (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010), across principal (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021), middle leader (Gurr, 2023; Leithwood, 2016; Lipscombe, Tindall-Ford, & Lamanna, 2021), teacher leader (Schott et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), and distributed levels (Supovitz et al., 2019; Tian et al., 2016). It not only seems logical to now explore leadership preparation in ITE, but imperative to do so given how schools and the work of teachers is changing (Zhou, 2018).

There are many university ITE programs that now have some type of leadership learning (Acquaro, 2019), although there is considerable variation in these programs (Acquaro, 2019; King et al., 2019; Nuttall et al., 2018; Page & Waniganayake, 2019; Thomas & Brown, 2019). Although the programs seem to be well received and impactful on the graduate teachers within their ITE programs, there is a paucity of research about best practice leadership learning and the impact of these programs on graduates as they enter the profession. As more ITE programs incorporate leadership learning, it will become important to understand how these impact on preparedness of graduate teachers early in their careers, their motivation to lead, and the impact of leadership learning from their formative years to their leadership experiences later in their careers. Longitudinal research tracking the career of teachers who received ITE leadership training, and evaluations of various approaches to leadership preparation in ITE programs, will help to establish the field and lead to further refinement of programs.

This chapter is somewhat of a call to action. Although leadership in ITE is an emerging field, it is gaining momentum as many universities seek to better prepare their teacher graduates for school environments that are calling on leadership skills early in teaching careers. Indeed, it is perhaps a moral and professional responsibility to have leadership programs in ITE – as a response to the environments graduates face, but also as part of the leadership pipeline of graduate teachers, teacher leaders, middle leaders, and senior leaders, culminating in the principalship. Leadership by many is now an important part of school success, and preparing teacher graduates for this is now an important part of ITE.

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# Mentoring for Women Academics: What Works

# 94

Lisa Catherine Ehrich

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## Abstract

For decades now, mentoring has been hailed as an important workplace learning and career development activity for women and men across a variety of organizational contexts including universities and schools, hospitals, corporations, government departments, and not-for-profit and community-based establishments. Since the 1970s, there has been a recognition that mentoring has great potential to enhance the learning and career outcomes of women and, for this reason, there has been a proliferation of formal mentoring programs established to support them. These formal mentoring programs for women are ubiquitous in universities in

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Australia and overseas. Their purpose ranges from providing women with career planning support, to socializing them into the role of academic, to developing their learning and specific skills in research and/or teaching. A recent development in the literature has been the argument for sponsorship for women academics rather than mentoring based on the assumption that the former is primarily associated with enhancing career outcomes while the latter tends to be concerned with psychosocial development. This chapter reviews the research and literature on mentoring for women in the academy in order to gain a better insight into its nature, purpose, scope, and benefits and challenges. It also considers some of the theoretical literature that has impacted upon and shaped its conceptualizations. The position taken in the chapter is that women in academe are likely to require multiple forms of mentoring and the specific type and focus will depend on their personal circumstances, interests, and needs.

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**Keywords**

Mentoring · Women · Academics · Universities · Development · Sponsorship · Career outcomes · Learning · Underrepresentation

**The Field of Memory**

The origins of the term mentor go back to the eighth century BCE to Homer's epic saga, *The Odyssey*. It is here that the character Mentor makes his first appearance in the literature. In *The Odyssey*, Mentor was the loyal servant of Odysseus who played the role of "father figure" to Odysseus' son, Telemachus, when Odysseus fought in the Trojan War which took him away from his family and homeland for over a decade. Odysseus entrusted Mentor to care for his son, to be in "loco parentis," and to be a watchful eye over him. After Mentor left the royal household, it was Athene, Goddess of wisdom, who took the form of Mentor and stepped in to provide role modelling, guidance, and support to Telemachus (Homer, 1992). Since the eighth century BCE and up until the latter part of the twentieth century, mentoring was a source of patronage in the arts, sciences, and across the professions. Mentors were often powerful, experienced, and successful men who used their influence to open doors for and support the work and careers of their protégés who invariably were men. In the 1970s, mentoring moved from being an individualistic elitist activity to one embraced by organizations where it became formalized and offered to women and members of target groups.

**The Field of Presence**

Mentoring today takes many forms, and there are three main types. First, a traditional approach to mentoring is akin to sponsorship. Here a more experienced person, a mentor, actively seeks out an up-and-coming talented protégé to develop and support and uses their power and influence to open doors for them in their career. Second, mentoring can be viewed as an "informal activity" where the mentor and mentee find each other. This type of relationship tends to be less hierarchical than traditional mentoring, but like traditional mentoring, it happens idiosyncratically. The third

perspective of mentoring that came into prominence in the 1970s is the formalized mentoring program. Based on the benefits of mentoring for the person receiving the mentoring, organizations designed targeted programs to support staff development. Today, formalized mentoring programs are used to develop novices and leaders alike as well as an affirmative action strategy where women and members of minority groups are identified as those recipients who would benefit mostly from a mentoring relationship. It is common practice among universities in both Australia and New Zealand to provide formal mentoring programs for women (Devos, 2008). Regardless of the type of mentoring arrangement or relationship in place, mentoring continues to be advocated as a valuable learning-, development-, and career-enhancing approach for individuals especially women.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Mentoring is a field of research and writing that has borrowed heavily from a variety of disciplines, theories, and perspectives over the past decades. For example, disciplines such as economics, psychology, and sociology have influenced the way mentoring has been depicted in the literature and enacted in practice. Within economics, human capital theory and leader member exchange theory view mentoring as a transactional activity or exchange that takes place between a mentor and a protégé/mentee. In contrast, developmental psychology including adult learning theory and career development theory has viewed mentoring as a relationship based on learning, growth, and development. Taken from sociology is Foucault's (1983) concept of governmentality, which has been used to understand the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and the mentored as it considers questions as: Who can govern? Who are governed? There continues to be a lack of consensus on what mentoring is, and some writers cite the reason for this is due to the great diversity of perspectives and theories that continue to influence and shape the way it is conceptualized.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

There have been several ruptures that have impacted on how mentoring is understood today. After centuries of mentoring being a source of patronage for professionals, the first rupture occurred in the second part of the twentieth century with the recognition that not only was access to a mentor likely to enhance the career outcomes of those who were mentored, but a formalized approach to mentoring was needed in organizations to ensure mentoring was a learning activity that could reach many people. In particular, women and members of minority groups were targeted as potential beneficiaries of these programs since they had been largely overlooked by traditional mentoring.

The second rupture was the move away from traditional one-on-one mentoring where the mentor is usually older and more experienced than the mentored to different arrangements of informal mentoring including co-mentoring, peer mentoring, mutual mentoring, network mentoring, community-based mentoring, and group mentoring – all designed to make mentoring a more collaborative, mutually supportive activity and beneficial to the parties concerned. A third rupture that occurred in the 1990s was the introduction of e-mentoring, made possible because of the influence of web-based

technologies pervasive in daily life and work. E-mentoring transcends geographical boundaries as a mode of communication enabling mentors and mentees to connect through a variety of electronic means. A fourth and final rupture that has been evident in the business sector and promoted within academe since 2010 has been a move toward “sponsorship” programs and activities for women based on the power of sponsorship to create career-enhancing opportunities and advancement.

### Critical Assumptions

Mentoring is a learning activity that provides both career development and psychosocial support. It can be experienced differently based on the type of mentoring that is undertaken, its focus, and degree of formality or informality governing the relationship. Its effectiveness can be understood within the context of a relationship between the parties concerned, usually a mentor, a more experienced person, and a protégé/mentee, a less experienced person. It can be one-on-one, or it can take the form of a network or community. While the research suggests that mentoring yields advantages to women academics, it is not without its challenges and issues. It is argued that women in academe are likely to require multiple forms of mentoring depending on their needs, interests, and personal circumstances.

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## Introduction

The idea of a guide or mentor who teaches, cares for, and is a protective figure for another person can be found in western and eastern mythology. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell (2008) explores the universal journey – life – that all heroes or human beings must experience and endure. According to the mythology, a mentor is a central figure who helps another in their journey towards self-knowledge, supporting them as they face trials and triumphs along the way.

The term Mentor was immortalized in Homer’s saga, *The Odyssey*, and according to some scholars, its reappearance in the eighteenth century through the work of Fénelon was significant since Fénelon’s interpretation of *The Odyssey* is one that is more akin to common-day understandings (Garvey, 2017). Fénelon explored the themes within *The Odyssey* where he viewed a mentor as a person who provided opportunities for another to learn, grow, and reflect on their life experiences (Garvey, 2017). This perspective of mentoring fits with today’s definition that sees a mentor as a teacher or adult developer who supports and challenges another and provides psycho-social support.

A seminal book that emerged in the 1970s in the United States that was concerned with mentoring relationships was Daniel Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee’s (1978) *The Seasons of a Man’s Life*. They described mentoring as “one of the most complex and developmentally important a man can have in early adulthood” (p. 97). Yet, since the 1970s, researchers have argued that this relationship is important not only for men but also for women such as women academics (Meschitti & Smith, 2017; Voytko et al., 2018), women managers (Ehrich & Kimber, 2016), and women scientists (UNESCO, 2017). Mentoring has been identified as a critical relationship not only to support academic women’s career development but also to

help redress their underrepresentation in leadership positions and in traditional male-dominated areas such as science (Meschitti & Smith, 2017).

The focus of this chapter, then, is an investigation of mentoring for women in the academy or university. It begins with a discussion of three broad categorizations, moves on to consider some definitions, and provides an illustration of three theoretical insights that have been used to illuminate the relationship between women and mentoring. The next part of the chapter considers formal mentoring programs and provides some current examples of programs available for women in universities across the world. A discussion of the benefits and challenges of mentoring for women is discussed next. In the final part of the chapter, some consideration is given to the notion of “sponsorship,” an activity aligned to mentoring, that has been advocated in recent times as a way forward for women in the academy.

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## Mentoring: Three Broad Categorizations

There are at least three different types of mentoring arrangements that are important to understand, and these are traditional, informal, and formal mentoring. Traditional mentoring has been around for centuries and refers to an experienced person who chooses to develop a protégé because the protégé shows certain abilities and talents. This version of mentoring usually includes the role of “sponsor” as the mentor uses their power and status to open doors for the protégé and helps them achieve career advancement. Informal mentoring arrangements sometimes occur when mentors and protégés/mentees find each other and decide to work together (Clutterbuck, 2004). Common to both traditional and informal mentoring is the idea that mentors and mentees work together of their own volition: traditional mentors seek out protégés, and informal mentors find mentees (or vice versa) with whom to form an alliance. In the context of higher education, traditional or informal mentoring usually occurs between a junior and more senior academic.

In contrast, formal mentoring is a twentieth-century phenomenon that was introduced to try to “recreate” traditional or informal mentoring (de Vries, Webb, & Eveline, 2006). Formal mentoring operates as part of a program used by organizations to develop new staff, aspiring leaders, or target groups such as women or members of minority groups. Formal mentoring programs can be described as a human resource development strategy in which the organization identifies the goals of the program, establishes its parameters, and selects and then matches mentors with mentees (Ragins & Cotton, 1999, in Ehrlich, 2008). A great advantage of formal mentoring programs has been their availability to staff who wish to be mentored.

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## What Is Mentoring: Some Definitional Considerations

Mentoring defies simple definition and, to date, there is no consensus on a scientific definition (Jacobi, 1991; Meschitti & Smith, 2017). One of the reasons for its “definitional vagueness” (Jacobi, 1991) can be traced to the wealth and variety of different

theoretical perspectives or, as Garvey (2017) says, different “underpinning philosophies” (p. 3) of mentoring. Not surprisingly, it becomes problematic to review the literature on mentoring because mentoring fulfills different purposes: it can be about learning and growth; sponsorship and visibility; or mutuality between colleagues.

Based on an analysis of over 150 research-based papers on mentoring in education contexts, Hansford, Tennent, and Ehrich (2003) defined mentoring as “a personal, helping relationship between a mentor and a mentee or protégé that includes professional development and growth and varying degrees of support” (p. 5). According to the authors, mentors are more experienced persons (not necessarily older) than the person(s) they mentor.

Another definition often cited in the field is by Kram (1985). Based on her study of mentoring dyads in the United States (US), she arrived at two key functions mentors perform, and these are career functions including sponsorship, coaching, protection, visibility, and challenging work assignments and psycho-social functions such as feedback, advice, friendship, and encouragement. In the sponsoring work they perform, mentors act as significant others in the lives of those they mentor because they provide them with resources, opportunities, and visibility that helps them advance in their careers. The career functions therefore aid the protégé to become visible and credible as they are being prepared for advancement. What Hansford et al.’s (2003) and Kram’s (1985) perspectives reveal are two related yet different ways of understanding mentoring. Common to both is the psycho-social supportive functions provided by a mentor, but they part ways in terms of the notion of “sponsorship.” Kram’s perspective on mentoring fits with a more traditional view of mentoring that sees a mentor as an expert and a sponsor who uses their power and influence to benefit a protégé’s career, while Hansford et al.’s (2003) definition highlights the developmental or learning focus inherent in the relationship.

Clutterbuck (2004) makes the distinction between developmental and sponsorship mentoring. He maintains that a developmental focus on mentoring is one that recognizes that mentoring is beneficial to both parties where both share power and knowledge. It emphasizes “empowerment and personal accountability” (p. 19), in contrast to sponsorship mentoring that pays attention to the “effective use of power and influence” (Clutterbuck, 2004, p. 19) by the mentor.

Over the last couple of decades, alternative types of mentoring such as co-mentoring or collaborative mentoring (Mullen, 2012), peer mentoring (McManus & Russell, 2007), and mutual mentoring (Yun, Baldi, & Sorcinelli, 2016) have emerged in the literature and research. Common to these perspectives is a focus on a developmental relationship between both parties that is egalitarian, mutually beneficial, and involves power sharing. These alternative views emphasize the “development” side of mentoring because of their concern to create a relationship based on psycho-social support, collegiality, and learning. Because of the great variety and types of mentoring arrangements, mentoring relationships vary in intensity and focus and will have very different outcomes.

## Theoretical Insights Pertaining to Women and Mentoring

There have been multiple theories that have been used to understand mentoring ranging from developmental theories that focus on age and stage, to economic theories such as social exchange theory and human capital theory, to learning theories such as social learning theory. Three key theories, each of which offers a unique perspective regarding women and mentoring, are considered here. They are homosocial reproduction theory and homophily that offer an explanation as to why women tend to be overlooked in traditional mentoring relationships; relational cultural theory that has been used to explain the mentoring process most suitable for women in academe; and Foucault's notion of governmentality that has been used to explore issues of how women navigate power in institutions.

### Homosocial Reproduction or Homophily

Much of the early research on mentoring observed that women were being denied traditional mentoring relationships which had negative implications for their career opportunities. Indeed some current writing in the field (see Blood et al., 2012; Levine, Lin, Kern, Wright, & Carrese, 2011; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014) continues with this argument especially for women academics in non-traditional areas and in senior leadership positions. This point is explored later on. An early ethnographic study of a large corporation in the United States by Kanter (1977) found that male managers sought out and sponsored up-and-coming males in the organization rather than choosing female members of staff. She used the term "homosocial reproduction" to explain this exclusionary practice that had the result of restricting women's career advancement and growth. In more recent times, a related term, "homophily," has been used to explain the way similar people (in terms of gender, class, age) develop relationships, communicate with one another, and associate with each other more often than with people who are different from themselves (van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). When men form part of the critical mass or are in the majority in an organization, they will "tend to have more homophilous network relationships than women" (van den Brink & Benschop, 2014, p. 474). Choice homophily, then, is said to represent a bias when gatekeepers in an organization, such as a university, are men since women will find it challenging to access academic networks. By gatekeepers, van den Brink and Benschop refer to "elite academics" (p. 462) who have considerable power and influence to support and promote staff to professorial levels. The theoretical concept of homophily could also be extended to issues of race or culture to explain how people of color can be overlooked by traditional mentoring arrangements and informal networks.



## Relational Cultural Theory

The second theoretical insight considered here is relational cultural theory (RCT). It is grounded in human development understandings regarding the importance of relationships between people. It is attributed to the work of Jean Baker Miller and was developed initially as way of exploring women's psychological experiences but today is applied to understand all human experience (Jordan, Hartling, & Baker, 2008). Central ideas within RCT include "all growth occurs in connection . . . all people yearn for connection and . . . growth-fostering relationships are created through mutual empathy and empowerment" (Jordan et al., 2008, p. 1).

Hammer, Trepal, and Speedlin (2014) use the basic ideas behind RCT and put forward five relational mentoring strategies for women faculty. These are attend to power in relationship, focus on mutuality, foster authenticity, listen to voice, and build a sense of community and connection. Regarding power in the relationship, a "power with" stance is viewed as preferable to a "power over" stance (Miller in Hammer et al., 2014), where the mentor is able to use their power to empower the mentee. A focus on mutuality refers to the idea that both parties are seen to benefit and are influenced by the mentoring relationship. Fostering authenticity refers to mentors who would be open and willing to share experiences with mentees and to encourage mentees to be true to themselves. Listen to voice refers to listening to one another and providing opportunities for mutual support and encouragement (Hammer et al., 2014). The final strategy "build a sense of community and connection" (p. 12) is one where the mentor helps the mentee to confront fears and concerns by creating a climate of connection and support. Hammer et al. (2014) argue that all five strategies would be appropriate to use when mentoring female faculty.

Another paper that has argued the case for RCT to underpin the way mentoring relationships should be experienced by women is by Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016). They argue that women academics need other women academics to mentor because they have similar subjective experiences based on their lived experience of being a female. As a developmental perspective, RCT whether it is applied to male/female mentor dyads or female/female mentor dyads fits with alternative mentoring arrangements such as co-mentoring and peer-mentoring since it focuses on mutuality, sharing power, and growth-based relationships.

## Governmentality

The third perspective discussed here moves away from humanistic notions of mentoring as understood in relational cultural theory, to locate it within its political and institutional contexts. Devos (2007, 2008) uses Foucault's (1983) notion of "governmentality" and "subjectivity" as a way of understanding how mentoring for women can be construed within organizational power relations within universities. Based on interviews with women academics, Devos (2008) argues that mentoring positions women both as active subjects who manage themselves through their relationship with their mentor and acted upon or "fashioned as a suitable academic

subject” (p. 200) by their mentor. The former is considered “agentic” and is related to feminist theories of subjectivity, while the latter demonstrates a desire on the part of the woman mentee to be “acted upon by others” (Devos, 2004 in Devos, 2008). In this way, mentoring is construed “as a site of governmentality” where the woman is both self-governing and governed (Devos, 2007, p. 183).

Devos (2008) also points to two discourses that intersect, and these are gender equity and the enterprise culture of universities. For example, formal programs for women have been introduced as a gender equity initiative to redress some of the barriers they face in academe as well as help them develop new skills, knowledge, access to role models, and as a means of allowing them to feel less isolated. And at the same time, within the university as an enterprise, the performative culture demands that women not only improve their performance but also it governs women’s performance. Devos (2008) concludes that women seek to engage in mentoring programs so that they can improve themselves (in terms of the development of knowledge and skills) and to conform to institutional norms of success (Devos, 2008). Similarly, Brabazon and Schulz (2018) concur with Devos as they refer to these two competing discourses: gender equity and corporatism (characterized by performativity, quantifiable outcomes) in which mentoring has been identified as a strategy to support both. What Devos (2008) and Brabazon and Schulz (2018) have done in their respective papers is to underscore the impact of neoliberalism on the content and focus of mentoring arrangements for women.

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## Formal Mentoring Programs for Women in Universities

For over three decades, formal programs have been used as an affirmative action strategy to develop women’s career prospects and advancement in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Quinn, 2012). They have also been used for recruitment and retention purposes (Steele & Fisman, 2014). For example, Steele and Fisman refer to two medical faculties in the United States that have introduced mentoring programs for women to redress the high attrition rate of women faculty. In both of these examples, the mentoring programs were seen as being highly successful in achieving the goal of retaining women faculty.

Yet within formal programs available to women, there can be great diversity due to the differing nature, purpose, and focus of such programs (Devos, 2008; Quinn, 2012). While some of these programs focus on retention of women faculty (Steele & Fisman, 2014), others are designed to support women regarding research and teaching. Some target women/early career academics’ mentoring, while others are designed to redress the poor representation of women in senior positions (Quinn, 2012). Some focus on helping new faculty assimilate into the university culture (Voytko et al., 2018), while others focus on productivity outcomes such as promotion, grant applications, and research publications (Mayer et al., 2014). Some are offered over a year, while others are offered for six months; some are part of leadership development programs (de Vries et al., 2006), and others are less structured and are based on a peer support model. Some match women mentees with women mentors, while other programs match women

mentees with either men or women mentors (Quinn, 2012). Usually all programs are voluntary for the participants (Devos, 2008). While these programs have become fairly common in universities across the world (Quinn, 2012), not all faculty departments have mentoring programs. For example, mentoring programs for women faculty in medicine are not common (Voytko et al., 2018), and formal mentoring programs are not necessarily pervasive in every country in the world. For example, Chitsamatanga, Rembe, and Shumba (2018) argue that while a type of mentoring exists in universities in South Africa, formal mentoring programs to support women academics do not exist.

As an illustration of formal mentoring programs for women academics, a brief description of four such programs from four countries (United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia) is provided here.

Rush University in the United States, whose focus is healthcare, provides a mentoring program for women faculty to support them to achieve their career goals. (<https://www.rushu.rush.edu/about/faculty-affairs/rush-mentoring-programs/rush-women-mentoring-program>) According to the website, the program aims to help women with promotion into leadership ranks, provide visibility, and promote their successes, as well as uses peer mentoring to nurture a sense of community among women faculty. Rush University also offers two other mentoring programs (available to both men and women) that focus on research and teaching respectively.

Durham University in the United Kingdom offers a number of initiatives to advance women's equality in the university, and two of these initiatives are a network that brings together female staff to offer mutual support and networking to discuss key issues of importance; and the other is a women in academic mentoring program. The key aim of the mentoring program is to assist women's career in higher education. Interested women academics are matched with trained mentors across the university. (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/lets.network/femaleacademicprogression/femaleacademicprogressionmentoring/courseinformation/>)

A mentoring program provided by the University of Otago in New Zealand (<https://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc/staff/women/mentor/index.html>) is offered as part of a special women's professional development program. It has been designed for more senior experienced academics to support less experienced women academics with areas such as planning and development for their career, developing a research profile, helping enhance teaching, and establishing networks. On the expression of interest form, potential women mentees are asked to nominate the areas with which they would like their mentor to support/guide them. Included here are areas such as "creating and maintaining a research profile; enhancing teaching; career planning; knowledge of the wider university and its culture [and] establishing networks."

Introduced in 2000, Monash University offers a women's mentoring program to both female professional and academic staff on a biennial basis (<https://www.monash.edu/gender-equity/programs/mentoring>). As stated on the website, "the program facilitates mentoring partnerships which provide women with opportunities to reflect on and grow their leadership capabilities, build professional skills and more effectively navigate Monash."

From the aforementioned examples, some of the different foci of these programs include promotion and visibility, mutual support and networking, help with research and teaching, leadership and professional skills, and socialization into the university's culture.

Another argument for the introduction of formal mentoring programs for women has been to redress (at least in part) women's underrepresentation in senior leadership positions and also in non-traditional areas such as STEM (science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics). The next section highlights the extent to which women are underrepresented in leadership and STEM within the university environment.

## Women's Underrepresentation

In university leadership positions in Australia, women continue to be underrepresented. Based on 2016 statistics, 56% of students in Australian universities are women, yet one-third of vice chancellors were women in 2018 (WomenCount Report, in de Vries & Binns, 2018). In the same year in the United States, 30% of college presidencies (a role similar to vice chancellors in Australia) were held by women (Johnson, 2017 in Moreland & Thompson, 2019).

In Australia, women make up 25% of deputy vice chancellor roles and 25% of vice chancellor roles (WomenCount Report, in de Vries & Binns, 2018). In 2019, around 30% of women work at the professorial level (i.e., level E), and just under 41% work at the associate professor level (Level D) illustrating that women senior academics continue to be underrepresented in Australian universities (Universities Australia, 2020). According to Voytko et al. (2018), almost half of the students undertaking medical schools in the United States are women, while 65% of all women faculty work as assistant professors and instructor level. Only 13% of women faculty are full professors compared with 30% of males at that level (Voytko et al., 2018). Women's underrepresentation in the professorship is widespread in the European Union, where the average percentage of female full professors is 20% (European Union, 2012, in van den Brink & Benschop, 2014).

Women from minority groups in the United States such as Black African American, non-white Hispanic, native American, Alaskan, and Pacific Islanders are significantly underrepresented in STEM with Petersen citing that while they constitute nearly 18% of the population, they make up only 3% of academics in science and engineering tenure track faculty. According to Petersen, Pearson, and Moriarty (2020), women from minority groups are grossly underrepresented in STEM. Moreover, there is a lack of diversity at senior levels of leadership within universities (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016). While women's underrepresentation in leadership and STEM has been cited as justification for formal mentoring programs, another reason has been the range of benefits they yield for the women who are mentored. The next section of the chapter considers some of the benefits as well as the challenges of mentoring women in the academy.

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## Benefits of Mentoring

Based on a comprehensive literature review of 51 articles concerned with mentoring and women in academe, Meschitti and Smith (2017) concluded that overwhelmingly mentoring has clear positive gains for women who are mentored. One of the key gains was in the area of psycho-social support. In terms of career outcomes, the

authors maintained that they were not as clear-cut since career outcomes would likely need a more long-term view. However, they cited some studies that did provide evidence of the career benefits of mentoring for women in academe. One of these studies was by Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns, and Marshall (2007).

A comprehensive longitudinal study by Gardiner et al. (2007) was used to explore the outcomes of a formal mentoring program implemented for junior female academics at an Australian university from 1998 to 2004. A control group of women academics of similar standing who did not receive the formal mentoring was used for comparative reasons. Not only did the majority of mentees find the mentoring experience positive, but compared to the control group they were more likely to stay at the university (i.e., 14% compared to 33% of those in the control group); had higher rates of promotion (i.e., 68% compared to 43%); had a higher average amount in external research grants; and produced a higher rate of scholarly publications. In one area, job satisfaction, there was little difference between the mentored women and the women in the control group. The findings of the study led Gardiner et al. to conclude that the university's formal mentoring program was highly beneficial.

Based on an integrative literature review involving 27 research studies concerned with mentoring outcomes for female health academics, Cross et al. (2019) found there were five key benefits for these women. These included career development (including career planning, opportunities for visibility, and achieving academic goals conducive to promotion and academic success); personal development (including access to role models and opportunities for reflection upon their values); academic craftsmanship which is said to include specific skills involved in academic teaching, research, publication, and grant writing); psycho-social support (including confidence, assertiveness, caring); and job satisfaction. The 27 studies were said to represent a variety of mentoring arrangements including formal and informal mentoring, traditional mentoring, and peer and collaborative forms of mentoring.

Within their literature review of mentoring women in the academy, Meschitti and Smith (2017) reported that alternative forms of mentoring such as peer mentoring and group mentoring as well as mentoring circles were found to be beneficial for women involved in them. They outlined the benefits as "increased opportunities of learning from others, sharing information, and avoiding isolation" (p. 180). These alternative arrangements were also seen as beneficial because they allow more women who are seeking mentors to have access to other mentors. A study by Koontz, Walters, and Edkin (2019) explored a specially designed program called "community mentoring" which combined multiple mentors, peer models, networks, community support, and vertical mentoring for women. Thirty-five women faculty with mixed ranks, ages, and ethnicities from one university joined the program, and everyone was both mentor and mentee. According to Koontz et al. (2019), the women participants expressed "an increased awareness of resources and positionality, alongside a sense of empowerment through more consciously realising their career-goals and ability to address associated obstacles" (p. 110).

Another example of an alternative mentoring program that was virtual was discussed by Petersen et al. (2020). Their program which operated across 20 universities in the United States was designed to support underrepresented

minority women working in STEM. The women participants came from all ranks and levels across the 20 different universities, and among the participants were multiple mentors who played different roles according to their needs. According to Petersen et al. (2020), the key outcomes of the program were mainly psycho-social in focus as participants reported increased confidence, less of a sense of isolation, better coping strategies, and increased self-efficacy. The focus of the program was described as “empathetic mentoring” (p. 319) since it was based on the assumption that colleagues of similar racial backgrounds would be best able to understand and support each other. The findings from Petersen et al.’s study have echoed many studies that have explored the benefits of multiple mentoring arrangements (sometimes called network or communal mentoring) where women can gain input, support, and guidance from many mentors at different times.

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## Challenges of Mentoring

While the literature has shown that mentoring for women in the academy has multiple benefits with few minor drawbacks (Meschitti & Smith, 2017), writing in the area of mentoring for women of color has revealed a number of challenges. Based on a meta-synthesis of 22 academic journal articles published between 2004 and 2015 exploring mentoring for women of color (i.e., any woman who is not white) in higher education, Cobb-Roberts et al. (2017) found that traditional mentoring arrangements tend to be unsatisfactory for women of color since they do not always address issues of diversity nor are they always culturally sensitive. Almost half of the articles reviewed reported on the benefits of alternative mentoring relationships such as peer mentoring, co-mentoring, and feminist mentoring for women of color as they were seen to be able to better cater to their needs. Another key finding was the importance of psycho-social support for mentees in cross-racial relationships. These are relationships where mentoring occurs among women of color from different disciplines and backgrounds and/or with white women/men.

Graham’s (2019) meta-synthesis of 103 papers that considered women faculty across African, Latino, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) backgrounds came to a similar conclusion to Cobb-Roberts et al. (2017) that “traditional mentoring models fail to fulfill their career advancement needs” (p. 14) and mentoring relationships are not always responsive to mentees’ diverse identities. Graham found that while there was some evidence of career advancement and career support experienced by women of color who were mentored, psycho-social support was viewed as inadequate because of the complexity of cross-cultural relationships. According to Graham, effective mentoring for ALANA women should include providing advice regarding promotion and tenure processes; how to meet various expectations; introduce them to networks that reduce their isolation; and provide them with resources. Moreover, relationships grounded in respect and mutual trust were seen as critical for the success of the mentoring relationships.

The reviews by Cobb-Roberts et al. (2017) and Graham (2019) have highlighted how issues of power, race, and gender can affect the mentoring relationship and how

mentors and those whom they mentor need to navigate and negotiate their relationship carefully. Another important issue raised by writers is the question of same-gender mentoring. The argument for same-gender mentoring relationships has been around for decades with key advantages including women being more comfortable working with other women, and women can act as role models for women (Clutterbuck, 2004; Hansman, 2002). Arguments against suggest that there may not be enough (senior) women to act as mentors to other women and if sponsoring mentoring is the focus, then perhaps a male mentor is preferable because of the likelihood of him having greater access to power (Clutterbuck, 2004; Hansman, 2002).

An issue that is discussed often in relation to cross-gender mentoring relationships is the difficulties that can emerge from these relationships based on concerns regarding “sexual innuendo [and] sexual harassment” (Hansman, 2002, p. 44). Clawson and Kram (1984) identified “sexual risks” as a challenge that can be present within male-female mentoring dyads, and these risks are said to occur when the relationship between the pair becomes sexual; when others suspect it is sexual (even if it isn’t); and when both parties play stereotypical roles (i.e., where the female is dependent and the male is all-knowing). Reflecting on women leaders in the university, Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) argue that “men will continue to be important mentors for women, [and] . . . women also need to have access to the perspectives of other women who have forged the way into higher education administration at the same time” (p. 307).

While Meschitti and Smith’s review (2017) reported the benefits of alternative mentoring arrangements for women, they also pointed out the difficulties that can emerge in peer mentoring/mentoring networks. One of these difficulties relates to “group dynamics” (p. 182). Citing Esnard et al.’s (2015) research, Meschitti and Smith sum up some of these frustrations as “perceived passivity of some members; perceived pressure to perform; lack of willingness to address in-depth the issues related to race and gender” (p. 181). Because mentoring relies heavily on interpersonal interactions between and among the parties concerned, it is not surprising that tensions and frustrations can characterize the relationship.

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## **What Type of Mentoring Is Needed for Women in the Academy? Is Sponsorship the New Answer?**

The aforementioned discussion has demonstrated that not only are there many types of approaches to mentoring women in the academy, but research has shown that both traditional and alternative forms of mentoring as well as formal and informal mentoring can yield important career and/or psycho-social outcomes for women. The argument presented here is one that was made by Ehrich and Kimber (2016) in relation to women managers. They argued that women would benefit greatly from access to multiple mentoring arrangements ranging from traditional mentoring to informal mentoring and working one-on-one or within a network or community of



others where women could appreciate the whole gamut of benefits from a mentoring experience.

As part of multiple mentoring arrangements for women, Ehrich and Kimber (2016) did not discount the traditional mentoring model that includes sponsorship as they saw its potential to support women's career advancement and development. According to the authors, they viewed sponsorship as a role played by traditional mentors following Kram (1985), whereby they use power and influence to enhance a woman protégé's career. Sponsorship has also been described as "the active and deliberate use of power (organizational position, professional standing, influence and connection) to facilitate the careers of others" (de Vries & Binns, 2018, p. 6). Although the research has shown that it is more difficult for women to be selected by traditional (male) mentors (because of homosocial reproduction and homophily), Ehrich and Kimber (2016) made an argument that if they were sponsored by a powerful other, they might be able to reap the rewards of this type of association just as men have done for centuries. Yet they were acutely aware that their argument was at odds with feminist values that eschew hierarchical and elitist notions of mentoring (Ehrich & Kimber, 2016). As discussed earlier in the chapter, feminist values are said to be firmly grounded in relational cultural theory where relationships between mentoring dyads are based on empowerment, the promotion of knowledge and skills, and personal autonomy (Schramm, 2000, p. 10).

In recent times, there has been a resurgence of interest in "sponsorship" for women based on a belief that mentoring programs have not gone far enough in advancing women's careers or in redressing women's underrepresentation in senior positions (Catalyst, 2010; de Vries & Binns, 2018; Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), 2016). For example, over the last 10 years, there has been a move to institutionalize sponsorship via programs and through other initiatives in the corporate world (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2010). Some of the sponsorship programs have targeted not only women but also women from diverse cultural backgrounds. de Vries and Binns (2018) along with other authors (Hewlett et al., 2010; WGEA, 2016) distinguish sponsorship from mentoring since they equate the former with career advancement (including promotion) and the latter with psycho-social support. de Vries and Binns (2018) give the following examples of sponsorship activities: recommending an academic to be on a panel or committee; providing letters of recommendation/references; introducing an academic to key people who could assist them in some way; providing resources such as funding or creating opportunities for an individual to visit another university; invitations to be part of research grants; and co-authoring and co-presenting research or other work (de Vries & Binns, 2018, p. 10). While de Vries and Binns (2018) present an unambiguous distinction between mentoring and sponsorship, it may not be so clear-cut. As indicated earlier, it would not be uncommon for a traditional mentor in a university context to engage in any or all of the activities of sponsorship. Moreover, a small body of research has revealed that some types of formal mentoring programs have been successful in yielding concrete career outcomes for women academics. For example, research conducted on a



formal mentoring program in an Australian university by Gardiner et al. (2007) revealed enhanced career outcomes for women in the program (i.e., promotion, securing of external grants, and greater research outputs) compared to those who were not part of it. Similarly, two important career outcomes – increased publications and promotion – were said to be the result of women faculty’s participation in peer mentoring programs (see Mayer et al., 2014; Turnbull & Roberts, 2005).

Based on their qualitative study with academics across two universities in Australia, de Vries and Binns (2018) continue to argue for mentoring programs for women based on their advantages and benefits, some of which have been identified in this chapter. Unlike others who advocate for sponsorship programs, de Vries and Binns’ position is that sponsorship is the responsibility of all senior leaders in universities and it should become a “legitimate business process” (p. 25). They claim that at present, sponsorship (like traditional mentoring) in universities tends to be *ad hoc*, informal, and demonstrated through unconscious decisions where some academics are given opportunities or access to resources and others are not. Their solution is to make sponsorship a visible, inclusive, and integral process of the work of senior leaders. “By taking sponsorship out from behind closed doors, . . . [organizations such as universities] will improve their accountability towards an equitable and fair career development and promotion process” (Carter & Silva in de Vries & Binns, 2018, p. 25). de Vries and Binns’ (2018) argument is a worthwhile one that can be construed as another important institutional response to support women’s career enhancement in universities.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

This chapter has endeavored to provide a discussion regarding the importance and place of mentoring for women in the academy. The task was challenging because mentoring can be understood in so many ways because of the theoretical perspectives that underpin it and because of the unique way it can be experienced and enacted. The chapter has highlighted some of the beneficial outcomes for women including various forms of psycho-social support and friendship, career development, opportunities for learning and developing skills, and socialization into academe. At the same time, it has its challenges and examples that were considered included the problems associated with both cross-gender, same-gender, and cross-racial mentoring, in addition to tensions arising from interpersonal dynamics between the parties. The final part of the chapter considered the shift to sponsorship, a related but more focused career development activity, that has begun to gain currency in universities. The position taken here is that de Vries and Binns’ (2018) view of sponsorship is one more important initiative that fits within the overall framework of multiple forms of mentoring. As with mentoring programs, there will need to be not only strong institutional support for sponsorship to flourish but also a big commitment by senior leaders to be proactive, transparent, and visible in the ways they support the careers of women in their specific work areas.

