Educational Administration
Quarterly

Transformative Leadership: Working for Equity in Diverse Contexts

The online version of this article can be found at:

Published by:

$SAGE

On behalf of:

uc ea

University Council for Educational Administration

Transformative Leadership: Working for Equity in Diverse Contexts

Carolyn M. Shields[1]

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article is twofold: to delineate a theory of transformative leadership, distinct from other theories (transformational or transactional leadership); and to assess the utility of the theory for guiding the practice of educational leaders who want to effect both educational and broader social change. **Approach and Methods:** This article is both conceptual and empirical. The delineation of transformative leadership theory is conceptual and draws on its historical and more recent theoretical roots. To investigate it empirically, the author identified two principals from a larger study and, using a backward mapping approach, attempted to determine, using Evers and Wu's (2006) abductive reasoning, whether transformative leadership might include "inference to the best explanation" (p. 518) for their practices. **Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis:** Using a set of predetermined criteria, the author selected two principals from a wider study of educators' pedagogical conceptions of social justice. The two were studied, using multiple interviews, confirmatory interviews with others, and observations in situ, to identify practices that might conform to categories of transformative leadership theory. **Findings and Implications:** Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy, critiques inequitable practices, and addresses both individual and public good. The author traced the practices of these principals to determine whether they

[1]University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA

Corresponding Author:
Carolyn M. Shields, Department of Educational Organization and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, 1310 S. Sixth Street, Champaign, IL 61820
Email: cshields@uiuc.edu

were consistent with these and other elements of transformative leadership. She then considered alternate explanations and inferred from the data the best fit for transformative leadership, thus supporting its relevance for leadership for equity, deep democracy, and social justice.

Keywords

transformative leadership, social justice, power, critique, promise, social context

Notions of promise, liberation, hope, empowerment, activism, risk, social justice, courage, or revolution do not automatically evoke images of educational leaders in charge of schools and systems, working within the dominant political and bureaucratic frameworks of the 21st century. Yet, all of these concepts are at the heart of transformative leadership—the theory to be explored here, first through a theoretical examination of the construct and then through an empirical study of two school leaders attempting to put these ideas into practice.

Transformative leadership (as opposed to either transactional or transformational leadership) takes seriously Freire's (1998) contention "that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it transformation cannot occur" (p. 37). Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others. Transformative leadership, therefore, inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded. Thus, it is my contention that transformative leadership and leadership for inclusive and socially just learning environments are inextricably related. In the past few years, there have been several conceptual studies addressing transformative leadership (e.g., Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Shields, 2009; Weiner, 2003). There have also been a number of empirical studies that make use of the term *transformative leadership* (see Glanz, 2007; Hoffman & Burrello, 2004; Kose, 2007; Marshall & Olivia, 2005; McLaughlin, 1989; Shields, 2008). At the same time, although these studies all use the term *transformative*, there is wide variation in its meaning.

Hence, the intent here is not only to further develop the theory of *transformative leadership* but to connect it directly to the work of school leaders, assessing its potential in practice to offer a more inclusive, equitable, and deeply democratic conception of education. Thus, the purpose of this article

is to first develop the concept of transformative leadership as a theory in its own right (distinct from either transactional or transformational leadership). A second purpose is to begin to examine the utility of transformative leadership theory in practice; thus, the article explores the practices of two school principals who have successfully "turned their schools around," making them more inclusive, socially just, and academically successful.

Data Sources and Methods

Methodologically, this article unites two somewhat disparate approaches. Always present is the question posed by Evers and Wu (2006):

> How is it possible to approach data in a theoretically sensitive way so that patterns are able to emerge unforced without the antecedent theory functioning either as a preconception that imposes an interpretation on the data or as a set of hypotheses that the data may confirm of [*sic*] disconfirm? (p. 517)

I take some solace in Evers and Wu's assertion that Popper (1963, cited in Evers & Wu, 2006) claimed that "the belief that we can start with pure observations alone, without anything in the nature of a theory, is absurd" (p. 516). At the same time, because I start with a theory of transformative leadership (Quantz et al., 1991; Shields, 2003a, 2003b, 2009; Weiner, 2003), I am cognizant of the need for caution with respect to "confirmation bias"—seeing "in the case only whatever is brought to it in the prior theory" (Evers & Wu, 2006, p. 522) or, as Littell (2008) describes it, "the tendency to emphasize evidence that supports a hypothesis and ignore evidence to the contrary" (p. 1300). To attempt to overcome this problem, I tried to ensure that I followed the advice of Evers and Wu (2006), "approaching data with good biases (those deriving from good theory) rather than with bad biases" (p. 517). I examined the claims of abductive theory and worked to ensure that the data were carefully embedded in a reasonable "inferential network" about socially just education, the presence of an uneven playing field, and the need for a more equitable and more inclusive approach to education. Evers and Wu cite a number of authors (including Josephson & Josephson, 1994; Lycan, 1988; and Walton, 2004) as they argue that in abductive reasoning, "the justification of a generalisation relies on the fact that it explains the observed empirical data and no other alternative hypothesis offers a better explanation of what has been observed" (Evers & Wu, 2006, p. 513); in other words, it uses "inference to the best explanation" (p. 528). As will be seen, it is my belief that this holds true for

the relationship between transformative leadership and the practices of the two principals discussed here.

My second approach was to draw on Elmore's (1979–1980) strategy of backward mapping, also used by Odden and Odden (1984) and Dimmock and Walker (2004). Elmore (1979–1980) argued the need to question the control of policy makers over "the organizational, political, and technological processes [that] affect implementation" (p. 603) and, hence, to implement a different process—one that begins with the need for a new policy or intervention, that identifies a "set of organizational operations that can be expected to affect that behavior," then that focuses on the "delivery mechanisms required for the effect to occur" (p. 612). This process, he claims, "focuses attention on reciprocity and discretion" at the closest point of contact. Thus, in their study of school leadership and student learning, Dimmock and Walker started with schools in which there had been a measureable increase in student learning and moved backward to leadership and conditions that promoted it—in other words, they began with the end in sight. Similarly, I did not set out specifically to find or study principals through the lens of transformative leadership; instead, from a larger, longitudinal study of the conceptions, practices, and challenges of educational leaders (identified through a reputational approach and who were self-declared "social justice educators"), I identified two leaders, whom I shall call Catherine Lake and Amy Hill.

I started with data from a larger, longitudinal project in which we interviewed a number of educators and school leaders who were self-professed social justice educators. Knowing that there was a wide variance in the ways in which these participants conceptualized social justice, I examined the data base for leaders whose schools had demonstrated considerable improvement based on the Illinois Interactive Report Card. From that pool of school leaders, I selected two principals whose increasingly diverse schools, each with a minimum of 25% minoritized and/or free and reduced price lunch students, had shown high levels of student achievement (based on statewide tests). Each principal had also introduced a number of changes to ensure not only that the school was "making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)" but that there was also wider and more equitable change in the school. Perhaps most important, each had demonstrated (during the interview process) a depth of understanding about leadership for social justice. Amy and Catherine were each interviewed several times over the course of a year; other educators who worked with them were also interviewed, and site visits were made to confirm (or disconfirm) the data from the interviews. Consistent with some accepted norms of qualitative research, the data were decontextualized and coded to identify themes, patterns, and practices possibly reflective of

transformative leadership as well as to identify any contradictory elements (Tesch, 1990). Data were subsequently recontextualized as identified themes were reexamined in light of seven major elements of transformative leadership found in the literature: a combination of both critique and promise; attempts to effect both deep and equitable changes; deconstruction and reconstruction of the knowledge frameworks that generate inequity; acknowledgment of power and privilege; emphasis on both individual achievement and the public good; a focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; and finally, evidence of moral courage and activism. Although these are not necessarily the only aspects of transformative leadership that might be examined, I believed that, if they were seen to be present in the reform efforts of each principal, together they would provide preliminary evidence of the possibility of actualizing the theory in ways that hold promise for the deep and meaningful transformation of schools.

