

Preparing Future Leaders for Social Justice, Equity, and Excellence:

*Bridging Theory and Practice through a
Transformative Andragogy*

Kathleen M. Brown, Ed.D.
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
School of Education

THE CHRISTOPHER-GORDON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SERIES

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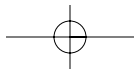
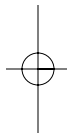
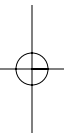
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Series Editor's Introduction and Perspective

Why Bridging Theory and Practice: The Christopher-Gordon School Leadership Series?
Why a new book series on school leadership and what does this particular series have to offer among the many fine books already published in the field of school and educational leadership?

Research over the past decade has finally confirmed what many educators, policy makers, think-tanks, and others viscerally knew—that leadership makes a difference for a host of dependent variables, including the most important one, student achievement. Additional research is needed, however, to more fully refine and uncover how in fact school leaders make a difference in a host of other areas. The answers to additional research questions will offer further legitimacy and draw greater attention to the field of educational leadership. Some of the questions include:

- How is social justice best fostered by school leaders?
- What are specific educational leadership strategies for reducing the black/white achievement gap?
- What impact does increased accountability and high stakes testing have on teacher morale, principal self-efficacy, and student achievement?
- What is the precise role played by school leaders in fostering inclusive educational practices?
- How might school leaders implement an effective data-driven decision-making process in their school?
- What is the role of school leaders in reducing school violence?
- How do increased efforts to promote teacher leadership impact the work of principals and their assistants?
- How can we better balance interest and work in instructional leadership with other important leadership functions?
- How do we induct and sustain good principals?
- How can we best prepare future school leaders?

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This particular book series is premised on the need to connect theory to practice. We are unique because we do not accept proposals that are “heavy” on one side or the other, but rather we look for manuscripts that are intellectually engaging with a sound theoretical base, yet firmly grounded in the daily lives of school leaders. I welcome readers to join the effort to increase knowledge in our field and affect daily school practice by submitting a proposal to the School Leadership Series on any of the topics mentioned above, or any other relevant ones. Feel free to communicate with the Series Editor via email, glanz@yu.edu.

* * *

As Series Editor, I am excited to introduce the second volume in our newly inaugurated School Leadership Series. *Preparing Future Leaders for Social Justice, Equity, and Excellence* is the most comprehensive, well-written, and timely authored volume that aims to provoke readers to action. The author, Kathleen Brown, calls on professors of educational leadership and principals to “become transformative leaders” to counteract “long-standing social inequalities” that serve to restrain children and adults from reaching their potential. Confronting issues of social justice, armed with the requisite knowledge, skills, is a moral imperative that Brown writes about with passion and intelligence.

Summarizing how transformational leadership works, Northouse (2003) explains: “Transformational leaders set out to empower followers and nurture them in change. They attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others” (p. 142). Northouse highlights the following characteristics of transformational leaders: serve as strong role models; have a highly developed sense of moral values; a self-determined sense of identity; visionary, confident, articulate; willingness to listen to followers; engender trust in followers, and act as change agents within and for the organization. *Preparing Future Leaders for Social Justice, Equity, and Excellence* is a guide to actualizing Northouse’s insights.

I cannot agree more with Brown’s insightful analysis. We cannot and will not make much difference unless we engage in transformational leadership. As leaders, we must work vigilantly to articulate and actualize vision as we look to the future and build hope for teachers and students.

The volume is divided into three major sections. First, Brown builds a strong foundation by reviewing key developments in the history of the principalship that demonstrate the “promises” and “possibilities” for action on the part of current day principals. Next, she examines the critical role the principal plays in promoting justice, equity, and excellence in schools. She then encourages the reader to realize the potency of one’s beliefs and values in becoming a transformational leader.

In the next section, Brown deepens the analysis by grounding her work in Paulo Freire’s concept of “transformative androgogy” that attempts to unmask various social, political, and economic factors that affect our work in schools. Encouraging educators to think critically, Brown nests this work in three theoretical perspectives: Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory. The final section represents a profound, theoretically sound, and practical call for action. I challenge any reader, after reading this section, not to be moved to action.