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# Issues and Decision Points with Online Leadership Preparation

# 95

Michael C. Schwanenberger

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### Abstract

When chronicling the rise and impact of online leadership preparation programs in educational leadership and management, there are a number of common issues and decision points involved. This chapter presents online leadership preparation programs from their beginning to the current state of “Must be included for program survival.” The major implications for educational leadership and management are providing the basis for asking reflexive questions about the inclusion and continuation of online delivery in leadership preparation programs. The chapter further utilizes the concept of presenting both a history and commentary about the field which includes ruptures and discontinuities in development. Additionally, the chapter includes what Michael Foucault terms “enunciative fields, in the discipline, to include: *The field of memory*, *The field of presence*, and *The field of concomitance*. The importance of perceptions cannot be overestimated, particularly when encountering a novel experience. Educators sometimes inappropriately generalize or project familiar, yet inappropriate, aspects of a situation to a new situation that may be nothing like the old. The Web classroom is arguably a revolution in teaching and learning. Even as it has grown in use, it continues to represent a radical departure from the familiar brick-and-mortar real-time face-to-face instructional experience.

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### Keywords

Higher education leadership · School leadership · Online learning · Leadership preparation · Professional development · Distance learning · Leadership development

### The Field of Memory

Though it may seem that online education had its beginnings in the late 1900s, the concept of distance learning first came into practice in the mid-nineteenth century when the US Postal Service was developed. The notion of reliable, long-distance correspondence led to the development and implementation of what were called commercial “correspondence colleges,” where instructional missives would be distributed through the postal service between students and professors (Visual Academy, n.d.). Today, at-distance education programs have become more sophisticated and accessible due to the proliferation of the web and digital technology. Elite institutions around the world now offer open courseware, online degrees, and online classes that are both legitimizing and popularizing the idea of education from a computer. Additionally, it is estimated that one out of four college students are enrolled in at least one online class. According to the Visual Academy (n.d.), there were over 4.5 million students enrolled in online classes in 2009 and the most popular of these courses was a Master of Science in Business Administration (MBA). It is likely the

trend toward online learning will increase well into the future. In fact, 83% of US institutions have indicated they anticipate online enrollments increasing within the next 10 years (Visual Academy, n.d.).

### **The Field of Presence**

The Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has created a radical variance in thinking as planning, by which all leaders are scrambling to find both answers and direction. There will be no returning to normal as educational leadership programs will be required to develop new norms, as the old norms will be nonexistent.

As educational institutions prepare to re-open in what will be a new post-COVID 19 world, these institutions, and their educational leadership preparation programs are all strategizing what this return will look like, and be like for students, faculty, and program leaders/decision makers. In many ways this will truly be a new day, with a new beginning in educational leadership preparation. All institutions will face the challenges of incorporating what was learned during COVID-19, both positive and negative, when implementing change. Without a doubt, more courses will be delivered fully online, or at least these courses will be delivered in blended format. With this change in course delivery, instructional methodology and pedagogy must also change to effectively meet student learning objectives. Students have now experienced firsthand the change to online instruction, and they will therefore demand programmatic change.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

As new theories in online learning continue to develop and shine different constructs on the nature of leadership, the impact of these new theories on online learning organizations and their leadership will become evident as stages of organizational development are studied. Resilience is a key life success trait that can spell the distinction in online learning success or failure of learning experiences for students, and the online classroom is characterized by some unique challenges regarding student resilience.

“Back in the day,” we understood that “distance” learning referred to both the physical distance between instructor and student and the fact that something mediated that distance. Then came the internet, and we began to learn what that meant and how that could mediate the learning experience much more directly and also modify the delivery of content. Eventually the internet’s inherent flexibility became obvious – and we began to call things “online,” referring to the mediating of the learning experience and delivery of content, regardless of physical distance. The flexibility of online learning became so appealing that it was no longer about physical locations at all but simply maximizing the flexibility in time and space. Students and instructors preferred the scheduling flexibility around which real life could still occur while programs of study were being pursued. Then complete degrees at all levels became possible.

Additionally, the technology of the internet and its webbed links changed how content was organized and delivered – and altered how content could be processed by students. Then came social media and the opportunities of real-time connections. This modified our approaches to instructional design as we began to realize some



content could be presented in real time, although asynchronous still provided the flexibility we all enjoyed so much. The advent of social media also changed how communication and exchange happened in society in general, and began to change the expectations of students. By this stage, wireless and mobility became advanced and changed the expectations of immediacy and connectivity for everyone.

Learning is inherently a social activity. By sharing insights and examples with one another, we are all enriched in our own individual learning journeys. The online learning environment has made it possible to forge such learner bonds on a global level. No longer are we restricted to the same concrete day, time, and place to “all study together,” as in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. This global context allows for a broader scope and depth of exposure to a variety of learning ideas Dereshiwsky, p. 163.

As the growth of online education continues to expand exponentially, course developers and faculty must understand the importance of relationships there by establishing and maintaining virtual connectiveness.

As a result of COVID-19 the psychological impact of online learning will be increasingly studied. One study found that, (1) students have started to get bored with online learning after the first 2 weeks of learning from home, (2) considerable anxiety on research subjects whose parents have low income, because they have to buy quotas to be able to participate in online learning, (3) mood or mood changes occur due to too many assignments and are considered ineffective by students, (Irawan et al., 2020, p. 53). The findings of this research suggest there is a need for counselors and psychologists to make a concerted effort to support the psychological well-being of students (Irawan et al., 2020).

What are the latest technologies to impact the evolution of online learning? According to [eLearningIndustry.com](https://www.elearningindustry.com), there were “5 Amazing eLearning Trends in 2016”: Mobile Learning; Gamification; Video-Based Training; Competency-Based Learning; and Big Data. In 2021 there are many more.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

In addition to the changes which students have experienced in course delivery, program faculty have also experienced a multitude of changes, and possibly more than their students have experienced. Faculty across the country who had never taught a course online prior to COVID-19 were forced to teach online courses with very short notice, and with very little preparation time. Even faculty who had limited online teaching experience were thrust into this new online world with minimal support. During this impending COVID-19 parading shift, universities will continue to scramble to develop quality professional development opportunities to meet the demands of faculty who want to increase their skills, knowledge and ability to provide remote instruction to their students. Faculty are likely to insist on the continuation of the positive aspects which have occurred in 2020.

Debate continues to exist in determining the quality of leadership preparation programs, as it relates to online, blended, and in-person delivery of courses. Knowing that educational leaders continue to work predominately in a face-to-face environment, does it make sense to assume that leadership preparation programs, and the courses which make up those precertification programs should continue to be



taught predominately in face-to-face or at least in blended format? This question is a key decision-making juncture in educational leadership programs. Can quality leadership development programs be taught in fully online environments? Can the interactive skills so necessary in the life of an educational leader be adequately acquired in an online program?

### **Critical Assumptions**

The growth of distance learning programs has many important side effects on higher. One of the important changes relates to the demographics of students enrolled. As an example, at the University of Phoenix, the average age of students is 33 and the majority of students enrolled in online classes are females. Moreover, 93% of all traditional universities including Harvard and Berkeley offer free online classes referred to as “open courseware” (Visual Academy, [n.d.](#)).

Graduate students are demographically, socially, and experientially different and ever changing. These students are requiring leadership preparation programs to be different than traditional leadership preparation programs. Today’s leadership preparation students are looking for convenience in program delivery as they shop for certification programs (driving distance, travel time, flexibility of course hours). Program cost is usually secondary to individual learning requirements and convenience in obtaining certification.

As technology improves and online programs become respected, education experts predict that distance education will continue to expand and complexify in the future. Some leaders in the realm predict that the number of online students will grow exponentially in the twenty-first century. As an example, to encourage online program growth, President Barack Obama pledged over \$500 million for the creation of new online course materials to fuel the industry.

Online leadership preparation programs are here to stay and the number of programs which are available, along with the increased variety of program delivery options, will only expand and be much more competitive, as the world shrinks, and as the field of leadership preparation becomes more competitive, especially from the “for-profit” higher education sector.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter provides a conceptual framework along with a brief historical background of online learning in educational leadership programs. Additionally, this chapter identifies the key issues and decision-making points which leaders must have in place to administer online courses within leadership preparation programs.

Online learning has become a ubiquitous and ever-expanding feature of instructional programming in educational institutions from elementary school through post-secondary education. As of 2013, over 80% of US research institutions offered online coursework, and if for no other reason than a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that online course delivery at the post-secondary level is pushing 100% (Visual Academy, [n.d.](#)).

Few scholars would argue that online learning provides some benefits over in-person instruction, both for the learner, and for the learning institution. Learners gain convenience, ease of access, and, frequently, more personalized learning in the online setting. Institutions benefit from the ability to offer coursework without being limited by students' lack of proximity to a particular location. Institutions may also experience online delivery as a more cost-effective and efficient way to deliver instruction, potentially reducing expenditures for classroom facilities and for personnel. When designed well, online courses offer the potential for greater personal connections and differentiated learning for students.

Much is required of individuals in leadership positions, particularly those who lead online learning programs. The online learning landscape will continue to change dramatically in the coming years, and the coming changes will affect instructional practices, the tools of technology, curricular standards, methods of assessment, and the faculty and program evaluation process. The purpose of the chapter is to provide a road map which if followed may be helpful as more and more program leaders ponder the fate of online leadership preparation.

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## Online Learning: Fad or Requirement?

According to a 2017 study by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), 94% of Children between the ages of 3 and 18 have access to a computer at home. Furthermore, NCES found that 65% of children had Internet access in 2015.

The use of technology is also prevalent in all aspects of professional life. For example, marketing depends on reliable access to current and prospective customers, as well as suppliers. Technology has expedited the speed and dependability of such communication channels. The ability to create databases and access them to generate financial reports has revolutionized the accounting function of business. Business documents can be more economically stored and retrieved from all locations without the need to generate mounds of paper (Crowder, *n.d.*).

Similarly, computer-based record-keeping and information retrieval occur in health care with regard to patient records. Laboratory analyses can be programmed in whole or in part for key medical tests. Furthermore, computer-assisted surgical systems (CAS) are now standard in the operating room (Corella, *n.d.*).

Likewise, government communications and record keeping have been revolutionized by technology. Document storage and retrieval of important records at the local, state, and national level can now occur with greatly enhanced speed and accuracy. Communications among various agencies can occur through multiple channels such as email and live chat. Additional examples, including promotions such as commemorative stamps issued by the United States Postal Service, are discussed on [techwalla.com](http://techwalla.com) (Suttle, *n.d.*).

The above examples barely scratch the surface regarding the applications of computer technology. A graduate program would be remiss in not preparing its students to be maximally qualified to apply such technology to their future activities in their personal and professional lives.

Indeed, online education reflects this need for maximum student preparation in its own ranks. As of 2018, there are over 28,662 fully accredited online higher education institutions, covering all levels from associate and certificate to doctoral degrees (2018 List of Accredited Online Colleges & Universities). This trend is supported by the concomitant growth of K-12 online educational institutions (Virtual Learning Academies & Online Private Schools, [n.d.](#)).

Given such evidence, some would argue that online learning is both a requirement and more importantly an opportunity both for students and faculty.

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## **Why Go Online, and What Are the Benefits to Students?**

The availability and accessibility of technology to students is perhaps one of the most critical issues with online instruction. There may be a difference, however, between undergraduate and graduate access to technology. For undergraduates even if a computer is not readily available at home, there are other ways for students to gain reliable computer access. For example, public libraries and Internet cafés have computer access available. They may have a friend, relative, or neighbor who might allow access to their computer for their studies. In addition, schools are increasingly ensuring that online classroom content can be dependably accessed via smartphones and tablets. All of these means of connectivity are also ways for students to continue to develop their computer navigation skills.

Many graduate students not only have home computers, but may also have them at their school-work stations. No longer are students tied down to a fixed day, time, and place to “all study together” as in the traditional brick-and-mortar real-time classroom setting. This added flexibility is a special plus for busy working adults and those with small children at home. There is no longer a need to jump into a car after a long day at work and fight 5 PM traffic jams to get to a brick-and-mortar classroom.

This benefit corresponds to the preceding one. With the increased prevalence of laptop and notebook computers, as well as social media devices (e.g., tablets and smartphones), classrooms can literally carry classrooms wherever desired. This is such a plus for those students who travel regularly on business, or who have a family vacation coming up. They no longer have to choose between one and the other commitments. Both travel and study can now be comfortably accommodated.

## **Greater Accommodation of Some Special-Need Student Populations**

Those students who are hearing-impaired no longer have to worry about engaging the services of a signer through campus services to accompany them to real-time classroom meetings. With the typical text-only communication format of the online classroom, they now face a level playing field with that of their non-hearing-impaired colleagues.

Adult learning theory highlights the benefits of peer-to-peer experiential learning as one of its primary principles (Pappas, 2013). What better way to broaden students' access to a wider diversity of viewpoints and experiences than in an online course which may contain students from different locations in the same classroom?

A substantial amount of communication in the online classroom takes place asynchronously. For example, discussion forums require text-based posts in response to the main discussion question as well as to other posts by classmates and instructor. In the extreme, all communication may take place in text-only in this online classroom. Some live meetings can be built into the class as well, using online classrooms such as Collaborate or Adobe Connect. Even during live sessions, however, students may need to use the chat box to type in a comment or question they may have during the live session.

### **Greater Attention to Netiquette in Written Communication**

This benefit is an extension of the preceding point about effective writing. Text-based communication can sometimes be misunderstood without the added benefit of visual and verbal cues (Davich, 2017). For example, is a brief message intended to be efficient? Or does it risk being misinterpreted as abrupt?

This benefit is an offshoot of the greater diversity and breadth of viewpoints made possible when students from a variety of locations are enrolled in the same online classroom. It also extends to courteous and respectful communication.

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### **Laying the Groundwork: Funding and Technology Issues**

There are three decision points which are important in moving to an online presence.

The first decision point is the extent to which the program personnel understand clearly the nature of the institution's mission and goals and with that the nature of the students.

The second decision point revolves around whether a program is going to maintain or enhance the levels of service and engagement through online education. Are the programs a good match for online delivery?

The third decision point involves a consideration of both time and effort, with a requisite funding source for this effort. Most institutions seemingly use in-house budget dollars from central administration to fund the startup, although various technology companies (Microsoft, Google, Facebook, etc.) have grant and partnership programs available.

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### **The Importance of Structuring Effective Online Instruction: Implementing Best Practices**

There are five key areas involved in structuring an effective online program. The first decision point involves a choice of SIS and LMS. SIS stands for Student Information System. The second is the Learning Management System. This decision connects to

the decision of hosting locally on campus, or off-campus in a cloud solution, keeping in mind the needs of the students and faculty. The ongoing maintenance and funding of an online solution requires both dollars and staff time, so preparations should be made accordingly for additional FTE staff and related labor costs for the maintenance and management of the online solutions.

*The SIS* system houses student demographical information in addition to most class information, allowing students to enroll, have grades posted, and house transcripts. The student information should auto populate from SIS into the Learning Management System, or LMS. When selecting an SIS keep in mind most institutions have an engrained SIS solution on campus, with Banner (owned by Ellucian) and PeopleSoft (owned by Oracle) currently being leaders in the market. LMS solutions are typically found with Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, among others, and most have a method or format for working with each other.

Historically institutions housed their data systems onsite; however, the last few years have seen the shift towards cloud-based solutions, using Software as a Service (SaaS). Labor costs for full time institutional employees, data center infrastructure costs to heat/cool and maintain the buildings, and security concerns have helped move software to cloud-based solutions. In most cases employees have stayed with the institutions into other roles, yet be aware of possible staffing implications should a cloud-solution be selected.

The needs of the student in relation to software purchases include a long list of requirements. These include but are not limited to the standard accessibility and section 504 accommodations (ADA), furthermore features such as mobile-friendly, off-line support, embedded video, testing solutions, ability to use AI for grading, multiple file support for submission, plagiarism detection (including self-plagiarism), and creating a centralized helpdesk support and ticketing system would be desirable.

Once the institution has adopted an SIS and LMS set of platforms, a decision point involves how they are going to be maintained. There may be monthly security updates for the computer systems to covering the labor costs associated with data entry, in addition to the on-campus or cloud-hosted systems that require expenditures. These costs quickly can add up, and with increasing enrollment the incremental costs need be factored into the budget.

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## **Creating Online Content**

After the systems are initiated, the next decision point concerns a determination as to which courses are going to be put on line. This process can be done via a variety of methods, with the most typical process being centralized to the institution's office of online learning. How to staff and manage this office can take a variety of different formats, with some ideas to follow.

The next decision point involves whether the Office of Online Learning should become the clearing house to coordinate online education for the institution. Most large public universities already have a distance (correspondence) or university

outreach extension office in existence, so using this framework, nomenclature, and budget codes might be the path of least resistance to start.

One of the largest barriers to adapting a new technology platform can be support – or lack thereof – from faculty. Providing a centralized clearing house of informational support should be one of the early steps taken when moving to developing an online learning program. Some faculty members are very comfortable with new technology and adjust their classes to an online format. Another decision point is whether a survey of faculty attitudes toward technology should be administered in order to get a sense of where the faculty's comfort zone lies. The faculty's disposition toward technology in general and a particular system specifically might reveal some specific gaps for professional development in order to relieve unnecessary anxieties.

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## **Supervising Effective Curricular Design and Pedagogy**

The expression on the face of the student was as surprising as the comment he had just made: “the instructor didn't respond to emails until after the semester was over, that way he could say it wasn't an issue any longer since grades were submitted. It is hard to believe one would have someone teaching who doesn't bother to respond to students via email.”

While system administrators may be surprised at this student's comment, it is surprisingly common within the institution to have non-email users, either by choice or by technology ignorance. A critically important issue is how does someone who oversees online learning ensure that faculty respond to student comments, including via email? The solution is not only technical and pedagogical, but also based upon the personality of individual faculty.

The method and practice of teaching (pedagogy) has not fundamentally changed significantly in hundreds of years – the “sage on the stage” continues with traditional classroom instruction as seen in most institutions. This format changes slightly with adult learners (andragogy) yet with online learning they find themselves having to adapt to a new delivery method – via video, assigned readings with related discussions, and an asynchronous feedback loop from the student audience.

As outlined earlier, a common method for the past 20 years has been for subject matter experts – faculty – to work with an instructional designer to put content into an online format, and then teach the class.

Some key decisions revolve around how to divide the course into manageable chunks and sizes for completion in a block of time. Some providers have sections that take 5 min or less to complete, others can take up to 3 h. A key design feature is to determine how long persons would like to sit and remain focused on a topic. The smaller the chunks of time involved ensures the greatest flexibility for

students to fit them into their home schedules and engage in effective time management. Students might be getting a small bit of course content time on a break at work, on mass transit on the way home, or during a child's nap. Instructors should consider dividing the work into the daily, or weekly, assignment blocks. The sense of accomplishment from completing each section brings the learner back again for more in the future.

LMS providers have customization features and templates that can be saved and reused for multiple courses. These include creating a clear standard for the course, and repeating it in future courses taught as well as considering changing the also changing the background colors, if possible, to help students taking more than one course to see which class they are currently viewing. Much like a biology lab is different from a lecture hall, a different space and feel can help students feel grounded in their location.

The standard collection of title, course numbers, meeting days/times, faculty information, including office location/email/phone along with boilerplate institution requirements are expected. Online classes should also help students by including information for campus technical support, vendor support if third-party sites are used, expectations of online behavior, and advice for dealing with technology problems.

Having clear learning objectives – composed as concisely as possible – allows a student to see at a glance what they should expect to cover in class. This information converted selection of program standards into measurable learning objectives also helps align the content to match the objectives, and remove any materials that do not fit with the objectives.

Interactions with the class content often comes in the format of discussion boards, with the faculty member posting questions related to the class content, and students replying. This threaded reply line allows a student to reply to the instructor questions, and then other students to reply to the first student in line. Students can learn from both the faculty member and fellow students.

Depending on the topic being taught, online education can help provide a real-world scenario for course content. In a class for computer security, a virtual lab environment can be developed where programs can be tested for security. For foreign language classes, VoIP calls can be made to known persons in other parts of the world to practice and use language skills.

It will be important to review the course through the Quality Matters Rubric to see if the course meets the standards for online education as set forth by Quality Matters, a respected group for online education at both K-12 and higher education levels. If there are areas in which the program needs improvement, step-by-step guides can be provided.

As online students begin to enroll from around the world, having a 24/7 help desk available for technical issues is an assumed must. Having academic advisors, student success coaches, mentors, or faculty available for guidance is an excellent way to differentiate a program as one of the best.

There are a variety of professional organizations focused on online learning, all of which have experts, best practices, and ideas for providing online education. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is the foremost organization in teaching technology in the classroom. As a result, ISTE has developed more than a dozen quality standards for how students, faculty, administrators, and computer educators should approach technology in the classroom.

As an example of professional development opportunities for leaders, the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) provides an Institute for Emerging Leadership in Online Learning on a yearly basis. Quality Matters (QM) is a well-known and highly respected organization which helps educational institutions to deliver their online promise to students: Learners need to improve and grow. It works to nurture them with well-conceived, well-designed, well-presented courses and programs.

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## Awareness of Online Learning

Online education has become a growing area in the last 20 years, and new entrants into the market continue. Seemingly each week a well-known large institution announces a foray into online education. A key issue and decision point relates to determining how an online provider can generate market awareness of the program. Key decision points pertain to four main places to start, with each needing to be tailored to the market in a blended method that meets budget, enrollment, and time constraints.

Begin by searching online degree programs and dozens will pop up. How would a prospective student find a specific program? Purchasing keywords for the program by format, academic topic, geographic market, or other differential term is the first step done via both Google and Amazon sponsored via their “Advertise with Us” link on their homepages. From there, an easy-to-understand website with clear information about the requirements, cost, time to complete, and ability to connect to a live person for questions should be developed.

On campus already are a collective group of students taking face-to-face classes. Having this already aware group of students enroll into one – or more – online class should be an easy transition. Clear explanations of credit transfer, cost, and expectations are key to capturing this market.

The sides of buses and trains across the USA are plastered with ads for Penn State, University of Arizona, and other institutions courting online students. Billboards and radio ads abound throughout the country for online degree programs. Although expensive compared to the first two methods, these mass media advertising methods gain awareness of online offerings.

The old adage that an upset customer tells ten friends while a pleased customer tells no one is even more true with social media. If a frustrated student is already online attempting to complete class assignments, it is likely a social media platform is either open or a click away, with quick venting easy for a student to complete.



## Supervision of Online Faculty

As instruction moves online, the days of faculty congregating in their physical office area is shifting to virtual office areas. The use of email and phone for essential business functions continues, but lost are the days of casual visiting in the halls, developing new ideas for research projects, and in some cases collaboration between faculty with classes within the same discipline. Many institutions continue to have monthly faculty meetings at the main brick and mortar campus, with provisions made for remote attendance via video or telephone conference. Yet, a key issue involves understanding how supervision can occur. Some institutions such as Cochise College in Sierra Vista, Arizona, require a faculty retreat at the beginning of each semester, sometimes held off-site for a full day (or more) which all faculty must attend in person. This is specified as part of their contract with the institution to gather at this convocation. Still some faculty only appear on campus once or twice a year at convocation, and perhaps graduation. For the balance of the year, they are an icon on the instant messaging software or an email to the all-employee list, rather than a face in the faculty break room. This is not a bad thing, but managing the expectations and workload, along with supervising faculty at distance, present a new set of opportunities. Here are some common decision points regarding supervision of online faculty.

1. Weekly check-ins are common in the nonacademic workplace, with status updates, briefings from departments, and announcements being the common fodder during these meetings. For a department chair or director with numerous direct reports, more than a day per week could be taken up with meetings, so biweekly or monthly meetings might be more appropriate.
2. No longer being able to walk down the hall or catch someone after a meeting, at a distance faculty should have certain expectations set upon them for being available via phone/email/IM during a set schedule or perhaps business hours.
3. In brick-and-mortar classes a department chair could slip in the backdoor of class and observe a faculty member teaching in person. Now, with even less obvious signs, a department chair can drop into an online classroom and observe the student interactions via the discussion board, the content provided for students, and the general feel of the instruction being provided.

The standard format that has evolved in the past has made its way online in the last 20 years, and at the end of the semester students have the chance to provide feedback about, and to, the instructor. Reviewing these forms for trends can help provide the department chair with a level of effectiveness and engagement of the faculty member.

The policies used by institutions can spell out not only employment laws and rules but also expectations for availability, response time to students, and teaching format considerations. These documents should be used to help set a clear expectation up front for distance faculty. Often these are included as a memorandum of

understanding and conditions of faculty service, although each institution will call it something different.

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## **Preparing and Recruiting Online Faculty: Skills and Dispositions**

It is a special breed of an online instructor required to enable an online program to be successful. The hiring of an instructor for student learning is undoubtedly the most important responsibility an educational leader must accomplish. It is well documented in the educational arena; a quality teacher is the most significant factor in student learning, and student learning is directly related to quality teaching, irrespective of age. Therefore, recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining quality online faculty is imperative.

Personnel needed by educational institutions are those who will have the ability, motivation, and creativity to: (a) enable the system to surmount its infirmities; (b) adjust the educational program continually to the needs of individuals living and competing in a dynamic society; (c) provide leadership that shapes the human organization in such a way that there will be congruence between the individual and the system; (d) create a climate conducive to maximizing voluntary growth and individual effectiveness; and (e) influence ordinary personnel to perform in an extraordinary fashion. Educational organizations, like all organizations, are created and maintained to achieve specific purposes (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

The following checklist regarding aspects of course quality has been used by instructional designers at Northern Arizona University as a starting place for all faculty who are teaching online courses:

1. Provide alternate text (titles and descriptions) for all images in the course. Use images to complement Ext, rather than replace it and use alternate text (titles and descriptors) to describe graphs and charts.
2. Verify that all web pages and media components function correctly on major operating systems and different supported browsers and ensure that all necessary plug-ins or software to run video, animation, audio, presentations, and/or course content files are easily accessible and useable on all student computer systems.
3. Ensure that copyright clearance was obtained for all materials inside the course that do not fall under the TEACH act of Educational Fair Use.

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## **Planning Necessary Support Services for Students and Faculty**

The issues and decision points for support services for online programs boil down to four areas: technology support, curricular design support, library support, and administrative support.

## Technology Support

This key area will be further subdivided into orientation and training, follow-up training and professional development (ideally conducted in partnership with curricular design specialists as well), and help-desk technical support.

Adequate orientation and training on how to navigate the online classroom is essential. If possible, in-person or technologically mediated live sessions should be offered as part of such training, even if the live component is limited to one or two sessions. It may be impractical for students and faculty who live at a distance from the main campus, or who work full time, to attend entire intensive online classroom navigation orientation sessions.

In addition to the above orientation, which is expected to be more time-intensive and comprehensive in nature, the university's IT department should also offer periodic shorter training and professional development opportunities, in conjunction with curricular design experts and experienced online faculty members.

This one seems almost self-evident. As the online instruction gets underway, both students and faculty need to have a dependable way to reach out for immediate help to tech support if they should encounter a problem. Such problems are bound to happen despite the best efforts at comprehensive training and orientation.

## Curricular Design Support

Prospective novice online faculty may not know what an online course actually looks like. More experienced online faculty who have been asked to develop an online course, or make major upgrades to an existing course, may need help in doing so. Curricular design experts can be instrumental on both counts. Many faculty members assume that because they are using presentation software or an electronic whiteboard to demonstrate a concept, they are integrating technology. Although using technology to deliver instruction can be useful, it is not true integration.

A wide range of valuable educational software products are available. Yet one is not always applying one's full potential to encourage higher-level thinking and to accommodate different learners. For instance, concept mapping products can be an amazing classroom resource. Using them to organize information is good, but using them to analyze information – for example, to compare and contrast information – is better. Another example is the use of spreadsheets. Spreadsheets are a great way to manage data and information, but a better use is to show students how to use them to make inferences and predictions, or even better, to develop new ideas.

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## **Library Support**

The days of having to stand in line on a cold winter day in the early morning hours, waiting for the doors to be opened at a brick-and-mortar library, are long over. Of course, these libraries continue to serve an important and valuable function in meeting real-time informational needs of both students and faculty. By the same token, walk into such a traditional real-time library to see how intensively computerized it too has become.

## **Administrative Support**

Department chairs and deans must support online faculty and students in a variety of ways: recognizing and rewarding online faculty initiatives through such avenues as direct acknowledgment in retention, tenure, and promotion decisions; similarly recognizing online faculty-related professional development activities such as participation in trainings and workshops in their annual statement of expectations; and providing teaching assistant support to online faculty, particularly those with large and/or especially writing-intensive courses.

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## **Other Critical Issues in Evaluating Online Faculty Performance**

Attendance is an issue in online programs as it is in the traditional brick-and-mortar class. However, the way that attendance is documented is very different. Instructors do not physically walk into an asynchronous online classroom. At the same time, most online classroom management systems contain specific ways to track instructor log-in days and times, duration of each log-in session and even in some cases, the specific activities the instructor engaged in while logged into their online classroom.

Instructor discretion with regard to creating their syllabus varies by rank of instructor and type of educational institution. Adjuncts, particularly those who work as needed at for-profit institutions, may have their syllabus basically handed to them. The benefit of this practice is consistency of course expectations regardless of specific instructor.

As with the syllabus, the online lessons may already be created in the form of existing web pages, supplementary links and other learning resources. Instructor discretion to modify this curriculum typically varies along the same lines as with the syllabus, discussed in the preceding point.

To quote the late New York Mayor Ed Koch who used to stop citizens in the street with this query, students naturally want to know "How am I doing?" with regard to their submitted assignments. Many schools have a requirement that an initial assessment must be graded for students within a relatively short time frame from the start

of the course. This is so they can effectively gauge their understanding and performance in the class.

There is no more daunting feeling to an online student than feeling stuck on something related to their course, and thinking, “I’m all alone, facing a cold computer screen. Is anyone out there available to help me?” Granted, the instructor response cannot be expected to be as rapid as in the face-to-face classroom, where an answer in response to a raised hand or a student approaching the instructor after class with a question is instantaneous.

Much like the live-and-in-person instructor who may precede a formal instructional session with some general announcements, regular posting of announcements in the online classroom is considered a best practice in enhancing communication with students. In addition to any late-breaking informational updates, many instructors post a start-of-week announcement that briefly recaps the learning content from the preceding week and previews the coming week’s topics.

As mentioned earlier, the amount of discretion that an online instructor may have with regard to their course content can vary. Ideally even with canned course content, there will still be room for instructors to add their own personalized tweaks to their course.

Technology itself is arguably the most rapidly changing of all disciplines. With changes in technology, there are bound to be related changes in the ways this technology is used in teaching. Most schools will likely change up their online teaching platform regularly. Sometimes this change will be an upgrade of an existing platform such as Blackboard. However, it can occasionally be a drastic shift to an entirely new platform as well.

It may seem odd to see these two items, particularly student evaluations, listed as the final evaluation criterion. Sadly, far too many evaluators of faculty performance give student evaluations the full weight, or most weight, in assessing faculty performance. Adjunct faculty at for-profit institutions, in particular, traditionally worry about their student evaluations as the make-or-break determinant in whether or not they will be offered a contract to teach again for the following term.

Online adjunct faculty, particularly those affiliated with for-profit universities, report a disturbing escalation of micromanagement of their teaching activities. This can take such forms as frequency of evaluation (e.g., the unannounced administrative drop-ins into an online classroom), exaggerating an isolated negative student evaluation comment while at the same time ignoring or underweighting positive student feedback), and ultimately employing evaluation results, particularly negative ones, in deciding whether or not to offer the adjunct faculty member a future teaching contract.

Any evaluation brings with it some inherent stress, regardless of the context. Once again, the online environment can exacerbate these stresses, particularly if they are used for nefarious purposes by the evaluator.

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## **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Online Programs: Does Delivery Modality Affect Student Assessment Results?**

The leadership world is ever changing. Leaders are challenged to evaluate both full-time and part-time faculty, who all possess terminal degrees, and who are recognized experts in their respective fields. Additionally, challenging is the evaluation of faculty whose courses were taught in three modalities: in-person, blended, and fully online. How do you effectively evaluate faculty who taught courses in more than one modality? Are faculty expected to be equally effective teaching online courses as they were teaching in-person courses? Can online courses produce the same quality of student learning outcomes as traditionally taught in-person courses had done, and can online courses effectively prepare Educational Leaders for K-12 school leadership (which occurs predominantly in a face-to face environment) via online instruction and while never meeting leadership candidates in person?

Christensen, Aaron, and Clark (2002) argued that distance learning is disrupting traditional education: this is the theory of “disruptive innovation.” The theory of disruption can provide answers to the aforementioned questions and provide researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, with a new perspective on how increasingly effective, affordable, and accessible online opportunity has become.

The purpose of course, program, and instructor evaluation, and its resultant effect on student learning, has been studied, reviewed, discussed, debated, and researched for as long as there have been schools, programs, teachers, and students.

Regardless of teaching modality, teachers have six different identities (Magan, 1990) according to the expectations of their students. All instructors should be aware of these identities as they plan instructional objectives and student outcomes. Understanding that educators can never go back and teach the same lesson to the same students ever again, and understanding that sometimes our strategies and techniques work and sometimes they do not, is vitally important.

Evaluation instruments are all designed for a singular purpose: improve instructor performance to optimize student learning. The challenge, however, is to design evaluation instruments which provide adequate, meaningful, consistent, and reliable feedback to instructors relating to the specific course being evaluated, as well as the individual details valuable to instructors as individuals. The following is provided as an example of the philosophy behind faculty evaluation.

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## **Sharing Results and Lessons Learned with Key Stakeholders**

Online learning has become a common feature of instructional programming from elementary school through post-secondary education. At the postsecondary level, a minimum of one online course is taken by one of every three students in their college years.

There can be little doubt that online learning provides some benefits over in-person instruction, both for the learner, and for the learning institution. For the learner, one of the great advantages of online learning is that it can be a convenient

way for working professionals to manage both a full-time job and college coursework. Its ease of access can make it possible for historically underserved areas to gain the opportunity for advanced learning. Through practices such as Universal Design for Instruction (Wynants & Dennis, 2018), differentiation for individual learning needs can, in some cases, be provided quite readily in an online setting. Institutions benefit from the fact that, in contrast to classroom-based instruction, which generally requires students to live within a reasonable distance of the classroom's location, online learning can enable institutions to offer coursework to students scattered across a geographic area as big as the earth itself. In some respects, it can be a cost-effective and efficient way to deliver instruction, potentially reducing expenditures for classroom facilities and for personnel.

There should also be little doubt that there are potential disadvantages associated with online learning. In order to ensure that the full potential for online instruction is realized, it is critical to acknowledge and address it. As school leaders consider how to go about sharing results and lessons learned from online programs, it is important to recognize that research evidence on the effectiveness of online learning programs is not consistently encouraging.

Where differences have been found in student outcomes between in-person and online coursework, it is important to attempt to understand the reasons for these differences. This does not imply that online courses should simply mimic practices that are employed in face-to-face settings. Online teaching may actually offer opportunities to innovate in ways that have not been fully explored in conventional classes, and may point the way toward improvements in both approaches.

The available evidence points to great potential for online learning to serve the needs of both individuals and institutions. As noted previously, online learning offers the potential for cost savings, increased access for underrepresented groups, differentiation of instruction, and convenience for learners who are working professionals.

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## **Continuing to Be a Positive Change Agent in Online Instructional Initiatives and What Is Known About Leaders Who Effectively Manage Change**

While there is an extensive body of scholarly work on the topic of change in educational institutions, this section will focus on four key areas that must be influenced by leaders to effectively manage inevitable and ongoing change: trust and credibility, respect for dissent, a shared sense of purpose, and a disciplined focus.

### **Trust and Credibility**

In order to effectively manage change efforts, leaders must first earn the trust of others within their organization. Trust is not earned overnight, and once earned, it can be quickly eroded with a single misstep or careless remark. While the presence

of trust provides no guarantee of organizational success, its absence is likely to produce a host of problems. Chief among these is often a resistance to change initiatives, which can be seen in visible manifestations of suspicions toward a leader's motives.

## **Respect for Dissent**

Constant change is a fact of life for educators, particularly with respect to initiatives that involve ever-evolving technological resources. Adapting to departmental or institutional change can be time-consuming and require deep stores of patience and humility. Factors associated with change can lead faculty to speak out to express frustration, exasperation, or outright hostility to change initiatives.