Thus, although "being able to generalise reasonably from a single case is a complex and difficult matter" (Evers & Wu, 2006, p. 524), I believe, with them, that

> the task is abetted by three important factors. First, cases possess considerably more structure than is commonly supposed, being shaped by such external factors as culture, language, theory, practices of coordination and communication, and a network of constitutive and regulative rules. (p. 524)

All of these, they say, "can apply well beyond the case," thus forming a basis for some preliminary judgments (p. 524) about the relationship of transformative leadership and deep and meaningful school change.

Transformative Leadership: Early Iterations and Confusion

To counteract many previous ways of thinking about leadership in terms of traits, Burns (1978), in what is often considered a seminal study of leadership, identified categories of leadership based either on transactions or on a goal of transformation. These are well-known, although less explored are the ways in which the latter concept has led to both *transformational* leadership and *transformative* leadership. Here, I first clarify the distinction, with particular emphasis on the latter—transformative leadership—as holding the most promise and potential to meet both the academic and the social justice needs of complex, diverse, and beleaguered education systems. Figure 1

	Transactional Leadership	Transformational Leadership	Transformative Leadership
Starting Point	A desired agreement or item	Need for the organization to run smoothly and efficiently	Material realities & disparities outside the organization that impinge of the success of individuals, groups, & organization as a whole.
Foundation	An exchange	Meet the needs of complex & diverse systems	Critique & promise
Emphasis	Means	Organization	Deep & equitable change in social conditions
Processes	Immediate cooperation through mutual agreement and benefit	Understanding of organizational culture; setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program	Deconstruction and reconstruction of social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequity, acknowledgement of power, & privilege; dialectic between individual & social
Key values	Honesty, responsibility, fairness, and honoring commitments	Liberty, justice, equality	Liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, justice
Goal	Agreement; mutual goal advancement	Organizational change; effectiveness	Individual, organizational, & societal transformation
Power	Mostly ignored	Inspirational	Positional, hegemonic, tool for oppression as well as for action
Leader	Ensures smooth and efficient organizational operation through transactions	Looks for motive, develops common purpose, focuses on organizational goals	Lives with tension, & challenge; requires moral courage, activism
Related theories	Bureaucratic leadership, Scientific management	School effectiveness, School reform, School improvement, Instructional leadership	Critical theories (race, gender), Cultural and social reproduction, Leadership for social justice

Figure 1. Distinctions among three theories of leadership

demonstrates clearly the deep differences among the three theories (transactional, transformational, and transformative) that have, in various ways, dominated the field of educational leadership for the past 30 years. In sum, transactional leadership involves a reciprocal transaction; transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness; and transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice.

For Burns (1978), an amoral leader is an oxymoron. Thus, Burns argued, "naked, power wielding can be neither transactional nor transforming; only leadership can be" (p. 20). Here, we note how moral and ethical behavior are intrinsic components of leadership. Burns begins his treatise by calling for a consideration of how both power (composed of motive and resources) and power relationships are central to comprehending the "true nature of leadership" (pp. 11–12). Furthermore, when he states that "transcending leadership is leadership *engaged"* (p. 20, italics added), he is pointing the way for transformative leadership, which is inextricably engaged with the wider society.

Burns's (1978) transactional leadership is based on exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, subsidies for campaign contributions, overtime work for increased pay. Its dominant values relate to means—"honesty, responsibility, fairness, and honoring commitments—without which transactional leadership could not work" (p. 426). Transactional leadership, for Burns, focuses on the means of leading, whereas transforming leadership implies a focus on the ends.

Thus, both transformational and transformative leadership theories share some common roots. Transforming leadership, as conceived by Burns (1978), occurs when the leader "recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower, … looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p. 4). "Transformational leadership," he states (using the term to apply to the work of transforming leaders), "is more concerned with *end-values*, such as liberty, justice, equality" (p. 426)—all aspects of both transformational and transformative leadership theories today. The focus on the moral purposes or ends of leadership has led to both transformational and transformative concepts. It is patently obvious that both theories of leadership—transformational and transformative—have at their heart the notion of transforming or changing something. Moreover, because even the Random House dictionary lists, as adjectives related to the verb *transform* and the noun *transformation*, both the words *transformational* and *transformative*, it is little wonder that the two

terms have frequently been used synonymously and, without clarifying the distinctions, to describe educational leadership.

Although Burns (1978) most frequently used the term *transforming leadership*, he also used the words *transformation* and *transformational*; it is surprising that the term t*ransformative*, often associated with his work, is markedly absent. Nevertheless, the implications of his conception of transformation point directly to transformative leadership. For example, he stated that "revolution is a complete and pervasive transformation of an entire social system" (p. 202) and later emphasized the need for "*real change*—that is, a transformation to the marked degree in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives" (p. 414). Statements such as these clearly indicate that neither transactional nor transformational leadership adequately exemplifies his understanding of transforming leadership—leadership that explicitly attends to the moral and ethical issues related to power relationships of entire social systems that often perpetuate inequity and inequality in organizations. For this, we turn to transformative concepts of leadership, found first in other social sciences and, more recently, in education.

In health care and related social service areas, transformative approaches are quite common. Duncan, Alperstein, Mayers, Olckers, and Gibbs (2006) advocated a transformative curriculum in relation to an interdisciplinary approach to the education of health care professionals in South Africa; Evans, Hanlin, and Prilleltensky (2007) supported supplementing ameliorative approaches with transformative approaches by human service organizations. The latter distinguish between "incremental, developmental, evolutionary, or 'first-order' change" and "transformative, discontinuous, revolutionary, or 'second-order' change in human systems" (p. 332). Watkins (2000) used the concept of transformative leadership to describe a fourfold approach to nursing administration and health care.

Transformative Approaches in Education

The notion of transformation has led, in education, to concepts such as transformative teaching, the transformative classroom (Duncan & Clayburn, (1997), transformative curriculum, transformative material activity (Miettinen, 2006), and so forth. One particularly well-developed use of the term, explicated subsequently by numerous writers in the field of adult learning, is Mezirow's (1991, 1996) transformative learning theory, which outlines a process of effecting change in one's frame of reference. The original focus was on individual learning prompted by self-reflection as a tool for deep and lasting personal change, but the concept has been expanded to emphasize the need

to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks as well as to "develop an appreciation of our own culture and the associated privileges and powers" (Taylor, 2006, p. 92). Davis (2006), for example, emphasizes that transformative learning "involves the acquisition (or manipulation) of knowledge that disrupts prior learning and stimulates the reflective reshaping of deeply ingrained knowledge and belief structures" (p. 1). Franz (2002) reports that her findings related to effective staff partnerships included "eight types of transformative learning" (p. 1). Sterling, Matkins, Frazier, and Logerwell (2007) write about science camp for children of socio-economically disadvantaged urban citizens as being a transformative experience for both students and their parents—changing the way they see themselves as learners and their self-assessment of their ability to attend college.