Preparing Future Leaders for Social Justice, Equity, and Excellence is the second volume published in the ground-breaking book series, *Bridging Theory and Practice: The Christopher-Gordon School Leadership* series. As Series Editor, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Advisory Board, once again, for their efforts in seeing this volume to fruition. Their diligent work was similarly supported by a Review Board comprised of leaders in the field of educational leadership. Their feedback to authors and the editor were essential.

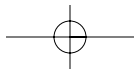
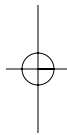
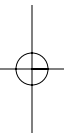
Special acknowledgment is extended to Adam Shalvey for expertly preparing manuscripts for peer review and summarizing comments of reviewers for authors and editors. His steadfastness and responsiveness were essential in helping manuscripts through the review process. I most especially would like to thank Hiram Howard and Sue Canavan of Christopher-Gordon Publishers for their confidence in the Series Editor and for their ongoing support for scholarly work in school leadership. Their honesty, insight, and integrity are refreshing in a world of publishing in which such virtues are a rarity.

This volume should be required reading in every principal preparation program in the world, and every educational leader needs to read it for intellectual stimulation and inspiration.

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Jeffrey Glanz
Silverstein Professor of Professional Ethics and Values
Azrieli School of Jewish Education and Administration
Yeshiva University
December 2007



Foreword

by Catherine Marshall, UNC-Chapel Hill

Tired of abstract, depersonalized theory with no answers? Tired of simplistic how-to books? Here is a book that has theory, real people, tools, skills-building exercises, and advice too! Tired of rhetoric that tears down educators' efforts but offers few concrete new directions? Tired of politicians' strategies that expect results from educators with little change in the economic, cultural, and societal systems that have marginalized families struggling to make it without the privileges that have enabled those politicians to get ahead? In *Preparing Future Leaders for Social Justice, Equity, and Excellence: Bridging Theory and Practice Through Transformative Andragogy*, Kathleen Brown chooses the most constructive aspects of theories to provide answers. She is purposefully provocative, piquing readers' curiosity from just the title—one wonders, how can andragogy and educational administration be in the same sentence, let alone combined in a whole book?

Brown's book is timely. Archaic modes of leadership and training, modes derived from out-of-date business management texts, are not working for attracting and retaining good teachers, helping high school kids feel that they belong in school, or creating mutually respectful and caring relationships with parents. We need models of leadership derived from what happens in *schools*, from the spirit and insights of *educators*. Educational leaders and scholars must have “the will, the words, the facts, and the guts” (Marshall & Oliva, 2006, p. 13) to veer from tradition.

We continue to debate what words, what theories, what modes of action and valuing offer viable alternatives. Not understanding terminologies or practicalities, some folks in educational administration say, “What's this social justice thing? And what are we supposed to do with it? And is it different from things we already do?” Some say, “we have to train people who can get hired and school boards don't understand new models.” Others say, “We can't put beliefs and theories (e.g., about social justice, transformative leadership, and andragogical practices) into our requirements for training and licensure without empirical research that they work in the real world” and then, in the next breath, argue that the basis for much of the current training and licensure requirements is “the wisdom of decades of practice.” This book refuses to

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belabor such debates and ironies and, instead, moves us forward, beyond the controversies. Brown shows us how to work with educators' values and beliefs, use strategies such as self-reflection and data-driven inquiry to become transformative leaders—leaders whose community and school collaborations enable schools to make advancement toward social justice and excellence.

Sometimes we move ahead because we just *know* it is right. But leading without followers and when powerful voices say we're wrong is difficult. Brown's book leads in a manner that brings followers along. She gentles resistant voices as she provides patient lines of argument, history, and research in the first few chapters. By the end of Section I, she has justified the Transformative Andragogical theory, enticing the reader to Section II, where she weaves theories to be applied to the preparation of principals. In Section III, she then provides multiple methods for readers to, in their own diverse ways, learn—by completing exercises, by engaging in philosophical arguments, by puzzling over pictorial representations of theory, by listening to stories and engaging in self-reflection, and by providing tools for effective practice. Thus, Kathleen Brown's book provides rationale, theory, research, and practical applications that help us prepare school leaders in ways that few *know* are right *and* are well grounded.