The most effective change efforts engage all stakeholders early on in the planning process, not just after a solitary leader has devised a brilliant scheme to improve the organization, which he/she then shares with others, in eager anticipation of their exclamations of enthusiasm. Instances exist of leaders who created, all alone and behind closed doors, an institutional mission and vision which was subsequently delivered to stakeholders as if the document constituted sacred text.

## **A Shared Sense of Purpose**

As noted earlier, the likelihood that a given change initiative will be successful is greatly enhanced by the development of a shared and clear sense of purpose. Success is further enhanced when leaders center their actions and the actions of others on a shared mission and goals, taking steps to actively support faculty in their efforts to carry out the initiative and addressing systemic barriers that, unacknowledged and unaddressed, can efficiently derail such efforts.

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## **Conclusions and Reflections**

Educators at all levels have witnessed countless waves of failed initiatives over the course of their careers, whether or not such initiatives have anything at all to do with online learning. Many educators have become accustomed to a somewhat cynical posture of "waiting things out" until an initiative runs out of steam and the leader who spearheaded the initiative in the first place either leaves or moves on to some more promising enterprise. Decades of education-related activism by state legislatures and the US Congress have resulted in countless top-down initiatives that spent much, achieved little, and validated the effectiveness of time-honored strategies such as pretending to care, faking implementation, and waiting until *that* person moves on so that one can go back to the way that one normally does one's job.

In the case of online initiatives, technology itself changes at a pace that is dizzying. The experience of finding that the laptop, Smartphone, router, or smart



speaker that was shiny and new not so long ago now needs (in a best-case scenario) new firmware, a new security patch, updated drivers, the most recent version of the operating system, or (in a worst-case scenario) replacement. Every closet, storeroom, and garage silently testify to the obsolescence of ideas and innovations that once seemed cutting-edge technology itself reduces the sense of reaching a point of stability or equilibrium in our lives, so it stands to reason that skeptical faculty would look at any technology-related initiative with more than a little skepticism and a sense that “this too shall pass.”

While it is unconstructive to assume that veteran faculty members are necessarily less predisposed to supporting new initiatives than newer faculty, it is constructive to recognize that there are diverse viewpoints and experiences regarding online learning in every department and college. The fact that some faculty are tenured, some not, some full-time, and some adjunct presents a host of challenges to offering effective training support. Professional development opportunities must endeavor to take into account such diversity and attempt to personalize learning for faculty, just to strive to personalize learning for our students. Although this chapter does not afford adequate space for a full exploration of the topic of faculty development for online learning, a body of current scholarly research should prove to be helpful (Carbonaro, Snart, & Goodale, 2002; Dailey-Hebert, Mandernach, Donnelly-Sallee, & Norris, 2014; Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson, & Mandernach, 2015; Hixon, Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, & Feldman, 2011; Ludwig & Taymans, 2005; Wynants & Dennis, 2018).

The bottom line should be a familiar one to most educators. Formal leaders must be viewed as the most vital of stakeholders whose support is essential to the success of a change effort such as online design and delivery in the higher education setting. While technology changes, the human element remains a constant. There are no new lessons to be learned here. There are only old lessons that have to be relearned again.

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# Realizing the Promise of Black Critical Pedagogy

Abul Pitre, Tawannah G. Allen, and Esrom Pitre

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## Abstract

In the 1980s, multicultural education became one of the leading areas of discourse among educational scholars. Its development is intertwined with critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and social justice. Multicultural scholars are concerned with issues of equity and equality of education for historically underserved student populations. Their research explores issues of race, social class, special needs, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. While these subjects are now major areas of study within academia, it's important to remember that the

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ideas about multicultural education originated in the Black activists and thinkers of the civil rights and Black power movement.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a historical overview of multicultural education by revisiting the influence of critical Black pedagogues in the curriculum discourse. It particularly explored African-centered discourse that led to the development of multicultural education, which argues that the current political climate makes it an ideal time to revisit educational discourse from an African-centered perspective. An understanding of the terms Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Black Critical Pedagogy, and Critical Race Theory, along with their relevance to Nikole Hannah-Jones' *The 1619 Project* is offered. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement as it relates to education and the preparation of educational leaders in the twenty-first century.

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**Keywords**

Critical Black Pedagogy · Multicultural education · Afrocentricity · K-12 history curriculum · Social justice · Antiracist

**The Field of Memory**

Multicultural education grew out of the African American experience (Banks, 1992), and its evolution can be traced back to the arrival of African-descended people who were brought to the Americas involuntarily. These enslaved people resisted their dehumanization, and persons like Frederick Douglass, in his 1852 speech *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July*, offered an alternative worldview to the mainstream American narrative. Douglass disrupted the White imagination, arguing that while White Americans were rejoicing in proclaiming a new nation founded on the ideals of freedom and justice, this was not the reality for Blacks in America.

Douglass was not alone in his critique. W. E. B. Du Bois, the first person of African descent to receive a doctoral degree from Harvard University, wrote extensively about issues of racism and whiteness while also critiquing Black education (Rabaka, 2008). In his book *The Souls of Black Folks*, Du Bois (1903) discussed what it meant to be a person of African descent in American society. He raised salient points of discussion like what it means when your race is viewed as a problem. In addition, he addressed the duality of consciousness that confronts African Americans as they strive to maintain their Africanity while simultaneously trying to be American (Du Bois, 1903). Du Bois's critique of whiteness is important considering the contemporary violence toward African Americans that is reminiscent of the terrorism they experienced in the aftermath of the Civil War (Rabaka, 2008). It was after the Civil War when the old South reemerged with the birthing of the White Citizens Council, the Ku Klux Klan, and police to inflict violence upon African Americans. The violence directed toward African Americans provides a timely reminder of why it is necessary for school curricula to be more critical, truthful, and inclusive of multicultural histories and perspectives.

Du Bois's critiques were echoed by Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Black History Month, starting in the 1920s. Woodson was an early proponent of the need for diverse perspectives and strong curricula of Black history in the schools. His 1933 book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* stated his case powerfully and represented a critical Black pedagogy that was a significant forerunner of the critical pedagogy movement. Woodson wrote of the violence toward African Americans, saying "there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom" (p. 3). For Woodson, the school represented a powerful tool that could be used to eradicate inequities in the larger society. In part, it was believed that multicultural perspectives would give whites a way of deconstructing whiteness and perhaps lead them to work toward making a more socially just society.

Because of their critiques several critical Black pedagogues were placed under surveillance by the US government. For example, Carter G. Woodson's scholarship on Black history caused the US government to monitor his research (Spivey, 2003). Later J. Edgar Hoover launched a counterintelligence program against African American leaders. As the program suggest it was to *counter the intelligence* that was emerging among African Americans.

Douglass, Du Bois, and Woodson represented what Pitre (2019) coined critical Black pedagogy, which existed before the more popular critical pedagogy emanating from White scholars in the Frankfurt School of the 1930s. This critical Black pedagogy has been referred to by many names (Rabaka, 2008, calls it *Africana critical theory*), but always includes the following principles: Afrocentricity, multicultural education, and African American spirituality. The statements made in speeches and essays by the African American thought leaders who founded this school of thought have been collected in the book *A Critical Black Pedagogy Reader: The Brothers Speak* (Pitre, 2019).

In the 1960s, the efforts of these Black thinkers began to bear fruit. The Black freedom movement forged the way for curriculum changes that would include the experiences and histories of Black people. In schools and colleges across the United States students were protesting for the inclusion of Black Studies into the curriculum (Banks, 2019). At San Francisco State University, the first Department of Black Studies was founded in 1968, paving the way for Black Studies degree programs and departments in colleges and universities across the United States.

The infusion of courses around the Black experience then gave birth to ethnic and multiethnic studies. Multiethnic studies included the history and experiences of many different people of color and supported the goals of multicultural education to provide equity and equality of education (Banks, 1992). Its leading figure and founder, James Banks, defined multicultural education as "an educational reform movement whose major goal is to restructure curricula and educational institutions so that students from diverse social, racial, and ethnic groups as well as male and female students of LGBT students, teachers, parents, staff, and administrators experience equal educational opportunities" (Banks, 2019, p. 155). Nieto and Bode (2018), for their part, argued that multicultural education is critical pedagogy and social justice in general.

Over the years multicultural education has grown beyond the African-centered perspective from which it originated. Other areas such as special needs, sexual orientation, and social justice have become more visible in the multicultural discourse. Unfortunately, one result has been that, despite the groundswell of critical pedagogical and social justice research studies, African-centered perspectives have taken a back seat. Most scholars in the field of education focus their work on European thought leaders and have neglected the early critical Black pedagogues. One can easily find at national educational conferences discourse around *Marx and Education* but little on *Woodson and Education*.

### **The Field of Presence**

The curriculum is the centerpiece of the educational discourse. Pinar (2020) writes that curriculum is the heart of education because it entails what bodies of knowledge will be included in a plan of study. Apple (2019) points out that those who select the body of knowledge used in schools say something about who has the power. He also writes that the knowledge used in schools does not encompass all there is to know but nonetheless becomes *official knowledge* because it is sanctioned by those in power (Apple, 1993).

Woodson (1933) argued that the education of African Americans was controlled by those outside of their race. He described how the curriculum had been weaponized against African American students, causing them to internalize the lie that they were inferior. Thus, he argued not only for the inclusion of Black history but laid the foundation for an African-centered perspective.

The battles over what to include in the curriculum have been an ongoing site for protest and contestation since the Civil War (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 2007; Spring, 2016; Watkins, 2001). In the aftermath of the Civil War, the White architects of Black education crafted a 75-year plan to educate the newly freed Blacks living in the South (Watkins, 2001). These architects believed that the goal of education should be to instill in the newly freed people dispositions that would make them submissive and amenable to White rule.

As time went on, African American thinkers and educators began to contest this version of education, one which Spivey (2007) called a new form of slavery. Molefi Asante's (1991) article "The Afrocentric Idea in Education" described the importance of having an African-centered perspective of the world, which required the study of African-descended people. The article also critiqued the Eurocentric curricula found in public schools across the United States.

William Watkins, in his article "Black Curriculum Orientations" (1993), identified six curriculum orientations toward the inclusion of Black history and culture. These six orientations are *functionalism*, *accommodation*, *liberalism*, *Black Nationalism*, *Afrocentrism*, and *social reconstruction*. His article highlighted the struggle that African Americans have faced to get their history and lived experiences included in the curriculum.

Pitre (2011) captured the impact of including African American studies from an African-centered perspective into the school curriculum with his study of the controversy around a Black history program that raised student consciousness of self-inflicted violence in Black communities that is a result of social engineering. Moreover, the study highlighted how an African-centered perspective can positively impact student learning.

The leading architect of multicultural education, James Banks, has also urged curriculum reform (Banks, 2019). He centers his advocacy on the importance of having students view the world from diverse perspectives – a simple example being presenting Columbus’s view of discovering the new world versus that of the Native Americans who were already there. To effectively implement multicultural education, Banks recommends four approaches that can work together to broaden students’ understanding of the world:

1. *The Contributions Approach*: This approach focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements.
2. *The Additive Approach*: Content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure.
3. *The Transformation Approach*: The structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.
4. *The Social Action Approach*: Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them (Banks, 2019, p. 54).

These four approaches can be a model for teachers to effectively build multicultural classrooms.

Asante’s (1991) clarion call for multicultural education set off a backlash from conservative educators. Pitre and Ray (2002) discussed the controversy around Black history in their article “The Controversy around Black History,” pointing out that scholars like Mary Leftowiz believe that the Afrocentric idea is divisive to the country. These conservative figures believe the curriculum should have a Western-centric perspective and include only textbooks that are considered Western classics. The debate over curriculum content has raged since the Civil War. The challenges to the curriculum launched by Black scholars and activists – and the subsequent defense by conservative scholars – show that these battles continue today.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

One of new frameworks that could inform the preparation of educational leaders is Critical Black Pedagogy. Critical Black Pedagogy was coined in 2008, in the book *The Struggle for Black History* (Pitre, Ray, & Pitre, 2008) but the more recent book, *A Critical Black Pedagogy Reader: The Brothers Speak* more fully articulates the framework. The book identifies four tenets of critical Black pedagogy, which includes Afrocentricity, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and African American spirituality (Pitre, 2019). The anthology highlights selected essays and speeches from Black male thought leaders offering compelling reasons why educational leaders can learn much from Black leaders who radically transformed the lives of African Americans. For example, persons like Marcus Garvey offered an ideological perspective on Black education that could assist educators to reimagine schools for African American students. Additionally, James Baldwin in his speech, *A Talk To Teachers*, offers to educational leaders a critique of the impact that deeply entrenched racism has on the educational experiences of African American students. And Dr. King’s essay, *The Purpose of Education*, moves educators to see beyond the

scientific management approach to one that is centered on ethics and moral underpinnings (Pitre, 2019).

Educational leadership preparation programs do not explore the educational ideas of Black thought leaders, and this contributes to a form of White supremacy because it means that the official knowledge used to license educational leaders is rooted in the ideas of White scholars. Cornel West (1994) was on point when he declared the many ways that race matters in the American society. His tribute to the leadership of Malcolm X opens the door for educational leaders to study subaltern forms of education.

In the twenty-first century schools, a large number of African American youth embrace Hip Hop. Hip Hop like English as a Second Language could be explored in educational leadership programs. These artists that are conscious spit lyrics in the same spirit as their ancestors who fought to be free from oppression. These artists highlight persons like Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan is taboo in the educational leadership discourse despite the fact that he is the voice of millions of oppressed people in the Americas and beyond.

The book, *Educational Leadership and Louis Farrakhan* departs from the scientific management discourse to one that is futuristic, multicultural, and spiritual (Pitre, 2017). Moreover, a critique of Hip-Hop and how it has been weaponized against Black youth to socially engineer their self-destruction is needed. New courses in educational leadership should include the study of Hip-Hop and how it can be used as a tool to empower educational leaders (Foust, 2021).

Lastly, there needs to be an African-centered perspective in the preparation programs for educational leaders. An African-centered perspective should begin with Africana Studies because it would help future educational leaders understand the African origins from which many of the disciplines and fields of study began (Karenga, 2002). In reading, Black Psychology educational leaders would get a chance to see how high stakes tests can be designed to support racial superiority (Akbar, 1999). In the study of Black Liberation Theology, educators would engage in the study of how the Supreme Being is on the side of the oppressed (Cone, 2010).

To effectively address the needs of African American students' preparation programs for educational leaders will need to go beyond the scientific management and social justice approach to one that embraces a critical Black pedagogy, particularly focusing on an African-centered approach for preparing educational leaders.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

When teachers embed an African-centric perspective within the K-12 curriculum, they also create opportunities to emphasize current examples of Black boys and men as valuable community members. This kind of exposure is critical to the boys' development of a healthy sense of self and agency. Learning about the important discoveries and courageous acts of historians from the past and present can serve as an important reminder for today's Black boys to see themselves and their communities as vital parts of American history. It also empowers them to challenge the "troublemaker" and "bad boy" stereotypes found in typical portrayals of Black boys.

The four components of Critical Black Pedagogy: Afrocentricity, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and African American spirituality offer the powerful agency that Black people can have over their own education. Moreover, the



curriculum must be changed to offer a multicultural perspective, which would not only liberate Black children but also White children, whose talents and character are currently distorted by the myths that support White supremacy.

Lastly, African American history is American history, and it is our responsibility, as educators, to cultivate spaces to engage with it. We must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to draw inspiration and wisdom from African American historic places.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Four critical assumptions undergird realizing the promise of Black critical pedagogy.

1. Throughout history, the struggle for educational access, equity, and social justice has been central to the educational experiences of many Black students being educated in K-12 public schools.
2. Controversy has surrounded race conscious education for a long time, with resounding proclamations of indoctrination of students. As a result, at least six US states are trying to ban the teaching of racially charged ideas about America's history, because of the supposed propensity to make American's despise their own country. A central premise of The 1619 Project seeks to illuminate the absence of key historical facts – such as slavery and its significant impact to date – that are often ignored or suppressed.
3. The current neoliberal educational reform movement has narrowed the curriculum, which often renders the historical contributions of prominent African Americans as inconsequential, irrelevant, if mentioned at all, while implementing controls including high stakes testing and the militarization and policing of schools, disproportionately resulting in the punishment and control of working-class Black youth.
4. The terms Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and Critical Black Pedagogy have been conflated, using poorly supported baseless information to weaponize the discussion of African American's historical contributions to America as nonexistent. Additionally, the resistance to acknowledge and utilize Black students' background and cultural experiences as tools to promote and sustain their academic success offers life-long consequences.

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## **Introduction**

In the 1980s, multicultural education became one of the leading areas of discourse among educational scholars. Its development is intertwined with critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and social justice. Multicultural scholars are concerned with issues of equity and equality of education for historically underserved student populations (Banks, 2019; Gollnick & Chinn, 2017; Nieto & Bode, 2018). Their research explores issues of race, social class, special needs, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

While these subjects are now major areas of study within academia, it's important to remember that the ideas about multicultural education originated in the Black activists and thinkers of the civil rights and Black power movement, here referred to

collectively as the Black freedom movement, and to their predecessors – especially the Black thinkers of the early and mid-twentieth century and even before. The student protests that occurred in the 1960s were the result of conscious youth who were determined to dismantle the traditional Western-centric canon that dominated educational institutions in the United States. These protests included the contestation for Black Studies in colleges and universities, which sparked new conversations around the need to include diverse perspectives into the curriculum.

The students in the Black freedom movement recognized that education is a political act (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2017) and they argued that certain bodies of knowledge were being kept out of the curriculum. Scholars like Carter G. Woodson (1933) argued that the contributions that Black people made to world history were not included in the mainstream curriculum. Instead, the curriculum imposed a Eurocentric perspective grounded in White supremacy (Asante, 1991). According to Woodson (1933), African Americans were being taught that their Blackness was a curse, causing them to declare this was the worst sort of lynching.

Civil rights leaders were not protesting the Eurocentric school curriculum but instead were fighting for inclusion into the mainstream society. However, many leaders within the Black freedom movement were influenced by Malcolm X and others who argued that the school curriculum represented a form of *White power* or anti-Black racism. Moreover, the curriculum was a tool used to subjugate African Americans to an inferior position (Jenkins, 2009). Malcolm raised the following question to Blacks in America: “Who taught you to hate yourself?” It was questions like this that awakened Black youth and inspired them to protest racist school curricula that sought to relegate them to an inferior status.

The anti-Black bias of school curricula was reinforced by a Eurocentric Christianity that formed the foundation of American education. The school curricula, like Western-centric Christianity, showed the founding fathers and other White men as defenders of freedom and justice, and whites were the center of academic attention (Asante, 1991). Members of the Black freedom movement began to realize that what they were being taught in schools and universities was a form of domestication. They began to question the images of White men as being divine and argued that the European version of Christianity was instrumental in the *mis-education* of African Americans. As a result, they began to look anew at Black thought leaders such as Marcus Garvey, Martin Delaney, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and many others as sources of learning and true education.

Scholars often point to Malcolm X as the foundational leader of the Black power movement and the emergence of Black consciousness. However, Malcolm was preceded by – and educated by – Elijah Muhammad. The wellspring of knowledge emerging from Elijah Muhammad caused him to be one of the most feared African American leaders because his teachings disrupted White supremacy as a global power. When he declared that Black people constituted the origin of humanity and were the architects of the entire universe, he began to attract attention; his influence eventually led him to be placed under surveillance by the US government (Gardell, 1996; Muhammad, 1965).

The teachings of Elijah Muhammad gave birth to a cadre of Black scholars in many diverse areas of study. Some of the most interesting were Black psychologists such as Naim Akbar (1999) and Wade Nobles (1973), who began to explore the Black self-concept. In the field of history, scholars began to look at Egypt anew, causing them to articulate that it was at one time called Kemet, the land of the Black. History became the tool to dismantle the lies that had been told, and it forged the way for a new identity among Black people. This new education even included a critique of the African American diet that was seen to be an offshoot of slavery.

The line of influence from Elijah Muhammad to Malcolm X to the leaders and students of the Black freedom movement was part of an ongoing struggle to incorporate a more multicultural curriculum in public schools. That struggle continues today and has brought positive changes to the curriculum, although it is still relegated to the shadows in some schools and universities. This chapter outlines the field of memory beginning with a historical overview of multicultural education by revisiting the influence of critical Black pedagogues in the curriculum discourse. It particularly explored African-centered discourse that led to the development of multicultural education, via the field of presence, which argues that the current political climate makes it an ideal time to revisit educational discourse from an African-centered perspective.

For African American students to realize their potential and ultimately experience academic success in the K-12 setting, an understanding of the terms Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, along with their connection to Critical Black Pedagogy and to Nikole Hannah-Jones' *The 1619 Project*, is essential. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement as it relates to education and the preparation of educational leaders in the twenty-first century.

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## The Two CRT Frameworks

The recent culture war on critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogy (both sometimes abbreviated to CRT) have sparked fierce debates in school board meetings, caused confusion for some members of the public and educational sectors, and galvanized those who worry about how the terms are defined and reflected in the K-12 curriculum. The charge that schools are indoctrinating students is a harmful theory or political mindset. The conflation of these terms has made it virtually impossible to understand and engage both terms to improve the educational outcomes of students – particularly Black students.

### Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a more than 40-year-old academic framework used to understand how racism has shaped social institutions such as the criminal justice system,

education system, housing market, and health care system. It regards race as a social construction and analyzes the connections between race, racism, privilege, and power (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 1995). It also can help Americans to understand how oppressive policies and practices have shaped public education. According to Solórzano (1997), CRT's basic perspective includes a "premise that race and racism are endemic, permanent" (p. 6) in both small and large ways within individuals as well as institutions. CRT is conscious and unconscious, has a cumulative impact, and intersects with both gender and class discrimination. Further, CRT challenges the dominant power structure, is committed to social justice, values experiential knowledge, and uses interdisciplinary practices to put knowledge into critical historical context (Lynn, 2004; Solórzano, 1997).

Scholars who study critical race theory in education look at how policies and practices in K-12 education contribute to persistent racial inequalities in education, and advocate for ways to change them. Among the topics they've studied are: racially segregated schools, the underfunding of majority-Black and Latino school districts, disproportionate disciplining of Black students, barriers to gifted programs and selective-admission high schools, and curricula that reinforce racist ideas.

## **Culturally Relevant Teaching**

Culturally relevant teaching values and uses the characteristics, experience, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students to frame pedagogy and attitudes. It values students' lived experiences, learning styles, ethnic history, and accomplishments (Ladson-Billings, 1994). CRT emphasizes "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.

It is community-oriented both inside and outside the classroom, is grounded in caring, values personal narrative and group efforts, encourages varying perspectives, and expects achievement. Culturally relevant curriculum reflects the images and concerns of children whom it teaches, promotes critical questioning, and is committed to social justice. Students' academic achievement and engagement increases when they are taught in a culturally relevant manner (Gay, 2002; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011).

Culturally responsive teaching also has critical synergies with other reform efforts in education, such as initiatives to improve school climate and implement social-emotional learning. For instance, research shows that students who develop a positive sense of racial and ethnic identity are more interested in befriending people of different backgrounds. Other studies have found that a strong racial-ethnic identity is linked to higher self-esteem, academic attitudes, well-being, and the ability to navigate discrimination. Though more rigorous, large-scale studies are needed, existing studies already support taking action to boost teachers' culturally responsive practice.

## Connecting the Dots: Understanding the Premises of Both CRTs and the 1619 Project

No other writing embodies the tenets of Critical Race Theory and Culturally Responsive Teaching more than Nikole Hannah-Jones' 2019 publication, *The 1619 Project*. The aim of this project was to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of African American at the center of the United States narrative. This aim faced significant criticism. The manuscript forces Americans to examine who we are as a country. Titled, *The 1619 Project*, 1619 reflected the year when approximately –20–30 Africans were captured in joint African-Portuguese raids and were brought, involuntarily, to the Virginia Colony, via the *White Lion* ship (Painter, 2006). Here begins the system of American chattel slavery – lasting for the next 250 years resulting in building the United States of America. This important linchpin in American history is all too often omitted from school curricula or, when discussed, does not provide an accurate depiction of slavery. Furthermore, conveniently omitted is how prominent individuals, industries, and institutions profited from slavery. Much like the premise of culturally responsive teaching – defined as understanding and embracing the background and culture of those different than our own – *The 1619 Project* argues that many White American students are poorly educated on and have no clue about the history of how the enslavement of Africans shaped America as we know it today. Additionally, Nikole's manuscript notes that prominent African American authors, scholars, and researchers are glaringly absent from historical discussions.

*The Project* includes 19 essays that not only explores the legacy of slavery, but also highlights the present-day struggles faced by Black Americans. Together, these essays chronicle how slavery's key tenets, can still be evidenced in just about every aspect of today's American society – including music, politics, housing, capitalism, and even religion. The systems, Hannah-Jones speaks of (e.g., education, democracy, capitalism, criminal), are the very systems explored in the framework of Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory denotes that systemic racism is part of American society – from education and housing to employment and healthcare. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies, and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities. To date, these systems continue to figuratively enslave millions of African Americans living in the United States.

Undoubtedly, Hannah-Jones has received some of the most prestigious awards in journalism. A recipient of the Peabody Award, along with the MacArthur genius grant for her reporting on the persistence of segregation in *This American Life*, Nikole also won a Pulitzer Prize for her essay accompanying "*The 1619 Project*." Despite being lauded for her scholarship, in 2021, Nikole faced staunch opposition to a tenured endowed professorship at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This opposition came from Walter Hussman, an alumnus, UNC Donor and Arkansas newspaper publisher whose name adorns UNC's journalism school. It should be noted that Hannah-Jones' dossier received overwhelming support from the departmental faculty, chairman, the dean, and the provost. Yet, Hussman argued his

pause with Hannah-Jones – also a UNC alumnus – was that the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media would become more closely associated with *The 1619 Project* than the schools' core values of objectivity, impartiality, integrity, the pursuit of truth, and the separation of news and opinion. Hussman contends his \$25 million donation was not contingent upon UNC's Board of Trustees vote to deny Hannah-Jones' application for tenure.

After lengthy deliberations, the Board of Trustees voted to grant Hannah-Jones tenure as the Knight Foundation endowed chair. However, Nikole Hannah-Jones – one who knows the value of her scholarship and who believes in academic freedom for scholars to explore ideas independent of public or political pressure – declined UNC's offer. Hussman's actions exemplify how those with power can attempt to use their privilege and financial resources to influence or even silence journalists, when the true story does not fit the narrative they want shared.

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## Reenvisioning K-12 Education with a Critical Black Pedagogy Focus

Critical Black Pedagogy (CBP) is a philosophy of education that emphasizes teaching students how to think critically about societal and even personal problems, understanding how structures of power and racism degrade the opportunities for democracy, economic justice, and personal development. It is a cornerstone of multicultural education (Nieto & Bode, 2018). The term *Critical Black Pedagogy* first appeared in the book *The Struggle for Black History: Foundations for a Critical Black Pedagogy in Education*. In the critical pedagogy strand of CBP, the question is asked, how would schools and universities be different if Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X were superintendents or presidents.

When reenvisioning this possibility, it is highly likely that teachers would have expectations for Black students, expulsion and suspension rates would be greatly reduced, special education referrals would be diminished, and students would be intrinsically motivated. Moreover, Black students would become unified community builders opposed to test takers. And while we are imagining what CBP would look like, there is a model that is open to study by way of the Nation of Islam's schools or their affiliates.

The education of students in these schools is grounded in helping students to discover their creative genius-knowledge of self (Pitre, 2015). And it is critical pedagogy because it is designed to empower and liberate Black people. Critical Black Pedagogy sits at the center of critical race theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, and *The 1619 Project* because these frameworks embody one or more of the following CBP components.

The four components of critical Black pedagogy are: Afrocentricity, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and African American spirituality:

1. **Afrocentricity** is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of African descended people. This approach is defined by Molefi

Asante (1991) wherein he writes, “Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person. In education this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African world view” (p. 171). It means that we must include an examination of Black leaders, scholars, students, and activists and their critique of Black education.

2. **Multicultural education** is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect (Nieto & Bode, 2018). And it offers a praxis for addressing contemporary concerns related to Black education.
3. **Critical pedagogy** asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are clearly not. And it asks a central question: What would schools and universities look like if Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X were in leadership roles such as superintendent, principal, university president, provost, or chancellor?
4. **African American spirituality** posits that the African concept of life and its concept of education require that the sacred and the secular should be seen as one. The African worldview does not approach the study of God as some kind of force independent of the human reason and physical reality. Instead, it sees God as an inescapable component of human life.

Each of these components is a common thread that undergirds the premise of *The 1619 Project*.

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## Postracial Discourse

In 2008, when President Barack Obama was elected president of the United States, some thought we had now entered a so-called postracial society. For those people, the struggles of people of African descent were no longer a pressing issue. In education, the discourse became more centered on diversity and social justice to the neglect of African-centered scholarship. Lost in these shifting dynamics was the African-centered discourse that had dominated the 1960s and 1970s.

Even when exploring critical race theory, there was an emerging trend to look beyond the Black and White binary that some believed was now outdated (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical race theory, these proponents argued, should include other groups and consider religious persecution as a form of racism. The emerging trend was away from the discourse of critical Black thought leaders that offered elucidating critiques of education in a *White supremacist society*.

In this environment, too many multicultural education scholars have lost sight of those Black thinkers who laid the foundation for critical Black pedagogy. In



conferences and textbooks, prominence is given to the likes of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, B. F. Skinner, Lev Vygotsky, Michael Foucault, and other European philosophers. There is scant mention of the Black pedagogues mentioned above and of the educational ideas of prominent African American leaders such as Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Septima Clark, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X (Pitre, 2019).

In concert with the neglect of Black educational theorists, educators today are not pushed to include in their pedagogy any awareness of Black culture and linguistics. The language of hip hop, for example, is an offshoot of Black nationalism but is not included in educator preparation programs despite the large number of students who embrace it (Foust, 2021). This neglect simply reinforces the ideologies that contribute to the domestication of African American students. While there is an abundance of discourse around closing the achievement gap between Black and White students, there is virtually no discussion about dismantling the ideological underpinnings of White supremacy that plays out within the curriculum in numerous ways, from ignoring Black achievements to dismissing Black language as inferior or irrelevant (Perry, 1998; Pitre, 2011).

The ideas of critical Black pedagogues that gave birth to multicultural education have been placed at the margins of educational discourse in the twenty-first century. And while many of the emerging educational discourses centered on social justice continue to dominate, there is a wealth of knowledge emanating from the Afrocentric literature that could transform the educational landscape. In public schools and universities where Black Studies courses and programs have been developed, the discourse has been diluted to the degree that they are impotent to stimulate a movement that is reminiscent of the revolutionary 1960s.

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## **Black Lives Matter in the Context of Education**

The Black Lives Matters movement has been one of the defining social movements of the 2000s. The organization was formed after the 2013 acquittal of vigilante George Zimmerman, who shot and killed teenager Trayvon Martin while he was walking alone to an acquaintance's house in 2012. The movement gathered power in the wake of several police killings of unarmed African Americans, such as Eric Garner and Freddie Gray, and most recently, Ahmaud Arbery – an unarmed jogger – and launched worldwide protests after the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020. The killing was filmed by bystanders, and the world watched in shock at the video of Derek Chauvin pressing on Floyd's neck for 8 min and 47 s, as Floyd pleaded "I can't breathe" over and over.

The Black Lives Matter movement advocates on many fronts, not just police brutality. Its efforts reach to border policy, global conflicts, and representation in the halls of power. We need also to extend this activism to schools. Black students have been muted and silenced, denied the "breathing room" that education should provide to all students. Even in schools that are predominantly African American one can find the majority of AP classes and gifted programs dominated by White students.



Joel Spring (2016) notes that many schools have second-generation segregation, which means segregation within schools. One example of second-generation segregation is tracking, a system of directing students into educational programs according to their supposed intelligence, where non-White students are routinely placed in lower tracks (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

The oppressive environment for Black students in schools begins early. In the elementary grades, Black boys are treated like adults and experience hostile teachers and administrators. Similarly, Black girls experience disproportionate discipline more than any other group of students, often outpacing the rates of most boys (Morris, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2011) writes that the school experiences of Black boys are similar to prison writing: “I could not help but notice the degree to which every aspect of the students’ activities were regulated – not just what they were taught, but also how their bodies were controlled” (p. 10).

Black lives are also being destroyed in classrooms where teachers do not acknowledge them even when their hands are raised. They receive little to no encouragement and are not given opportunities to develop leadership skills. In an observation, of one elementary school during an honors ceremony there were no non-White students with roles in the program (Personal Observation, 2018–2020). African American students over time learned to take the backdoor, causing many of them to exit the school. Louis Farrakhan once pointed out that no one wants to be in a place where one’s self-worth is diminished (Pitre, 2018). For African American students, that place is school.

Teacher preparation programs do little to discourage the dehumanizing practices of schools in regard to African American students. Too many educators still believe the vicious stereotypes about African American students being lazy, violent, and dangerous. Moreover, educator preparation programs are being forced to align with state mandates that require teacher education professors to focus on passing licensure exams required by their states, which diverts upcoming teachers from the kind of in-depth study of multicultural education that is desperately needed. There is certainly no time for the pedagogical philosophies of Black educators; a perusal of popular textbooks shows the occasional mention of Dr. Du Bois but rarely any other of the major Black thinkers. Nor is there time for the comparative study of alternative educational models like those of the Nation of Islam. It seems clear that the social justice discourse that is sweeping the educational landscape currently functions more as a pacifier designed to stop the Black exodus from mainstream society (a major goal of some Black organizations) than a true implement of liberation.

Black Lives Matter is more than a cry for equal inclusion into mainstream society. It is spiritual, rooted in the deep humanistic desire of all people to connect with their own humanity and live to their fullest potential. Education forms the center of this quest. It is knowledge that brings about a newfound consciousness that causes human beings to discover the creative self. Knowledge empowers people to become masters of their environment and it frees them to look beyond materialism. And it connects us back to our theological roots: Black lives matter because they are descendants of the originator of the universe (Muhammad, 1974; Rogers, 1995).

## Leadership Implications

While curriculum is at the center of education there is a need to explore the role of leadership in implementing multicultural curricula in the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black Lives Matter Movement is a rebirthing of past movements that sought to bring an end to atrocities that led to the untimely death of African descended people in America. Woodson argues that there would be no lynching if people were educated differently.

This implies that there is a need to explore leadership, but particularly educational leadership programs. In part, educational leaders develop policies, address curricula orientations, and they play a major role in determining how curriculum will be enacted. This section explores the role of educational leaders as it relates to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Historical speaking the preparation of educational leaders has been shaped by a scientific management approach. Through a scientific management approach, educational leaders were prepared to oversee the operation of *things*, class schedules, bus routes, supervision of teaching, extracurricular activities as well as a host of other duties. In this context, the preparation of school leaders took on an apolitical perspective. Educational leaders were concerned with operational efficiency while not recognizing the role of culture in making the schools run efficiently.

The scientific management approach relied on quantitative research in the preparation of educational leaders. Other forms of research were not seen as authentic research. English (2002) describes it best when he says that the scientific management approach, “. . .creates a demarcation line, bestowing legitimacy on those who do their work within it while discrediting all that came before as false and trivial” (p.111). Thus, quantitative research relied on numeric data that did not explain the cultural influences that shaped the data.

Throughout the preparation programs of educational leaders there was a Eurocentric approach that began with the curriculum and expanded to the readings of predominantly White male scholars of administration theory. The preparation of educational leaders represented a form of hegemony that would support White supremacist ideology. To date, the influence of these pioneers of school administration dating back to the 1920s continues to impact the preparation of educational leaders. By and large the majority of educational leadership program continue to be rooted in a scientific management approach.

The scientific management approach does not offer a critique of the inequities that exist in schools. And it could be argued that a sizable population of those aspiring to roles such as principal or school superintendent is looking for gimmicks that bring a quick fix to a problem their schools might face. Challenges like; How to improve test scores? Or why do African American students show signs of apathy? To understand these issues, the preparation of educational leaders needs to expand beyond the scientific management approach.

The effort to expand the scientific management approach was in part a byproduct of the 1960s *Black Power Movement* that resulted in Black Studies, which gave birth to multicultural education (Banks, 1992). The introduction of multicultural

education in teacher preparation paved the way for social justice discourse in preparation programs for educational leaders.

William Foster's (1986) publication, *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration*, introduced a critical theory to the study of educational leadership. Other scholars caught on and began to focus on preparing educational leaders for social justice (Furman, 2012). Scholars in the area of social justice preparation of educational leaders while not entirely dismissing management and administration began to infuse a pedagogy of leadership around the ethic of care and moral philosophical underpinnings. New and emerging scholarships like Capper's *Organizational Theory for Equity and Diversity: Leading Integrated, Socially Just Education* expand beyond the traditional discourse found in organizational theory. In other works, like Rosemary Papa's (2020) *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice Education*, a treasure trove of information is provided that could help in raising the consciousness of educational leaders.