Others invoke the notion of transformative learning as it relates to increased gender equity and "transformative gender justice." Keddie (2006b) calls for a "transformative approach that seeks to challenge and rework (rather than normalize and reinscribe) boys' narrow conceptions of gender" (p. 111). She argues (Keddie, 2006a) that transformative gender justice remedies social disadvantage "through problematizing and restructuring the underlying frameworks that generate such disadvantage" (p. 401). King and Biro (2000) call for transformative learning to start with a "disorienting dilemma" and for it to "progress through a dynamic pathway of stages … [to a] final reintegration of a new frame of reference" (p. 19). The common elements in these transformative approaches include the need for social betterment, for enhancing equity, and for a thorough reshaping of knowledge and belief structures—elements that reappear as central tenets in the concept of transformative (although not so necessarily in transformational) leadership. Transformative concepts and social justice are closely connected through the shared goal of identifying and restructuring frameworks that generate inequity and disadvantage.

Transformative Leadership

In education, transformative ideals owe much to the work of Freire (1970, 1998), who used the terms *transform*, *transformation*, and *transformative* to describe the changes that may occur as a result of education. Freire (1970) calls for personal, dialogic relationships to undergird education, because without such relationships, he argues, education acts to deform rather than to transform. He states, "Each time the 'thou' is changed into an object, an 'it,' dialogue is subverted and education is changed to deformation" (p. 89).

A Developing Theory

Transformative leadership as a theory has developed in ways that are congruent with the uses of transformation and transformative learning in other fields of social science and education. It has also developed in ways that are consistent with Burns' (1978) understanding of social change, of leaders who "build advocacy and conflict into the planning process in response to pluralistic sets of values" (p. 420). It incorporates Burns' emphasis on purposeful moral leadership, as well as his acknowledgment that leadership necessarily includes an understanding of historical and social causation, of power wielding and political power (pp. 433–434).

One of the first writers to discuss transformative educational leadership was William Foster (1986). His belief was that leadership "must be critically educative; it can not only look at the conditions in which we live, but it must also decide how to change them" (p. 185). Although perhaps ahead of his time (as discussed by Starratt, 2004, in a retrospective essay commemorating Foster's life and legacy), Foster's advocacy of leadership that both transforms and empowers is central to today's notion of transformative leadership. Also, in 1986, Bennis wrote an article entitled *Transformative Power and Leadership*, in which he identified as components of transformative power three factors—the leader, the intention, and the organization—and defined the transformative power of leadership as "the ability of the leader to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings, and inspires human intent that is the source of power" (p. 70). Acknowledgment of the effects of power is increasingly advocated and clarified in the emerging theory of transformative leadership, although later writers soon called for an understanding of power, not simply as an inspiring force, but as a force that both implicitly and explicitly perpetuates hegemonic and dominating behaviors, cultures, and structures.

Capper (1989), in an article advocating a more inclusive approach to democratic[1] schooling for severely disabled students, drew on Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) notion of a transformative intellectual and identified the need for the school administrator to be a transformative intellectual "to encourage social justice" and to practice "transformative leadership which can transcend the intellectual bias in democratic schooling to the benefit of all students and staff" (p. 5). Capper (1989) also cited Giroux and McLaren's definition of a transformative intellectual as one who attempts

> to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle

over power relations … one whose intellectual practices are necessarily grounded in forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a *preferential concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed*. (p. 9, italics added)

In these early articulations, we see the beginning of the major divergence between transformational and transformative leadership theories: The former focuses primarily on what happens within an organization whereas the latter starts with a recognition of some material realities of the broader social and political sphere, recognizing that the inequities and struggles experienced in the wider society affect one's ability both to perform and to succeed within an organizational context.

This distinction emerged gradually during the 1990s, with much writing still using the terms *transformational* and *transformative* interchangeably and synonymously. Sagor (1992), for example, wrote about three "transformative leaders"—principals who made a difference by using "the three 'building blocks of transformational leadership'" (p. 13). Bates (1995) used the term *transformative leader* but in a way more aligned with current transformational leadership, as he emphasized the work of leaders who reshaped and focused corporate culture and carried workers along with the vision. Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) also perpetuated the confusion by continuing to use the terms interchangeably, alluding to the work of Leithwood and Janzi as "transformative leadership" and then making reference to Burns' (1978) transactional and transformational concepts. Sergiovanni (1990) again referenced Burns and stated that "transformative leadership is first concerned with higher-order psychological needs for esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization and, then, with moral questions of goodness, righteousness, duty, and obligation" (p. 23). A few pages later, Sergiovanni equated the concept he then called transformational leadership with the notion of "value-added leadership" (p. 25). His appeal to psychology is of note, as it subsequently helped to distinguish the development of the two strands of leadership. Transformative leadership, in the next decade, shed most of its psychological trappings and focused much more directly on sociological and cultural elements of organizations and the wider society in which they are embedded.

Quantz et al. (1991) outlined many of the tenets of what has come to be known as transformative leadership. They argued that traditional theories of leadership are inadequate for democratic empowerment and that "only the concept of transformative leadership appears to provide an appropriate direction" (p. 96). Before clarifying their use of the term, they stipulated that the literature was still somewhat unclear about its meaning and that the term

required "critical reinterpretation" (p. 96). Although they, too, fell at one point into the trap of using both terms interchangeably, their work was firmly grounded in the critical elements that distinguish transformative leadership theory from formulations and characteristics of transformational leadership (see also Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, 1999). Quantz et al. (1991) posited that schools are sites of cultural politics that serve both to reproduce and to perpetuate the inequities inherent in gender, race, and class constructs and that "confirm and legitimate some cultures while disconfirming and delegitimating others" (p. 98). They went on to argue that because organizations must be based on democratic authority, transformative educational leaders must learn to diminish "*undemocratic power relationships*" (p. 102) and use their "power to transform present social relations" (p. 103). Transformative leadership, they asserted, "requires a language of critique and possibility" (p. 105); a "transformative leader must introduce the mechanisms necessary for various groups to begin conversations around issues of emancipation and domination" (p. 112).

Transformative Leadership Matured: A Theory of Critique and Possibility

Despite the confounding of the terms *transformative* and *transformational* into the present decade, it is clear that as early as the mid-1980s, with the work of Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), Foster (1986), Quantz et al. (1991), and others, a theory of transformative leadership grounded in the twin concepts of critique and possibility was emerging. The increasing clarity and the developing body of literature associated with the concept of transformative leadership continue to emphasize and reinforce these two ideas. Weiner (2003), drawing like many others on Freire's work, emphasized both the individual and collective nature of transformative leadership. He wrote,

> 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)

The differences between the foregoing statement and Leithwood's (2010) statement that transformational leadership "has four dimensions (setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program)" demonstrate how much the two theories have diverged in terms of central preoccupations and emphases. Although it would be wrong to conclude that either theory precludes either instructional excellence

or social responsibility, there are clear distinctions between the ways in which leaders subscribing to each theory conceptualize, interpret, and approach these tasks. Weiner (2003) delineates the responsibilities of the transformative leader to instigate structural transformations, to reorganize the political space, and to understand the relationship between leaders and the led dialectically (and not hierarchically). He also calls for leaders to

> confront more than just what is, and work toward creating an alternative political and social imagination that does not rest solely on the rule of capital or the hollow moralism of neoconservatives, but is rooted in radical democratic struggle. (p. 97)

Thus, a fundamental task of the educational leader in this transformative tradition is to ask questions, for example, about the purposes of schooling, about which ideas should be taught, and about who is successful. Critique lays the groundwork for the promise of schooling that is more inclusive, democratic, and equitable for more students. It is "anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and responsive to class exploitation" (Weiner, 2003, p. 100).