Marshall, C., & Oliva, M. (2006) Building the capacities of social justice leaders. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Introduction

While many agree that theory, research, and practice should be intertwined to support the type of schooling (and society) that values rather than marginalizes, few scholars offer ground-breaking, pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders. From a critical theorist perspective, this book offers a practical, process-oriented model that is responsive to the challenges of preparing educational leaders committed to social justice, equity, and excellence. Advocates for social justice espouse a theory of social critique, embrace a greater sense of civic duty, and willingly become active agents for meaningful change. The purpose of this book is to inform professors of future leaders of an andragogical strategy aimed at developing such principals and then to encourage those same school leaders to modify the activities described herein for use with their own faculty, staff, and parent groups.

Transformative learning is a process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rationale discourse that can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in context which challenge the learner's basic assumptions of the world. Transformative learning leads to a new way of seeing. "Values are not necessarily changed, but are examined—their source is identified, and they are accepted and justified or revised or possibly rejected" (Cranton, 1992, p. 146). This in turn leads to some kind of action. By weaving a tripartite theoretical framework together in support of an alternative, transformative andragogy, future leaders can learn "to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1994, p. 17). They can in turn begin to recognize and refine their own agency in teaching and leading others.

Transformative andragogy is the art and science of helping others learn. It is the art and science of helping others to think critically and act responsibly; to examine beliefs, to accept, reject, or modify values, and to engage in activism and advocacy with and for others. As such, the three theoretical perspectives of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory are interwoven with the three andragogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to increase adult learners' awareness of self, acknowledgement of others, and action for

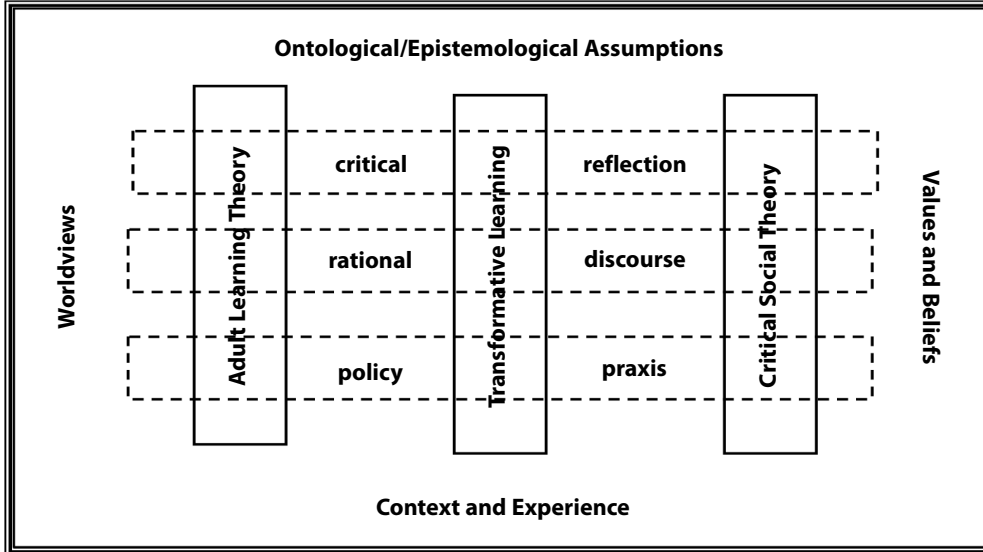
equity. In doing so, Giroux (1993) has urged educational leadership faculty to create “a new language capable of asking new questions and generating more critical practices” (p. 37). As such, reflective questions are provided at the end of each chapter to help professors and future principals alike rethink theory and practice, reformulate traditional notions of power, authority, and ethics, and refocus education around concerns of justice, equity, diversity, privilege, student achievement, and social responsibility.