One result of the social justice scholarship in the preparation of educational leaders is the Carnegie Project for the Educational Doctorate. The Carnegie Project for the Educational Doctorate seeks to reenvision the Educational Doctorate (Ed.D.) for educational leaders in the twenty-first century. Its major premise is preparing social justice educational leaders. Moving away from the traditional dissertation, students seeking the Ed.D. are engaged in improvement science and complete a Dissertation of Practice or Capstone Project.

The current wave of preparing educational leaders for social justice brings us full circle back to the need for discourse around Black Lives Matter in the context of Multicultural Education. While the work on social justice leadership is laudable, this may not be enough to radically change or disrupt the inequities that African American students face.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The contemporary multicultural curriculum discourse has become more centered around issues of special needs, gender, and poverty; however, scholars and practitioners would do well to look at multicultural education's African-centered origins to understand how to forge a more socially just society through education. The multicultural approaches by James Banks (2019), with a particular focus on reaching the social action approach, should be revisited in the current sociopolitical climate where African Americans are bearing the brunt of both psychological and physical violence. Within the social action approach are the elements of Black consciousness that started a movement that transformed America to become more inclusive, and true to the ideals espoused in the American Constitution.

Educational scholars have asked why critical pedagogy hasn't gained traction in making wholesale changes to the educational landscape. In part, critical pedagogy is still new to the people who have been most underserved and bear the brunt of educational inequality. The paternalism in the field of education has limited powerful Black voices from being heard and as a result limited the changes that educators for

social justice claim they would like to see. Many of these educational scholars are dumbfounded when challenged by truths that go beyond their critique of the educational crises.

This has been a major factor in the lack of progress in education. To speak like James Baldwin and declare that the entire educational system is designed to destroy Black people would be heretical. Multicultural education is accepted as long as it is limited to discrete additions to the curriculum. But critical pedagogy requires a more significant transformation, addressing the structures of power, the skills needed to advocate for true democracy, the materialistic and instrumental goals of Eurocentric education, and the spiritual aspect of movements to eradicate inequities. It addresses what knowledge is taught and what knowledge is excluded, like the efforts of the Million Man March and other powerful movements that are transforming the Black world.

Critical Black pedagogy is one approach that could potentially help educators rethink policies and practices that have been detrimental to Black lives. The fear of exploring Black thought leaders from groups like the Nation of Islam should be dispelled if we are truly seeking to eradicate the inequities that exist in school and society (Pitre, 2015). In part, it was persons like Malcolm X who inspired the movement for Black Studies in schools and universities. His critiques of the dominant society sparked what are known today as critical race theory and whiteness studies.

Malcolm X raised the consciousness of people from diverse backgrounds and his “radical” teaching departed from the dominant narrative of the mainstream curriculum. His famous speech “The Ballot or the Bullet” inspired a cadre of Black activists that were determined to get justice *by any means necessary* (Breitman, 1990). And while most writings in the educational discourse refer to Malcolm X, it was Elijah Muhammad from whence he received mentorship and a *supreme wisdom* that transformed his life.

As a critical Black pedagogue, Elijah Muhammad articulated a history of Black people that predated the cosmos and he adopted Malcolm as a son, tutoring him unlike the other Ministers in the Nation of Islam, which grew him into a world leader (Haley & Malcolm X, 1964/1992). He sent Malcolm as a diplomat to African countries, and this led him to situate the Black struggle in America to people of African descent across the globe. The awakening of Malcolm X was the result of a body of knowledge that awakened the teacher within. Once awakened a metamorphosis was underway, causing Malcolm to move away from the slimy life – likened to a worm – to that of a butterfly, one of beauty and splendor that mesmerizes.

If those concerned with education are truly invested in Black lives, it will require a study of African-centered perspectives. Educator preparation programs will need to be revamped to include the ideas and philosophies of Black thought leaders. In addition, it will require that those writing the licensure exams to include African-centered perspectives. Lastly, the African-centered approach to curriculum development should be viewed as part of the multicultural curriculum reform that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and voices.

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# A Principal-School Counselor Relational Leadership Model to Improve Student Mental Well-Being

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Rachel Louise Geesa, Kaylee M. Odell, Theresa Kruczek, Nicholas P. Elam, Lori G. Boyland, and Makayla L. Ceresa

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## Abstract

Studies report that most children with mental health disorders do not receive the adequate amount and type of mental health care and support they should receive to effectively guide growth and development. Often, schools are one of the only places where students and their families can receive mental health care, though

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unfortunately, many school leaders do not receive sufficient training to support students in their mental health needs. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of essential knowledge and skills necessary for principals and school counselors to develop collaborative relationships that better position them to support the mental health of P-12 students. The discussion is framed through the lens of relational leadership theory and highlights how the school counselor and principal roles are effectively operationalized within a collaborative, multitiered system of supports. Finally, how to move forward with collaborative pre- and in-service mental health training for principals and school counselors is discussed.

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**Keywords**

School counselor · Principal · School leader · Collaboration · Preparation · Mental health · Multitiered system of supports · Relational leadership

**The Field of Memory**

In regard to the mental health support that children receive in P-12 schools, a particular concept that is not current is that of a *vocational or guidance* counselor. In addition to fostering the academic and career developmental of students, contemporary *school counselors* also provide services which support the personal, social, and emotional needs of students. The goal of these latter services is to foster overall mental health and well-being in students. The current and comprehensive approach to school counseling focuses on academic, career, and social-emotional development. Comprehensive school counseling represents a shift from the beginnings of the profession when the focus was predominantly vocational guidance (i.e., guidance counselor to school counselor). Further, while a contemporary school counselor is trained to address the mental health needs of students, the notion that the school counselor alone bears sole responsibility for addressing the mental health needs of students is no longer valid. It has become increasingly clear that a team of individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, principals, and school counselors) is needed in order to promote mental health in students.

**The Field of Presence**

In order to effectively address students' mental health needs in schools, collaboration is essential. Unfortunately, the appropriate role and function of school counselors in the current education system often is not sufficiently understood or supported by school leaders and teachers. Thus, school counselors often are not provided with the time and resources necessary to adequately address students' social-emotional needs. Collaboration between school leaders, now more than ever, is key to a healthy school climate. This collaborative and comprehensive approach is articulated in the American School Counseling Association's (ASCA) National Model for Comprehensive School Counseling (CSC), which outlines recommended best practices for school counseling schools in the USA.



### **The Field of Concomitance**

Comprehensive school counseling draws on subject matter from related fields which include the social (e.g., psychology and sociology) and biological sciences (e.g., biology and medicine), philosophy, and social activism. Underlying school counseling and education are the principles of social justice, morality, and human behavior, as these are intertwined with one's mental health. Many of the social, emotional, and academic competencies fostered by school counselors have been grounded in the aforementioned subject areas. Further, educational leadership is connected to school counseling in that administrators and school counselors need to work together in order to achieve overall school improvement goals to most effectively meet students' needs. Comprehensive school counseling relies on successful collaboration between school counselors and principals so that both are aware of one another's roles and can support one another.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

Despite the importance of addressing student mental health, there have been major ruptures in creating a school culture which supports the mental health of all students. Schools with limited resources demonstrate disproportionalities in terms of student mental health needs. At the same time, schools in low-income areas with limited funding and staffing often assign school counselors tasks (e.g., bus duty, substitute teaching, and test administration) that are not within the recommendations for best practices by ASCA in terms of job duties. This practice has been a key rupture in affording school counselors the time needed to create an environment that fosters comprehensive school programming which includes addressing students social-emotional development as recommended by the ASCA National Model for CSC. Further, schools are not always consistent in their implementation of comprehensive school counseling, even when the school counselor has been trained in the approach. Often this is due to the fact that many principals are not aware of the appropriate roles of school counselors, thus creating role confusion and inappropriate use of counselor time.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Critical assumptions in this chapter are that the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students must be addressed in addition to academic and career development. Further, collaboration between school leaders, families, stakeholders, and others is crucial in properly meeting these needs.

Since children spend much of their productive time in educational settings, schools provide a unique opportunity to identify and treat mental health conditions by serving students where they already are. (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2020)

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## **Introduction**

Approximately one in five children have a mental health disorder, and 80% of those children do not receive adequate or any specialized mental health care (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Unfortunately, disparities in access to mental

health support are more prevalent for students and families of color, low socioeconomic status, and English language learners. Often, schools may be the only place these students and families can receive support for behavioral, mental, and emotional disorders, which makes school-based mental health support an essential function of the educational environment (Kaffenberger & O'Rourke-Trigiani, 2013; Platell, Cook, & Martin, 2017).

School-based mental health support has evolved and improved over the years, growing from one or two professionals to a team of licensed individuals through the initiative of activists in the field, which benefits both underserved and general student populations as a whole (Flaherty & Osher, 2003). As having a *team* of individuals is key in promoting mental health in schools, this chapter is framed through the concept of relational leadership. Also within this chapter, a historical analysis of the development of school-based mental health is presented. An overview of the current state of mental health support in schools, with specific regard to the collaboration of school leaders and school counselors working toward the end goal of meeting students' social, emotional, academic, and mental health needs, is shared and analyzed through the lens of relational leadership. Currently, mental health in school programs is often developed and supported by a number of school personnel and leaders, with school principals and school counselors leading the focus of these programs. Therefore, it is imperative in today's society that principal and school counselor preparation programs provide candidates meaningful learning opportunities to understand and collaboratively support student mental health.

Through collaborative support, principals and school counselors effectively communicate between themselves and among school teams, parents, and community partners to determine the best route of action. It is equally important that principals and school counselors recognize when to connect students to mental health service providers with the expertise and time required to provide sufficient support. While principals and school counselors cannot provide primary mental health care for students, it is essential that they foster educational systems that facilitate access to appropriate care providers both within the school environment and outside community. This support can manifest in a variety of ways, such as enhancing the development of students' social and emotional skills (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011); creating systems for school counselors to perform role-appropriate duties that include conferencing with students and listening to their needs (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010); providing wraparound services like professional mental health services (Sanders, 2016); building a transparent and accessible network of school and community interventions and supports (Stephan, Sugai, Lever, & Connors, 2015); and developing and sustaining trauma-informed schools (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Preservice and current practitioner principals and school counselors must have knowledge of these standards of practice, as well as how to collaborate together effectively to support the implementation of school-based services and community partnerships.

Principal and school counselor collaboration to support students' emotional well-being, mental health, and equitable access to high-quality instruction and academic achievement are increasingly robust areas of research (Boyland et al., 2019; Dahir et al., 2010; Yavuz, Cayirdag, Dahir, & Gümüşeli, 2017). It is important to examine

this relationship in practice as well as the discrete skill sets of both professions so that mental health needs for P-12 students are adequately met. Furthermore, those characteristics and skills ought to inform principal and school counselor preparation programs so that candidates are able to demonstrate proficiency in this regard upon entering the workforce.

The purpose of this chapter is to first present a brief history of the developmental timeline of school-based mental health, followed by an overview of the essential knowledge and skills necessary for principals and school counselors to develop collaborative relationships so that they are better positioned to support the mental health of P-12 students through the utilization of relational leadership. The chapter also includes discussion of how that knowledge can best be incorporated into principal, counselor, and educator preparation programs. To that end, the chapter includes presentation and analysis of extant literature and current recommendations for the requisite education and professional development needed to encourage a meaningful collaboration between principals and school counselors to support student mental health. An exploration of opportunities for candidates to co-construct knowledge surrounding leadership in service of P-12 students' mental health needs within schools is also included.

## Tracing Theories and Developments

The school counseling profession developed in the context of larger educational practices, and the focus on students' personal and social development is often synonymous with supporting positive mental health. Various efforts to transform educational practices to address the mental health needs of students have been proposed for over 100 years. These education reform efforts have consistently identified ways to improve schools and transform educational practices in order to overcome the barriers to educational success encountered by many low-income and minority students. Historically, this equity-based approach to education reform was taken by educators like Julia Richman and John Dewey, as well as social workers and other activists like Jane Addams and individuals from the Hull House (Wallin, 1914).

Julia Richman experienced many roles since the start of her teaching career in 1872. Serving as a principal for 19 years, and then as a district superintendent of elementary schools in overcrowded areas of New York City, Richman was involved in many sides of the educational system, which encompassed many roles and responsibilities (Berrol, 1972). It is noted that Richman's passion for working with immigrant and lower-income populations likely arose from her friendships with other "social progressives," such as Lillian Wald and Florence Kelley (Berrol, 1972, p. 404). Richman was one of the first superintendents to form classes that aided students who experienced difficulties with learning. These classes focused on serving immigrant and children with individualized needs, in order to close the achievement gap that had developed between them and their general education peers, with the overall goal being for them to complete their elementary education by the age of 14 (Berrol, 1972). Further, Richman began to use remedial measures with students who had been disruptive or truant within

classrooms, which included approaches like increasing the amount of time spent in gymnastics, and mandating suspended students report to her on Saturday mornings (Berrol, 1972).

In contrast, John Dewey studied philosophy at the beginning of his educational career and spent time teaching at both a high school in Pennsylvania and a seminary in Vermont (Hildebrand, 2018). Dewey then continued his philosophy and psychology education at Johns Hopkins University, with these fields serving as the focus for his remaining career (Hildebrand, 2018). Much of Dewey's philosophical approach was inspired by the work of William James, as it focused on learning through the human experience (Gibbon, 2019). In 1899, Dewey published *The School and Society* – a pamphlet detailing his beliefs regarding educational reform. Dewey's approach largely focused on classrooms that included student engagement and participation, as he felt that children should be active in their learning and have hands-on experiences (Gibbon, 2019).

Interestingly, Dewey and Addams – an activist and early social worker in the early-to-mid-1900s – influenced one another's work, as both individuals understood the importance of student attendance and hands-on engagement within the classroom (Paul, 2016). Addams was instrumental in promoting immigrant, women, and children social rights. She and members of the Hull House helped to launch programs such as the Immigrants' Protective League, the Juvenile Protective Association, the National Child Labor Committee, and the Federal Children's Bureau. Additionally, Addams enacted protective legislation for children that helped create mandatory minimum education laws. This work can be seen as the basis of the promotion of healthy and inclusive school environments (Paul, 2016). Addams was influenced by the Romantics such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, social visionaries like Canon Barnett and Leo Tolstoy, and pragmatists which included Dewey and George Herbert Mead (Hamington, 2018).

As some of Addams' influences included the social visionaries Barnett and Tolstoy, the activist was dubbed as what Moldovan, Rotari, and Zagorodniuc (2016) referred to as "Tolstoy's disciple" (p. 313). Russian radical social thought developed alongside European social philosophy in the nineteenth century, resulting in the spread of Russian social and philosophical beliefs to Europe and the USA (Moldovan et al., 2016, p. 314). Addams was greatly impacted by Tolstoy's religious and philosophical works, such as *My Religion*, which aided in her adopting the philosophical approach that focused on the importance of peace, stability, democracy, and social justice (Moldovan et al., 2016). Thus, ideals like Tolstoy's began to foster a desire to fight for peace and social justice, which eventually would become the backbone of social work, and influence early school counseling practices.

School counseling began as a response to the US transition to an industrial economy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Herr & Erford, 2011). This time period marked the start of the vocational guidance movement, which had a focus on professional- and career-based counseling, guidance, academic placement, and assessment (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr & Erford, 2011). Initially, school counselors operated under the label of guidance officers or guidance counselors and had the main responsibility of guiding students to postgraduation

employment based on their individual characteristics that included interests, abilities, intelligence, and professional aspirations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr & Erford, 2011). Often, these guidance counselors were teachers who had been given these extra “guidance” responsibilities, but were challenged by a lack of formal training, leadership, and resources (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

The practice of utilizing teachers and administrators for these guidance positions changed as school counseling became a stand-alone profession that required specialized training (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). During the 1960s and 1970s, the field wrestled with its professional identity, with the central debate surrounding whether school counselors should be classified as primarily educators or mental health professionals (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). As a result of increasing US diversity, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Rights Movement, and the Disability Movement, school counselors began serving increasingly diverse students that caused counselor education training programs to begin emphasizing multicultural counseling techniques and approaches that are designed to support the academic development and mental health needs of all students (Herr & Erford, 2011). Further, school counseling interventions became increasingly focused on measurable and developmentally appropriate interventions, as well as a range of services that include: individual and group counseling, student behavior appraisal and intervention, staff and parent consultation, and career counseling and course placement (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Federal legislation continued to support guidance and counseling during the 1960s, which included the passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. As a result, school counseling retained a vocational focus that was seen particularly at the secondary level, while also increasing emphasis on student mental health.

The concept of comprehensive school counseling programs, along with its basis in relational leadership, was initially developed during the latter half of the twentieth century and has evolved over time. The early incarnations of comprehensive school counseling are similar to the recommendations for school counseling best practices today (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Rather than primarily providing individual counseling to high-needs students, or services determined exclusively by the needs of schools, comprehensive school counseling includes a purposeful, developmentally appropriate, accountability-based school counseling framework with a range of defined components (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). The goal of comprehensive school counseling is to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students via effective partnerships and interactions between school leaders and other school and community personnel. Within a comprehensive school counseling framework, school counselors perform a myriad of tasks which include: collaboration and consultation with stakeholders that include school staff and families; serving as school leaders who advocate for systemic change; providing services which support the school’s academic mission and vision; and implementing practices which support the educational reform movement (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Further, these trends are reflected in the school counseling literature. Alexander, Kruczek, Ramirez-Chase, and Zigelbaum (2003) reviewed the school counseling literature in the ASCA

flagship journals at the outset of the National Trust's Transforming School Counseling Movement. At that time, journal articles emphasized mental health over educational and academic achievement at a ratio of two to one. Ten years later, mental health was still emphasized over educational and academic achievement, but the ratio had declined from five to three (Zagelbaum, Kruczek, Alexander, & Crethar, 2014). Further, the majority of the literature in the ASCA journal in the more recent review focused on topics unrelated to either mental health or academic achievement. The top two topics emphasized were accountability and collaboration (within schools and with outside agencies). These two topics were followed by school data and trend analyses, professional development, supervision, and coping with work stress, in that order (Zagelbaum et al., 2014).

As it stands today, school counselors provide school-based mental health services in accordance with American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model for Comprehensive School Counseling programs (2019a). This model clearly defines the recommended role and responsibilities of school counselors in American school systems, and has a substantial amount of empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness for promoting student success (Dahir, Cinotti, & Feiren, 2019). Dahir et al. (2019) also notes that "comprehensive school counseling programs, driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career, and social/emotional development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students" (p. 122). This model articulates specific, empirically derived school counselor mindsets and behaviors needed for student success (ASCA, 2019a). Particularly germane to this discussion is the first mindset, which encourages the importance of mental, social, emotional, and physical well-being. Behavior standards have been established which encourage student development of learning strategies, self-management, and social skills needed for mental health and academic success (ASCA, 2019a).

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## **Theoretical Frame: Relational Leadership**

The chapter is framed through the lens of relational leadership theory, as it illuminates the important role that traditional school leaders, like principals, and school counselors, who increasingly are expected to be leaders (Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2018), have in influencing their schools to be successful. Relational leadership understands leadership "as human social constructions that emanate from the rich connections and interdependencies of organizations and their members" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 655). This theory constitutes a shift from traditional views of leadership that historically focus on independent actions of one sole leader to leadership that is the result of effective relationships and interactions between many individuals (i.e., principals and school counselors).

Relational leadership theory was developed from the perspective that knowledge is socially constructed, or co-constructed between individuals as they interact with one another in their environments (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010). Applied to principal-school counselor relationships, the focus is on how both parties co-construct leadership through their collaboration and interdependence,

particularly in a framework of multitiered system of supports fostered through communication and other necessary relationship-building approaches in schools (Duslak & Geier, 2018).

Some existing literature points to the importance of understanding relational leadership in the context of schools to support students beyond academic achievement. Relational leadership, in addition to an ethic of care among school principals, was found to be needed to address bullying in schools, as these factors were predictive of the nature and quality of relationships between principals, school staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders (Smit & Scherman, 2016).

We identify the discrete characteristics of leadership for principals and school counselors as separate professionals, but it is through their relational processes that mental health support will best be realized. Therefore, this chapter includes an explanation of the co-construction of knowledge and understanding within leadership and school counseling to foster collaboration to meet the complex mental health needs of all students. It is equally important to consider how preparation programs can create opportunities for principal and school counselor candidates to co-construct knowledge about students' mental health support.

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## Literature Review

Shifting from a leader-centric approach to a relational leadership approach can both precipitate many benefits within schools and be the product of other effective approaches. As a notable example, principals and school counselors can use relational leadership to support the mental health of students. To understand this, it is vital to first understand their respective professional responsibilities. Differences and similarities among the roles of school counselors and principals in promoting student mental health in schools are reviewed in this section. Following the review of roles, this section includes ways school counselors and principals may positively collaborate to allow for more time and resources to be allocated toward mental health and social-emotional learning (SEL) in school settings, with specific examples of relational leadership fostering these collective efforts.

## School Counselors' Role in Promoting Student Mental Health

Through relational leadership, school counselors play an important role in identifying and addressing mental health needs and issues, particularly with students from economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds through the support of educational leaders, classroom educators, and other school stakeholders (Better-Bubon, Brunner, & Kansteiner, 2016). ASCA (2019a) indicated that school counselors are often the first to recognize students' mental health needs in schools. Accordingly, they can play vital roles in supporting students with mental health needs through designing and implementing school counseling programs, if given the opportunity to lead.



The collaborations with other school staff, other educational professionals, and community services are crucial to provide education, prevention, intervention, and referral services to address mental health issues within schools (ASCA, 2019a). School counselors can develop and implement school-based prevention programs and professional development opportunities that educate teachers, staff, and leaders to enhance awareness of mental health (Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2018). Additionally, school counselors can advocate, collaborate, and coordinate with stakeholders to provide appropriate referrals, resources, and accessible mental health services. Adapting the school's multitiered system of supports into a multitiered, multidomain system of supports provides a school counseling core curriculum which can meet not only the academic and career development needs of students but also their personal-social and mental health needs (Hatch, Duarte, & De Gregorio, 2019).

### **Principals' Role in Promoting Student Mental Health**

School principals are charged with operationalizing the mission and vision of the school to address students' academic, social, and emotional needs; however, principals cannot successfully accomplish this goal without forming effective partnerships and alliances within the school and community (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). There is a lack of research exploring the role of principals as relational leaders in partnership with school counselors to address students' mental health needs, as prior research has focused largely on the historical view of the principal in a leader-centric role. Relational leadership, on the other hand, requires a transformation in the nature of school leadership (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012). In the case of principal-school counselor collaboration, relational leadership involves the forming of a partnership of equals, which results in a new type of highly cooperative and constructivist leadership that emerges due to the interactive nature of the relationship and a focus on shared goals.

Previous studies that have explored the principals' role in promoting students' mental health have primarily focused on the extent to which principals acknowledge student mental health as a priority, barriers that exist in schools to addressing student mental health needs, and effective approaches – some of which are affected by these barriers – to addressing student mental health needs.

Price, Khubchandani, Payton, and Thompson (2016) found that principals believed school violence incidents were attributable to inadequate mental health services, and peer harassment and bullying. Even so, studies have yielded varying findings with regard to the priority principals have placed on student mental health. In the wake of the 1999 Columbine High School mass shooting, a survey of Colorado school leaders revealed principals were significantly more likely than school psychologists and school social workers to indicate they were happy with current mental health services for students (Crepeau-Hobson, Filaccio, & Gottfried, 2005). However, Iachini, Pitner, Morgan, and Rhodes (2016) found that principals rated behavioral and mental health as top student needs above other categories



including extracurricular opportunities, academic considerations, attendance, technology, and discipline. Additionally, Hill, Ohmstede, and Mims (2012) found school principals, school psychologists, and school counselors were in agreement with their perceptions of the need for various mental health services.

Results of several studies have indicated that principals believe having school personnel dedicated solely or primarily to addressing student mental health, and professional development for teachers and staff, to be among the most effective approaches for promoting student mental health (Frabutt & Speech, 2012; Iachini et al., 2016; Price et al., 2016; Raphael & Burke, 2012). However, barriers exist to bringing mental health training, resources, and personnel into schools. Given that mental health personnel and professional development often directly require schools to dedicate additional financial resources, principals have identified the most significant obstacles to adequately promoting student mental health as lack of personnel and funding (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2005; Frabutt & Speech, 2012).

In addition to hiring personnel and providing professional development, principals can support a variety of other initiatives that promote student mental health, which may or may not require the school to dedicate additional financial resources. Durlak et al. (2011) found that students in schools that implemented SEL programs not only demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills and academic achievement, but that these programs were effectively conducted by classroom teachers and other school staff and could be incorporated into the routine curriculum. Frabutt and Speech (2012) also found that principals saw a benefit in specific curricula and programs aimed to promote student mental health, and reported that it was important to establish and maintain high-quality, home-school relationships to prevent student mental health concerns.

Principals have also approached student mental health in ways that are closely associated with prevention and intervention of school violence. Crepeau-Hobson et al. (2005) found that following the Columbine shooting, mental health services of virtually every type were more widely implemented throughout Colorado's schools than they had been before. These services included daily check-ins with at-risk students, social skills training, group counseling, the creation of crisis teams, conflict resolution programs, and anti-bullying programs.

Assessment of the effectiveness of school-based services is an important step in promoting student mental health. Whitley (2010) noted the importance of establishing infrastructure, building capacity, partnering with the community, and developing evidence. Principals have implemented additional approaches, including suicide prevention and education (Hill et al., 2012), honing communication strategies to convey school mental health information clearly and effectively (Caparelli, 2011), and fostering positive relationships between students and teachers in classrooms and/or common planning and discussion time among teacher teams (Raphael & Burke, 2012).

Shifting away from a leader-centric model to a more relational leadership approach is also important to consider the impact of a multitiered system of supports that includes principals and school counselors, as this approach presents further opportunities for holistically supporting student mental health and fosters a

collaborative and constructivist approach to problem-solving. Through a multitiered system of supports, clear boundaries between principals, school counselors, and other participants become increasingly fluid and are contextually defined as the team focuses on the goal of helping each student meet with success. Therefore, as explained by English (► [Chap. 17, “Leader Centric Versus Leader Relational”](#)), under a leader relational model, leadership of such a team is constructivist in nature, created by human interactions, and can take on a life of its own. The interactive and relational approach of multitiered system of supports serves to blur the role boundaries between principals and school counselors as they mutually seek, create, implement, and evaluate methods of collaboratively supporting students’ mental health.

### **Multitiered System of Supports, and Comprehensive School Counseling, as a Framework for Collaboration and Relational Leadership**

Principals and school counselors play key roles in monitoring and managing school accountability as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), and more recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). A key element of the accountability movement, which fostered this legislation, was closing the achievement gap between historically marginalized minority students and their majority group counterparts. Initially, response to intervention (RTI) was developed as an alternative to the discrepancy model to identify those students in need of special education services, in the spirit of leader-centric approaches’ field of concomitance. The discrepancy model, which was originally part of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA, 1975, 2004), has been criticized for overidentification of students of color and requiring students to fail before receiving services.

RTI was developed as a three-tiered approach, focused on prevention and intervention. Instructional RTI is well understood by educators, principals, and school counselors, but less awareness surrounds mental health and behavioral RTI. School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports is a multitiered approach to prevention and intervention in the areas of social, emotional, and behavioral functioning. Some school leaders see positive behavioral interventions and supports and RTI as separate models competing for limited resources. This could be attributable to the perception that PBIS has more constrained fidelity guidelines, whereas RTI allows more freedom and flexibility in implementation (Ziomek-Daigle, Goodman-Scott, Cavin, & Donahue, 2016). However, the multitiered system of supports approach incorporates both RTI and positive behavioral interventions and supports into one comprehensive system in which RTI provides a framework for prevention and early intervention, while positive behavioral interventions and supports provide a model for consistency in behavioral expectations and incentives for positive behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

Harlacher, Sakelaris, and Kattelman (2014) described six key tenets of the multitiered system of supports framework: (a) all students are capable of grade-level learning with adequate support; (b) multitiered system of supports is rooted in proactivity and prevention; (c) the system utilizes evidence-based practices; (d) decisions and procedures are driven by school and student data; (e) the degree of support given to each student is based on their needs; and (f) implementation occurs schoolwide and requires stakeholder collaboration. Integration of a comprehensive social emotional curriculum can supplement RTI and positive behavioral interventions and support and enhance students' mental health. Specifically, social emotional theory and research suggests that the capacity to understand and regulate emotional experiences is crucial for successful academic, personal-social, and even career development (Avant & Swerdlik, 2016).

ASCA's position statement (2019b) on multitiered system of supports recommends alignment between a school's comprehensive school counseling program and multitiered system of supports in order to ensure the academic and social-emotional success of all students. By aligning a school's multitiered system of supports and comprehensive school counseling, school counselors and principals can collaborate to improve equity, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery.

Fortunately, the elements of multitiered system of supports and comprehensive school counseling are conducive to alignment and overlap. Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016) note that:

Similarities include utilizing collaboration and coordinated services; efficiently using the school counselors' time through tiered supports; collecting and reviewing student and school data; using evidence-based practices; developing culturally responsive interventions that close achievement gaps; promoting prevention and intervention for students through a tiered continuum; and facilitating schoolwide systemic change and a positive school climate. (p. 226–227)

This overlap manifests in each of the four components of comprehensive school counseling, including: foundation (CSC vision and goals should align with the school's multitiered system of supports priorities), delivery (CSC and multitiered system of supports can include similar prevention activities and interventions), accountability (CSC and multitiered system of supports can have similar processes for data collection/analysis and overall program evaluation), and management (CSC and multitiered system of supports can have similar organizational and administrative processes) (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). For example, data systems must be designed which guide intervention planning and implementation for students not meeting grade-level academic, *and* social-emotional and behavioral benchmarks (Avant & Swerdlik, 2016). In effective comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors lead through supporting, intervening, and facilitating (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016), in line with the principles of relational leadership.

RTI and positive behavioral interventions and supports within the combined auspices of multitiered system of supports provide a useful strategy to improve mental health literacy and awareness in schools. Multitiered system of supports

provides a continuum of three tiers of prevention and intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary (Harlacher et al., 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2009). In order to develop comprehensive and integrated programs that support social, emotional, and behavioral skill development, both assessment and prevention programming must be developed for all three levels of intervention (Desrochers, 2015). Tier 1 activities that constitute primary prevention are provided universally to all students, and occur within the general education environment. Eighty percent of students receive and respond to these activities (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Tier 2 activities consist of secondary prevention efforts with the goal of early identification and intervention with the approximately 15% of students who are at risk to prevent long-standing patterns of academic failure and discouragement through social and emotional functioning (Avant & Swerdlik, 2016). Finally, Tier 3 activities are those tertiary prevention efforts which are often grounded in functional behavior analyses and consist of individual behavior plans for the approximately 5% of students who are not meeting grade-level social, emotional, and behavioral benchmarks (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

In order to enhance the mental health functioning of students, it is imperative that principals invest significant effort in improving Tier 1 activities. In a recent survey, 82% of school mental health professionals reported spending very little time on Tier 1 mental health prevention programming or school-wide systems change (Avant & Swerdlik, 2016). Since schools with school-wide mental health and SEL programs have average achievement scores that are 11 points higher than schools without such programs, school principals and counselors need to collaborate to increase development of Tier 1 activities (Desrochers, 2015). Tier 1 activities should begin with those designed to create responsive classrooms, which promote positive relationships, collaborative problem-solving, cooperation, individual responsibility, self-control, and assertiveness (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014), eschewing the field of presence inherent in misguided leader-centric approaches.

Additionally, at Tier 1, school counselors should collaborate with principals to develop a comprehensive approach to classroom guidance which supports the development of four key social-emotional functional areas that have been linked to academic and career success (Squier, Nailor, & Carey, 2014). Those areas include: motivation, self-knowledge, self-direction, and relationship skills. Further, mechanisms should be developed whereby all students are assessed for the accomplishment of social, emotional, behavioral, and academic benchmarks (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Finally, collaboration should include universal screening for specific mental health concerns, and general emotional and behavioral risk.

Those students who are not meeting social, emotional, and behavioral benchmarks as well as those identified through the universal screenings at Tier 1 would be identified for Tier 2 prevention programming. Collaboration at this level involves school principals and school counselors working to develop and implement small group interventions using evidence-based programs. These groups can be provided

by school counselors or other school mental health personnel such as school psychologists or social workers (August, Piehler, & Miller, 2018) to better address the needs of all students in the school.

It is clear, then, that principal and school counselor collaboration is crucial in both Tier 1 and Tier 2 prevention programming. However, in order for this collaboration to be effective, there must be mutual trust and teamwork between these school leaders. Principals must support school counselors, and counselors need to be considered as leaders within their school (McConnell, Geesa, Mayes, & Elam, 2020). Doing so further fosters a culture of relational leadership and distances schools from elements of a leader-centric model, particularly the field of memory of utilizing vocational and guidance counselor-specific roles rather than school counselors who focus on social, emotional, academic, and college and career readiness needs.

Further, it is crucial that principals are trained properly in the evaluation of school counselors, as they often utilize ineffective methods and measures to determine performance (Mayes, Elam, Geesa, McConnell, & McDonald, 2020). When principals are not aware of how to properly evaluate school counselors, the counselor's role in the school could be negatively impacted, and the principal-school counselor relationship strained. Thus, it is important that principals continue to seek professional development regarding how they can support school counselors, and what their role *should* look like.

Bohanon, Gilman, Parker, Amell, and Sortino (2016) recommended a six-step implementation process for multitiered system of supports where relational leadership is evident at every step: (1) exploration and adoption fosters buy-in among staff, often through surveys and by allowing teachers to contribute to reshaping the school's mission and vision; (2) program installation calls for the formation of leadership teams, and empowering teachers through professional development related to multitiered system of supports; (3) initial implementation allows individuals or small groups to lead implementation through piloting, and involves students in event planning and schoolwide celebrations; (4) full operation involves "changing the professional roles for the entire staff" (p. 5), allowing all staff to impart some element of the program to students, and teams analyzing data at every tier to determine which students need which interventions; (5) innovation allows multitiered system of supports to serve as a springboard for developing new practices within the school; and (6) sustainability looks ahead to continue the cycle, preparing and empowering the next wave of leaders of the program.

Rowan, Correnti, Miller, and Camburn (2009) also focused on instructional leadership and teacher leadership in discussing "school improvement by design". In examining three different models of comprehensive school reform (Accelerated Schools Project, America's Choice, and Success for All), they found Accelerated Schools Project to foster the highest teacher autonomy and innovation, by focusing on culture rather than on procedural controls and routines. This aligns most closely with the principles of relational leadership, and as such is likely most conducive to implementing multitiered system of supports.

## Discussion

Training to address SEL and foster collaborative relationships among school professionals should occur before candidates enter the profession and continue through professional development in their workplace. This section discusses steps for pre- and in-service school counselors, educators, principals, and higher education faculty to take to support and promote student mental health in P-12 schools.

### Social and Emotional Learning and Pre- and In-Service Training

As discussed previously, many school leaders value SEL, though many feel that they need greater knowledge and resources to more effectively implement SEL in schools. For instance, DePaoli, Atwell, and Bridgeland (2017) found that many critical barriers to implement SEL in schools are due to the lack of pre- and in-service training. Effective SEL training for educators, school counselors, and principals is needed in preparation programs and throughout their professional careers in schools.

Regarding preservice training, Rosenthal and Gatt (2010) described a program that has been effective in teaching caregivers how to promote SEL. Although the program was initially designed for caregivers working with young children, it was adapted for teachers working with children age three to six, and thus could have important implications for teachers and other educators. The program had two parts, the first consisted of biweekly workshops and the second consisted of biweekly consultation meetings in small groups. The consultation meetings involved analyzing videos of children engaged in “challenging” behavior with a more experiential focus. Caregivers who participated in this training were more likely to offer verbal and emotional support, engage in behaviors promoting conflict resolution, and express greater warmth overall, when compared to their untrained counterparts (Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010).

A similar study by Hemmeter, Santos, and Ostrosky (2008) detailed a model, which included components of building positive relationships, implementing prevention practices in various settings, incorporating social-emotional teaching strategies, and creating individualized interventions. The researchers discussed how crucial it is to provide educators with a practicum experience that incorporates the above pieces to provide them with a more comprehensive knowledge of social-emotional development.

Rosenthal and Gatt (2010) and Hemmeter et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of experiential preservice training. Elbertson, Brackett, and Weissberg (2010) highlighted effective SEL training as providing information to in-service educators continuously, taking the form of preimplementation training, user-friendly manuals, and ongoing communication between teachers and program personnel. It would be helpful for principals to receive more preparation and training regarding the roles and responsibilities of school counselors in order to aid them in better supporting school counselors to address mental health in schools (Elam, Geesa, Mayes, & McConnell, 2019; Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Geesa, & Mayes, 2018).