Weiner (2003) makes the important additional point that transformative leaders always experience the challenge of having "one foot in the dominant structures of power and authority." Were this not the case, they would not likely have attained the formal recognition as leaders that casts them as "willing subjects of dominant ideological and historical conditions" (p. 91). At the same time, transformative educational leaders must be able to work from within dominant social formations to exercise effective oppositional power, to resist courageously, and to be activists and voices for change and transformation. They must be willing to

> take risks, form strategic alliances, to learn and unlearn their power, and reach beyond a "fear of authority" toward a concrete vision of the work in which oppression, violence, and brutality are transformed by a commitment to equality, liberty, and democratic struggle. (p. 102)

At about the same time, other educational researchers and theorists took up the task of articulating, and advocating for, transformative educational leadership (see Anderson, 2004; Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2003; Shields, 2003a; Tillman, 2005). For example, Shields (2003b) critiqued the typical silence of educational leaders that tends to pathologize differences, stating that

> transformative educators and educational leaders must address issues of power, control, and inequity; they must adopt a set of guiding criteria … to act as benchmarks for the development of socially just education; and they must engage in dialogue, examine current practice, and create pedagogical conversations and communities that critically build on, and do not devalue, students' lived experiences. (p. 128)

Many of these theorists also cite the work of Astin and Astin (2000), who associate transformative leadership and societal change, saying,

> We believe that the value ends of leadership should be to enhance equity, social justice, and the quality of life; to expand access and opportunity; to encourage respect for difference and diversity; to strengthen democracy, civic life, and civic responsibility; and to promote cultural enrichment, creative expression, intellectual honesty, the advancement of knowledge, and personal freedom coupled with responsibility. (p. 11)

Brown's (2004) articulation combines adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory in a framework for the preparation of educational leaders that would emphasize transformative leadership. Once again, key elements of this framework include the need to address issues of power and privilege, dialogue aimed at disequilibrium that results in meaningful change, and a call to activism. More recently, other discussions, in particular those related to leadership for social justice (e.g., Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; McKenzie et al., 2008), have raised similar issues, although they do not necessarily use the term transformative leadership. McKenzie et al. (2008), for example, in discussing leadership preparation programs, identify the need for leaders to possess "a critical consciousness about social justice" and knowledge of "inclusive practices" and to "create proactively redundant systems of support to maximize student learning" (p. 128).

Summary of Transformative Leadership Theory

Early in the 21st century, the theory of transformative leadership has been consistently articulated as a form of leadership grounded in an activist agenda, one that combines a rights-based theory that every individual is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard with a social justice theory of ethics that takes these rights to a societal level. It emphasizes the socially constructed nature of society and the attendant outcome "that certain individuals occupy a position of greater power and that individuals with other

characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions" (Mertens, 2007, p. 87). Transformative leadership, therefore, recognizes the need to begin with critical reflection and analysis and to move through enlightened understanding to action—action to redress wrongs and to ensure that all members of the organization are provided with as level a playing field as possible—not only with respect to access but also with regard to academic, social, and civic outcomes. In other words, it is not simply the task of the educational leader to ensure that all students succeed in tasks associated with learning the formal curriculum and demonstrating that learning on norm-referenced standardized tests; it is the essential work of the educational leader to create learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is enhanced in such a way as to provide equity of opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society.

It is not unexpected that the theory has its critics as well as its advocates. It is sometimes believed to be too idealistic and too demanding and to place too much responsibility on the shoulders of educators and educational leaders for redressing global ills. Some argue that a focus on power, equity, and social justice can only occur at the expense of intellectual development and accountability. These arguments are countered by those who posit that addressing issues of equity is the only way to transform education to achieve the success of all students—a goal that, although elusive, is at the heart of most current educational leadership theories. In addition, the tensions identified by Weiner (2003) of needing to work within the system to effect transformation cannot be overestimated and can certainly not be discounted.

Perhaps the most salient criticism, and one that remains to be addressed in the coming years, is that although there is a considerable body of conceptual work, there is little empirical research related to transformative leadership: Few studies have operationalized transformative leadership and examined its effect in real-life settings. One scholar pursuing similar kinds of work empirically, but calling it "leadership for social justice" rather than transformative leadership, is Theoharis (2007), who defines

> social justice leadership to mean that these principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. (p. 223)

Moreover, his findings consistently emphasize the need for seeing connections between student behavior and performance and "the principles of justice

that underlay [*sic*] them" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 21). He also highlights the resistance that school leaders tend to face and the need for commitment and moral courage to persist. Similarly, other scholars identify other overlapping elements of leadership, such as the need to eliminate deficit thinking (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001) or the need for less technical and more equitable reforms (Oakes & Rogers, 2006), and hence make related and significant contributions to more inclusive and equitable schooling for all children.

Nevertheless, because of the paucity of empirical work related to the theory of transformative leadership, and to begin to examine its potential to effect profound changes in schools, we turn now to a preliminary study in which the leadership of two educational leaders known for their innovative and successful leadership was examined using the framework illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, to highlight the following themes: balancing critique and promise; effecting deep and equitable change; creating new knowledge frameworks; acknowledging power and privilege; emphasizing both private and public good; focusing on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; and demonstrating moral courage and activism. Here, we take as our starting point the work of principals Catherine Lake and Amy Hill and map it backward onto these concepts to help us determine the potential of a transformative theory of educational leadership to bring about schools that are both socially just and academically excellent.

Catherine and Amy: Transforming and Transformative Leaders

In this section, the accounts of the efforts of these two leaders will necessarily be too brief to accurately capture the extent of their work but will, it is hoped, serve as a basis for identifying those elements of their practices consistent with transformative leadership theory. At the time of the study, each leader had been a principal for some time and had been in her respective schools for between 3 and 5 years. Each served a school that had, until recently, been primarily Caucasian but that had a rapidly diversifying population. Catherine's school, for example, had changed from having approximately 64% Caucasian students 4 years previously to its current population (46% Caucasian), with increasingly large groups of African American, Latino/a, and multiethnic students. At the same time, the population had always been relatively impoverished, with a former superintendent sometimes making the horribly inappropriate suggestion that the school served a "trailer park" or "white trash" population. Amy's school had gone from a relatively homogeneous, and largely middle class, Caucasian population to its current demographics with more than 25% minority students, many of whom