Critical theory is grounded in the day-to-day lives of people, structures, and cultures. It pays attention to the educational ideas, policies, and practices that serve the interests of the dominant class while simultaneously silencing and dehumanizing “others.” According to Beyer (2001), “It is precisely in understanding the normative dimensions of education and how they are intertwined with social, structural, and ideological processes and realities that critical theory plays a key role” (p. 154). A critical stance frames this discussion by outlining clearly the need for professors to retool their teaching and courses to address issues of power and privilege—to weave social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum, pedagogy, programs, and policies. At the same time, it recognizes and advocates for the social change role and responsibility of educational leaders. This book encourages future principals to become more deeply aware of the impact that race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability language, immigration, and religion have on schools and students’ learning and to commit themselves to challenging systemic inequities and to leading teachers in creating equitable opportunities for all students.

Since contemporary researchers (Argyris, 1990; Banks, 1994; Senge et al., 1994; Wheatley, 1992) have found that effective leaders take responsibility for their learning, share a vision for what can be, assess their own assumptions and beliefs, and understand the structural and organic nature of schools, preparation programs and staff development programs need to carefully craft authentic experiences aimed at developing such skills. Future and current leaders need time to think, reflect, assess, decide, and possibly change. By exposing adult learners to information and ideas that they may resist and by assisting them to stretch beyond their comfort zones, a critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies can occur. While the strategies proposed here focus specifically on pre-service preparation, their applicability to ongoing professional learning for in-service principals to use with their faculty, staff, and parent groups is an important and necessary complement. The model proposed (see Figure A) promotes awareness of self through critical reflection, acknowledgement of others through rational discourse, and action for equity through policy praxis (i.e., reflective practice or a union between thought and action). All three components are necessary in preparing leaders with the knowledge, skill, and desire to examine why and how some school policies and practices “devalue the identities of some students while overvaluing others” (Nieto, 2000, p. 183).

This book is divided into three main sections. Section I: Transformative Ideas and the Contextual Background contains four chapters that lay the groundwork for preparing leaders for social justice, equity, and excellence. Given the importance of school administration, the role of educational leadership in school improvement, and the preparation of educational leaders, it is essential to understand the history, development, and promise of the principalship. Due to changing demographics, conflicting

Figure A: An Andragogy of Transformative Leaders
The Principle Weaves of Principal Preparation



societal values, and shifting expectations, the principal’s role is ever evolving. In Chapter 1, some of those critical events are outlined briefly, followed by a description of the effects on the role in general and on the preparation and certification of principals in particular in Appendix A. Within this context, gender equity issues are explored more deeply in Appendix B. Chapter 2 provides readers with an overview of the role of the principal in actually promoting social justice, equity, and excellence. Although many schools are failing to fulfill their duty, others are meeting the challenge of serving each and every student really well (Oakes et al., 2000; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002). The literature on leadership for social justice identifies schools that have demonstrated tremendous success not only with white middle-class and affluent students, but students from varied racial, socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds (Capper & Young, in press; Scheurich, 1998). In striving for equity *and* excellence, virtually all students in these schools are learning at high academic levels. There are “no persistent patterns of differences in academic success or treatment among students grouped by race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p. 2).

Reminded by Delpit (1995) that we do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs, the internal courage to look within and honestly confront one’s biases and shortcomings is necessary in order for the external work in the school community to be authentic and effective. Because understanding the nature of beliefs, attitudes, and values is essential to understanding future and current leaders’ choices, decisions, and effectiveness regarding issues of diversity and equity, Chapter 3 offers a review of quantitative measures, instruments, inventories, and studies that assess educators’ personal and professional beliefs, attitudes, perceptions,

and preconceptions. Two instruments in particular are recommended for principals to use with their teachers in addressing similar issues. From a critical theorist perspective, Chapter 4 then describes a practical, process-oriented model that is responsive to the challenges of preparing such educational leaders committed to social justice, equity, and excellence. This is followed by a mixed-methods research study aimed at documenting theory into practice findings.