Much of the research about in-service training for educators focused on its lack of use or availability, in addition to its importance (Jennings & Frank, 2015; Murano et al., 2019). For example, Murano et al. (2019) expressed that ongoing professional development regarding SEL is crucial for educators, though no states include teacher education standards that address comprehensive SEL competencies, and only 33% of state standards detail SEL competencies for students. Similarly, Jennings and Frank (2015) explained how SEL training for educators is often lacking, as SEL professional development is frequently delivered as a one-time approach.

As there is a clear lack of pre- and in-service SEL training, Chandler (2017) proposed a framework of SEL education in North Carolina. The framework incorporates social-emotional health training into preservice programs, in-service training modules to address the needs of professionals in schools, and training around North Carolina's eight SEL competencies. Additionally, Chandler (2017) found that in a study of adult professionals in various fields who had experienced several forms of SEL in-service training, participants ranked in-service training and learning through a bachelor's level program as the most effective form of preparation. These findings could apply to education professionals.

Much of the research on effective SEL training pinpoint the importance of a comprehensive approach (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003; Elbertson et al., 2010). Elbertson et al. (2010) asserted how the effectiveness of a SEL program often depends upon continuity throughout schooling (e.g., K-12), and collaboration of several individuals, from teachers to school leaders, to parents and students themselves. Further, Bencivenga and Elias (2003) detailed characteristics of visionary social-emotional leadership, a couple of these being: supporting and empowering teachers, distributing leadership roles, and actively welcoming parents and the community into schools, among other goals. Similarly, Williams and Koplow (2018) included the importance of school leaders communicating regularly with students' families in order to convey their commitment to and their cultural consideration of each student. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to pre- and in-service social-emotional training would likely be helpful in fostering strong social-emotional development in schools for educators, school counselors, and principals.

## **Course Content for Pre- and In-Service Principals and School Counselors**

As discussed, to build the capacity for principals and counselors to collaboratively promote school-wide mental health awareness and support, a comprehensive training approach is recommended which should promote the engagement of teachers, families, and other stakeholders in advancing school mental health (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003). The content of pre- and in-service training for principals and school counselors should focus on collaborative leadership for implementing research-based programs and strategies that address school mental health needs, while also developing principals' and counselors' awareness of appropriate role division in these efforts per the relevant professional standards for their respective fields



(Boyland et al., 2019; Carnes-Holt, Range, & Cisler, 2012; Dahir et al., 2010). Therefore, the course content for principal and counselor trainings should be aligned with their leading national standards, the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards for building-level leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2018), and the ASCA professional standards and competencies for school counselors (2019a). This standards-based, collaborative training of principals and school counselors should begin early in candidates' university preparation programs and then continue with ongoing professional development opportunities provided after graduates have become practitioners. Through the lens of relational leadership theory, education preparation faculty would focus on creating opportunities for candidates to examine the nature of their collaboration and understanding of leadership actions to support students (Crevani et al., 2010).

Specific course content areas that have been identified as crucial for pre- and in-service training of principals and school counselors for collaborative SEL leadership include, but are not limited to: understanding each other's professional standards; effective integration of research-based multitiered system of supports and SEL programs; appropriate role and resource alignment; effective communication; family and community engagement strategies; and collaborative social justice leadership for school improvement and opportunity equity (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Lowery et al., 2019; Stephan et al., 2015). Delivery of course content should begin with an overview of the principal and school counselor national standards, and the research bases supporting these standards (Boyland et al., 2019; Geesa, Elam, Mayes, McConnell, & McDonald, 2019). Understanding the professional expectations from both fields lays the groundwork for principals and counselors to then learn about the appropriate roles and responsibilities of each position (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012), suitable allocations of the counselor's time in supporting students through direct and indirect services, and the importance of effective communication between principals and school counselors (Duslak & Geier, 2018).

Content for pre- and in-service training for principals and school counselors should include detailed information on collaborative management of an effective student services program. This includes appropriate financial and human resource supports for implementing research-based strategies to address school-wide SEL efforts, incorporation of culturally responsive practices, as well as methods of working with families and community resources to support students' mental health needs (Lowery et al., 2019; Stephan et al., 2015). Principals and counselors should also learn how to partner in leading school crisis prevention, intervention, and safety planning, including dealing with emergency situations such as child abuse, suicide, bullying, harassment, and threatening behaviors (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). In sum, course content for pre- and in-service training should focus on the standards-aligned teamwork that is needed between principals and school counselors in leading SEL efforts, while effectively engaging teachers, families, and community resources to assess and address school mental health needs to integrate research-based strategies, appropriate preventative and intervention programs, and ongoing supports.



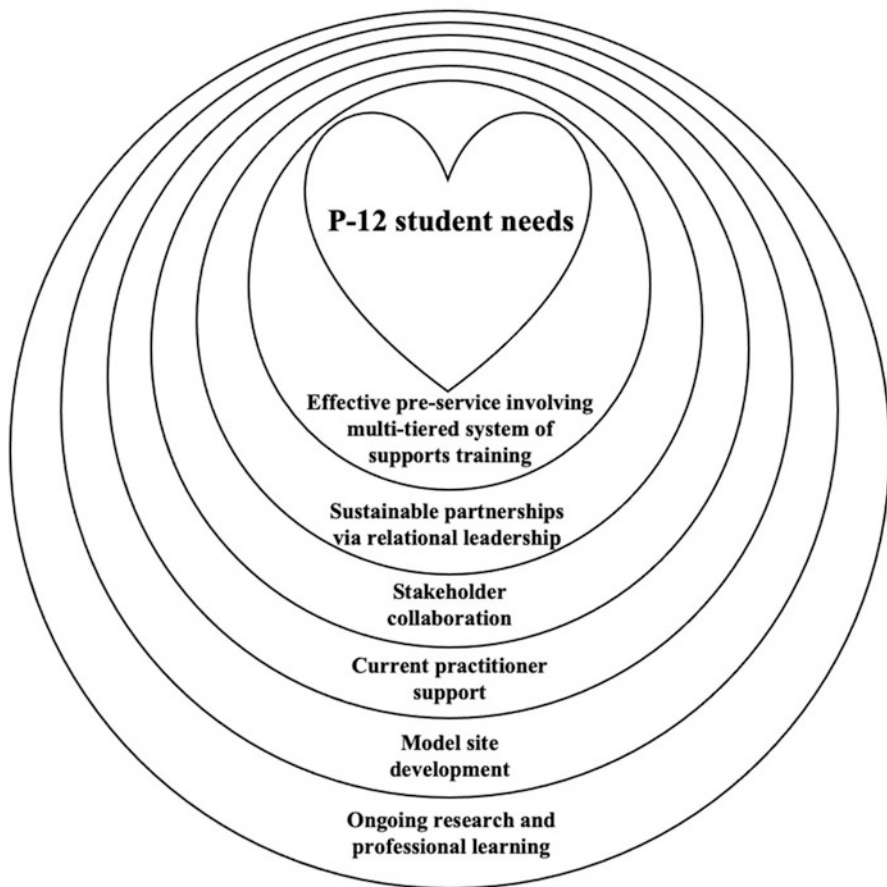
## Training to Support Collaboration for Multitiered System of Supports and Comprehensive School Counseling

Successful collaborative implementation of multitiered system of supports and comprehensive school counseling to support the mental health and social-emotional functioning of students may require changes to curriculum and pedagogy. Specifically, it is important for school principals and school counselors to recognize the significant degree of commonality their respective professions have in terms of being part of a leadership team, fostering collaborative relationships within schools, supporting data-informed decision-making, ensuring equity and cultural responsiveness, supporting evidence-based prevention and intervention, promoting systemic change and advocacy, and ensuring a positive school climate (Ziomiek-Daigle et al., 2016). Toward that end, Splett, Fowler, Weist, McDaniel, and Dvorsky (2013) recommend adding multidisciplinary team-taught courses into the curriculum of both professions that model collaboration and integration. The goal of these courses would be to increase collaboration and school-wide systems of support, improve effective interventions, and situate school leaders and counselors as co-managers of data management teams (Avant & Swerdlik, 2016). These courses present the opportunity for the co-construction of knowledge surrounding schools and students' mental health as discussed in relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006). For example, candidates could explore case studies and role plays from their respective vantage points, and collaborate around problem-solving. This could also take place within in-service professional development opportunities.

As part of ongoing learning critical for successful implementation of multitiered system of supports, school counselors and principals should collaborate to provide professional development activities for school faculty and staff. These activities should result in the implementation of evidence-based, school-wide classroom management systems that are clear and consistent across grades, reflect the principles of responsive classrooms, are sensitive to the mental health needs of students, and are trauma informed. These systems should include strategies for assessing and monitoring social and emotional learning that go beyond the typical attendance and discipline data that are commonly utilized as proxies for SEL. Attendance and discipline referrals alone do not provide the causal information needed to develop meaningful intervention strategies. In the real-life context of their work, education professionals would have the opportunity to construct, reflect upon, and interrogate their practices.

### Call to Action

The *Collaborative Training Framework* (see Fig. 1) provides educators, leaders, and school counselors a structure to promote active leadership and collaboration in schools toward the betterment of students' mental health. This framework is altered from the original framework for collaborative school principal and school counselor preparation and support by Geesa et al. (2020). The purpose of this chapter is to



**Fig. 1** Collaborative training framework. (Note. An earlier version of this figure was published in “Increasing Partnerships in Educational Leadership and School Counseling: A Framework for Collaborative School Principal and School Counselor Preparation and Support,” by R. L. Geesa, R. D. Mayes, K. P. Lowery, L. G. Boyland, M. M. Quick, J. Kim, N. P. Elam, & K. M. McDonald, 2020, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, p. 10 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1787525>). It has been revised and updated to suit the needs of the contents of this handbook entry)

make a call to action to pre- and in-service educators, school counselors, and school leaders, as there are many ways that they can help create a healthier school climate that support student needs. For instance, effective preservice preparation might mean implementing an exemplar program that integrates training in multitiered system of supports with training in effective collaboration between preservice administrators and preservice school counselors. Building sustainable partnerships, specifically between educational leadership and school counseling programs, is another example of an action that would better prepare preservice candidates to effectively meet

students' needs. This also would demonstrate relational leadership, which is one of the ultimate goals of sustainable partnerships both in the school and outside of it. Similarly, active collaboration with community and business stakeholders can open opportunities for students that they may not have had otherwise, and can provide an additional level of support to students and their families.

Current practitioner support can also be instrumental in learning how to meet student mental health needs, as ongoing, in-service training can provide practitioners with newer and more relevant information on social-emotional learning as it evolves. This in-service training could also serve to keep practitioners updated on new developments related to best practice in multitiered system of supports. Next, creating, participating in, or visiting a model site of an exemplary program can give both pre- and in-service practitioners the chance to observe an effective principal-school counselor working relationship that is rooted in collaboration. Last but certainly not least, ongoing research and professional development are critical where collaborative school counseling and relational leadership are concerned, as contributing to the research base can aid practitioners in better understanding this collaboration, and how it can benefit students.

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## Conclusions and Reflections

A relational leadership approach should extend beyond the principal and school counselor role, as expanded school mental health includes a multilayered approach to addressing student mental health that should involve school-community-family collaboration (Weist, Ambrose, & Lewis, 2006). Partnerships with community agencies, connections with students' caregivers and families, and resources and supports for all school stakeholders to better identify and support the mental health needs of PK-12 students are needed.

Principals and school counselors are essential leaders in school-community-family collaboration with efforts to improve mental health well-being. This chapter includes several learning opportunities for preservice candidates and new and veteran educators (e.g., teachers, school counselors, and principals) to collaboratively construct meaning of the school environment to provide the best mental health care for students within multitiered system of supports. Multitiered system of supports provide a structure for school leaders, student support specialists, and other stakeholders to improve student support services and provide the proper type of social-emotional learning assistance to individuals and groups of students.

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Jeff Walls and Jamie Kudlats

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### Abstract

Although education is understood to be a caring endeavor, explorations of caring leadership have often taken caring as either a taken-for-granted background condition or a means to an end. Caring, though, is complex, and well-intended efforts to care often fall short or, worse, have the opposite of their intended effect. Recent scholarship has increasingly sought to move understanding of caring from an empty buzzword to a meaningfully defined and bounded idea. Over the past decade, an increasing number of studies have placed caring leadership at the front and center (see Bass L, *Int J Qual Stud Educ* 25:73–87, 2012; Bass LR, *Educ Adm Q* 56:353–395, 2020; Louis KS, Murphy J, *J Educ Adm*, 2017; Louis KS, Murphy J, Smylie M, *Educ Adm Q*, 52(2), 310–348, 2016; Lumby J, Azaola

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MC, *Br Educ Res J* 40:30–44, 2014; Sanzo KL, Sherman WH, Clayton J, *J Educ Adm*, 2011; Smylie MA, Murphy J, Louis KS, *Am J Educ* 123(1):1–35, 2016; Rivera-McCutchen RL, *Educ Adm Q*, 2020; Tichnor-Wagner A, Allen D, *Leadersh Policy Schools* 15:406–447, 2016; van der Vyver CP, van der Westhuizen PC, Meyer LW, *Educ Manage Adm Leadersh* 42(1):61–74, 2014). Most of this scholarship responds to a sense that the research and practice of educational leadership had become too focused on administrative emphasis on academic press (that is, expectations to maintain or raise academic standards of performance), to the detriment of the way that leader-affective support influences the organizational environment and relationships in the school. These strands of scholarship emphasize that, despite a policy environment heavily focused on accountability and narrow measures of student success, social support for adults and the creation of a caring school environment are important functions of school leadership as such, and not merely as an instrumental approach to improved student achievement. The purpose of this chapter is to ground scholarship in caring leadership in past and ongoing discussions about leadership, examine cleavages and disconnections within current conceptualizations of caring leadership, and explore potential future directions and avenues of inquiry in caring school leadership.

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**Keywords**

Caring · Support · Relationships · School culture · Care ethics · Equity · Social justice · Radical care · Principal-teacher relationship · Principal-student relationship · School organization

**The Field of Memory**

At first glance, caring may appear to be a “trait” of a leader (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). Caring leadership, however, does not align with trait theories of leadership because caring is a way of being in a relationship, not a resource or benefit offered from a leader to others. Consequently, trait-based understandings of caring leadership are firmly in the field of memory.

**The Field of Presence**

More immediate predecessors in leadership theory on which conceptions of caring leadership draw include transformational leadership and leadership for social justice. Transformational leadership emphasizes both the importance of alignment between leader’s goals and follower’s needs, and the way that leaders work to produce emotionally supportive organizational climates (Gunter, 2016; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003). Leadership for social justice emphasizes the ways that educational leaders work to redress historical marginalization and inequity, and specifically, the way that leaders’ critical consciousness shapes their actions and interactions (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Horsford, 2010; Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). These two theoretical approaches straddle the border between the field of memory

and the field of presence: although both remain fertile spaces for inquiry in educational leadership, and offer foundational concepts to inquiry into caring school leadership, much of the scholarship of caring school leadership no longer explicitly situates itself within these frames – though this is more true of transformational leadership than leadership for social justice.

Caring is a broad concept that is frequently used as a colloquial descriptor even when it is not a major focus of study. Consequently, one focus of empirical and theoretical work on caring leadership has focused on understanding and defining the leader's role in fostering informally described caring conditions (e.g., a caring school climate).

### **The Field of Concomitance**

Caring school leadership borrows not only from work on care ethics in education more broadly (Gilligan, 1993; Noddings, 2005; Noddings, 2013), but also work on caring from other fields such as nursing (Gadow, 1985; Watson, 2008) and ministry (Doehring, 2014; Gerkin, 1997). Caring is understood to be an essential component of what it means to be human, and so philosophers, political scientists, and anthropologists have all explored caring relations, along with scholars from human service professions. Each of these perspectives offers something to caring school leadership as well.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

As noted above, the emphasis on caring school leadership is a response, in part, to overemphasis on academic press to the exclusion of social and affective support in schools. However, the primary misalignments within caring leadership mirror the misalignments in the scholarship of caring in education more generally. Nel Noddings (2005, 2013) is the most widely cited ethicist of caring in education. Noddings' vision of good care in schools is similar to the care that a mother offers to her child. However, other scholars have critiqued this conceptualization on several grounds. First, some scholars suggest that Noddings' way of thinking does not admit of the variety of ways of caring that may be shaped by culture or social position and argue that Noddings' vision of care is essentially a white, middle-class approach to caring (Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). These debates about the cultural specificity of caring are also reflected in the ways that different scholars describe caring school leadership.

### **Critical Assumptions in Defining Caring School Leadership**

Although there are some disagreements in the definition of caring school leadership, several assumptions are widely agreed upon and have to do with the phenomenology of caring itself. First, caring is an intersubjective way of being in a relationship. This means that caring cannot be a "one-way street": Both the person intending to care and the would-be recipient of caring must recognize what is occurring as care. Consequently, actions cannot be described as caring or uncaring from the outside – what matters is how the people in the relationship intended and received those actions. Furthermore, caring necessarily has the potential for mutuality: The person

caring in one instance may be the person cared for in another instance. One final implication of this understanding is that describing a school climate as caring is not strictly appropriate. Because caring is a characteristic of a relationship between individuals, it makes more sense to describe school climates that are *conducive to* or *facilitative of* caring.

Second, caring must respond to needs. These needs may be expressed by the one cared for or inferred by the one caring. This means that caring involves a particular kind of attentiveness and action – one must detect and respond to the needs of another. Additionally, caring cannot simply be a felt state – it involves action on behalf of another. The mutuality, attentiveness, and emphasis on action make caring leadership subtly different than other forms of leadership that emphasize general social support. For example, transformational leadership theory focuses on inspiration and leader behavior as ways to increase follower motivation and improve organizational climate; however, the locus of action for transformational leadership is more focused on organizational improvement than meeting needs.

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## Introduction

Despite the current policy emphasis on accountability in schools, and heavy focus in practice and research on the ways that leaders facilitate high levels of academic press and improved student learning outcomes, there has been renewed interest in how school leaders develop caring relationships with members of the school community and support a caring school climate. These examinations simultaneously acknowledge that schools that achieve both academic success and high levels of social and emotional flourishing are characterized by a balance between academic press and social support that has become tilted too far in the direction of the former, while also emphasizing that relations of care are a good and worthwhile goal unto themselves.

The purpose of this chapter is to place inquiry caring school leadership in context. The initial section of the chapter explores caring school leadership's outgrowth from existing leadership frameworks. Then, it describes and appraises the two currently dominant conceptions of caring leadership – one rooted in an organizational leadership perspective and another, based on notions of critical care, that is broadly rooted in leadership for social justice. The concluding section explores the possibilities for additional symmetry and synthesis between these two perspectives and describes potential fruitful directions for research at the interstices between care ethics and school organization.

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## Caring School Leadership

Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to understanding caring educational leadership that typify scholarly discourse at present. One approach to caring leadership focuses on how leaders' interpersonal caring and/or vision and pursuit of a caring school climate influences teacher beliefs and actions and thereby broader

organizational outcomes. The other approach emphasizes the ways that leaders' positionality and experiences around caring shape their beliefs and actions with respect to equity and social justice in education. This section briefly traces the origins of each way of thinking about caring school leadership, before exploring the particulars of each way of thinking in greater depth.

## Origin Stories of Approaches to Caring Leadership

Although both approaches to caring school leadership described above find their basis in how leaders approach and realize care ethics in schools, they nonetheless stem from somewhat different intellectual traditions. This section refers to the two approaches as an *organizational approach* and a *social justice approach*. Although this shorthand does elide some of the strands of thinking both between and within each approach, it is also a convenient way to distinguish between the two.

As noted above, the organizational approach to caring school leadership was borne in part out of increasing concern that an emphasis on educational leadership for academic press was crowding out schools' role in offering social support to students (and that social support is important both for its own sake and because it is associated with improved academic outcomes). Although the empirical and theoretical bases of work around caring leadership have deepened considerably over the past decade, it is important to note that concerns with caring in educational administration are not new (Beck, 1994; Enomoto, 1997; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steele, 1996; Sernak, 1998). These earlier works argued that a renewed emphasis on caring in educational administration was needed to improve the ethical focus of schools (Beck, 1994; Sernak, 1998), respond to overly rational, mechanistic, and transactional models of leadership (Marshall et al., 1996), and balance care ethics with other potentially competing ethics such as justice (Enomoto, 1997; Sernak, 1998). The importance of developing leaders with emotional literacy (Roffey, 2006) and with a strong sense of the ethical aims of education (Noddings, 2006) has also been a topic of inquiry. In general, these earlier works had a relatively more deontological emphasis, whereas more recent scholarship has had a more teleological, consequentialist emphasis. Besides these earlier works, which take caring school leadership as their direct topic of inquiry, a great many works reference care or caring in leadership in general as a worthy aim.

Recent scholarship in the organizational approach to caring school leadership also draws on extant frameworks for leadership, including servant leadership, authentic leadership, and transformation leadership. Specifically, caring leaders are proposed to be servant leaders in the sense that they highly prize meeting the needs of others as a way of creating a positive and productive climate (Greenleaf, 2002). Caring leaders are understood to be authentic leaders in that their leadership stems from a strong ethical base and is characterized by openness in professional relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Finally, caring leaders are understood to be transformational to the extent that such leaders focus on producing emotionally supportive climates, and increasing awareness of moral standards (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Gunter, 2016;

Hoy et al., 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003). These leadership frameworks and accompanying examinations of how such leadership influences relationships and organizational outcomes form some of the basis for recent scholarship in caring leadership.

The social justice approach to caring leadership finds its origins in a combination of womanism/black feminist caring, critical care, and notions of mothering as care. Womanism is a social theory first advanced by Alice Walker (1983) as a response to feminism. Womanism advances the values and experiences of women of color to challenge traditional hierarchies of race, class, and gender (Williams, 1993). Like womanism, black feminist caring is grounded in the experiences of black women. Thompson (1998, 2004) argued that traditional feminist theories of care ethics are grounded in a colorblind, essentially white vision of what constitutes good caring. However, Thompson (1998, 2004) suggests that caring is both culturally and experientially grounded: Good caring may look differently in contexts characterized by oppression or marginalization such as those frequently experienced by black women and families. In educational terms, this means that caring must often be characterized by advocacy and resistance. The concept of critical care also emphasizes advocacy. Critical care stems in part from Valenzuela's (1999) finding that minoritized students often find caring to be inauthentic and contingent (e.g., teachers care about students who care about school). For such students, caring that is both authentic and directly responsive to both culturally grounded notions of care and to racial and ethnic discrimination is important (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Curry, 2016; Rolón-Dow, 2005). Wilson notes, "Critical care involves embracing and exhibiting values, dispositions and behaviors related to empathy, compassion, advocacy, systemic critique, perseverance and calculated risk-taking for the sake of justly serving students and improving schools" (2016, p. 557). Finally, although the bulk of the research that takes a social justice approach to caring leadership has taken place in the USA, some international scholarship draws on theories of mothering and how mothering is related to social context. Specifically, mothering often constitutes a shared activity that involves delivering everyday care to those in need (Hollway, 2001). The concepts of womanism, black feminist caring, critical care, and mothering are all closely related – in many cases, they are directly intertwined. The implications of these theories for caring school leadership are explored in greater depth below, but, unsurprisingly, they emphasize advocacy and resistance of injustice.

## **Caring Leadership and Organizational Perspectives**

The most complete current formulation of the organizational perspective on caring leadership comes from Smylie, Murphy, and Louis (2016, 2020). Their model is broken down into three components: antecedents to caring school leadership, practices of caring school leadership, and outcomes of caring leadership. For the present examination, the antecedents and practices of caring leadership are most important, both because this chapter focuses on caring leadership as a phenomenon, and

because the effects of caring leadership on student outcomes are only beginning to emerge in empirical studies (although adult outcomes are better understood).

The antecedents of caring leadership implicate the aims, virtues, and competencies of the leader (Smylie et al., 2016, 2020). In the first place, leaders must intend to care – to purposefully meet the needs of others. Because caring is a quality of a relationship, the aims underlying a leader’s actions are important; efforts at “caring” that are merely instrumental or transactional are unlikely to achieve the intended results and may backfire (Noddings, 2006; Smylie et al., 2016, 2020). Similarly, caring leadership must be grounded in moral virtues (e.g., kindness, empathy, and respect); caring relationships are characterized by the one caring genuinely intending to do good on behalf of another. Finally, caring involves knowledge and action that can be held and done with greater or lesser efficacy. Although caring is grounded in intention and feeling, it progresses to specific knowledge of another’s needs, and action on behalf of those needs. Caring that is done with good intentions, but that does not actually address a need, is referred to as *virtue caring* (Noddings, 2001). Because caring is an intersubjective way of being in relation, a caring leaders’ aims, virtues, and competencies must all align in order for that leader to be truly caring (Smylie et al., 2016, 2020).

Following the antecedents of caring leadership is the practice of caring leadership itself. As one might expect, the first component in the practice of caring school leadership is leader’s interpersonal and relational caring with members of the school community (Smylie et al., 2016, 2020). These relationships can serve as a form of modeling or a template for the desired tenor of interpersonal interactions in the school (Noddings, 2012). The second broad practice of caring leadership is cultivating caring communities within the school (Smylie et al., 2016, 2020). One aspect of building caring communities within the school is building the capacity of others to care. This may involve not only modeling caring practice (as described above), but also explicitly teaching others how to care in certain context, or emphasizing caring as a prized organizational attribute. The last way that Smylie and coauthors (2016, 2020) suggest that caring school leadership can cultivate caring school communities is via influence on organizational conditions. Although caring is understood to be a quality of a relationship between individuals, past research has found that an organizational emphasis on caring and the common good can create organizational policies and practices that promote caring relationships (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Siddle-Walker, 1993). The final way that caring leadership is practiced is in contexts beyond the school. Specifically, caring school leaders may engage families and the broader school community to build webs of care and support that rebound to support students in school as well (Smylie et al., 2016). Caring school leaders may also engage in both boundary spanning (e.g., with the district office) to advocate for care resources and buffering (e.g., with respect to policy initiatives) that may prove adverse to caring in schools (Rallis & Goldring, 2000; Smylie et al., 2016). Leaders’ interpersonal caring, cultivation of caring school communities, and caring engagement in contexts beyond schools form the crux of practice for caring leadership.

Although the ultimate outcome of caring school leadership is presumed to be social, emotional, and academic benefits to students, most of the recent empirical

literature on caring leadership has focused on its effects on adults or on the broader climate of the school. For example, caring school leadership appears to have the largest effect on the climate of the school when it is accompanied by a strong culture of professional collaboration (Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016; Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2011). Furthermore, the schools that most successfully operationalize a caring climate not only have leaders who infuse caring into the vision of the school, but also have school-wide structures (e.g., a surfeit of extracurricular activity options) that create opportunities for a greater density of caring relationships (Tichnor-Wagner & Allen, 2016). Several recent studies have specifically examined the way that perceived principal caring is related to professional climate and organizational outcomes. Principal caring for teachers is associated with both greater teacher academic support for students and greater sense of collective responsibility among teachers (Louis et al., 2016). Furthermore, teachers find principals to be more caring when principals hold higher levels of trust in teachers' professional capacities and judgments; greater principal caring is in turn associated with higher levels of organizational learning (Louis & Murphy, 2017). Finally, principals tend to believe that they are more caring than teachers find them to be, especially with respect to their personal interest in the well-being of teachers (Van der Vyver et al., 2016). Although a deep understanding of caring leadership influences on students and teachers is only emerging, there is nonetheless growing evidence that caring school leadership has considerable organizational benefits.

### **Critical Caring: Leadership for Social Justice Perspectives**

Examinations of caring school leadership that proceed from a leadership for social justice premise often focus somewhat more on the direct actions and intentions of leaders compared to studies of caring leadership that proceed from a more organizational perspective. Specifically, these studies often invoke a counterstorying framework that centers questions of racism and oppression, and how leaders resist and combat these problems (Rivera-McCutchen, 2020; Wilson, 2015, 2016). For example, caring school leaders often prioritize an ethic of care over an ethic of justice by resisting or ignoring zero tolerance policies (Bass, 2009, 2012). This approach emphasizes relational reciprocity (i.e., the golden rule) rather than fixed and principled notions of right and wrong. Caring leaders also take actions on behalf of students and the broader school community to resist marginalization and advocate for school and community needs (Wilson, 2015, 2016). For example, Wilson (2016) examined the way that African American women leaders operating from a critical care approach resisted school failure and deficit framings of their community and advocated for community needs in policy arenas. Similarly, caring school leaders seek to subvert deficit framings of their school and students and restore these deficits as sources of strength and resilience (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). Scholars writing from this perspective emphasize that caring school leadership involves "activist risk taking" (Bass, 2012, p. 73) on behalf of students, and "tweaking,"



(Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010, p. 228) resisting, ignoring, or subverting policies that are disadvantageous in order to prioritize an ethic of care.

The ethic of care is a feminine ethic (Gilligan, 1982, Noddings, 2012; Tronto, 2010), so it is perhaps unsurprising that scholars writing of caring leadership from a social justice perspective have emphasized *mothering* and *othermothering* as dimensions of caring leadership. Because this perspective primarily originated in womanist and black feminist thought, mothering is a natural approach to frame caring actions. These scholars highlight that a mothering perspective emphasizes practical skills and needs and is a way to grapple with local context and frame social problems in challenges humanely (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Mothering is often seen as distinct from leadership, or not leaderly, but this approach “troubles gender” by repositioning motherhood as a leadership asset and pushes back against gendered visions of leadership as dominant or aggressive (Lumby & Azaola, 2014, p. 36). Othermothering as it relates to caring leadership emphasizes that mothering can be an act or expression rather than a familial relationship, and direct maternal care and service to others is an essential quality of mothering that can also promote reciprocal caring relations (Bass, 2009, 2012, 2020). Scholars writing from this perspective also emphasize that there is often a religio-spiritual dimension to caring school leadership (Bass, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). Caring leadership often stems from leaders’ own experiences of discrimination and marginalization, and adopting a spiritual perspective on overcoming obstacles is often a symbolic source of strength and hope for such leaders. For example, Witherspoon and Arnold locate the spiritual influence of the black female principals in their study in the Black Church which is “the heart of hope in the Black community’s experience of oppression, survival struggle and historic efforts toward complete liberation” (Williams, 1993, p. 205).

One recent framework in this approach to caring school leadership is the idea of *Radical Care* (Rivera-McCutchen, 2020). This approach to caring school leadership has five elements. First, radically caring leaders adopt an antiracist, social justice stance. This involves highlighting and redressing inequitable distributions of resources and organizing students to resist racism and oppression within the community (Rivera-McCutchen, 2020). Second, radically caring leaders cultivate authentic relationships. This means, above all, not treating relationships with students or staff as a mechanism for instrumental exchange, but for deeply felt expressions and actions of support. Third, radically caring leaders believe in students’ and teachers’ capacity for growth and excellence. This generally means taking an expansive view of what is possible in students’ education and encouraging students and staff to be similarly expansive and creative in their efforts. Fourth, radically caring leaders skillfully navigate the sociopolitical and policy climate. Leaders are adept at recognizing areas where they can advocate on behalf of students and families, and the extent to which they can reimagine policy expectations in ways that better support the students in their schools. Finally, radically caring leaders also embrace a spirit of radical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). This radical hope simultaneously recognizes the serious shortcomings faced by many minoritized students

in schools while maintaining optimism that it is worthwhile to envision and vigorously pursue a better, more humane approach to education.

Overall, the caring leadership that stems from a leadership for social justice approach simultaneously not only recognizes the oppression that is endemic for many students and communities, but also holds that an ethic of care can elevate marginalized voices and produce more humane conditions in schools (Rivera-McCutchen, 2020; Wilson, 2015, 2016).

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The above sections proposed that there are, in some sense, two related but distinct approaches to conceptualizing caring leadership: one that focuses primarily on organizational theory and the organizational effects of leadership, and another that grounds itself in leadership for social justice. This distinction is, to a certain extent, stylized. Certainly, the scholars identified as writing within each approach cite one another. However, the distinction is nonetheless useful because these scholars are operating from somewhat different epistemological stances and exploring the borderlands between these stances is a useful way of understanding how future work in caring school leadership may proceed. This section explores three avenues that may both expose some tensions across the two ways of thinking and offer potential for synthesis of ideas.

### Joining Conceptions

One obvious avenue for additional work in caring school leadership is in efforts to better join organizational conceptions of caring leadership with those that draw on leadership for social justice perspectives. Current scholarship has found that the benefits of caring leadership may be amplified in schools that serve large proportions of marginalized students (Louis et al., 2016). However, while there is evidence of this relationship, and a fairly extensive normative literature about how leaders operating from an ethic of care may combat marginalization and minoritization (Rivera-McCutchen, 2020; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010), there is not much insight into the *process* of how caring leadership alters the organizational grammar of the school in ways that promote social justice (see Khalifa, 2018, for one process-oriented exploration). Two avenues of inquiry may be especially fruitful. First, examinations of caring leaders exercising power and engaging in conflict and negotiation to achieve equitable ends would help to clarify how ethically caring leadership influences organizational commitments to social justice (Walls, 2020a). Second, Smylie and coauthors (2017) have noted that caring leadership often involves building webs of caring that not only begin in school but also reach beyond it. Understanding how leaders' caring practices face outward into the broader community will offer insight into the process by which caring leadership might produce social justice (Khalifa, 2018).

## Caring as an Ethical Stance

Earlier works on caring leadership tended to focus more narrowly on the deontological *and* teleological dimensions of leading through an ethic of care (see Beck, 1994; Enomoto, 1997; Sernak, 1998). The ethical position of caring in more recent works has been positioned as a response to concerns: an overemphasis on academic press and achievement for scholars writing from an organizational perspective, and oppressive and marginalizing social forces for those writing from the perspective of leadership for social justice. By its nature, caring is focused on doing what is right in the context of particular relationships, e.g., when might failing a student or enacting a zero-tolerance discipline policy be a careless response? However, given that many of the concerns that caring leadership responds to are codified as national or state policies (i.e., high-stakes standardized testing) or local prescribed practices (i.e., one-size-fits-all discipline policies), there is room to examine caring leaders' local ethical responses. For example, how do caring leaders support teachers experiencing stress and pressure to show positive "results" in narrowly defined ways (Walls, 2020b).

## Interpersonal Relationships: Foundations of Care

Interpersonal relationships are primarily how care is manifest in schools and, thus, should be a central focus for school leaders who desire to promote care in their schools. Smylie et al. (2020) noted, "the outcomes of caring should be understood systematically, that is, as a totality of caring relationships that a person may experience" (p. 24). Starratt (1991) stated that school administrators committed to an ethic of caring must "be grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred" (p. 195). While there is ample evidence pointing to significant outcomes resulting from positive, caring teacher-student relationships, there is less empirical evidence pointing to outcomes of principal-teacher relationships, and even less detailing the effects of principal-student relationships. What *is* known about leader-involved relationships, however, suggests that they are also critically important, affecting both student and school-wide outcomes in ways similar to the teacher-student relationship.

While the teacher-student relationship is a well-studied, important phenomenon in schools, shown to have a broad and deep impact on a variety of outcomes (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004; Freiberg, 2014; Landrum, 2014; Murray, 2014; Poplin & Weeres, 1993), less is understood about leaders' relationships – especially with students. What is known, however, implies that leader relationships are similarly impactful and important. A principal's professional relationships are integral to their ability to effectively perform many of their job responsibilities, and these relationships can contribute to improved outcomes in schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). But while the vast majority of leadership effectiveness research indeed acknowledges a substantial relationship between leadership and student outcomes, most appear to discuss the various

mechanisms, mediating factors, and pathways through which the effects on student outcomes are manifest. For example, several authors have documented the power and responsibility of principals to influence school culture, which in turn impacts outcomes (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997; MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Principal-teacher relationships, specifically, impact principals' and teachers' satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment levels, thereby influencing school climate (Price, 2012; Price & Moolenaar, 2015).

But a growing body of scholarship is revealing that direct principal-student relationships may also have profound effects on individual as well as school-wide outcomes. Presented in greater detail in Chapter XX of this volume, direct principal-student relationships have led to increased motivation and perceptions of achievement in students (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Silva, White, & Yoshida, 2011), as well as a better ability to feel the pulse of the school (Kudlats & Brown, 2020; Lavery & Hine, 2013; Ryan, 1999). Deeply meaningful and personally profound relationships have also formed between principals and students (Cranston, 2012; Hawkes, 2010; Janson, Parikh, Young, & Fudge, 2011; Kudlats & Brown, 2020), and direct student relationships have contributed to students' feelings of fairness and belonging, promoting more culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, 2018). Given the underexplored and undertheorized nature of leader relationships, caring school leadership may provide the most fitting framework on which to base further study of these relationships and better reveal their impact on a variety of student and school outcomes.