Implementing Transformative Practices		
	Amy Hill	Catherine Lake
Personal background	Grew up in poverty with alcoholism and violence.	Grew up in foster homes; worked in alternative education programs (e.g. outward bound).
Balancing critique & promise	"Every student who walks through the door gets an equal chance;" leader critiques and overcomes deficit thinking.	Ensures a level playing field –not treating every child the same; leader critiques elitist practices (gifted programs).
Effecting deep & equitable change	Extended learning opportunities—school as safe haven, homework supervision, community partnerships, staff "buddy" program.	Identified "non-negotiables; instituted flexible grouping, partners and volunteers deployed where there was the greatest need, staff meetings as professional development, school community meetings.
Deconstruction & reconstruction of social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequity	Scheduled staff visits to low income and more "dangerous" housing areas.	New redistributive principles (differential class and group size, resources, etc.); change from single class to school-wide activities; teacher initiated reallocation of funds to buy needed resources.
Acknowledging power and privilege	Ongoing dialogue about avoiding shame, blame, deficit thinking; Occasional use of power to "bend rules."	Used power to require change, e.g., writing and dialogic exercises at staff meetings; also to encourage change—white boards for new pedagogical approaches; personally shouldered "blame" for failure.
Emphasizing both private and public good	A few citizenship activities for students. Use of book clubs, class buddy systems, community partnerships—elders reading.	Overcame resistance to loss of "teaching time" to hold regular community meetings, music, performances, recognition in partnership with community. Focus on broad learning and citizenship goals in firm belief that academics would follow
Focusing on liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, justice	Staff asked, "Why are you so driven?" Explicit rejection of blaming of parents. Began with small changes in school.	Differentiated between performance and ability (opportunity and ability to learn), regrouping, inclusion of all parents and students.
Demonstrating moral courage and activism	Took unpopular stand regarding gay teacher, overcame staff resistance, shared personal background.	Challenged superintendent regarding language at meetings, took difficult stands and resisted explicit resistance of staff, community, and other principals-negative impact on annual merit pay.

Figure 2. Summary of the transformative practices implemented by two principals

qualify for free and reduced price lunch. Both schools had been successful in meeting the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act and in meeting AYP. On the Illinois state reading tests, 80% of Amy's sixth-grade

students met or exceeded grade-level expectations, with 85% having achieved the same status in mathematics. Catherine's school had demonstrated outstanding progress; for example, on third-grade reading tests, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations had risen from 70% in 2005 to 89.6% in 2007, with 98.5% of students achieving the same standard in math.

It is interesting that although one would not necessarily expect this to be the norm, each principal had experienced considerable hardship growing up—a factor that perhaps helped to account for their commitment to the less advantaged and often underserved members of their community. Catherine, having grown up in a series of foster homes and having subsequently worked in non-traditional educational settings such as outward bound, court-sponsored outdoor programs for young offenders, and alternative education programs, spoke extensively about how developing personal relationships with her students led her to see beyond negative stereotypes and seek the potential and promise in each person. Amy's impoverished and unstable childhood that resulted from her parents' alcoholism and occasional mental illness similarly led to her belief that "failure is not an option" and that school must be for others, as it was for her, "a safe place, a consistent place, a place [she] could count on."

Balancing Critique and Promise

Catherine Lake emphasized her belief that it is important to examine all "facets of students' experiences, to ensure a level playing field"—a concept that she clarified is different from "treating everyone the same." She approached her principalship by discussing with her staff their role—actually their responsibility—for the success of all children in the school. In her 1st year, despite some resistance, she identified small groups of willing teachers who would collect some data about the background and progress of every child in the school and then constantly asked, "Now that we have these data, what can we start doing differently?"

Amy described her approach to education in the following words:

> For me it means that every student that walks through the door gets an equal chance for the best education we can offer them, and I think my teachers feel that way. When we talk in adult groups, they want to do that, they feel that they are doing that, but they do admit to deficit thinking.

In both cases, there was an explicit identification of a need to challenge current practices and to begin to do things differently. In both cases, the optimism was cautious, as they recognized that teachers have to overcome deficit thinking and blame and take responsibility for the success of all children.

Effecting Deep and Equitable Change

The need to do things differently was never seen by either Amy or Catherine as overwhelming but, rather, as the challenge to be met. For Amy's staff, it meant first trying to understand the needs of the 100 new students (most of whom came from disadvantaged families). Despite their sense of frustration at being called upon to address unfamiliar challenges, teachers willingly experimented with new approaches and structures: new approaches to teaming, reassignment of resource teachers, ways to extend the school day to provide a safe haven before and after school, additional homework supervision, a mentoring "buddy" program between staff and students, and a community partnership in which retirees from the community come to school and establish regular and ongoing connections with particular students who need to have the consistent presence of a caring adult in their lives.

Catherine's teachers, beginning with the data they generated, spent long hours in dialogue, in newly created team meetings, trying to develop new approaches to achieving success with all students. They began by identifying their "non-negotiables" (areas where there can be no compromise, such as addressing homophobic language whenever it is heard or agreeing that they would not focus on "bubble kids" to the exclusion of others). The constant questioning about what they would do if there were no constraints led to creative new approaches and to a shared rejection of after-school tutoring, noon-hour instruction, or Saturday school—in favor of strategies that placed the onus on teachers and did not "punish students." In fact, they recognized that too many of these common practices arise from deficit thinking—a belief that children need to be cured rather than a belief that teachers using multiple pedagogical strategies can help all children to attain high standards. Thus, they instituted flexible grouping in which students were regularly tested, grouped, and regrouped for specific tasks. They, too, developed a partner program and trained parent volunteers to meet the most pressing needs (not simply to volunteer in their own child's classroom). Staff meetings became professional development opportunities, and weekly schoolwide "community meetings" were instituted to establish a sense of pride and collective school ethos.

Creating New Knowledge Frameworks

The foregoing approaches, however, in and of themselves, although creative, are not particularly transformative. In both cases, it was the careful and consistent deconstruction of old knowledge frameworks that perpetuated deficit thinking and inequity and their replacement with new frameworks of inclusion

and equity that undergirded the continuous improvement mentality. Amy, for example, was not content to simply discuss the needs of her increasing numbers of disadvantaged students. To the dismay of some of her staff, she scheduled visits to the areas of the community from which many of these students came. When teachers wondered why they were going to *these* areas, and even asked Amy if she was afraid to enter *those* communities, Amy responded honestly and directly that she had come from similar circumstances and so, of course, was not afraid. She then explained to her staff her own sense of shame and then subsequent guilt about being ashamed of her family, the feelings of never being able to invite a classmate to her home, but also the hope that came from teachers who encouraged and supported her.

Catherine, likewise, helped her teachers develop some new redistributive principles on which their strategies would be based. They recognized that they had inherited a highly inequitable system in which a full third of the students (and classes) had been identified as gifted; it is not surprising that these classes had children from the most affluent families and regularly held the most lavish parties. Ongoing conversations about fairness led to new frameworks in which individual class parties were supplanted by schoolwide celebrations to unite rather than divide groups of students. Similarly, they recognized that persistent assumptions about the lack of ability of children from poverty were inhibiting high expectations and quality learning.

Catherine's staff (in an atypical nonterritorial way) agreed that for each new task, those children having the most difficulty should be in smaller groups, with teachers with more skilled students voluntarily accepting larger groups. They decided that those teachers opting to teach the groups with the lowest level of skill would have their first choice of parent volunteers as well as the first call on the school's often limited resources. During the 1st year of this approach, a teacher working with a group of struggling readers made a startling discovery. The school did not have adequate high-interest age-/grade-appropriate reading materials, especially to meet the needs of the group of Spanish-speaking students new to the school and the community. When there had been only one or two children per classroom falling below grade level expectations, this need had gone unnoticed, but with the new approach to teaching for learning rather than to the test, it was clear that additional materials needed to be purchased from the already stretched and limited school budget. Quickly, all teachers approached the challenge, identifying ways to give up fiscal requests in order to redistribute funds for the needed materials.

