

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Praise for *Transformative Leadership in Action*

'*Transformative Leadership in Action* offers a deeply reflective and reflexive account of the bravery and vulnerability necessary for substantive social change, meaningful personal transition, and groundbreaking policy initiatives in an increasingly uncertain world. Through brief research accounts, personal stories, and professional cases, the contributing scholars deftly capture the compassion and determination needed to continually refine one's allyship prowess. The ideas, tactics, and strategies collected here should be considered required reading for all aspiring allies, accomplices, change agents, advocates, and activists.'

Vivechkanand S. Chunoo, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and co-editor of *Changing the Narrative: Socially Just Leadership Education*

'An array of turbulence in the twenty-first century dictates that strong, confident voices rise up and address the matters of the day – dominance, privilege, social justice, activism, allyship – and, without wavering, advocate for social change. The editors and authors in this brilliant collection, masterfully do just that. This is a must have, must read for scholars, practitioners, students, humanitarians, and others whose goal it is to protect our collective humanity by putting transformative leadership into action.'

Donnette J. Noble, Ph.D., Voss Distinguished Professor of Leadership Studies/ Director of Civic Learning and Engagement/Associate Professor of Leadership Studies – Fort Hays State University

'This timely book goes beyond transformational leadership as a conceptual framework to transformative leadership as a call to action that involves taking steps to elevate the human condition toward greater equity and justice. Well-documented, informative, personal, inclusive, and provocative, the authors offer a book aimed at helping students heed a call to action to make the world a better place.'

Barry Z Posner, Michael J. Accolti, S.J. Chair, Professor of Leadership, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, and Co-Author, *The Leadership Challenge*

'This is an incredible resource for leaders and leadership educators in all contexts looking to engaging in complex conversations about transformative change.'

Kathy L. Guthrie, Associate Professor and Director of Leadership Learning Research Center, Florida State University, and co-editor of *Changing the Narrative: Socially Just Leadership Education*

‘For those from privileged background who want to be authentic allies to liberation movements, *Transformative Leadership in Action* provide practical guidelines and examples of authentic allyship. This book adds to our understanding of social change leadership in both the university and the wider community.’

Drick Boyd, Professor Emeritus, Urban Studies, Eastern University

‘*Transformative Leadership in Action* is a book of uncommon courage, depth, and gravity. In the wake of the unfulfilled promises of democratic nations, organizations, and groups of all forms, here we find an antidote, a curative effect helping us become more whole and more capable of answering the most difficult responsibilities of the present day. The leadership and practice involved in liberatory and transformative life comes to the fore, reshaping that which has failed to enliven the best in the human community, *Transformative Leadership in Action* reaches into the heart of humanity not only to strengthen our collective heart, but to lead us forward and upward into a new dawn in which we more closely embody the prophetic essence Martin Luther King Jr. spoke so deeply of: that the content of our character would make us capable of transcending the chaos of the times.’

Shann Ray Ferch, PhD, Gonzaga University, USA

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Allyship, Advocacy & Activism

Edited by

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2020

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83909-523-8 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83909-520-7 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83909-522-1 (Epub)

ISSN: 2058-8801 (Series)



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Certificate Number 1985
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We dedicate this book to our moms, Donna Allesandro Boitz and Peggy Mahoney McKee for teaching us through their example that justice and equity were everyone's responsibility and should be everyone's life work. And to Ainslee Bruce; John, Lydia, and Faith McKee; and Regina Le-McKee in hopes that they won't need to transform their world.

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PREFACE

As we put final edits on this text, people around the world are joining the call for transformative change in policing. As we write this preface, 14 of the 15 paperback nonfiction best sellers are about white supremacy, racism, and anti-racism. People are feeling the mandate for deep equitable change and they are heeding the call for moral courage. They are taking to the streets in protest, developing policy asks that call for radical change in policing or defunding of the police, organizing phone banks and email campaigns, reading, listening to, and promoting the work of experts in anti-racism, and calling on their friends and family to join them. For generations, these transformative leadership skills have been taught in ally, advocate, and activist communities – in places of worship, at organizer camps, in field offices, across kitchen tables, and in classrooms.

Transformative Leadership in Action is a text for the teaching of transformative leadership. As such, it incorporates the theoretical framework for transformative leadership, pedagogy for teaching transformative leadership as learner, ally, advocate, and activist identities, tales from the field to serve as examples, and case studies for students to analyze. Leadership educators and students can use this text to explore what it means to be a transformative leader and the necessary competencies and behaviors to enact transformative leadership.

This text begins with Dr Carolyn Shields' *Leading to Transform Our World* to explain what transformative leadership is and then proceeds to Dr Jennifer Tilghman-Havens' *Disrupting Dominance: Privilege, Positionality, and Possibilities for Shared Power* to position transformative leadership as essential to leadership education. We then delve into a program designed to develop transformative leaders and follow that with pedagogy and activities to support the development of identities within transformative leadership – learners, allies, advocates, and activists.

It is our hope that the readers of this book will find it to be useful in a few ways. First, that the theoretical chapters provide you with solid groundwork from which to start (or continue) your leadership journey. Next, that the pedagogy chapters provide a roadmap to guide your journey. Lastly, that the case studies challenge you and that the tales from the field inspire you, wherever you are, to transform your communities. Finally, know that your commitment to transformative leadership gives us hope. Because of you dear reader, the world is on its way to a better place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To *Emerald Publishing*, *Debra DeRuyter*, and the *ILA*, our deepest gratitude for taking a chance on first time authors/editors who wanted to do something a “little different.” Your patience with our many questions and your guidance throughout the process will be forever appreciated. To *our authors/contributors*, your work creating a more just and equitable world inspires us!