Although schools are presumed to be sites of caring, there is evidence that most American students feel that caring is crowded out by an emphasis on success and achievement (Weissbourd & Jones, 2014). Caring has sometimes been a taken-for-granted concept in educational research as well, but achieving true interpersonal care, and realizing a climate of care, often proves to be quite complex in practice. This chapter has examined the growing scholarship on caring school leadership. Thus far, this scholarship has largely split into two broad areas: one focused on how caring leadership influences school organizations, and the other focused on caring leadership as a means to produce greater social justice in education. Both of these approaches have generated insight into what caring leaders believe and do, and how this influences other adults and students in the school. Future efforts should focus on bridging conceptual gaps between the two approaches, zeroing in more narrowly on caring as an *ethical* approach to leadership, and, perhaps most importantly, examining the particulars of leaders' interpersonal relationships as a model for how caring is realized throughout the school.

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# Moving Toward International Perspectives on the Preparation of Education Leaders

# 99

Rosemary Papa and Frank Davidson

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## Abstract

This chapter begins with a Western perspective on education administration, management, and leadership preparation in backdrop to understand the present international field which has been greatly shaped over the last 20 years through exportation of standards and assessments in administrator preparation worldwide. The drumming of economic efficiency and scalability led to the neoliberal rise of standard measurements through testing is examined with the Western lens to recent international studies performed with the best of intentions. The final section represents our imagining of a world shaped by localized and contextualized realities in rejection of political and economic levers guiding the creative world of schooling in search of quality and fairness as sought by Educational Leaders Without Borders.

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Preparation · Principals · Standards · Western · International

**Field of Memory: Points of Western Origin**

In order to understand the impact of Western development on school leadership, the US history is described beginning with the science of management in the 1880s to 1980s. In excerpt (Excerpt from Papa, 2005):

In the ways of knowing Education Administration, one must acknowledge that knowing where you are requires you to understand where you have been. To assimilate our rich legacy enables each of us to understand our role in preparing leaders in all educational settings.

*Science of School Management 1881–1930.* The first course designed to train principals was taught in 1881 by William T. Payne, a former superintendent and later an education professor at the University of Michigan. Over 100 years ago, in 1904, Cubberley and Strayer became the first professors of education administration in this country (Willower & Culbertson, 1964). Cubberley wrote in 1927, “We have an organized body of knowledge and established principles of action” (p. ix), based on the ideas of William Payne and William Harris who stressed the need for scientific approaches to be used in school administration (Papalewis, 2004). In 1905, Teacher’s College Columbia awarded eight doctorates in educational administration and two of the recipients, Ellwood Cubberley and George Strayer, became professors at Stanford University and Teachers’ College, Columbia, respectively (Culbertson, 1988). Later in his career Cubberley (1927) was convinced that educational administration had a knowledge base to solve the problems of managing city school districts when he stated, “. . . We have had an organized body of knowledge and established principles of action which have been taught generally for some time” (p. 8). In 1920 the number of college courses in school administration had multiplied to supply the demand for administrators for America’s schools (Hoyle, 1991). Cubberley believed that from a state perspective more unique interests, “. . . Called for a more thoroughly sound policy and a firm grasp of economic policy and political theory” (p. 14). The knowledge base at that time consisted of school management, teacher supervision and practical field-based experiences, “war stories” for students to emulate from former school administrators (Hoyle, 1991).

*The Giants Theory [1960s].* Willower and Culbertson wrote that emphasis in our field must move in the direction of theory, research and content differentiation (Papalewis, 2004). Campbell (1964) wrote more specifically to the kind of professors sought in education administration, “In seeking talent for the professorship. . . we should look for men who are bright, who are young, who have dealt with the major ideas of Western culture, who have exhibited some independence and creativity, and who have a commitment to education” (p. 19). In seeking these ideal professors of education administration, the American Association of School Administration (AASA) in their 1960 Yearbook listed (Griffiths, 1964) the ideal staffing for our departments. Possibly, this was an early precursor to their role in the standardization of our field: “3 senior faculty members; 5 associate faculty members; 2 assistant faculty members; 10 graduate assistants; and 7 secretaries” (p. 30).

The great man theory meant employ “giants” in our field for university and departmental fame. These giants were not to be expected to become team players. The scientific journal theory was meant to harness the intellectual activity of the department. Create a scientific refereed journal and the intellectual activity would increase among the faculty and bring esteem to the department. In the 1960s, theories relating to practice focused on the administrator as practitioner and was viewed as an outcome of a complex marriage of practice and theory enlivened by the tension between them. “It was believed that practice brought two

gifts: The wit to bring theory to its matter. . . make sense of ideas; and the wit to bridge what theory must become coherent” (Willower & Culbertson, 1964, p. 64). Consequently, “Theory brought three gifts: Depth and breadth of coherent knowledge beyond experience; Breaching walls of personal and social class prejudice; and Expansion and refreshment to experience” (p. 64).

Reller (1962) in the early 1960s argued that field studies in a foreign country were an effective way to provide better understanding of educational changes in the U.S. Over the next [50] years, this became the purview of the research institutions, often leaving the local community and state education initiatives in the hands of regional comprehensive institutions. As a field of study, we claim more than a 140 years of knowledge development. We anchored our discipline in the medical model of theory and practice. Joseph Schwab (1964) pointedly argued that the theory movement reflected a false model both for inquiry and training. He stated that medicine’s ‘theory of practice’ with the study of biological science and medicine – what diseases and pathologies there are, their symptoms, etiology, causes and treatment is equivalent in education administration. He suggested that the study of the school – the missions it undertakes, and patterns it has used, its strengths and weaknesses, needs and problems is parallel more to the medicine model (Papalewis, 2004).

**Theory Movement 1970s.** Since the 1970s, the theory of practice and the practice of theory debate has long been a strong topic for the education administration professorate. Culbertson wrote (1988) that NCEA [National Council of Professors of Education Administration now called the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership] helped nurture the new movement by providing forums where scholars could challenge existing research and advocate theory-based norms to professors in attendance from across the nation. To the study of education administration, the theory movement promised to deliver a solid knowledge base (Hoyle, 1991). Today most still believe that our future depends on the theory development. Hoy and Miskel (1991) stated, “The road to generalized knowledge can lie only in tough minded empirical research, not introspection and subjective experience” (p. 25).

In opposition to the theory driven field of study, Greenfield in 1975 stated, “Academics who assume that social-scientific secrets can explain how organizations work or how policy should be made, indulge at best in premature hope and at worst in a delusion” (Culbertson, 1988, p. 20). Greenfield commented that researchers in education administration wrote of organizations as if they were real. Greenfield espoused that there should be no single paradigms, only theories of education administration that should be limited to specific types of organizations which exist in carefully defined contexts (Papalewis, 2004). Culbertson (1988) wrote that both Greenfield and William Harris stressed that organizations cannot be equated with objective phenomena, “That organizations do not think, choose, or act as theories claim; rather individuals do” (p. 20). The theory movement has attracted critics who maintain that organizational theory portends that people drive organizations and therefore are too unpredictable to follow hard mathematical and scientific principles (Foster, 1980; Greenfield, 1975; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Schwab, 1964). Jack Culbertson (1988) suggested that the theory movement has failed to live up to its billing. Few final answers through theory have been found focused on precise practice applications.

**Pluralism and Libertarian Drivers 1990–2020.** Beginning with the 1980s we began to diversify the field both by faculties and school administrators. This began the movement that would produce more voices into the field and better reflect the growing diversity of our schools. Role modeling and mentoring became the vehicles for moving our field forward. Practice in the schools became more inclusive of women and people of color. Research on gender and race discrimination became a focus to education administration human resource courses with an attempt to be inclusive of “all voices” to enrich the field of leadership research (Leonard & Papalewis, 1987; Papalewis & Yerkes, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1988). In 1989 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration was created by UCEA [University Council of Educational Administration] to foster reform in the field and develop

policy positions for its Agenda for Reform. This report contained seven recommendations for programs to deliver: 1. Societal and cultural influences in education; 2. Teaching and learning processes and school improvement; 3. Organizational theory 4. Methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis; 5. Leadership and management processes and functions. 6. Policy studies and politics of education; and, 7. Moral and ethical dimensions of schooling.

Papalewis (1995) wrote that traditional writings in education administration have tended to disregard the existence of different types of leadership leading to a uniform “typically male” way of perceiving and relating. Moral and ethical leadership allowed diversity and inclusion into education administration. Previous models that were applicable to a single gender were still the “realm of the coin” in most education administration textbooks well into the mid-1990s. The need to allow more voices, different voices was beginning to take hold. The professional organizations – NCEA and UCEA – were no longer single gender nor single race based.<sup>1</sup>

### **Field of Presence**

Global response to preparation of school leaders has followed a similar trend as the USA experience with a focus for schools on assessments and standards, and a narrowed curriculum to fit business needs.

Inherent with this new era of business and privatization, the hopeful move into diversity of school administrators was met with eventually a standardized and in the USA a nationalized curriculum that many in the field of education administration actively sought. By increasing credentialing and certification requirements, standards were forcefully supported with many research funds going into a bifurcation of the field through private career degrees, and master’s versus doctoral programs. The harshness of federal initiatives 1983 – United States National Commission on Excellence in Education *A Nation at Risk*, the 2001 – *No Child Left Behind*, and the 2009 *Race to the Top* continued to narrow school leadership curriculum, as well the curriculum offered students. During this austere time and guided less by the contextualized reality of child and family poverty and the continued lack of funding for public education eroded schools in the USA.

The international arena moved its focus on overcoming poverty in the world with a view that quality education would achieve the economic goals set primarily by Western voices. In 2000, the United Nations created Millennium Development Goals which had 8 goals, 21 targets, and 63 indicators which by the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals grew to 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. This universal agenda is intended to leave no one behind. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are described as:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015, para. 1)

By flipping the narrative, standards could be imposed with measurements to be met. The field of educational leadership preparation expanded over the last two decades to research and influence on international principal preparation standards.

### **Field of Concomitance**

International educational leadership preparation has been heavily influenced in recent decades by the colonizing influence of the professional standards movement in the USA and UK. The standards movement, in turn, borrowed extensively from fields including medicine, law, psychology, and engineering, which have long pursued professionalization through an established and highly regulated approach to professional standards (Hackmann, 2016). This movement has also been based on a belief, borrowed from business, that market competition would produce, through a process of creative destruction, a state of unparalleled educational entrepreneurship (Moore, 2019).

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures Which Form the Different Viewpoints of This Field**

As has been asserted thus far, the influence of the standards movements, both those focused on professional standards and those focused on academic standards, has shaped the field of international leadership preparation for the last 30 years. In addition, the acceleration of efforts to move toward greater privatization, marketization, and individualization of schooling (Moore, 2019) has been quite pronounced during the last two decades. In answer to efforts to either homogenize schooling through standards or to incentivize competition through privatization, there is emerging interest in asserting indigenous, local, and context-based reforms that reject mindsets founded in colonization. Much work, however, remains to be done in this area. Notes Mullen, “Tribal justice for Indigenous populations has yet to appear as an ethical framework in the preparation of graduate students for the principalship, superintendency, and other leadership roles” (2020, p. 18).

### **Critical Assumptions**

Schooling has been unduly influenced by “prescriptive educational transactions and programming” (Mullen, 2020, p. 22) imposed on others. Examples can be found in the standards and accountability pressures described in this chapter. These pressures and their underlying assumptions are today being increasingly challenged by grassroots leaders. Mullen argues that a nascent decolonization movement “is growing, fueled by the desire for Indigenous rights and freedoms, systemic change, and sustainable ecologies” (2020, p. 23). The present chapter envisions systems of schooling that are shaped by localized and context-based circumstances and realities and led by leaders whose primary motivations are social justice and culturally responsive leadership.

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## **Standards 1990s–2020**

The original ISLLC standards from 1996 were revised by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2008 provoked sometimes heated debate among scholars in the years following their adoption. These standards and their later version (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) provoked sometimes heated debate among scholars in the years following their adoption. Proponents of such standards never

fully overcame concerns that their efforts actually lowered leadership-preparation standards (English, 2006) that these efforts rested on a flawed assumption that their implementation would solve the challenges of schooling America's children (English & Papa, 2010), and that, at their core, they relied on a premise that employees could be controlled through "a policy regime and a culture of performativity" (Gronn, 2002, p. 553).

Although significant questions regarding the 1996 and 2008 versions of the ISLLC standards were not fully addressed (English, 2006, 2012), groups that were supportive of the idea of professional standards pressed ahead with a revision of the standards, in the form of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) and the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018). The next generation of standards was adopted in 2015 by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration to replace the ISLLC standards. The updated National Educational Leadership Preparation ("NELP") standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018) were developed to align with the PSEL standards.

The movement toward leadership standards in the USA has been influential in promoting similar efforts internationally. In 2008, the OECD cited efforts by a number of countries to replicate the leadership standards movement in the USA and to incorporate such standards in the regulatory framework of schooling (Pont, Nusche, Moorman, & Hopkins, 2008, pp. 62–63). Their proliferation in the USA and the UK has been attributed to a kindred market-oriented neoliberal ideology (English, 2012).

If the roughly 500 leadership preparation programs in existence in the USA have successfully endeavored to align their programs and course offerings with professional standards, legitimate questions remain as to whether these efforts have produced better leaders or better outcomes for students. Young and colleagues acknowledge there is "a significant difference between merely adopting a set of standards and using or putting them to work" (2016, p. 21). Some have concluded that sound evidence of such effects does not exist. McCarthy and Forsyth wrote,

There appears to be universal agreement that empirical documentation of the merits of leadership preparation is lacking and that much written about this topic cannot be considered research. In short, we do not have credible evidence to counter the allegations that the current preparation of school leaders is wrongheaded or that the significant costs associated with graduate education for school leaders could be better spent elsewhere. (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009, p. 117)

Elsewhere, these authors argue that "Although educational leadership programs are purported to have become standards based and even document which standards each course addresses, it is debatable whether the actual substance of most courses has changed substantially" (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009, p. 95). Elaborating on this point, these authors point out that "The state of educational leadership preparation is never what academics think it should be, and it never perfectly meets the perceived needs of practitioners and the public" (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009, p. 87).

Given the fact that the ISLLC standards were ultimately adopted by 45 states, it should come as no surprise that they influenced licensure requirements in every state (Baker et al., 2007; Young, Mawhinney, & Reed, 2016). Although there is little research on the relationship between state licensure examinations and leader quality (Browne-Ferrigno & Fusarelli, 2005; Fuller, Young, & Baker, 2011; Hackmann, 2016), the majority of the states now require successful completion of an examination in order to receive licensure (Young et al., 2016). State licensure is predicated on the assumption that passing a standards-derived assessment signals that an individual is qualified to lead a school or a school district. Hackmann reported that, as of 2008, 43 states required some form of the ISLLC standards in licensing requirements and leadership preparation coursework, and that 35 states required applicants to pass an examination in order to receive licensure (2016). Research has failed to establish verification of a relationship between licensing criteria and leader effectiveness (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009).

Although the existence of professional standards is purportedly intended to ensure that all school leaders demonstrate certain core competencies, the US federal government effectively incentivized a back door to certification. The federal Race to the Top grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) required applicant states to create alternative paths to certification, which have become prevalent over the last decade. Consequently, as many states increased requirements for leadership-preparation programs and administrative licensure through traditional routes, they simultaneously promulgated alternative pathways and preparation routes to circumvent such requirements. As a result, "In some states, individuals can become school principals or superintendents with no administrative training, having no educator experiences, and possessing only a bachelor's degree" (Hackmann, 2016, p. 58).

The later part of the twentieth and early decades of the twenty-first century embraced cultural pluralism on the one hand and privatization to narrow the education administration curriculum to a very prescribed path, on the other. Achilles in many writings (1991, 1994, 2000) believed, "If practitioners do not know what improves schools, this reflects upon the EDAD professorate" (2000, p.11). Context matters for school leadership. The early twentieth century was focused on the science of school management. The mid-twentieth century was characterized by administration as a science. The business model of management gave way to the medical model of theory building. Societal impacts expecting more and more of public education while withdrawing funds to enforce private collaborations have earmarked the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

In support of a narrowed curriculum and privatization, continuous assaults from professional educational organizations continued. Fuller et al. (2011) found an association "between principals who attended principal preparation programs housed at research and doctoral institutions and improvements in the qualifications of the team of teachers. . . Thus, we believe the results suggest some type of programmatic or resource availability effect of the preparation programs housed by research and doctoral institutions" (p. 208). As a field, using this lens, the research done by esteemed journals in the field supported this with accepting research that fit



this discourse. Perrone and Tucker (2019) research focused on ed. admin degree production from 2000 to 2014. Three findings:

1. The number of institutions granting degrees in ed. admin increased by 72% this century.
2. The total number of leadership degrees granted doubled over this time period and is substantially larger at all award levels (postbaccalaureate, master's, specialist, doctorate) in 2014 than 2000.
3. The types of institutions offering ed. leadership degrees and their production rates have changed dramatically over this period. (p. 253)

Implications include that “the supply of principal candidates far exceeds the number annual principal openings offering school systems greater choice among candidates” (p. 253). The assault within the USA feeds the narrative that data presented are data that should be considered without context. Likewise, Grissom, Mitani, and Woo (2019) studied how principal preparation programs (PPP) lead to measuring principal outcomes. “This study establishes that PPPs vary systematically based on their graduates’ licensure examination results, labor market outcomes, and job performance” (p. 106).

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## International and the West

International research speaks to the spread of standards outcome based promoted through research found in the dominant journals (such as EAQ, Sage Journal of Research on Leadership Education) in research often funded by conservatively based philanthropies (e.g., Wallace Foundation, Heritage) all in the name of reform.

The International Study of Principal Preparation network (Slater, Garcia Garduno, & Mentz, 2018), created in 2008 by members of UCEA, has been focused on novice principals for their ongoing mixed-methods research in 15 countries across five continents. Their focus was to understand how principal preparation was useful. In a three stage study, (1) case study, interviews, (2) followed by principal narratives, and (3) a survey on their challenges, they found “in spite of cultural differences and economic development of the countries, the challenges faced by novice principals had more commonalities than differences” (p. 126). The commonalities found are: feelings of professional isolation, loneliness, management of time through multiple tasks, prioritizing budget items, handling state/nation requirements, reckoning with the previous principal’s style, ineffective staff, and operational and maintenance problems with buildings. Context over standardization is emphasized through two ISPP frameworks that emerged from this research: “Principals need to be in a position to help teachers guide students to learn to be critical of the status quo and become agents of change for a more just community” (p. 126). This can be difficult to do when preparation of school leadership in the US model is exported worldwide.



Slater et al. (2018) believed these findings support an expansion for both developed and developing countries for formal principal preparation, while emphasizing that the programs should not be standardized. The new principals, their study showed, the “need for clear instruction on budget, paperwork related to accountability, and the implementation of government mandates” (p. 131). They believe these are the first needs new principals have.

Webber and Scott (2013) in their international research established five elements for principal preparation. These include: (1) principal as a professional; (2) establish relationships with stakeholders and learn to navigate them; (3) understanding of the formal and informal characteristics; (4) balancing skills of power and accountability; and (5) preparing for a clear understanding of the stresses and need to take good self-care. Ensuring excellent preparation for school administrators is at the heart of preparation programs.

According to Bysik et al. (2015) a new era of accountability in Russia set the stage for national standards for principal preparation. In a study of 300 principals across four regions in Russia, these principals identified their expectations for their training as seeking “personal professional growth (36%), new knowledge (15%), improving the quality of schooling (13%), and getting the certificate completed (1%)” (p. 336). Responses from the survey “highlighted organizational and communication skills, intuition, ability to handle stress, ability to work hard as being essential to becoming successful principal” (p. 336), though these are characteristics “not explicitly taught or developed within the training they had experienced” (p. 336). Bysik et al. found that Russian principal preparation mainly focused on “issues of educational law (53%), management (51%), and finance (48%)” (p. 337). Items these principals felt were not covered, but were nonetheless important, included

Leading the management team, developing leadership skills and ability to communicate with people, handling professional relationships at school, especially working in a team, modern ways to manage a team, building relationships from a vertical to a horizontal system of professional collaboration, and ways to stimulate teaching staff to improve the quality of services. (p. 337)

Other findings include how these principals feel the tensions between how they were trained and their personal feelings about the role of serving as principal. The principals want to work more collaboratively with their teachers in building professional communities; however, the principal standards are managerial in nature and fail to focus sufficiently on themes such as professional relationships and collaborative work.

Research on how Malaysia prepares principals is also tied to the reform movement. “The findings from this study would indicate that the contemporary leadership practices of principals in Malaysia are rapidly changing and this shift is consistent with the transformational aspirations and reform agenda within the country” (Jones et al., 2015, p. 362).

Sumintono, Elsee, Sheyoputri, Misbach, and Jumintono (2015) described in a study of 18 principals, chosen since 2001, that “in a new era of educational reform, as

part of changing state administration” (p. 344) new polices were ushered in to redefine education with some colonial roots. A variety of selection methods were found along with preparation and appointment procedures. For example, some were appointed without principal training or known qualifications, appointed by a major. The politics in this process feature those that are in favor, though many teachers have received training in principal preparation. “The competition to become a principal in any public secondary school in Indonesia is tight and it has been argued that this has resulted in practices that bypass the formal system of selection” (p. 348). Increased scrutiny from the central government has challenged principals with accountability concerns. Further data suggests that unintentional appointing of principals is “not solely based on merit or qualifications but rather is a matter of political expedience” (p. 350).

Five programs (Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the USA) were reviewed from three continents: Asia, North America, and Australia in research performed by Walker, Bryant, and Lee (2013). They identified: (1) the top performers in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment); (2) recognition in reports (testing and performance cultures); (3) all with accredited credentialing (degree and non-degree programs); and (4) qualification required for principal appointment (universities, professional organizations, not-for-profit). Participants in this study were: Canada (Ontario): Principals Qualification Programme (PQP); Australia (Victoria): Master of School Leadership (MSL); Singapore: Leaders in Education Programme (LEP); Hong Kong: Certification for Principalship (CFP); and USA (New York City): Aspiring Principals Programme (APP). Findings by Walker et al. (2013) identified major commonalities of a framework:

1. Frameworks are based in empirically grounded research or theory.
2. Frameworks are derived from research syntheses or widely respected international sources.
3. Frameworks provide the potential of a common leadership language across the respective jurisdiction; frameworks are adjusted to suit jurisdictional needs.

Major variations identified by Walker et al. (2013) are:

1. Explicitly articulated to program structure to implicitly applied in instructional tools
2. Derived from a synthesis of research to derived from a singular theoretical construct
3. Mandated from the top (Ontario, Hong Kong, and Victoria) or framed by program developers (Singapore and New York)

Walker et al. (2013) with respect to content (instructional and transformational), major commonalities include:

1. Established frameworks drive overarching content
2. Provider expertise determines specific foci
3. Practitioner involvement supports contextualization of content

Major content variations include:

1. Specific program foci are dictated by local concerns as mediated by the expertise of academic and/or practitioners.
2. Content ranges from addressing “national” priorities such as globalization and the knowledge society (Hong Kong and Singapore) to more pragmatic concerns of the “local” context (e.g., NYC on closing the achievement).

Major commonalities in terms of operational features include:

1. Programs accept aspiring and potential principals.
2. Programs have admission requirements (e.g., experience and professional qualification).
3. Successful completion of a program results in formal licensure/certification – this is required by the system although some provide credit toward formal degrees.
4. Programs are offered by multiple providers who are centrally selected/regulated (except Singapore).
5. Practitioners’ roles in programs are expanding as programs emphasize contextualized knowledge and skills.

The variations of operational features are:

1. Some programs (e.g., the cases of Singapore and New York City) involve a limited number of fully funded places to attract a wider range of talent. Walker et al.
2. Other programs (e.g., the cases of Hong Kong and Ontario) focus more on wider access to potential leaders and so an expanded pool of future principals. (In Ontario’s case, completion rates now exceed principal positions.)

They found that these programs through offering part-time access greatly broadened access (Ontario, Melbourne-Victoria, Hong Kong) while highly selective programs (New York City and Singapore) were offered on a full-time basis only. With all stakeholders (universities, practitioners, and governments) involvement requires partnership to aid in shaping by the key providers’ determining what they choose to emphasize.

According to Gurmu (2018) the development of Ethiopian school leadership courts self-dependence as noted in its historical evolution as a country. “An attempt to understand the existing practices of the leadership of any nation and an effort to formulate its future policies are revealed from its historical discourses” (p. 343). Historical evolution of Ethiopian education is described in three phases: (1) indigenous education; (2) “inscriptions carved on stones” prior to Christianity (p. 344) and involved primarily “leadership of the church and mosque education” (p. 345); and, the introduction of Western education. Seven phases formed school leadership from the turn of the twentieth century to currently: (1) the school principalship evolved into a separate position; (2) Ethiopians replaced expatriate staffs;

(3) Ethiopian principals' preparation commenced; (4) principals' tasks escalated while their preparation reduced; (5) principal deprofessionalized; (6) principals' preparation reemphasized; and (7) postgraduate diploma in school leadership (PGDSL) training started. "Educational leadership is an integral part of Ethiopian traditional education . . . transition through the twentieth century was one of international and national forces" (p. 359). "An effort to reinvent policies as well as practices of the school leadership of a nation must be conversant with lessons from its past since exertion for its systematization without counting on such information becomes baseless" (p. 360).

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### Where Has the Creative and Imaginative Leader Gone in Research?

If the artfulness of leadership cannot be measured, then it is understandable that it has been left off the table of preparing school leaders. Barakat, Reames, and Kensler (2019) presented research on how educational leaders are prepared culturally to ensure better competency. They found that ". . . few programs access their student's cultural competence" (p. 212). These authors stated that culture has complex roots in anthropology, sociology, intercultural communication, and cross-cultural psychology.

Within *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the "banking" concept of education Freire described a setting where the student was viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher. He explained the result of such an environment wherein the teacher-student relationship controlled the thinking of the student and inhibited his or her creativity (Freire, 1996). Freire's (1996) pedagogy is an "education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to the education as the practice of domination" (p. 62). Freire's proposed pedagogy is a "problem-posing education" that is a "humanist and liberating praxis" which "posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation" (p. 67). Freire (1996) concluded that his problem-posing education "does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor" (p. 67) as underprivileged students of color "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist and the world with which and in which they find themselves" (Freire, 1996, p. 64).

Leadership preparation supports teachers to understand what Freire (1998) calls for hope and optimism. Those who think pessimistically "have lost their place in history" (Freire, 1998, p. 26). Montessori schools began in the early twentieth century focused on inner-city Roman children unable to learn elsewhere. The Montessori techniques emphasized collaboration, independence, and discovery (American Montessori Society, 2016). Dewey believed that (Dewey, 1997) education "would lead to the liberation of a greater diversity of personal capacities which characterize a democracy" (p. 87). Dewey (1997) asserted "our instruction in history and geography and our social studies should be intellectually more honest, they should bring students into gradual contact with the actual realities of contemporary life" (p. 156).

These are lessons that we espouse as good practices are not applied to principal preparation. Bush (2018) identifies five arguments that preparing for a principalship (headship) requires:

1. Expansion of the role of school principal
  2. The devolution of powers to school level
  3. The increasing complexity of school contexts
  4. Recognition that preparation is a moral obligation
  5. Recognition that effective preparation and development make a difference.
- (p. 67)

Bush (2018) stated

Patterns of leadership preparation and development are highly variable across national contexts, ranging from prescriptive mandatory programmes, as in Singapore, to ad hoc “on the job” learning in many countries. There is growing recognition of the need for specialized leadership preparation, but programme content and processes differ significantly. In centralized systems, such as China, France and Singapore, the learning model is standardized, providing consistency, but allowing limited scope for role mentoring, would enable participants to customize their learning to their personal needs and those of their school. In decentralized systems, for example in England, the challenge is how to judge the value of optional national professional qualifications, offered by different licenses, and to compare them with university master’s level programmes. (pp. 69–70)

Specialized, imaginative, and creative should enter the jargon of educational preparation of school leaders (Papa & English, 2014). Educational Leaders Without Borders believes that education should be “universal, enlightening, and liberating...[it] should draw out of humans the potentialities of a progressive humanity which is inclusive and respectful of difference” (Papa, 2016, p. 4). School leaders must be prepared to be culturally proficient while understanding the inherent bias the school has. Educational Leaders Without Borders work to create a socially just school leader that recognizes the impacts of poverty within the contextualized fabric of communities throughout the world. ELWBers question and stand outside while working inside at how schools work to “perpetuate injustice, social division, and reinforce social hierarchy” (Papa, 2016, p. 5). ELWB views leadership for schools as “a leveraging institutional force for greater equality and opportunity than...are found in many of the wealthier more privileged Western nations”.

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

Many scholars (Jensen, Downing, & Clark, 2017; LaPointe, Davis, & Cohen, 2007; Levine, 2005) have concluded that leadership preparation programs do an inadequate job of preparing leaders for the complex work of leading a school. Acknowledging findings supporting such conclusions, Skousen argues that leadership development should be construed as a process that continues throughout one’s

career, as “there is no assurance that the participants who leave [a] program will be successful school leaders and enact effective practices” (2020, p. 1097). The pandemic COVID-2019 has brought the USA world of measurements, assessments, and testings to an abrupt halt, for now. Most schools will begin the Fall of 2020 in a virtual environment. Universities structure of admission once driven by such tests as the SAT (Jaschik, 2020) and other test scores are soundly confronted with the realization of #BlackLivesMatter and the obvious bias and lack of social supports for those in low-paying high poverty jobs. The folly to the road we have been on in preparation of school leaders through measurement and testing standards is exposed by the very nature that starved public schools following edicts of measurement is not the right road to be on. A recent report from the CDC found data collected in 14 states March to July 2020 that while

most pediatric cases of covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, are asymptomatic or mild and that hospitalization rates among children remain relatively low. [But like covid-19 in adults](#), Black and Hispanic children are far more likely to experience symptoms warranting hospitalization. The report calls for improved understanding of the broader social forces that affect health so that racial and ethnic disparities in pediatric hospitalization rates can be mitigated. (Janes, 2020, paras. 2–3)

Our hope is now found in the opportunities the pandemic has bestowed upon us: the lack of public supports through social services to improve lives, and in the USA the unrelenting racial bias that has undergirded many of the supposed good educational initiatives. Clearly, the standards movement has not yielded unbiased schools. Humanity through the educational leaders’ eyes must be fairness to all: is fairness in opportunity, is fairness in funding supports, and is a leader prepared to understand hope and happiness as the higher calling. Preparation programs for school leader able to emphasize that social justice “isms” (racial, gender, LGBTQ+, age, special needs, etc.) are at the core of contextualized schools, thus found in preparation programs that support human agency. These are complex, not easily measured qualities in preparation programs for the school leader. Humanity in all its labyrinth of messiness holds a future that school leaders characterizes more than the ability to check measurement boxes. We ask you to imagine preparation of school leaders in a contextual, resource rich, respected, and respectful of the children, families, and communities they serve globally.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Neoliberalism, Education Policy, and Leadership Observations](#)
- ▶ [The Cultural Constructions of Leadership](#)
- ▶ [The Worldwide Specter of Neoliberalism and the “Neoliberalization” of Educational Leaders](#)
- ▶ [Transcending National Boundaries: How Five Educational Leaders Rethought Poverty and Access to Education](#)
- ▶ [When Best Practices Are Neither Best nor Discerned](#)

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# Mitigating the Impact of *Brown* with New Pathways for Black Teachers and Principals

# 100

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## Abstract

Despite decades of school reform initiatives focused on closing the racialized achievement gap, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students continue to experience systemic barriers to a high quality education. Research indicates that the academic and social-emotional well-being of students from minoritized groups greatly improves when they are taught by a teacher who shares their racial identity. Unfortunately, teachers of color are underrepresented in education.

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They enter the profession at much lower rates than their white counterparts, and they exit the profession at much higher rates. To improve student outcomes, more school principals of color are needed; principals of color have proven to recruit and retain more teachers of color, who, in turn, positively influence student outcomes. This chapter provides the context and support for the need to diversify leadership in education by providing teachers and principals of color with new pathways to career attainment. Cultivating effective high-quality school leaders of color has the potential to shift the demographics of the teaching profession to better align with the increasingly diverse student body. More importantly, these future leaders possess the capacity to improve the academic and life outcomes for all students, in particular students of color.

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**Keywords**

Educational leadership · Black principals · Black teachers · Desegregation · Career pathways · Black education history · Brown versus Board of Education

**The Field of Memory**

The disproportionately low number of Black principals relative to today's increasingly diverse student body can be traced back to the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. In 1954 when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that school segregation was unconstitutional, it marked progress toward racial equality at the expense of Black educators, especially principals. School integration was a slow arduous process that mostly forced small groups of Black students to attend schools outside of their communities, environments that were riddled with hostility and, at times, violence. School integration rarely included the integration of *staff*. After the ruling, Black principals, especially in the southern states, were fired or pressured to resign. Others maintained employment as principals but with little authority, or they were demoted. The alleged progress toward racial justice and equality in education as a result of *Brown* had an unforeseen, detrimental impact on Black principals for decades to come.

**The Field of Presence**

Second to teachers, school principals can have a significant impact on student learning, engagement, and academic achievement. In particular, schools with highly qualified principals of color have reported positive academic and social-emotional outcomes for students and staff. Principals of color can combat deficient ideologies about students, especially those students of color who are disproportionately placed in special education programs, denied access to advanced placement courses, and disciplined at higher rates than their white counterparts. They can advocate for policies and practices that will increase opportunities and create sustainable systems to improve the school experience for students of color. They typically recruit, hire, and retain more teachers of color at rates much higher than White principals. When

students are taught by teachers who share their racial identities, this can positively influence their academic and social-emotional well-being; thus, the ripple effect of a principal of color can possibly shift power dynamics and minimize the oppressive structures that have historically suppressed opportunity, hope, and agency for generations of students.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

While student populations continue to become more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, the demographics of principals have not followed this shift. Principals of color represent roughly 10% of all principals, while the percentage of students of color continues to climb toward 60% across the nation. Other industries with perpetual shortages of underrepresented groups understand the need to diversify their workforces to both innovate internal processes and improve external outputs to clients. In examining methods of addressing this challenge, the approach taken by science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries has been to strengthen their “pipelines” of potential candidates. Similarly, educational systems have begun to recruit and prepare students and educators of color situated at various points in the educational pipeline. These districts and organizations have created new pathways to teaching and leading that have the potential to close achievement gaps and improve the academic and life outcomes for all students.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The educational experiences of generations of Black children have been afflicted by systemic oppressive ideologies, policies, and practices. Black children are overrepresented in special education programs, experience disproportionately high suspension rates, and are forced to learn White supremacy culture through racially biased curricula and assessments. The reorientation of schools toward educational equity begins with creating innovative approaches to recruiting and retaining staff that exhibit the cultural values of the communities in which they serve.

### **Critical Assumptions**

Cultivating more Black principals to advance the well-being and academic success of Black students surfaces several critical suppositions. First, Black principals must possess the capacity to build inclusive and supportive school climates; secure appropriate personnel and resources; manage district requirements and expectations; comply with school, district, and federal mandates; and develop the competencies of an instructional leader. Next, they must be proficient in facilitating collaboration among key stakeholders, e.g., parents, philanthropic organizations, district personnel, community organizations, and local colleges and universities. In addition, they must build a dexterity of skills that allow them to be instructional leaders, data managers, community liaisons, and business developers. Last, Black principals possess the authority and influence to change school and district policies to continue to advance the well-being of students and staff, especially those intentionally or unintentionally the target of racially charged practices.

## Introduction

The 1896 ruling from the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized “separate but equal” public facilities. This case sanctioned laws that prohibited people of color from using the same hospitals, buses, water fountains, building entrances, cemeteries, schools, and any public facility as White people. During this time, Jim Crow laws established a plethora of complex, irrational, and dehumanizing rules and customs that further exacerbated the *Plessy* ruling. The laws spanned from etiquette norms that asserted, “Blacks were not allowed to show public affection toward one another in public, especially kissing, because it offended whites” to require Black voters to pass literacy tests and pay poll taxes before they were permitted to vote (Pilgrim, 2012). This era of racial apartheid in the United States lasted well into the middle of the twentieth century.

Beginning with its founding in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) advocated for an integrated education system. At that time, the resources allocated to schools for children of color were far less than equal to those granted to White schools. Especially in southern states, the segregated schools for Black children were located in old, dilapidated buildings (Spring, 2001). Children were often given worn, outdated textbooks after years of use from White students. The curriculum given to Black teachers was limited and unparalleled to the course of study afforded to White students (Fairclough, 2004). In addition, Black teachers and principals were paid less than their white counterparts with far more responsibilities. It was common practice for Black teachers to use their own money to buy classroom supplies. Black principals, especially in rural schools, typically both led and taught classes at their schools.