Acknowledging Power and Privilege

New awareness of inequity led not only to more equitable approaches but also to an increased understanding on the part of all staff of issues related to power and privilege. In Amy's case, this manifested itself, in part, in ongoing conversations about how to ensure that all students were included in all activities, not simply those with the financial wherewithal to participate. New partnerships with local businesses permitted students to borrow (or, in some cases, rent) musical instruments. "Giving back" to the community became a consistent theme, resulting in Christmas baskets, for example, being distributed as part of a community caroling activity in an attempt to de-emphasize the charity involved.

Recognizing that the power they have sometimes involves bending the rules in the interest of students' needs is another part of the new approach. Amy described one young seventh grader whose parents were divorced and who seemed in particular need of reassurance and adult support. The boy told her how after school, he "took his dogs for a walk and microwaved his dinner and then he would walk on the railroad tracks to get to the house of a friend whose Mom was home." Amy, emphasizing human relations rather than rigid administrative thinking, stated that she was glad when the boy informed her, "Sometimes when I'm not here it's because my mom has a day off and that's when I get to spend the day with her, so she lets me stay home." Using her power judiciously to support the boy, rather than chiding him for occasionally missing school, is a mark of a transformative leader.

In some ways, Catherine was more explicit and more intentional in her use of power to transform. She frequently indicated that she encouraged her teachers to experiment but told them that if something did not work, they could blame her. Furthermore, she insisted that she was willing to take the heat from the board and district officials if anyone complained. In an attempt to understand her teachers' own level of competence and discomfort with writing (some had said they could not teach writing), Catherine instituted writing activities at all staff meetings, requiring her teachers to complete sentences such as, "The difference between high and low performing students is …" or "Jose is still not learning because. …" The practice permitted everyone's voice to be heard, dissenting perspectives to be expressed safely, and all ideas to be carefully considered. The teachers' responses then formed the basis for ongoing dialogue at weekly team meetings as well as for subsequent whole staff discussions. Despite initial resistance, Catherine persisted in her attempts to model new pedagogical practices and to involve her teachers in activities that would generate both dialogue and new awareness.

Emphasizing Both Private and Public Good

Catherine's focus on community, on instituting equitable schoolwide practices, and on discussing how to unite rather than divide groups of students is clear evidence of the importance she placed on the public good. As I attended one of the school community meetings, I realized with some surprise that this goal had permeated the whole school. With the help of the music teachers, students had written and enthusiastically performed their own school song; teachers instituted awards for students "caught being good," but students, in return, caught teachers "being good" and offered their own awards. Classes volunteered to demonstrate what they had been learning (I witnessed a delightful readers' theater of *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse* performed by a first-grade class), but individual students also "auditioned" for the principal and were often added to the program to demonstrate a collaborative game that they thought others would enjoy at recess, and so forth. Although the school exuded enthusiasm and collaboration, these were not simply fuzzy attributes divorced from high academic expectations and student achievement, as evidenced by the school's success on state tests and their receipt of a state achievement award in the year of this study.

Amy's school was struggling to achieve a similar balance between individual achievement and the development of community. Like Catherine, she believed the key is ongoing dialogue and so Amy had instituted various ways for teachers to come together to discuss new ideas. One regular activity was a book club in which many of her teachers generally participated, suggesting new books and articles and exploring how they could promote school reform. They had also instituted a buddy mentoring program with pairings between eighth- and sixth-grade students. Nevertheless, the culture in her school was just beginning to become more community-like, with many conversations still only occurring between herself and a single teacher or remaining within small groups of educators.

Focusing on Liberation, Democracy, Equity, and Justice

In almost every example provided in the previous paragraphs, we have seen evidence that both Amy and Catherine were driven by their commitments to social justice and equity. Amy's staff even asked her on occasion, "Why are you so driven?" prompting her to share even more of her personal story of shame and subsequent success as the basis for her ongoing quest for something more and better for her students.

The examples of new approaches instituted by each leader not only exemplify new knowledge frameworks about teaching and learning but also

illustrate redistribution of power as all educators worked together to achieve excellence. These examples of leadership that result in changed pedagogical practices illustrate the relationship between equitable instructional approaches and the creation of democratic learning contexts in which all children are included and their needs addressed. In this situation, the redistribution (Fraser, 1995) was confined to the school itself. Although staff were aware of, and concerned about, the wider social issues that account for some children being more able readers than others, they began by taking responsibility for the changes they could effect within their schools.

Catherine, for example, described how one of her consistent topics of discussion focused on having her teachers understand the difference between performance and ability, between a child who has never been taught how to do something (perhaps clean her paintbrush between colors) and one who may experience difficulty completing the task. She helped them to understand that a child who had had the opportunity to learn to paint at home would likely achieve paintings that were more colorful and less smudged, but that it did not necessarily mean she was more "artistically gifted." The solution, of course, was not to place the child in a remedial program but simply to take a few minutes to teach her to clean her brush. Amy's concern with justice had led her to interrupt meetings she believed were becoming too negative to reframe the discussion without blaming a parent. Subsequently, as she debriefed with her teachers, she was clear that it is inappropriate to bombard parents with negatives, because the goal is to help the parent (in many cases, a mom with limited comfort with schooling, struggling to support her family). As she consistently worked to overcome deficit thinking, she tried to help her staff understand how intimidated the parent must feel and how only a positive and collaborative approach is likely to achieve the desired result.

Demonstrating Moral Courage and Activism

Transformative education, at minimum, will not necessarily change the wider societal patterns of poverty and power but will acknowledge their existence and effect on students and will therefore make polices in schools that redistribute resources to correct inequitable outcomes (see Fraser, 1995). This is not as easy as it sounds, even with strong commitment and moral courage.

It is clear that both Catherine and Amy have demonstrated moral courage and the willingness to take risks and to become actively engaged in the struggle and challenge of creating schools that are more equitable, inclusive, excellent, and socially just. It is unfortunate that despite the dedication and resolve of these educational leaders, each change was met with opposition from some

members of the wider community and from educators in other schools who expressed concern that they would be required to introduce similar changes.

In her conversation, Amy frequently made comments like, "We thought we were doing it properly according to the data. But I would do it differently next time; on paper it seemed right, but in practice, we needed to look more at the individual kids." Her ability to reflect on the risks and decisions taken and to admit that they could have been done differently and to better effect is indicative of her commitment to the goals of equitable reform, even at the cost of admitting her own mistakes. Retooling, redoing, and reconsidering were all words she used regularly to indicate that the quest was ongoing and she had not yet attained her goals.

Catherine, too, talked about taking risks and about being the first one in her district to attempt something, frequently accepting the criticism and sometimes scorn of others. Both principals sometimes found themselves tested; for example, both took extremely unpopular stands in their conservative communities to support the hiring or retention of a gay teacher. Catherine describes how when her new superintendent arrived, she also made the decision to talk to him about her discomfort when colleagues at principals' meetings made comments casting aspersions on one director whom they thought was "gay," saying things like, "We don't have any other abnormal people in our district," or when they made jokes about "ethnic names."

Persistence in these new approaches required both Catherine and Amy to be willing to take the risks and to have the courage to take a firm stand in the face of criticism and opposition, resisting threats about what might happen should the changes detract from improving test scores or meeting adequate yearly progress. Having the courage to address, head-on, situations that are unjust and marginalizing is not easy. Indeed, both Catherine and Amy indicated that they had suffered push-back in terms of others keeping a distance or in terms of decisions about annual salary increases. Nevertheless, they were both convinced that being a leader is not about popularity but about doing what they believed was right and just for students. It is not simply about raising test scores but about creating rich and inclusive learning environments for all.