Throughout the three chapters in Section II: Transformative Andragogical Practice and the Centrality of Experience, the three theoretical perspectives of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory are interwoven with the three andragogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to increase future and current leaders' awareness, acknowledgement, and action for social justice, equity, and excellence. Employing a critical, transformative andragogy requires professors and principals to be active facilitators and co-learners who go beyond simply meeting the expressed needs of the learner or the teacher. Through a wide array of roles, methods, and techniques, they need to take on the responsibility for growth by questioning the learner's expectations and beliefs.

Transformative learning may occur as a result of a life crisis or may be precipitated by challenging interactions with others, by participation in carefully designed exercises and activities, and by stimulation through reading or other resources. By being actively engaged in a number of assignments requiring the examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 demonstrate how adult learners (principals and teachers) can be better equipped to work with and guide others in translating their perspectives, perceptions, and goals into agendas for social change. The exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout personal and professional spheres can lead future and current educational leaders and their school faculties to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of student learning and equity in their schools and districts.

Garcia and Donmoyer (2005) stress the importance of "keeping principal preparation attached . . . to the inquiry-oriented university setting" (p. 2) and suggest that a case study, action research project could be a helpful tool in bridging the theory-practice gap. The last three chapters in Section III: Transformative Research and the Call for Action each describe a specific action research project that future leaders undertook in an effort to do just that. Each chapter stands alone as an individual model of proactive data gathering and analysis within a school, district, or state policy context. For example, in Chapter 8 pre-service principals collected quantitative data through equity audits of twenty-four schools in one nearby district to scan for equities and inequities across multiple domains of student learning and activities. The purpose was to document and distinguish between "good schools" (i.e., those that are both excellent *and* equitable) and those that are not. This action research project initiated from several heated discussions regarding the state's accountability system and method of high stakes testing, particularly the way in which schools are erroneously identified, rewarded, and labeled as "Honor Schools of Excellence."

In Chapter 9, future leaders struggled with why the achievement gap exists and what they could and should do about it. While searching for answers, they studied

racial identity theory, researched critical race theory, and read Ogbu and Simons (1998) work suggesting that minority parents “hold teachers and schools, rather than their children, responsible for poor academic performance” (p. 177). They also found that other adults focus on the children and families, commenting on such things as poverty and lack of parental concern, and then there are the students who talk about being underestimated, dismissed, or just bored. The purpose of the study described in Chapter 9 was for principals to examine Black and White teachers’ perceptions of possible causes and potential solutions to the achievement gap. Similarities and differences in their perceptions are highlighted. This study suggests that before school leaders can take a discussion of racial issues and solutions to the achievement gap to the next level, teachers must first examine and move past their personal assumptions and strive to understand the whole reality.

The action research example described in Chapter 10 is different in that it chronicles a historical, document analysis project. After learning about the segregation, desegregation, and resegregation patterns of American schools and then reading articles such as Alfie Kohn’s (1998) “Only for My Kid: How Privileged Parents Undermine School Reform,” pre-service principals decided to delve deeper into one local district’s efforts to keep their schools racially and socio-economically integrated. These future leaders read Board policies and reports, studied recent demographic and housing trends, and reviewed state and national integration laws. They examined the rationale behind the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the University of Michigan’s *Grutter v. Bollinger* case (2003) and described the educational benefits of diversity as documented by research and argued by the seventy-five amicus briefs filed in support of the Law School’s race-based admissions policies. Chapter 10 further discusses the implications of the *Grutter* decision on race-conscious decisions, on “choice” integration programs, and on increased diversity strategies in K-12 schooling based on the requirements of compelling interest and policies that are narrowly tailored.

The book concludes with a call for action—a call for social justice, equity, and excellence in U.S. schools—a call for all professors of educational leadership and all school principals to become transformative leaders—a call for all educators to serve as change agents that analyze cultural and political aspects that have permitted longstanding social inequalities to, not only proliferate but, become institutional ideological belief systems. The purpose of this book is “to provide future and current school leaders with the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions that promote best practice” (School Leadership Series)—best practice that links educational equity with social equity, best practice that engages the school and community in confronting issues of social justice, best practice that avoids political traps, and fights instead for substantive educational improvements for all students so that no child is left behind.

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