Because of these inequalities, the NAACP fought for decades with a network of other organizations and state level teacher associations to prepare the profession and general public for school integration. Nevertheless, when the Supreme Court ruled that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional in the landmark case *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*, neither the field of education nor the general public were truly ready for this decision. While this historic ruling marked significant progress toward racial equality and arguably provided the impetus for the Civil Rights Movement, it came at the expense of thousands of Black educators. The NAACP and its constituents assumed during the initial phases of the desegregation of schools, some Black educators would lose their positions. They thought unemployment would be temporary; however, in the decades to follow, racism and discrimination eroded the presence and power of Black educators (Karpinski, 2006).

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## The Consequences of *Brown* on Black Teachers

Prior to *Brown*, the field of education was one of the only professions that offered upward mobility for Black college graduates. Accordingly, 60% of these graduates became teachers, most of which were employed in Black schools in the south

(Tillman, 2004b). Black teachers embodied excellence, competence, skill, and perseverance. Black teachers lived in the communities in which they worked. They attended the same church as their students and often visited their homes (Randolph, 2004). They acted as surrogate parents, social workers, counselors, and role models; advocated for the academic, social-emotional, and cultural development of children; and championed for racial uplift (Fairclough, 2004; King, 1993). Despite the marginal resources allotted to their schools, they strived to provide Black children with a superior education and prepare students for the racially charged world that awaited them.

Since Black teachers were integral to the success of Black students and a vital part of the community, the NAACP worked with Black teacher associations to convince its members that school integration was necessary for racial advancement, justice, and equality; therefore, any encumbrance endured would be for the greater good of current and future generations of black children. The organization projected that unemployment due to Black and White schools merging would be minimal. In addition, employment termination would most severely impact incompetent, unskilled teachers, not the majority of high-effective skilled Black educators (Fairclough, 2004). Unfortunately, this sentiment was far from reality.

One year before the *Brown* ruling, a superintendent sent the following letter to all Black teachers which bluntly foreshadowed their fate for the foreseeable future.

Due to the present uncertainty about enrollment next year in schools for negro children, it is not possible at this time to offer you employment for next year. If the Supreme Court should rule that segregation in the elementary grades is unconstitutional our Board will proceed on the assumption that the majority of people in Topeka will not want negro teachers next year for White children. . . It is necessary for me to notify you now that your services will not be needed next year. (Tillman, 2004b, p. 280)

The 10 years immediately following the *Brown* ruling represented the most devastating for Black educators. Districts almost immediately devised racist policies and practices that victimized Black teachers. Hiring managers began to evaluate applicants based on their scores on standardized assessments such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and National Teacher Examination. This subjective evaluation only applied to Black applicants, not White, and eliminated them from the candidate pool. In numerous southern states, Black teachers were fired for being members of so-called radical organizations such as the Urban League, NAACP, and even Black teacher associations. The Board of Education in Georgia adopted a resolution that prohibited teachers from even joining the NAACP. Other states dismissed Black teachers for registering to vote, participating in voter registration campaigns, and/or exercising their right to vote (Tillman, 2004b). In other instances, state organizations simply revoked their teaching licenses without just cause. These tactics evolved from fear of Black teachers taking the jobs of White teachers and even worse teaching White children. In total, nearly 38,000 Black teachers were fired between 1954 and 1965 (Ethridge, 1979), causing such severe declines in some states that by 1975, Black teachers were faintly existent (Hudson & Holmes, 1994).

White school administrators selected the most highly effective Black teachers to be transferred to their schools, environments where they confronted hostility, degradation, and, at times, violence on a daily basis (Milner & Howard, 2004). For others, colorism played a major role in their employment at the newly integrated schools (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Milner & Howard, 2004). Deeply rooted deficit ideologies about skin color stemming from slavery still dominated this time period. White administrators viewed lighter-skinned Black female teachers as “more closely connected to the White students and teachers, and consequently there was less of a threat for the White teachers, White community members, and White students” (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 289). The darker-skinned teachers were perceived to be too far from Whiteness, i.e., less employable in the integrated school.

The massive resistance to desegregation permeated higher education. Specifically, teacher education programs also suffered from the wrath of racism (Tillman, 2004b). In one notable case, the governor of South Carolina accused three professors at Allen University of promoting communism and demanded that the university terminate their contracts. The three professors, two White and one Black, were all Northerners and outspoken opponents of segregation, discrimination, and bias (Hoffman, 1998). All three were highly credentialed and well-qualified educators; therefore, the Board of Trustees failed to comply with the governor’s mandate. To retaliate, the State Board of Education headed by the governor withheld state certification of the university’s teacher education program (“Fourth Annual Message,” 1958). Without state teaching certification, Allen University graduates were virtually unemployable. Black students who tried to enroll at the University of South Carolina to complete their degrees and earn certification were flatly denied admission. The battle continued until the university succumbed to pressure and terminated the professors. Unfortunately, records do not indicate when/if the state board reinstated Allen University’s certification of the education program.

The majority of Black students remained in schools stripped of culturally competent, dedicated, and highly skilled teachers. Hawkins (1994) deemed the post-*Brown* era as the beginning of Black children experiencing higher rates of school-induced trauma; decreased career and life aspirations; increased academic tracking in low-level courses; and disproportionate placement in Special Education programs. The sudden decrease of Black teachers warranted equally severe dismissals of Black principals.

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## **The Consequences of *Brown* on Black Principals**

Black principals were integral figures in the Black schools and communities (Randolph, 2004). They recruited, hired, and maintained talented Black teachers to their schools and supported teachers. As instructional leaders, Black principals provided schools with a vision of excellence in education. They were role models for teachers, students, and other members of their staff. They worked with parents to obtain necessary school resources by asking for direct donations, organizing fundraisers,



and supporting their petitions to an all-White school board for additional funding. They challenged the deficit ideologies about Black students held by their White counterparts and advocated for an educated class of Black children. In direct opposition to White supremacist ideals of Black inferiority, Black principals radiated self-efficacy, self-respect, and racial pride (Tillman, 2004a). They acted not just as principals, but as financial advisors, politicians, civil rights activists, superintendents, family counselors, and community organizers (Tillman, 2004b).

The unintended consequences of *Brown* also impacted Black principals. Tillman (2008) argued that black principals experienced the most disadvantage of all Black educators. The fear of White children being taught by Black teachers was only trumped by the fear of White schools being led by Black principals. As with Black teachers, the “best” principals were transferred to the newly integrated schools, but they were demoted to assistant principals. In direct opposition to their previous roles as community leaders and role models, they were limited to being disciplinarians to the Black students, especially the Black males (Milner & Howard, 2004). The remainder of principals were dismissed at an expedient tempo and pace (Fultz, 2004). If a Black school closed, the principal lost his or her position. If enrollment in a Black school declined because of integration, the principal was oftentimes terminated and replaced with an unqualified or reluctant White principal. Other Black principals were denied employment contracts, and some were terminated for insignificant matters, such as failure to administer the routine fire drill or report a parking violation. The most unfortunate were fired without notice and without reason (Karpinski, 2006).

In the 10 years immediately following the *Brown* decision, Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma closed the majority of all Black schools; those same five states terminated over 50% of their Black principals (Tillman, 2004a). In Maryland between 1954 and 1968, the employment of Black principals decreased by 27% as the number of White principals increased by 167%. North Carolina experienced a 95% decline in the employment of Black principals, the largest of all southern states (Karpinski, 2006). The number of Black principals decreased from 226 to 15 in this state between 1963 and 1973 (Karpinski, 2006); other sources report a more severe decline from 620 to 40 (Tillman, 2004a). Inconsistent and inaccurate data collection methods conceal the actual impact of desegregation on Black principals. Once official records finally surfaced in the 1970s, Black principals were at the brink of extinction.

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## The Current State of Black Principals and Teachers

The decimation of Black principals ebbed and flowed for the next four decades. Currently, only 11% of principals are Black (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Despite the small representation of Black principals, their impact of Black teachers and students is fairly immense (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). The historic tradition of supporting Black teachers continued with contemporary leaders. Black principals hire more Black teachers at a higher rate than their White counterparts. This stems

partly from Black principals' ability to hire from within their diverse professional network (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). In addition, Black principals are more likely to be placed in urban schools, schools in which the demographics of the staff are typically incongruent with the student population. Thus, diversifying the staff to better meet the needs of students of color becomes a priority. Once hired, Black teachers with race-congruent principals report higher levels of support, autonomy, and appreciation. This also increases their tenure in the profession longer than Black teachers supervised by White principals (Grissom & Keiser, 2011).

The increased attrition and increased job satisfaction of Black teachers because of Black principals directly translates to student outcomes (Hansen & Quintero, 2018). Continuing the legacy of their predecessors, Black teachers hold significantly higher expectations for Black students in comparison to nonblack teachers (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018). One study revealed that math and reading achievement significantly increased when students have a race-congruent teacher (Dee, 2004). Evidence from national data indicates that Black students have a higher likelihood of placement in gifted programs if their teacher is Black; this increases substantially when both the teacher and principal are Black (Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2017).

Black teachers are more likely to seize opportunities in class to discuss issues of race, bias, and discrimination and redesign eurocentric curriculum to be more culturally responsive (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). In their classrooms, Black students feel emotionally and physically safe. Black teachers are more likely to address behavioral infractions rather than refer students to the principal's office (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019). One study analyzed discipline and demographic data of elementary school students and teachers. Over a 5-year period, they compared disciplinary rates of students in years with versus without race-congruent teachers. The results were consistent with similar studies; Black students, especially males, were less vulnerable to detentions, suspensions, or expulsions from school when the teacher was Black (Williams, Davis, & Butler, 2020).

Recent findings are beginning to reveal the impact of a race-congruent teacher beyond the time in which students spend with the teacher. Black students hold affirmative aspirations for postsecondary degree attainment at higher rates in classrooms with same-race teachers (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019). Utilizing data from a statewide initiative on the impact of class size in elementary schools, Gershenson et al. (2021) uncovered if a Black student experiences at least one Black teacher between kindergarten and third grade, it increases the likelihood of the student graduating from high school by 13% and enrolling in college by 19%.

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## The Complex Road to the Principalship

Despite the overwhelming evidence that supports the impact of Black principals on Black teachers and students, pathways to the principalship are complex. Those Black teachers and other educators (e.g., school counselors) who aspire to be principals face a host of obstacles that hinder, delay, or completely halt their advancement

(Mc Cray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). First, most Black educators are not encouraged to pursue administrative careers; school leaders tend to encourage those who share their gender and race exclusively (Fuller, Hollingworth, & An, 2019). Considering that most administrations are White, they are the ones who typically are encouraged to apply to principal preparation programs. For those Black educators that persist and earn their administrative credentials, they are more likely to be assistant principals for a longer period of time than their White colleagues. Specifically, Bailes and Guthrey (2020) found that 5 years after earning certification, Black administrators were more likely to still be assistant principals, while their White male counterparts have transitioned into being principals.

For all women of all races, the road to higher level administrative positions is much less linear than White males. Women are most often granted positions as principals in elementary schools. While this represents an accomplishment, it also comes with many consequences. In the implicit hierarchy of school leadership positions, the elementary school principal is much less prestigious. Most school districts have more elementary schools than secondary, making these positions more plentiful. The school's geographic reach is relatively small, and budgetary needs are less demanding than those of secondary schools. Also, administrators have to manage very little extracurricular and/or after school activities. Last, elementary school principals are typically paid less than secondary principals. These and other factors have limited women's access to higher level positions (Bailes & Guthrey, 2020). The position of high school principal is often viewed as the gateway to superintendency and other higher level central office positions (Mc Cray et al., 2007). Unlike their male counterparts, career advancement is delayed by 5–6 years, as they move from elementary school principal to mid-level central office position.

Wilkerson and Wilson (2017) declared that aspiring Black principals have an “infinitesimal chance” of leading a majority White school (p. 777). Typically, they inherit segregated schools with majority Black and Brown students who reside in communities highly impacted by poverty. These schools are challenged by high staff turnover rates, high concentrations of beginning teachers, and low student achievement on standardized assessments (Wilkerson & Wilson, 2017). They must balance the contradictory demands from students, staff, parents, and superintendents while internally battling feelings of isolation and marginalization (Poland, 1997).

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## Shifting from Pipelines to Pathways

The “pipeline” metaphor is often used to explain the low representation of people of color and women in certain high-demand fields (Jacobs, 2010; Tippet & Stanford, 2019). The metaphor is based on the premise that having an *output* of college graduates for a particular occupation requires an *input* of students interested in that field during their formative years. Their interest is maintained throughout the pipeline from elementary school to college graduation and beyond. As individuals move along the metaphorical pipeline, success is assessed by their ability to progress through critical preparatory checkpoints.

Decades of research on participation and achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have popularized this metaphor. The STEM pipeline follows a linear projection. Typically, it begins in middle school, the quintessential time when students, especially girls, must develop and maintain an interest in STEM (Modi, Schoenberg, & Salmond, 2012). In high school, they need to complete upper-level STEM classes to best prepare themselves for rigorous college coursework (Lancaster & Xu, 2020). While in college, students must participate in a series of internships and other work-related experiences before they earn their degrees in STEM (Lyon, Jafri, & St. Louis, 2012). The next steps along this pipeline include earning advanced degrees and securing employment. The metaphor explains that women and underrepresented racial groups in STEM “leak” out of the pipeline at multiple points, e.g., lack of advanced math courses in high school (Green & Sanderson, 2018) and discriminatory hiring practices (Sheltz & Smith, 2014). The leaks in the pipeline explain their low representation in STEM fields.

The pipeline metaphor has been a framework frequently used to describe the lack of racial diversity among teachers and principals (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Turball, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). In an examination of the Massachusetts teacher workforce, Rucinski and Goodman (2019) disaggregated by race the potential candidate pool of teachers at each stage of the pipeline: (1) public school students, (2) 4-year college graduates, (3) completed teacher certification exam, (4) passed exam, (5) earned license, (6) hired as a teacher, and (7) taught for 3 or more years. The report identified areas of improvement along the teacher pipeline to include closing gaps in high school and college enrollment for Black and Latinx students in addition to targeted interventions for teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds who do not initially pass the state teacher licensure test. After analyzing 12 years of employment data, Williams et al. (2020) looked further down the pipeline for opportunities to increase racial diversity. Findings revealed that the percentage of Black teacher assistants (52–58%) far extended the percentage of Black teachers (25–29%). Their study suggested the recruitment of currently employed teacher assistants could lead to more teachers of color.

Emerging studies advocate for shifting the framework away from a pipeline to pathways (Fealing & Myers, 2012; White, 2005). Inherent in the pipeline metaphor is the assumption that when people “leak out” of the pipeline, they have exited completely. This metaphor leaves no time, space, or opportunity for an individual to rejoin the career progression (Garbee, 2017). Second, the pipeline metaphor ignores the experiences of those who never traveled through the pipeline, yet still acquired positions within their desired profession. In studying female scientists and engineers, this dominant framework failed to explain the experiences of approximately half of these STEM professionals (Cannady, Greenwald, & Harris, 2014). Last, the metaphor assumes there is one linear path to career attainment. This exemplifies a dominant cultural frame of reference based on White male privilege and discounts the variances in career trajectories for women and people of color (Atman et al., 2008). Specifically, the linear metaphor ignores the extent to which pervasive gender and/or racial discrimination derail their career aspirations.

More recent studies support a pathway metaphor to better illuminate the complexities of career development, especially for women and people of color. This metaphor is less dependent on a linear progression from one checkpoint to the next; instead, the pathway provides multiple entry points throughout time. School districts across the nation have recognized the need to create pathways targeted at diversifying their workforce.

## **Edgecombe County High School Scholars Program**

High school teacher cadet programs date back to 1984 when one of the first was created by Lehman High School and Walton College in Bronx, NY. These programs focus on rigorous coursework, work-based experiences, and professional learning for aspiring teachers. The programs offer students 1 year of introductory experience (Center for Teaching Quality, 2009). More recently, programs have expanded in scope and sequence. Edgecombe County, a rural district in North Carolina, developed a 3-year program. The Edgecombe County High School Scholars Program recruits a racially and ethnically diverse cohort of rising juniors interested in careers in teaching. The impetus for the program emerged from a need to stabilize their workforce. At the time of its inception, 20% of teachers left the county every year; high teacher turnover has a negative impact on student learning and engagement. The purpose of this program was to attract, prepare, and empower local students to pursue careers in teaching in Edgecombe County.

Often referred to as the grow-your-own-program, the curriculum focuses on social justice, career exploration, service learning, and power of place, i.e., knowing the needs of the local community. The scholars complete both high school and community college courses while participating in internships at local elementary and middle schools. Through working with mentor teachers, they gain exposure to the knowledge, competencies, and skills needed to be a highly effective, culturally competent teacher. The hope is for the scholars to return to the district to complete their student-teaching and eventually secure full-time employment. It is too early to determine the impact of the program; however, the majority of scholars have majored in education and plan to return to Edgecombe upon graduation.

## **Call Me MiSTER**

Call Me MiSTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) is another example of a grow-your-own program. It originated in South Carolina at Clemson University, a state challenged by perpetual teacher shortages, nearly half of students attending schools in rural areas, and higher than average levels of poverty in those rural areas. Call Me MiSTER is designed to address the need for more dedicated and highly qualified teachers in high-need elementary schools by investing in male college students. It attracts and recruits mostly Black males pursuing majors in elementary, middle, or special education. The program provides them with

financial, academic, social-cultural support and a mentor to promote their personal and professional growth. The tenets of Call Me MiSTER are ambassadorship, brother's keeper, personal growth, teacher efficacy, and servant leadership.

The program officers utilize both traditional methods to recruit candidates (e.g., providing information to school counselors) and more community-based informal means by seeking young pastors, local barbers, community organizations, or volunteers at the local YMCA. The vast majority of Call Me MiSTER graduates secure teaching positions in the targeted rural, high-need areas; several have earned advanced degrees and became assistant principals and principals. In South Carolina, over 90% of the 211 program graduates have remained in education at the elementary, secondary, or postsecondary level (Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019). Call Me MiSTER is now a nationally recognized program for cultivating the next generation of Black male teachers with affiliates in North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Illinois.

### **The Aspiring Principals Program**

The Leadership Academy's research-based Aspiring Principals Program represents another pathway designed to attract and prepare teachers to school leadership positions. The program started in New York City to cultivate a cohort of leaders prepared to dismantle systemic inequities in school through exposure to culturally responsive leadership. It is a yearlong residency program that includes expert mentors, multiweek summer-intensive, and skill-based training. From 2003 to 2017, the program trained nearly 600 principals to serve high-need schools throughout the city. In 2019, 67% are still working in the New York City school system and improving student outcomes, currently operating as the majority of participants were women and people of color. With its success in New York City, the program has been adopted by more than 200 education systems in 37 states and Washington D.C. (Leadership Academy's History, 2021).

### **Guilford Aspiring Leaders Academy**

Other leadership preparation programs borrow tenets from the grow-your-own framework. Guilford County in North Carolina designed GALA, Guilford Aspiring Leaders Academy, to prepare future leaders to advance the district's culture for equity, deeper learning, and high performance. Similar to Call Me MiSTER, the academy welcomes all candidates with an emphasis on Black and Latino male assistant principals. The 18-month program builds on research that Black and Latino boys experience greater academic outcomes, lower suspension rates, and higher graduation rates in schools with more male educators of color. The participants learn about the complexities of leadership, school culture, data-informed decisions, leading for equity, cross-racial and cross-cultural community, and instructional leadership (Contreras, 2018). The program shows promising results; some of the newly

appointed principals assigned to high-need schools, with a majority of students of color, reported notable improvements to academic performance and growth (Contreras, 2021).

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## Conclusions and Reflections

The unintended consequences of *Brown* versus *the Board of Education* reverberate throughout today's educational systems. As student populations increasingly become richer with racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, the divergence between principal and student demographics becomes greater and greater. Throughout elementary, middle, and high schools, students deserve to see leaders who look like them, who share their cultural values. Leaders who are empowered to critically identify and examine inequities permeating their schools and districts dismantle systemic obstacles that inhibit learning and engagement and create innovative policies, practices, and procedures to improve the academic and life outcomes for all students, especially those experiencing marginalization. To ensure academic excellence for Black students, these leaders strive to retain more black teachers. With the support of the Black principal, Black teachers design classroom learning environments that foster community, safety, and agency. This translates into greater academic and life outcomes.

The realities of the current educational system reveal the rarity of these experiences for Black children. State and national programs have emerged that pave viable pathways to teaching and leadership for people of color, but even more are needed to mitigate the impact of *Brown*. A new program could uniquely situate itself between initiatives that strive to professionalize career pathways for teachers and those that aim to diversify leadership licensure programs. It serves as a means of retaining teachers of color, especially those who may not have considered a position in leadership as a viable career option, while simultaneously preparing more educators to better serve the needs of students from minoritized groups. The curriculum would need to dive deeply into aspects of critical self-reflection, historical root causes of racism in education, current institutional factors that inhibit student success, and approaches used by transformative leaders to ensure more equitable outcomes. With more exposure and preparedness for school leadership, program graduates are best positioned to increase the diversity of the principalship and facilitate individual and collective approaches to teaching and learning. By tracing our roots, i.e., examining the history of education – both successes and challenges, educational systems can create new pathways to transform the role of Black principals and improve long-term outcomes for black students.

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# Sustaining a Vision to Reclaim Educational Reform

# 101

The Case of the New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership) 2004–

Jennifer Antoni, Taryn J. Conroy, Kevin A. Peters, Susan H. Shapiro, Arkadiy Yelman, and Steven Jay Gross

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### Abstract

The New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership) was formed in 2004 when two senior educational leadership faculty members from Temple University's College of Education partnered in response to two dynamic challenges. The first was a neoliberal policy environment that focused on high stakes testing that included draconian sanctions along with a robust pursuit of privatization. The second was the ill-founded belief that if the testing regime led to improved scores, social problems such as poverty among marginalized groups would be greatly reduced if not eliminated.

Central to this organization's scholarship, course development, conferences, and work with practitioners in the United States and around the world are five visions for educational leadership statements. Each of these is contrasted to behaviors of conventional leaders to form a continuum. This chapter examines each vision statement vis-à-vis Foucault's fields of memory, presence, and concomitance. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of the combined impact of these statements in guiding and sustaining the New DEEL organization, especially as it moves into an ever more challenging yet potentially constructive era in educational leadership due to the impact of a global pandemic and the crisis of racial injustice found in the United States.

### Keywords

Democracy · Ethics · Educational reform · Equity · Turbulence theory · Leadership · Social justice and social responsibility

### The Field of Memory

That education is siloed from the rest of society into a nondemocratic hierarchy typified by neoliberalism, essentialism, and scientific management theories. That micro-managed accountability practices will lead to higher test scores which will lead in turn into a more equitable society. That ethical reasoning is largely a matter of an ethic of justice and that careers in education can be viewed as a climb up a corporatist ladder.

### The Field of Presence

That guiding social development both near and far is part of educational leadership. Redefining leadership to include all participants and community members. That democracy, authentic educational reform, and social responsibility are dynamically reinforcing and integrally connected. That working with turbulence

to protect and promote innovation is critical as is working from a multiple ethical paradigm when faced with inevitable ethical dilemmas. Seeing one's career as a calling.

### **The Field of Concomitance**

These include democratic theory, feminist critique, critical race theory, Desmond Tutu's use of unbuntu, Deweyan progressive philosophy, democratic administration theory, turbulence training for pilots, action research, Alfred North Whitehead's notion of the utilization of knowledge, FDR's Second Bill of Rights, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

### **Discontinuities and Ruptures**

The New DEEL approach rejects the stance of neoliberalism's reprise of scientific management in education. Specifically, it rejects the position that schools alone bear the weight of social and economic transformation toward equity and that equity can be achieved when schools produce sufficiently high scores on standardized tests. Further, it rejects the concept that educational leadership is restricted to a single individual at the top of an organizational chart and that educational leaders are not to act as democratic ethical leaders in the wider community.

### **Critical Assumptions or Presupposition**

The current policy that predicts testing and punishment will lead to middle-class lives for those families now entrenched in poverty is exactly backwards. It is the very supports that middle-class families have that account for most of the difference in educational performance in our society. Since we have not seen signs of a reversal in this wayward policy direction, educational leaders at every level who seek social justice and social responsibility must redefine their jobs and share leadership with all related groups (faculty, staff, students, families, and the wider community). Beyond new attitudes and expanded definitions of the job of democratic ethical leadership, new skills including community organizing, alliance forging, sophisticated ethical reasoning, and understanding the nature of organizational turbulence are required.

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## **Introduction**

The New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership) was formed in 2004 when two senior educational leadership faculty members from Temple University's College of Education partnered in response to two dynamic challenges. The first was a neoliberal policy environment that focused on high stakes testing that included draconian sanctions along with a robust pursuit of privatization. The second, allied with this emphasis, was the ill-founded belief that if the testing regime led to improved test scores, social problems such as poverty among marginalized groups would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated.

The two founders believed that the first priority of a public education system was to raise the next generation of young people to be able to sustain and improve upon a democratic ethical society. Given the vast gulf between this goal and the then current situation facing educational leaders at every level, they decided to create a new movement. They shared their concerns and aspirations with colleagues around the world asking for support and involvement. They achieved this through the Consortium for the Study of Leadership and Ethics in Education (CSLEE) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA).

After two Winter Strategy Sessions in 2004 and 2005, the New DEEL colleagues drafted a mission statement and adopted a set of five beliefs that they felt would define the parameters of a new kind of educational leader. They refer to these five beliefs as the New DEEL Vision for Leaders. Significantly, these are a series of interdependent continua rather than dichotomous extremes. They are also dynamic and are influenced by such external conditions as security, economics, the environment and technology, and their combined impacts on educational leaders. As such the New DEEL vision for leadership statements are meant to be both aspirational and practical in nature. All New DEEL initiatives, including articles, books, course development, international conferences, and consultations with practitioners, have used these statements as foundational elements.

New DEEL colleagues believe that these five vision statements are at the heart of that organization and its ability to evolve over an extended period of time and through dynamically changing circumstances. Each of the five vision statements represents a critical facet of a socially just and socially responsible movement to reclaim educational reform. Therefore, each of the five statements will be explicated in order in this chapter and considered in light of the Fields of Memory, Presence and Concomitance. Their unified impact will be described at the chapter’s conclusion.

**Vision Statement 1**

New DEEL Leader	Conventional Leader
Guided by an inner sense of responsibility to students, faculty, staff, families, the community and social development on a world scale.	Driven by an exterior pressure to those above in the organizational/political hierarchy.

The first vision statement for the New DEEL vision for educational leadership describes the continuum between a New DEEL leader who is driven by an inner responsibility to stakeholders whom they serve, and a conventional leader who primarily responds to a narrow understanding of responsibility to the leaders occupying roles with positional power. Conventional leaders often define their success through outputs created by exterior pressures, such as performance on high-stakes testing, affirmation from those in leadership positions above them, and opportunities to “climb the ladder.” Comparatively, the New DEEL leader is energized by “building community and a wider sense of us” in all facets of the school community (Gross & Shapiro, 2016). In short, while conventional leaders operate with a concentration on compliance, New DEEL leaders recognize the cornerstone to their approach is sensing the connection and adhering to a commitment to others outside of themselves (Gross, 2020).

Yet, school leaders grapple with this tension between accountability and responsibility. One fundamental question centers around what exactly it means to be driven by an inner sense of responsibility in the wake of accountability pressure, which is often experienced by school systems in economically disadvantaged areas disproportionately. In these school systems, how do school leaders work for vulnerable students and families while complying with narrow, rigorous accountability systems?

Thus, educational leadership responses have not always been designed with equity in mind. One such widespread response resulting from the accountability-based reform approach that highlights the difference between New DEEL leaders and conventional leaders is the focus on the “bubble groups” in instructional and strategic leadership and decision-making. Commonly employed in low performing school districts, conventional leaders commit additional resources and time to only those students whose score was near proficiency cut score (Greer, 2018), to the exclusion of the students performing below the cut score level. Concerned with expedient compliance and narrow ideas of improving student achievement, school leaders endeavor to move the students deemed most viable to the next higher performance level with a result of an increased overall rating for schools and districts, often to the detriment of all ready under-resourced groups of students at the tail end of the continuum (Ladd & Lauen, 2010). In this way, conventional leaders believe that closing the achievement gap required by the accountability-based reform approach can simply be reduced to analyzing the data of student performance on the high-stakes testing (Feuerstein, 2013) and selecting the student groups whose test scores seem easiest to elevate. As has been noted, while this practice grew in popularity during the onset of high stakes testing, the practice misses the boat when it comes to broader concerns for the whole school community.

Moreover, leaders who react to the pressures of accountability-based reform and rely on increasing student achievement to comply with those mandates fail to abandon traditional educational approaches and beliefs even when they may recognize social inequities exist (Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). Conversely, New DEEL leaders recognize this narrow approach contributes to greater educational inequities and social injustices. Moreover, they believe students are more than just sets of data. Fei Wang states, “Educators who seek solutions to social injustice look to address the root causes of problems, not just their symptoms” (2017, p. 396). Shifting focus away from narrow responses to accountability measures, school leaders, driven by a broad sense of social justice and equity, remain committed to, for instance, traditionally under-resourced student groups, even if it means not expediently achieving the required accountability targets.

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## Field of Memory

Foucault’s concept of the field of memory challenges one to identify what components of ideas, theories, and practices are no longer viable, and may have evolved into dysfunction. Although the accountability-based reform approach has morphed over time from the narrow focus of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to the more flexible Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there are still components that stymie

the progress of maintaining educational equity. While some educational leaders and policymakers assert that the focus on accountability is an important part of school reform, others point out how some so-called reform efforts have spurred unethical practices (Lauen & Gaddis, 2012). One example of the narrow focus on accountability is the widespread practice of reorganizing instructional time to emphasize the tested subject areas. This practice has led school districts to support this additional instructional time in tested areas by cutting recess, emphasizing “teaching to the test,” and decreasing, or in some cases, eliminating, instructional time for non-tested content areas such as social studies, art, or music (Groen, 2012). Altogether, this practice is both short sighted and neglects the broader focus that an inner sense of responsibility to students elicits.

At the heart of the overreliance on leadership practices that amount to accountability compliance over a shared sense of responsibility are conventional, commonly held assumptions and conceptions about the value of high stakes testing. These assumptions can also be seen in the very policies that shape the use of testing across school systems itself. Yet, how useful are test scores in the advancement of students?

In response to the strong call for exemplary schools on an international level, Levin (2012) traced the increasingly narrow focus on test performance to the exclusion of other critical skills, contending that noncognitive and socio-emotional skill acquisition were arguably more important to strengthening labor force readiness than test performance was. Likewise, responding to the broader question of the field’s overreliance on educational testing and the oversimplification of test interpretation in school settings across the country, Koretz (2008) cautioned that test scores fall short in attempting to capture the full picture of a student’s achievement or a school’s effectiveness, suggesting that school leaders and policymakers narrowly focusing on test scores were missing the bigger picture.

The accountability-based reform movement has not only led to educational inequities for students, it also has created unforeseen challenges for teachers. In work investigating the effects of accountability pressure on teachers, several factors relating to the reform movement such as a lack of time, imposed curriculum changes, and testing of special education populations contributed to an increase in job-related stress for educators (Gonzalez, Peters, Orange, & Grigsby, 2017). Additionally, recent work has identified that the massive workload associated with accountability is a critical factor that contributes to qualified teachers leaving the profession in the first 5 years (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). As can be seen, accountability exerts a toll on teachers and their school systems.

Perhaps, instead of becoming engrossed in reducing the pressure, leaders should invest their time sharing in the responsibility of addressing the root of the problem that is much deeper than not meeting the required accountability targets. Although more demanding, the work of democratic and ethical leadership is manifested through efforts such as uniting the school community, supporting the self-efficacy of stakeholders, and advocating for the underrepresented groups most detrimentally impacted by unresponsive policies.



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## Field of Presence

Analyzing what is truthful and necessary about a practice is the foundation of Foucault's field of presence. New DEEL leaders confront the inequities of the accountability-based reform movement by connecting educational reform to democracy and social responsibility. They understand and even appreciate the "out of touch" and "incompetent" labels some place on them because they are focused on deeper educational reform outcomes than what accountability-based reform can produce (Feuerstein, 2013).

One concept that has become validated in the field of presence is cultural competency as a standard in educational leadership. Accordingly, possessing a high degree of cultural competence necessary to understand and meet the needs of stakeholders and communities is now considered an integral component to a sense of social responsibility. As schools and classrooms become more culturally and linguistically diverse (Keengwe, 2010), the New DEEL leader confirms the values and beliefs of stakeholders through actions, decisions, and communication. What this requires leaders to do is "recognize the hugeness and complexity of what (culturally competent) educators on the frontline are up against: the status quo which has built-in reinforcements to protect itself" (Boutte, Kelly-Jackson, & Johnson, 2010, n.p.).

Yet, accountability pressure continues to be at the foreground for many school leaders. Many school districts moved to a focus on "teaching to the test" and overloading students with assessments, such as benchmark, diagnostic, and assessments created just to practice taking the standardized assessments (Groen, 2012, p. 14). With all this time committed to preparing for the test operationally, in addition to the focus on teaching tested content like math and language arts, less attention can be given to the "educational, social, and political implications of our role as educators" (Boutte et al., 2010, p. 15) necessary to provide culturally relevant learning opportunities for students.

In the continuum of beliefs about school reform, New DEEL leaders are committed to being agents of social justice, and as such, understand the needs of diverse learners and support teaching so that all can achieve (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009). They also believe that their inner responsibility stretches beyond the commitment to stakeholders of one organization. Their inner drive is grounded in a social responsibility and transcends the organization because "it considers the community and social development around the world" (Gross, 2020, p. 91).

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## Field of Concomitance

Thinking about the ideas that also belong to or concern different types of discourses (Foucault, 1972), social responsibility and cultural competency are not unique to the New DEEL leader nor K-12 education. These values also have a deep root in politics and public administration. Giving attention to the "racial hierarchy that impacts modern issues of wealth and power" is a necessary part of public administration

(Carrizales, 2019, p. 30). Beyond politics and public administration, they are an established feature of social work education and practice, a main objective of engineering programs, and connected to business practices and corporate policies (Brodeur, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Vincent, 2012). As educational leadership continues to evolve, contemporary concepts such as anti-blackness, intersectional oppression, cross-cultural concepts of motivation from the fields of public policy, sociology, and psychology continue to imprint on educational leaders, as they continue to grapple within the continuum between accountability and responsibility, pressure to comply as a leader on the rise and a deeply held commitment to share responsibility for and with the humanity widely experienced by all.

### Vision Statement 2

New DEEL Leader	Conventional Leader
Leads from an expansive community-building perspective. A democratic actor who understands when and how to shield the school from turbulence and when and how to use turbulence to facilitate change	Bound by the system and the physical building. A small part of a monolithic, more corporate structure.

Inherently, there is a dynamic tension between the New DEEL Vision for educational leaders and the corresponding behavior of conventional school leaders. The conventional leader is often “bound by the system and the physical building, seeing themselves as a “small part of a monolithic, more corporate structure” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 7). On the other hand, the New DEEL leader “leads from an expansive community building perspective.” Connected to a concern for the community, the New DEEL leader “is a democratic actor who understands when and how to shield a school from turbulence and perhaps most importantly, when and how to use turbulence to facilitate change” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 7). With attention to a mutually beneficial and democratic vision for the future, the New DEEL leader has the ability to work with emerging turbulence and create more opportunities for discussion, innovation in terms of policy and programming, and representation from those who have typically been silenced (Gross, 2020).

One compelling and ongoing illustration of this vision of leadership can be seen in the recent development of the school closures during the COVID 19 pandemic. As turbulence levels hit an all-time high in school districts throughout the United States, the landscape of education continued to change, sometimes on a daily basis. Among other needs, school leaders were required to expediently assess and resolve a myriad of unprecedented operational and instructional concerns. It is precisely this ability to gauge evolving needs that drives adaptation and new democratic and ethical possibilities for the organization. Shapiro, Gross, and Shapiro (2008) described how the process of gauging the level of turbulence in any given situation supports the organization moving forward in increasingly just ways:

Under turbulence theory, individuals have an enhanced ability to calibrate the severity of the issue at hand. It further aids them in their attempt to contextualize a given problem as they construct strategies to move to less troubled waters. (p. 18)

A tool for understanding and transforming problematic conditions, gauging turbulence and understanding the complex balance of driving forces within the context and culture are invaluable strategies for the democracy minded school leader.

As has been noted, schools are facing an unprecedented crisis requiring transformational leadership. On its surface, the central challenge has been for leaders to pivot from conventional notions of how to educate young people who cannot go to physical schools because of the pandemic. However, the community minded, NEW DEEL leader goes beyond reflective thinking, advancing toward a more reflexive process to grapple with the “thinking about the thinking” (English, 2015, p. 40) that undergirds complex decision-making during turbulent times. Thus, a New DEEL leader must be able to think through the turbulence, working with stakeholders in democratic ways, in order to make certain that learning takes place in the most equitable way possible, sometimes using the turbulence to innovate and make more democratic existing processes.