Reflecting on the Data

In the foregoing pages, I first developed the concept of transformative leadership as one in which leaders are concerned about the material realities of students' lives both in and outside of school and in which they focus not only on preparing students for academic achievement but on citizenship more

broadly defined. Although neither transformative leadership theory nor the practices of these two principals imply total responsibility for redressing societal ills, there is a recognition in both theory and practice that educators must do what they can to challenge unjust practices, to overcome inequity, and to create conditions under which all children can learn. As both Amy and Catherine indicated, this does not mean treating all children the same, but it means building strong and positive relationships that permit the identification of what each child needs to become successful. It also requires a focus on the democratic purposes of schooling to foster citizenship and public engagement as well as a refusal to narrow instructional practices or focus on test-taking to the exclusion of other endeavors.

Rejecting deficit thinking and blame, each is convinced that it is essential to differentiate between what children have or have not been taught to do and what they are able to do. In their minds, teaching what children have not had the opportunity to learn is the clear responsibility of the school community as a whole. Moreover, this does not require a singular focus on test-preparation that narrows children's learning opportunities but, instead, requires rich, vibrant, and engaging pedagogies and high expectations for all children. In fact, as the foregoing brief discussion has demonstrated, and as summarized in Figure 2, each principal has demonstrated some of the principles of transformative leadership as she has taken explicit steps to change the goals and climate of her school.

Taking seriously the concepts of abductive reasoning and inference to the best explanation (Evers & Wu, 2006), one must reflect on whether other leadership theories might explain, equally well, the activities of these two principals. Briefly, there was little evidence of a transactional approach on the part of these leaders. Transformational leadership, as we saw earlier, might encourage a greater emphasis on effective schoolwide reform but pay less attention to the external, material realities of the students and their families. Moving beyond these theories, I considered some alternatives. Distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), for example, was considered because both Catherine and Amy enhanced the distributed and shared nature of their educational leadership. At the same time, their practices went far beyond instituting shared processes of leadership to focus on the context and content as well, once again emphasizing, as Foster (1986) urged, the conditions in which we live and how to change them. I considered whether authentic leadership best explained the leadership of Catherine and Amy, given that both leaders demonstrated considerable congruence among their espoused beliefs, assumptions, and actions (Terry, 1993) and they clearly knew themselves authentically (Cashman, 2008; Palmer, 1998) and worked with courage and integrity. Although the theory of

authentic leadership certainly described their approach well, it did not explain their focus on social justice, equity, and inclusivity as underlying principles for school leadership. Similar reflection about contingency theories (House, 1996) and participative theories (Miller, 2006; Yukl, 2002) led me to infer that transformative leadership is the "best fit" and, hence, that transformative leadership theory has the most complete explanatory power to elucidate the majority of findings of this study.

Concluding Thoughts

Transformative leaders recognize that the end of education is not only private good and individual achievement but also democratic citizenship and participation in civil society (Giroux, 1995; Macedo, 1995; Shields, 2009). Balancing these demands in the current climate of accountability and standardized testing is never easy; yet, both Amy and Catherine show evidence of considerable schoolwide progress toward this end. The key values of liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice shine through their words and their practice. As Amy says, it is important to talk "not about what we can't do, but about what we can do," to ask what each person needs to be successful and then to allocate resources appropriately. Catherine expresses it in terms of preparing each student to accomplish his or her potential, rejecting the advice of one former superintendent to "forget about college, and just worry about getting them through the curriculum." In fact, for both Amy and Catherine, just "getting students through" is not even in their vocabulary.

As Catherine and Amy have demonstrated, transformative educational leaders also act with courage and conviction to bring about the collective promise of education, described by Maxine Greene (1988) as being "citizens of the free world—having the capacity to choose, the power to act to attain one's purposes, and the ability to help transform a world lived in common with others" (p. 32). Transformative educational leadership not only works for the good of every individual in the school system; at its heart, it has the potential to work for the common good of society as well.

By backward mapping data collected from a study of the beliefs, motivations, and practices of these two principals, I have shown not only that transformative leadership is possible but that it holds the potential inherent in the theory itself for deep and meaningful change in the norms of schooling. The study does not indicate that the practice is widespread, only that transformative leadership is not simply a blue-sky theory too idealistic and too difficult to implement in practice. For both Amy and Catherine, the foundation of their practice is not effectiveness and efficiency, but it is critique of injustices and inequities and the promise of a better, more equitable future for all children.

Each has focused not simply on improving test scores (although that did happen) but on instituting changes in the educational environment of their schools—structures, culture, pedagogical practices—that resulted in more inclusive and more just experiences for all students. Each has adopted processes that go well beyond transactional approaches and beyond the goals of organizational effectiveness fundamental to transformational leadership. Instead, they have focused on helping their teachers identify and understand how many of their current assumptive knowledge frameworks constitute barriers to the success of all children. To that end, each has chosen to emphasize leadership that generates new understanding and new approaches. Each has focused on deconstructing practices that perpetuate the privilege of some to the exclusion of others while, at the same time, using the power they have to redress inequitable resource distribution.

Unlike transformational leadership, which has the most potential to work well when the organization and the wider society in which it is embedded are synchronous, transformative leadership takes account of the ways in which the inequities of the outside world affect the outcomes of what occurs internally in educational organizations. Because this is certainly the case almost everywhere with respect to schooling—both in developing and developed countries—this study has demonstrated the potential of transformative leadership as a way forward. Transformative leaders, who focus on both critique and promise, do more than bemoan current failures and tinker around the edges of deep and meaningful reform. Indeed, they act courageously and continuously to ensure more equitable learning environments and pedagogical practices for all children. The evidence here demands that we join with Catherine, Amy, and others to adopt transformative leadership practices before more students are lost and society damaged irreparably.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Author's Notes

This article draws, in part and with permission, on an invited chapter for the International Encyclopedia: Shields, C. M. (2010). Leadership: Transformative. In E. Baker,

B. McGaw, & P. Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Note

1. Here and elsewhere, when the term *democratic* is used in this article, I am conscious that transformative leadership does not need to be embedded in any particular form of governance structures; however, democratic is used here to imply a form of schooling that ideally emphasizes justice, liberation, inclusivity, and openness.

References

Anderson, G. L. (2004). William Foster's legacy: Learning from the past and reconstructing the future. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(2), 240–258.

Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H. (1985). *Education under siege: The conservative, liberal, and radical debate over schooling*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (2000). *Leadership reconsidered: Engaging higher education in social change*. Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation. Retrieved December 2006 from http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/CCT/Leadership/Pub3368.PDF

Bates, R. (1995, July). *A socially critical perspective on educational leadership*. Paper presented at the Flinders University Conference on Educational Leadership, Adelaide, S. Australia.

Bennis, W. (1986). Transformative power and leadership. In T. J. Sergiovanni & J. E. Corbally (Eds.), *Leadership and organizational culture* (pp. 64–71). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(1), 77–108.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

Cambron-McCabe, N., & McCarthy, M. (2005). Educating school leaders for social justice. *Educational Policy*, *19*(1), 201–222.

Capper, C. A. (1989). *Transformative leadership: Embracing student diversity in democratic schooling*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. (ED 305 714)

Cashman, K. (2008). *Leadership from the inside out: Becoming a leader for life*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Dantley, M. (2003). Critical spirituality: Enhancing transformative leadership through critical theory and African American prophetic spirituality. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *6*(1), 3–17.

Davis, S. H. (2006). Influencing transformative learning for leaders. *School Administrator*, *63*(8).

Day, C., Harris, A., & Hadfield, M. (2001). Grounding knowledge of schools in stakeholder realities: A multi-perspective study of effective school leaders. *School Leadership & Management*, *21*(1), 19–42.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2004). A new approach to strategic leadership: Learning-centredness, connectivity and cultural context in school design. *School Leadership & Management*, *24*(1), 39–56.

Duncan, M., Alperstein, M., Mayers, P., Olckers, L., & Gibbs, T. (2006). Not just another multi-professional course! Part 1. Rationale for a transformative curriculum. *Medical Teacher*, *28*(1), 59–63.

Duncan, P. K., & Clayburn, C. (1997, November). *Why haven't I heard from you? Evoking the voices of adult learners through transformative teaching*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Orlando.

Elmore, R. F. (1979–1980). Backward mapping: Implementation research and policy decisions. *Political Science Quarterly*, *94*(4), 601–618.

Evans, S. D., Hanlin, C. E., & Prilleltensky, I. (2007). Blending ameliorative and transformative approaches in human service organizations: A case study. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *35*(3), 329–346.

Evers, C. W., & Wu, E. H. (2006). On generalising from single case studies: Epistemological reflections. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *40*(4), 511–526.

Foster, W. (1986). *Paradigms and promises*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.

Franz, N. (2002). *TL2: Transformative learning and transformative leadership in successful cooperative extension staff partnerships*. Paper presented at the Association of Leadership Educators Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Fraser, N. (1995). From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a "postsocialist" age. *New Left Review*, *212*, 568–593.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Giroux, H. A. (1995). Educational visions: What are schools for and what should we be doing in the name of education? In J. L. Kincheloe & S. R. Steinberg, *Thirteen questions* (pp. 295–302). New York: Peter Lang.

Glanz, J. (2007). On vulnerability and transformative leadership: An imperative for leaders of supervision. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *10*(2), 115–135.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hoffman, L. P., & Burrello, L. C. (2004). A case study illustration of how a critical theorist and a consummate practitioner meet on common ground. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(2), 268–289.

House, R. J. (1996). Path-goal theory of leadership: Lessons, legacy, and a reformulated theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, *7*, 323–352.

Keddie, A. (2006a). Gender and schooling: Frameworks for transformative social justice. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *27*(3), 399–415.

Keddie, A. (2006b). Pedagogies and critical reflection: Key understandings for transformative gender justice. *Gender and Education*, *18*(1), 99–114.

King, K. P., & Biro, S. C. (2000). A transformative learning perspective of continuing sexual identity development in the workplace. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *112*, 17–27.

Kose, B. W. (2007). Principal leadership for social justice: Uncovering the content of teacher professional development. *Journal of School Leadership*, *17*, 276–312.

Leithwood, K. (in press). Transformational school leadership. In E. Baker, B. McGaw, & P. Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990). Transformational leadership: How principals can help to reform school cultures. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *1*(4), 249–280.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *35*(5), 679–706.

Littell, J. H. (2008). Evidence-based or biased? The quality of published reviews of evidence-based practices. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *30*, 1299–1317.

Macedo, D. (1995). Power and education: Who decides the forms schools have taken, and who should decide? In J. L. Kincheloe & S. R. Steinberg, *Thirteen questions* (pp. 43–57). New York: Peter Lang.

Marshall, C., & Olivia, M. (2005). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education*. Old Tappan, NJ: Allyn & Bacon.

McKenzie, K. B., Christman, D., Hernandez, F., Fierro, E., Capper, C. A., Dantley, M., … Scheurich, J. J. (2008). From the field: A proposal for educating leaders for social justice. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(1), 111–138.

McLaughlin, D. (1989). Power and the politics of knowledge: Transformative leadership and curriculum development for minority language learners. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *66*(3), 41–60.

Mertens, D. M. (2007). Transformative considerations: Inclusion and social justice. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *28*(26), 86–90.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *46*(3), 158–172.

Miettinen, R. (2006). Epistemology of transformative material activity: John Dewey's pragmatism and cultural-historical activity theory. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *36*(4), 390–408.

Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Oakes, J., & Rogers, J. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Odden, A., & Odden, E. (1984). Education reform, school improvement, and state policy. *Educational Leadership*, *42*(2), 11-17.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Quantz, R. A., Rogers, J., & Dantley, M. (1991). Rethinking transformative leadership: Toward democratic reform of schools. *Journal of Education*, *173*(3), 96–118.

Sagor, R. D. (1992). Three principals who make a difference. *Educational Leadership*, *49*(5), 13–18.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1990). Adding value to leadership gets extraordinary results. *Educational Leadership*, *47*(8), 23–27.

Shields, C. M. (2003a), *Good intentions are not enough: Transformative leadership for communities of difference*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow/Technomics.–

Shields, C. M. (2003b), Dialogic leadership for social justice: Overcoming pathologies of silence. *Educational Administrative Quarterly, XI*(1), 111-134.

Shields, C. M., (2008), *Democratizing practice: Courageous leadership for transforming schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon publishers.

Shields. C. M. (2009). Leveling the playing field in racialised contexts: Leaders speaking out about difficult issues, *International Journal of Educational Administration. 37*(3), 55–70.

Shields, C. M. (2010). *Transformative Leadership*, In E. Baker, P. Peterson, & B. McGaw (eds.), International Encyclopedia of Education, 3rd Edition, Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Skrla, L., & Scheurich, J. J. (2001). Displacing deficit thinking in school district leadership. *Education & Urban Society*, *33*(3), 235-259.

Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Starratt, R. J. (2004). The dialogue of scholarship. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(2), 259–267.

Sterling, D. R., Matkins, J. J., Frazier, W. M., & Logerwell, M. G. (2007). Science camp as a transformative experience for students, parents, and teachers in the urban setting. *School Science and Mathematics*, *107*(4), 134–148.

Taylor, E. W. (2006). The challenge of teaching for change. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *112*, 91–95.

Terry, R. W. (1993). *Authentic leadership: Courage in action*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Bristol, PA: Falmer.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *43*(2), 221–258.

Theoharis, G. (2008). Woven in deeply: Identity and leadership of urban social justice principals. *Education and Urban Society*, *41*(1), 3–25.

Tillman, L. C. (2005). Mentoring new teachers: Implications for leadership practice in an urban school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *41*(4), 609–629.

Watkins, J. (2000). Leading via caring-healing: The fourfold way toward transformative leadership. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, *25*(1), 1–6.

Weiner, E. J. (2003). Secretary Paulo Freire and the democratization of power: Toward a theory of transformative leadership. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *35*(1), 89–106.

Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organizations* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bio

Carolyn M. Shields, PhD, is currently a professor of leadership in the Department of Educational Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. Her teaching is in the area of transformative leadership, ethics, deep democracy, equitable policy, and social justice. She also conducts research related to how educational leaders can create learning environments that are deeply democratic, socially just, and inclusive of students' lived experiences and, at the same time, prepare them to be fully participating citizens in civil society. These interests are reflected in her teaching and many publications, including the 2008 book, *Courageous Leadership for Transforming Schools: Democratizing Practice*.