By the same token, a New DEEL leader must think well beyond the walls and constraints of the building and consider all possibilities. As an illustration, for many school systems prior to the emergence of COVID-19, online learning existed at the periphery of services offered for students. While some school districts had previously and successfully implemented cyber course options for their secondary students, other school districts had constrained online learning to the occasional infusion within the conventional, face to face curriculum or as ancillary course options designed to recover credit or enrich learning, often limited to specific students in need of these options at the secondary level.

In an instant, however, online and hybrid learning has become more than an important tool in this new educational world; it has surprisingly become the very foundation of learning, albeit newly established and perhaps temporal in its dominance. Indeed, in the age of COVID-19, for many school systems, online learning has become the primary platform for learning for all students, PK – 12.

Predictably, heightened turbulence around evolving guidance from an array of community agencies and stakeholders has also become the new normal. A New DEEL leader, though, relies on a community building perspective, and thus, is better prepared than a traditional, individualistic leader to think well beyond even the local community to make certain that his or her students learn not only the required curriculum but are supported with the tools, both emotionally and logistically, during this time and beyond.

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## Field of Memory

When applying Foucault’s field of memory (1972) to educational leadership, the reasonable premise involves the traditional school leader as the figure responsible for carrying out the wishes of the state or district. These leaders were bound by rules from the past, spending time enforcing the dictates of others. This principle often entailed enforcing state testing or abiding by mandates that lacked flexibility from the federal government. This perspective limits educational leaders to be essentially little more than middlemen who are bound by rigid rules, trapped within the confines of the building, making decisions in the vacuum of the building itself. These leaders

may lack the flexibility to respond to unprecedented changes in a new era. These leaders may have problems dealing with students who are diverse and who require new forms of pedagogy. They may not understand the needs of diverse communities.

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## Field of Presence

Today's leaders must intimately know the citizens beyond the four walls of their school buildings in order to effectively serve the different communities of which they are a part of, and who comprise the school community. Thus, the impact of the coronavirus highlights how dysfunctional conventional ideas of leadership can be in this new landscape. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, most American schools were forced to close their doors and move to an online format. This required that leaders act swiftly and dynamically, responding to the needs of their individual community at an unprecedented pace. Rather than narrowly setting their sights on compliance, these leaders needed to tailor the dictates of the state and district to their communities' unique needs. Factors like size of the district, income level, existing technological resources, and level of tech literacy were among the factors that laid the foundation for early operational, strategic, and instructional decision-making. Understanding the unique barriers that students and families face in terms of access to Wi-Fi, adequate devices, and proficiency with online learning systems had the potential to make the difference between the children in their schools receiving an education or falling by the wayside.

Responding to the heightened turbulence that COVID-19 closures have specifically had on low income, racially and ethnically diverse, and classified students, school leaders, and policy makers have begun to respond. With equitable access to high school graduation in mind, multiple states waived their graduation assessment requirements for Class of 2020 senior students (Ed Week, 2020), with discussion in progress on a similar waiving or adapting of requirements for the Class of 2021, as well. Without specific, supplemental instruction on portfolio or substitute assessment, and other similar supports, for instance, the turbulence caused to vulnerable students and families pursuing high school graduation in those final months would have been severe to extreme, as described by the turbulence gauge (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Thus, on the local level, school and district leaders have responded with adapting existing policies such as waiving their end of year or end of course test and credit requirements (Ed Week, 2020), and scrutinizing and reducing the use of grade retention as a practice, particularly for students whose performance diminished primarily during the time when schools were closed (Schwartz, 2020).

As with anything else, a continuum exists for the presence of an ethical and democratic emphasis in school leadership responses. By using the turbulence to create new possibilities for vulnerable students, some school systems have begun to innovate existing systems of intervention for students and families. One widespread area that school leaders have used the force of turbulence to improve upon is that of credit recovery which, at its best, can counter the practices of retention, course

repetition, and dropout and pushout responses (Franco & Patel, 2011; Heppen et al., 2017).

In addition to the heightened needs of students and families, teachers, too, are also experiencing turbulence. Thus, for school leaders, responding to the emerging needs of the teachers has also become critical. Certainly, there is a widespread, timely need to provide expedient professional development and technological support to help prepare those educators with inadequate or outdated technical skills. Additionally, teachers require further pedagogical support to create new content, innovate processes, and successfully deliver it through unfamiliar, online or hybrid formats. While recent work has begun to explore best practices for online learning and teaching (Bowser, Davis, Singleton, & Small, 2017; Keengwe & Schnellert, 2012; Yang, 2017), more attention to this is needed, especially for the educators thrown for a loop, during times of heightened turbulence.

In the final analysis, this unique situation requires leaders to act wisely under turbulent conditions and to envision the expansive needs of the community rather than constrain one's leadership actions to a small piece of the bigger picture. Committed to finding viable benefits and opportunities for flexibility, the New DEEL leader aims to work with the flow of a given situation and come through periods of turbulence with improved and more just practices.

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## Field of Concomitance

Interestingly, the COVID 19 pandemic has necessitated school leaders to concern themselves with the discourse of different domains including the health science and public health policy, illustrating the utility of the field of concomitance (Foucault, 1972). Now more than ever, school leaders must endeavor to be community advocates who understand evidence-based results. They need to have some knowledge of and respect for science to educate their students and their parents regarding the coronavirus and its after-effects.

New DEEL leaders will continue to face severe levels of turbulence as they wrestle with the fallout from COVID-19. But a skilled leader will use the turbulence to advocate for needed resources for their schools. They will know which students need crisis counselors, as children in the hardest-hit areas wrestle with trauma. They will be aware of which children require remedial help as they catch up on work that they could not complete due to lack of resources. Knowing the community and being able to respond beyond the confines of a building will play a huge part in the educational recovery that will have to occur in school systems across the world. It will take many years to recover not just educationally but emotionally from the impact of COVID-19 on schools, communities, families, and students. Leaders will be responsible not just to the community within the building but toward a more expansive community beyond the school doors. By knowing their population and advocating for the unique needs of diverse communities, it is believed that responsive New DEEL leaders will be able to negotiate the changing landscape of education in these turbulent times.

### Vision Statement 3

New DEEL Leader	Conventional Leader
Integrates the concepts of democracy, social justice, and school reform through scholarship, dialogue, and action.	Separates democracy and social justice from guiding vision and accepts school improvement (a subset of school reform) as the dominant perspective.

Throughout educational leadership circles, social justice and democracy have been key concepts emphasized in the scholarship and dialogue associated with the field, and the concept of school reform goes back even further. Taught in leadership programs, integrated into the leadership standards, highlighted within district and school mission statements, social justice and school reform purports to be at the center of the beliefs, decisions, and actions of educational leaders. Furthermore, as Gross and Shapiro (2015) suggest, educational reform has had an array of theoretical and philosophical influences and has evolved into a narrowed emphasis of accountability (e.g., limited curriculum; high stakes tests and policies) and what is stressed by market forces. Left out of the contemporary definition of school reform, often, are the concepts of democracy and a shared commitment to equity, one of the five New DEEL visions for a more inclusive and progressive brand of educational reform.

Not surprisingly, in practice, leaders often struggle between what is optimal for reform and acting upon what is deliverable, resulting in the phenomenon of school leaders modifying reform efforts, as opposed to reform efforts transforming schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1996). The reasons for this are complex. Too often, the more difficult notion of leadership that brings about social justice is chiseled down to reflect a school improvement perspective over a broader concept of school reform: the democratic, ethical educational leadership perspective (Gross & Shapiro, 2015). While conventional leaders advance a mechanistic vision that narrowly ties school reform to singular accountability measures or initiatives, a democratic educational leader sees a bigger, more complex picture – that school reform cannot be annexed from a democratic perspective.

To understand this continuous, iterative tension between conventional leadership and democratic educational leadership, consider one current focus of school reform, the improvement of chronic absenteeism rates. As of 2020, 36 states and the District of Columbia have approved Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) plans with school level chronic absenteeism as an indicator for school quality, and leader effectiveness. Research has supported its utility as a predictor of pivotal educational and quality of life outcomes (Gottfried, 2009; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Like many other accountability measures, though, it has the potential to become the single focus for improvement-minded school leaders, overwhelm other reform efforts, and at worst, be used to manipulate educational outcomes for vulnerable students. Indeed, student attendance, deceptively simple to measure in practice, has utility to operate both as an accountability measure for school leaders and a “backstage” lever to buffer school leaders and educators from the most difficult to educate students (Tropea, 1987).

To further investigate the ways conventional and New DEEL leaders respond to accountability pressure related to chronic absenteeism, it is important, as Creswell (2013) noted, to set knowledge in the conditions of the world today, deconstructing this knowledge in terms of the different discourses and universals that hold true regardless of social conditions. Foucault's framework organizes this knowledge and helps us understand it in terms of the coexistence of the field of statements.

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## Field of Memory

A ubiquitous measure, attendance collection as a practice dates back to the very first public schools of the 1800s, but became intertwined with another early accountability measure, the city-wide test examination (Tyack, 1974). As early as the 1870s, cities across the country began to publish test results for the public's review – striking examples of the early testing programs as tools to hold schools and teachers accountable. At the same time, these early state tests garnered almost immediate criticism and a variety of subsequent responses from actors operating in the school system's organizational environment including ceasing the publication of test scores (e.g., Thomas Crawford, Portland) and publicly decrying the comparison of school systems and teachers based on test scores (e.g., Emerson E. White, Cincinnati). While these responses may have represented some concern for the way teachers and students alike were represented and impacted by negative public perceptions, other leadership responses went even further to buffer school systems from accountability pressure. One example of this manipulation of student attendance involved school leaders coaxing low performing students – often poor, diverse students forced to school by public officials, to discontinue attendance to school.

The problem of educating students who teachers and leaders of the time referred to as “incorrigible” (Tyack, 1974, p. 70) and “defective” (Tropea, 1987, p. 11) was complex, as can be seen in the cases of large urban school districts of the late 1800s. In the 1890s, important legislation such as child labor and compulsory education laws began to influence how school leaders and their practices were governed. While school leaders could easily defy these compulsory attendance laws by continuing to expel the difficult to educate and vulnerable as young as 11, some of the forces that would change the continuity of school leadership practices. Specifically, these laws “rearranged, reduced, effaced” the continuity (Foucault, 1972, p. 9) of events that led to thinking about students attending school in a different way.

Yet, it would take many decades for leadership practices around exclusion to improve. Tropea (1987, 2005) documents that with the advent of compulsory education laws, school leaders introduced the special class, often ungraded, for the management of low performing, behaviorally challenging schools, and with this, a period of significant segregation and lowered standards. Hence, the identification of special children in a special class allowed both compliance with mandates about compulsory attendance that were very much a part of the field of presence at that



point and met the needs of the teachers who were challenged by these students. The practice of the ungraded special class enrolled with difficult, special students that school leaders were forced to educate illustrates what Foucault (1972) termed as the document: existing in memory but containing relevance and holding relation to other important events.

The unfettered leadership practice of segregating students in their special, basic classes began to be reformed through important court decision such as *Hobson v Hansen* (Tropea, 2005). As a result of this rupture, school leaders needed a new strategy. Thus, by the 1960s, the use of the disciplinary suspension, a younger descendent of the practice used during the common school days (Tyack, 1974), re-emerged and was applied for lengthy periods of time in the cases of difficult students and implemented at the school, not district, level in many cases (Tropea, 1995). Additionally, leaders also dispensed suspensions to problematic students to avoid the accountability associated with the testing of these students perceived to be difficult to educate (Tropea, 1987). This history of gaming the accountability associated with attendance continued to evolve, as countermeasures developed.

Indeed, using suspensions to control the impact of low achieving students continued as a practice into the 1970s. All things considered, there could be no greater demonstration of nondemocratic, leadership practice than that of excluding students from their education to buffer the system from their performance; those families and students had no representation in those decisions. Thus, accountability measures connected to emerging compulsory schooling laws provided a necessary check to exclusionary practices. This increased accountability, however, did not effectively reform the rationale that fueled the manipulative leadership practices in the first place, as Tropea argued (2005), but it did change the strategic way school leaders approached vulnerable students.

Fortunately, the idea of sending low performing students home now represents a practice that contributed to the reproduction of inequities in the school system. Illustrating Foucault's notion of discontinuity (1972), this widespread practice of excluding students from education to buffer accountability-minded school leaders and educators was cut off from the original intention and brought into a new time. Subsequently, a new tension was born, one between the accountability associated with improving absenteeism rates, and one concerned with the larger question of democratic, equitable access to a high-quality education for all students, even the difficult to educate.

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## Field of Presence

In recent years, the scope of accountability systems has broadened under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. As such, chronic absenteeism has emerged as a popular metric chosen by many states as a newer component of their statewide accountability system (Rafa, 2017; Bauer, et al. 2018), undergirded by the widespread assumption by school leaders and policymakers that student attendance is integral to key educational outcomes (Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried & Kirksey, 2017; Gottfried, 2010; Mac Iver & Messel, 2013; Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007;



Henry, et al. 2012). As a result, conventional school leaders have taken to encouraging, pressuring, and even punishing students and families to achieve acceptable levels of school attendance, in spite of the barriers that exist for students living in poverty. Leaving behind the old practices of exclusion through unfettered expulsion and suspension in the field of memory, school leaders have adapted and developed new practices that reflect the continuity of the well-established need to manage difficult students.

Recent scholarship demonstrates the use of these kinds of leadership practices in the field of presence. Mireles-Rios, Rios, and Reyes (2020) explored the use of punitive truancy responses to students experiencing a myriad of challenges including health, transportation and school avoidance issues, finding that this type of policy supported a pushing out effect on vulnerable students at risk for dropping out. Similarly, in a mixed methods study exploring the educational experiences of Latino youth who chose to leave high school before attaining a diploma, Lukes (2014) found that both local and federal policy constrained school leaders attempting to serve students with limited English proficiency and chronic absenteeism. Not surprisingly, when the path became checkered with barriers and hurdles too high to surmount, students chose high school equivalency programs to advance their aspirations for jobs, training, or higher education (Lukes, 2014). These findings suggest that leadership practices developed in response to absenteeism policies still manage to use attendance as a lever to manage and steer difficult and vulnerable students.

As has been noted, the importance of sound student attendance has been established in the field of presence, supported by methods explicated by Foucault (1972), such as logical validation, repetition, and acceptance justified by authority. However, as has been noted, leadership practices can vary significantly when considering that continuum between conventional and democratic, ethical responses. In the final analysis, intended as a school quality measure, the use of student attendance in policy and practice has the real potential to be designed and implemented narrowly, punitively, and subsequently, can be used to replicate, rather than eradicate, inequity.

Interestingly, both the set of knowledge developed by conventional school leaders with their flawed, narrowed visions of school reform and the knowledge associated with their progressive counterparts, endeavoring to lead with broad visions of democratic, equitable leadership, have a place in the field of presence. School reform is a well-established goal in the field, and democratic leadership, served by practices such as engaging families in culturally responsive ways and endeavoring to represent every group's traditions and perspectives in leadership decisions, is a necessary proposition. Yet, so are narrow school improvement strategies such as punishing chronically tardy and absent students with consequences that take them away from critical instruction.

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## Field of Concomitance

Lastly, applying the field of concomitance to reform efforts focused on absenteeism, the use of data systems for purposes of improving educational outcomes originates from other disciplines. Fueled by advances in computing power and development of

data analysis techniques for large amounts of data, school systems across the country now utilize longitudinal data systems like New Jersey's Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART). Instituted in response to the need for larger quantities and types of data generated by the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and later, ESSA, NJ SMART collects demographic and student achievement information on students across the state. Data submitted by districts through NJ Smart generates the District Report which includes information about an array of accountability measures such as chronic absenteeism and 4-year graduation rates, complete with graphical representations of these measures. While openly accessible to important stakeholders such as families, community members, and students, this kind of reporting narrowly focuses on the aforementioned measures, and in the case of New Jersey, simplistically places the district in the red, yellow, or green of a gauge, depending on the reported percentages. Do such representations hurt or help the efficacy of parents, students, teachers, and leaders? Alternately, do they advance a sense of shared responsibility amongst our educational communities or do they narrow and crystallize the gazes of decision makers? Too often, the reporting outputs of longitudinal data systems serve as both a reflection and an endorsement of conventional notions of school reform and can encourage leadership actions that favor a limited vision of school reform.

A second reform effort that reflects the field of concomitance is the applicability of various technological teaching and learning applications, which on their face, provide at-risk students more options for educational attainment. Two examples of this type of innovation are learning management systems and online tutorial platforms, which range in both cost and cost effectiveness to school systems and families. At their best, these systems allow vulnerable, chronically absent, highly mobile students to achieve higher levels of engagement with their studies, and perhaps more importantly, connection with caring, concerned leaders (i.e., teachers, counselors, and administrators). At their worst, these innovations reflect existing achievement and opportunity gaps and subject vulnerable student groups to further inequity in achievement and resource allocation. In recent research exploring the disparities in remote learning since schools closed rapidly due to COVID-19, an Ed Week study found that the percentage of educators in the lowest income schools who reported that they were engaging in instruction was significantly lower than their higher income counterparts. Likewise, students from low-income schools were truant, or essentially unreachable, throughout distance learning in far greater numbers than their counterparts in higher income schools (Ed Week, 2020). While peer-reviewed research on the impact of COVID-19 on learning outcomes is still a ways off, initial reports may sound a critical alarm for school leaders and policy makers regarding access and equity to learning (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020; Ed Week, 2020).

While online learning is achievable due to knowledge existing from other technological disciplines and perpetuated through the field of concomitance, in the final analysis, it is where the leader falls on the continuum of ethical and equitable practice that ultimately determines the degree to which these innovations can help to level the playing field for students at risk of disengagement, absenteeism, and drop out.

### Vision Statement 4

New DEEL Leader	Conventional Leader
Operates from a deep understanding of ethical decision-making in the context of a dynamic, inclusive, democratic vision.	Operates largely from perspective of the ethic of justice wherein obedience to authority and current regulations is largely unquestioned despite one's own misgivings.

The fourth vision statement of the New DEEL vision for educational leadership indicates that leaders should operate from a deep understanding of ethical decision-making, using a multidimensional paradigm approach that is inclusive and diverse in nature (Gross, 2006; Gross & Shapiro, 2016). This exists in stark contrast to the behavior of conventional school leaders who rely predominantly on the ethic of justice when making complex decisions. Conventional leaders are concerned with obeying authority and often will not question current regulations, despite their own misgivings (Gross, 2006). The New DEEL leader understands the importance of the ethic of justice in decision-making because it informs leaders on what laws, rules, and rights have to say about a given situation. However, New DEEL leaders also recognize an approach to decision-making that includes other ethics is needed, as well. Thus, in addition to the ethic of justice, New DEEL leaders utilize the ethics of critique, care, and profession when making decisions.

Certainly, there are times in which educational leaders can be pulled away from using a multidimensional approach to ethical decision-making and lean more toward making decisions based solely on the ethic of justice. For example, when leaders work in an organization with a controlling culture rather than a supporting one, they are more likely to defer to their superiors on decision-making (Langlois & Lapointe, 2014). In such a case, leaders subscribe to the policies of the organization rather than utilizing their own judgment when making a decision. Using Foucault's concepts of presence, memory, and concomitance (1972) help to illustrate how the behavior and practices of conventional school leaders circulate and evolve.

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### Field of Memory

Foucault's concept of the field of memory encourages people to consider what about a particular practice is no longer viable. Most commonly, school leaders draw from an overreliance on the ethic of justice. Not surprisingly, leadership practices that only include the ethic of justice in decision-making are limited. Based on two different schools of thought; one grounded in anthropology and the other in epistemology (Starratt, 1994), the ethic of justice is at the foundation of thinking for many conventional school leaders. Starratt's first concept of justice (1994) is based on the works of Hobbes, Rawls, and Kohlberg and places the individual as the central figure, separate from social relationships. Individuals make decisions based on their own self-interests and, through human reasoning, determine how much freedom they are willing to give up for the betterment of society or social justice. Conversely,

Staratt's second concept of justice (1994) puts community at the forefront of just governance and is based on the works of Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and Dewey. Through participation in community and relationships, individuals learn how to think about their behaviors and the impact they have on the society in which they live (Starratt, 1994).

Building on these two different schools of thought, the ethic of justice attempts to use a similar standard that is applied to all situations in the same manner (Starratt, 1994). In doing this, leaders neglect important considerations for each decision they make. For example, the ethic of justice does not take into account if the rules, laws, and policies in place benefit certain groups of people over others. Correspondingly, leaders who work solely from an ethic of justice may not consider how the outcomes of their decisions will impact others. Specifically, the ethic of justice is not focused primarily on what is in the best interest of the student (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). All of these are necessary considerations that the ethic of justice alone does not address.

Alternately, the ethic of critique, as described by Starratt (1994), is based on critical theory and the idea that issues in society can be problematic as various groups and individuals have competing wants and needs. Foster (1986) explains that critical theory "critiques and examines" the ways in which our lives are organized and "probes foundational assumptions that are normally taken for granted and seen as natural outgrowths of historical process" (p. 72). While some studies (Arar, Haj, Abramovitz, & Oplatka, 2016; Eyal, Berkovich, & Schwartz, 2011) suggest that aspiring educational leaders rely heavily on the ethic of critique when making ethical decisions, Langlois and Lapointe (2007) argue differently. Langlois and Lapointe (2007) assert that new principals used one ethic only (i.e., justice) in ethical decision-making, whereas more seasoned leaders approached dilemmas using a "consolidated ethical framework which includes the ethic of care and the ethic of critique" (p. 247), along with an "emerging professional ethic" (p. 247). This suggests that there is a link between educational leaders' years of experience and their use of a more comprehensive ethical framework for decision-making (Langlois & Lapointe, 2007).

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## Field of Presence

As Foucault (1972) asserted, existing concepts change in emphasis or structure and new concepts are introduced. This can be seen in the way the "general arrangement" of ethics expanded to encompass new forms (Foucault, 1972, p. 63). Foucault's concept of the field of presence asks individuals to consider what about a particular practice is truthful and necessary. When educational leaders use a multidimensional approach to ethical decision-making, they are engaging in exemplary practices substantiated in reasoning (Starratt, 1994). Thus, educational leaders should strive to move themselves and their school communities toward operating from a position that considers the ethics of justice, critique, care, and profession when making decisions. The fourth vision statement in the New DEEL vision for educational leaders urges leaders and their school communities to consider more than just what

laws, rules, and policies have to say about a particular situation when making decisions. Educational leaders expand the ways in which they think about ethical dilemmas by incorporating the ethics of critique, care, and profession into their decision-making, as well.

The ethics of critique, care, and profession ask leaders to consider important questions in their decision-making process. For example, the ethic of critique requires leaders to question current laws and policies to ask such questions as: Who created the laws and policies and who do the laws and policies benefit (Gross & Shapiro, 2016)? The ethic of care, on the other hand, calls for leaders to ask themselves: Who benefits and who is harmed by the outcomes of their decisions? Finally, the ethic of the profession requires leaders to consider the professional ethics from different organizations, as well as their own personal and professional codes of ethics, when making decisions. Taking into account the multiple codes of this ethic, it is not surprising that, at times, educational leaders' codes may clash. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) state that leaders' codes can clash in the following four ways:

clashes between an individual's personal and professional codes of ethics; clashes within professional codes; clashes of professional codes among educational leaders; clashes between a leader's personal and professional code of ethics and custom and practices set forth by the community (either the professional community, the school community, or the community where the educational leader works). (pp. 24–25)

To address clashes that arise, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) urge leaders to stay focused on their central mission: to make decisions in the best interests of the student, while still considering the community as a whole. Approaching ethical decision-making in this way proves to be both inclusive and democratic in nature.

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## Field of Concomitance

Foucault's concept of the field of concomitance entails considering the ideas and theories that have come from other disciplines and have been transferred to the field of educational leadership. Philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle first proposed theories related to the ethical behaviors of human beings. These theories set the stage for engagement in ethical decision-making in a number of different disciplines. In the field of psychology, for example, Rest (1994), drawing from the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, proposed a model for ethical decision-making that includes four processes: moral awareness, moral judgment, moral intention, and moral action. Likewise, ethical decision-making models can also be found in both the business world (De George, 2010) and the medical profession (Self & Baldwin, 1994). De George (2010) traced ethics in business back to Plato's discussions on justice, and notes the rise of a business ethics movement in the 1970s that was modeled after a medical ethics model adopted a decade prior.

As elements of ethics originating in these other fields are transferred to educational leadership, one can see how the concept grows and changes. The approach to ethical decision-making offered by the New DEEL vision for educational leadership illustrates the practical ways leaders can approach decision-making in their organizations. Leaders can now work from a multidimensional paradigm composed of four ethics to consider when faced with ethical dilemmas. For example, the multidimensional approach to ethical decision-making guided one principal at an adult secondary education setting in responding to and supporting his school community after the death of a student (Yelman, 2019). Considering each ethic helped guide the principal on what steps to take after the student's death, such as when and how to inform members of the school community, how much personal information to share about the deceased, and how to develop a protocol that could guide leaders in the future through similar circumstances (Yelman, 2019). Finally, the New DEEL does not suggest that this form of decision-making is specific to educational leaders only. Instead, the New DEEL urges educational leaders to encourage and support the various members of their school communities to think and act in this ethical way, as well, endeavoring to include and connect everyone to the shared vision.

### Vision Statement 5

New DEEL Leader	Conventional Leader
Sees one's career as a calling and has a well-developed sense of mission toward democratic social improvement that cuts across political, national, class, gender, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries.	Sees one's career in terms of specific job titles with an aim to move to ever greater positions of perceived power within the current system's structure.

What does it mean to have found one's calling? Some believe that phrase has become, perhaps most recently, a jargon-y cliché used to persuade employees to work increasingly harder for ever stagnating wages. But is that always the case, or can seeing one's career as a calling positively influence the way in which one practices his or her craft? In school systems, this tension can be seen in the way school leaders envision their mission. On the one hand are the traditional school leaders who do not view their career as a calling. Pulled by political and economic forces toward positions of perceived prestige for the sake of increased pay and elaborate titles, these leaders often operate without a greater sense of purpose, seeing the position as their purpose, and nothing more. On the other end of the spectrum are the New DEEL leaders who see their role as transcending the traditional role of school leadership. Driven by a commitment grounded in democratic social improvement for all people, the New DEEL leader uniquely aspires to a mission that is larger than just the self.

Convincingly explored by Mattingly (1975), the lengthy tradition of career as a calling has been connected to supernatural, spiritual, or religious beliefs. A more recent body of literature indicates that those who see career as a calling operate differently than those who see career as a sliding scale of pay and responsibility (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010). Additional literature suggests that those who see their profession as answering a calling are likelier to feel satisfied and fulfilled

(Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman, 2009; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997).

Traditionally, the position of school principal has been considered prestigious and desirable to those looking to use it as a stepping stone on the way toward more executive power at the district or state levels. Meanwhile, these school leaders are regularly asked to take on new responsibilities in increasingly challenging circumstances. This ends in roughly half of new principals leaving their schools by the third year, despite the allure of the title and the perceived power of the office (School Leaders Network, 2014). This grim statistic is made even more tragic by the fact that principal turnover continues to disproportionately affect students of color, students with disabilities and low-income, urban schools (Béteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015). This unsustainable practice continues to drive a wedge between our most accomplished schools and those most in need of support.

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## Field of Memory

The power of school leadership lying in a single office with a sole stakeholder is an idea that has entered the field of memory. A series of complex pressures have made it nearly impossible for any school leader to sustain progress while centralizing power (Spillane & Anderson, 2014; Spillane & Lee, 2014). As such, the idea of the school leader being siloed within an office and making decisions from on high no longer inhabits the standards that define the profession. Such conventional ideas of school leadership have also been rendered obsolete by changes in technology, the economy, and family structure. Increasingly, the idea that a principal might serve a particular type of student or a particular group of people has largely disappeared aside from select private or religious schools. While this notion of leadership is no longer discussed or accepted in the field, its association with the field of leadership can still be identified and thus, according to Foucault (1972), comprises the field of memory.

The idea of school principal as chief and harsh disciplinarian has also entered the field of memory. In 1952, Leland March so eloquently wrote “It used to be thought that the sterner and harsher the principal was, the better disciplinarian he was. Fortunately, that point of view is changing” (p. 49). A more comprehensive understanding of the position, and its relationship to the New DEEL vision statement is manifested by the school principal’s focus on school culture and sustained transformation in the lives of students. Several studies have established that teacher retention is correlated with working conditions and teacher perceptions of their school principals (Burkhauser, 2016; Ladd, 2011). It is, therefore, unsurprising that school principals are becoming increasingly focused on equity and community connectedness at the expense of their role as chief disciplinarian. The National Association of Elementary School Principals established that the role of the principal has been changing for some time, suggesting that “Traditional leaders may have considered their jobs to be solely the managers of schools.” They contrast this sharply with what they see as the new role of the principal: “supporting social, physical and emotional



needs of children,” in a way that “the vision, courage and skill to lead and advocate for effective learning communities. . .” (2012, p. 2).

Applying to principal and other school leadership roles, the New DEEL vision statement for school leadership challenges educators to increase their awareness to the interconnectedness of all of us, with a deeply felt regard for all groups of people, guided by the belief in “democratic social improvement for everyone” (Gross & Shapiro, 2016, p. 122). Yet, this mission has still not fully been realized. As indicated by the turnover rates of novice principals, something about the current system of external pressures toward conformity and accountability is, largely, not working to support this aspiration for lifelong leadership that transcends racial, socioeconomic, national, ethnic or religious boundaries.

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## Field of Presence

Understanding how school leaders can develop a mission toward democratic self-improvement and helping them see career as a calling that is disconnected from positional power is critical in the current context. School leaders often face anger, unhappiness, and disengagement from their work when their beliefs or character do not coincide with the realities of the career (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017a). Significant research on turnover among novice leaders suggests that their ability to cope with some of the first experiences in schools is directly related to their ability to persevere in their positions in meaningful ways (Louis, 1980). If the research is to be believed, a new type of leadership preparation needs to enter the field of presence. This type of preparation *must* focus on the development of a meaningful mission in a way that underscores career as a calling.

In contrast, this New DEEL vision statement goes beyond understanding a personal philosophy of education and touches on a more profound truth that is ingrained in the heart of many educators: the work goes beyond the self. In order to sustain school leadership through trying circumstances and a myriad of reform movements, the career has to be a calling.

Career as a calling has been explored more extensively by Duffy and Sedlacek (2010) who assert that career as a calling is not found in any major texts on career choice. Their work found that nearly 70% of surveyed college students either saw their future career as a calling or were seeking a career that called to them. This relatively new entry to the literature highlights the value of the 5th New DEEL vision statement. Duffy and Sedlacek also found that students pursuing “advanced professional degrees” were further predisposed to seeing their career as a calling. Considering that the principalship, specialized school leadership positions and an increasing number of teaching positions require advanced degrees, there is certainly room for discussion on the relationship between continuing education, career calling, and perceived overqualification.

Lobene and Meade (2013) discuss the relationship between teachers’ perceived overqualification, their commitment to the school organization, and their orientation toward career calling. Their work found that those with higher levels of calling were more likely to stay in teaching positions even though they perceived themselves to be



overqualified, while those with low calling and a high sense of overqualification were more likely to leave or want to leave the position. This finding seems to suggest that it is the more complex, less definable, commitment to the work than a specific educational trajectory that seems to support the feelings of having calling in the educational field.

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## Field of Concomitance

Concepts from human resource management, economics, and the business sector have steadily crept into education and permeated the way that school leaders conceptualize their work. A prominent example is the focus on labor-market outcomes, resulting in the ubiquitous push for college and career readiness for all students. This push was largely initiated by *A Nation at Risk*, the 1983 report of the US National Commission on Excellence in Education, and further amplified by the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2004. Anyon and Greene (2007) have convincingly argued that this bill was a thinly veiled stand-in for a comprehensive jobs policy. Since then, the national focus has shifted from teaching and leading as callings for democratic social improvement to a push to improve the national economy (Anyon & Kiersten, 2007). Where does this push leave school leaders aspiring to tend to the care and welfare of others through the educational system?

Thomas Friedman (2014) proudly exclaimed that “average is officially over,” at the Society for Human Resource Management Annual Conference & Exposition. He argued that current economic systems are pushing routine workers out due to automation, and that the real *value* has to come from “your unique value contribution that justifies why you should be hired, why you should be promoted and why you should be advanced every year.” This rhetoric is indicative of the tension between conventional school leadership values, now represented by the tension experienced between the trademark values of a market-based economy and a New DEEL leader. On the one hand is the concept of a career as an ever-escalating set of titles and pay raises with the hope of preparing others for the same circumstances. On the other hand is the idea of career as a calling, marked by humility and a quieter understanding of power, focused on improving the lives of other people, regardless of their desire to participate in a predatory economic system.

The intrusion of nonprofit and for-profit organizations into the school space has raised significant concerns about the future of public education. School choice and voucher systems have dominated headlines and court dockets in recent years. One thing is for sure: K-12 and higher education are being increasingly driven by market forces rather than a progress toward improved teaching and learning.

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## Conclusion and Reflections

The five vision statements describe a more inclusive, less hierarchical profession with organic connections to potential allies and colleagues in the wider universe beyond the typical boundaries of organization and the narrow confines of machine

metaphor thought. The disharmony now existing between traditional forms of education and the deeper needs of young people is itself a central rupture. Each of the five vision statements lays a part of the foundation needed to reposition, redefine, and thereby reclaim education toward social justice, social responsibility, and a vigorous democratic society.

Vision Statement 1 encourages leaders at all levels to change their perspective and focus from relying on external rewards such as achievement measures and approval of others to an intrinsic motivation that is built on the foundation of their inner responsibility to stakeholders, the profession, and a global push for social justice and democracy. The pressures to move into the approach held by conventional leaders will continue and may even increase. When leaders ground themselves in their inner responsibility and surround themselves with others who approach leadership from a New DEEL lens, they will be able to move beyond the pressures and simple expectations of mere compliance.

Vision Statement 2 pushes educators to go beyond reflexive thinking. Those seeking to become authentic democratic actors must refuse to behave in a reactive, fear motivated fashion when confronting the inevitable turbulence that all educators at all levels and those they serve face as a simple fact of their work in communities. There is a new requirement to be flexible enough to respond to the dynamic challenges and opportunities of heightened turbulence by seeing turbulence itself as a critical source of energy rather than a threat. This requires a new set of skills and habits of mind.

Vision Statement 3 reveals important shifts that include leadership responses to early twentieth century calls for compulsory school attendance, and later, reform through high stakes testing and other similarly narrow, limiting conceptions of school quality. Likewise, there is a promising possibility that current conditions simultaneously disrupt the historic grip of this idea while giving way to its alternative. These include culturally responsive, democratic leadership practices such as two-way communication with students and parents. It also means increasing access to better quality of life outcomes for underrepresented students through stronger policies and programs such as schools as sanctuaries for immigrant origin students and school-based health centers.

Vision Statement 4 moves leaders beyond considering ethical dilemmas from the sole vantage point of what rules, laws, and policies have to say about a given situation. Instead, New DEEL leaders approach ethical decision-making using a comprehensive model that includes the ethics of justice, critique, care, and profession. The questions each of these ethics ask of us as leaders elevates our work by providing practical ways to address ethical dilemmas. Further, it engages the entire school community to think and act in this same manner.

Vision statement 5 alerts us to the fact that major shifts are coming in the way that schools determine student success and prioritize social-emotional health over college and career readiness. Yet, the recent global pandemic has demonstrated that the greatest disruptions will affect the school communities that already demonstrate the greatest need, with a shift to remote work pushing some students and teachers even further behind. This opens a very real possibility for the continued intrusion of big

business values into public education, focusing on the outsourcing of teaching work to for-profit entities that can provide remote instruction at a discounted rate. So, what will be dominant, the mission of the democratic ethical educational leader or the machine of the organization that too often traps and confines her/him to its rigid dimensions?

The New DEEL colleagues have used these vision statements to organize, inspire, and guide their work for the past 16 years. Times and challenges have changed. Their thinking and scholarship has evolved in each of these areas. Currently, the leadership of this group has moved to an emphasis of connecting the existing scholarship, course work, and conference presentations to concrete problems of practice in the field, particularly in the area of mentoring leaders at all levels in democratic ethical practices so that they in turn can mentor others.

In the macro sense, this project has been challenged first by the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis sweeping the world, thereby shutting off the group from field practitioners, at least for the time being. Just as critical, the May 2020 murder of George Floyd at the hands of police along with similar murders of other African American men and women has created a simultaneous challenge to all educators. This challenge may disrupt the business-as-usual mentality, pushing large elements of the system to recalibrate their priorities in a direction more in keeping with these vision statements and the decade and a half of scholarship, practice and community building that they represent.

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