From Jacklyn

Being able to thank the people who made this book possible brings into stark focus what an embarrassment of riches surrounds me. To our Department Chair *Dr Carolyn Dunn*, thank you for giving me the space to grow as an educator and practitioner of leadership and justice. Much of my work is possible because of your consistent championing, mentorship, and support. A particular debt of gratitude to *Dr Byron Green*. Your bravery put me on the very first step of this journey. I will be forever grateful to you. To the *Oaks Leadership Scholars past and present*, you inspired all of this! You give me hope that a brighter day is coming because you’re working for it! To my husband *Danny* & daughter *Ainslee*, I love you so much. Thank you for your patience and grace as deadlines loomed and I asked for “just a few more minutes” at the laptop, for listening to ideas (good and bad) and inspiring me to make change. And finally, to my *co-editor/co-author*, who knew a terrible diversity training experience would one day lead to this? Grateful for your friendship, your support, your insight, and your wit. Thanks for pushing me to be a better educator. You’re the best!

From Katherine

I am lucky to have so many people to thank for their support on this book and the work that shaped it. To my **co-editor/co-author**, for inviting me to a coffee/tea chat in the middle of a hurricane and then sponsoring me into a career as a leadership educator. I’m thankful for your friendship, your

guidance, your support, and your 1990s sing-along skills. You rock! Speaking of amazing women who lift other women, thank you to our department head and mentor, **Dr Carolyn Dunn**, for the opportunities and support you provide for me to have and pursue big ideas and for your example of leadership. 'Tis grand. To our **Oaks Leadership Scholars past and present**, I'm excited to live in the world you are building.

To my friends, who have taken their time and energy to teach me and others, I know those are acts of love and I promise to keep learning. To my parents, **Peggy and Rich**, for their lifelong example of standing up for what they believe and for raising me to be brave. And finally, to my husband, **Jonathan**, for his tireless support of my work and snacking and his endless patience.

Chapter 1

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

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LEADING TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

CAROLYN M. SHIELDS

Traditional leadership theories are inadequate for meeting the present challenge. Of the commonly discussed theories, only the concept of transformative leadership appears to provide an appropriate direction. (Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991, p. 96)

* * *

Transformative leadership is characterized by its activist agenda and its over-riding commitment to social justice, equality, and a democratic society. (van Oord, 2013, p. 422)

* * *

For over 30 years, as the above quotations suggest, some leadership scholars have asserted a belief in the potential of transformative leadership to create equitable change; yet in this century, its potential is still unrealized. Perhaps, this is because the theory is comprehensive and complex. Its focus on advocacy and activism for justice and equity require practitioners to act with moral courage, recognizing the potential for both push-back and considerable rewards as they work to transform workplaces and communities.

This chapter will briefly explain the origins of the theory, clarify its fundamental characteristics, and offer some insight into its potential as a vehicle for social change. It will demonstrate that transformative leadership theory (TLT) responds to the current sense of alienation, marginalization, or even oppression expressed by so many people throughout the world by offering a vision of hope and solidarity for an interdependent world. This chapter will begin with a very brief overview of some of today's challenges and the need for socially just, activist-oriented leadership that will not only improve organizations but, as argued above, successfully meet today's challenges.

NEEDED: A NEW APPROACH

More than 30 years ago, Maxine Green expressed the need to teach

to the end of arousing a consciousness of membership, active and participant membership in a society of unfulfilled promises – teaching for what Paulo Freire used to call “conscientization” (1970), heightened social consciousness, a wide-awakeness that might make injustice unendurable. (1988, p. xxx)

Yet, I was surprised to find, when I used this quotation at a major leadership conference, that people were confused. One attendee actually interrupted the presentation asking, “What do you mean by unfulfilled promise?” It had seemed so obvious. America was founded on the principle of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all; yet, wealth and income gaps have been increasing annually not only in the United States, but in many developed countries; urgent cries of “Black lives matter” reflect the still disproportionate arrests and incarceration of people of color; terrorist incidents occur with frightening regularity; new diseases and their antidotes have raised the cost of prescription drugs beyond the reach of many who need them; thousands are homeless and others are faced with urban blight or rural displacement. And these are only a few of the many concerns that reflect the unfulfilled promises of a world in which too many still cannot live in safety, peace, and economic security.

The world in which most of our food was produced by family farms, in which manual labor was valued, and in which “community” implied a homogeneous ethnic background, language, and religious belief, seems like a long-ago fairy tale. Nevertheless, in reality, it was also a world of slavery, of classism, of industrialization in which many were exploited, devalued, and excluded, and in which some were advantaged while others were marginalized, unable to fully participate in the goods and benefits of a democratic society. Today’s world may look more diverse, but inequitable outcomes persist. Almost 70% of us do not know our neighbors who may look unlike us, speak a different language, or practice a different religion from ourselves (Matthews, 2018). We are often filled with fear – fear of the those who have been displaced by conflict, fear about jobs being moved overseas; fear about the rapid destruction of agricultural lands and rain forests, decline in the size of glaciers, and impending extinction of many plants and animal species.

We are concerned about a world in which more people feel isolated than ever before, in which hate groups abound (SPLC, 2019), in which civility seems elusive, and in which selfishness and individualism still protect privilege at the expense of both the environment and groups of people who, for historic reasons relating to identity markers, cannot access power and hence cannot fully participate in democratic life.

The need for change is great and often seems overwhelming. Yet, after centuries and decades of attempts at reform, thousands of books and theories about what characterizes good leadership or offering “seven steps” to being a good leader, society is still marked by uncertainty, volatility, and disparity. How have we reached this point and what can we do about it?

A Brief Trajectory of Leadership Theories

Scholars often trace the beginning of thinking about leadership to the stratagem of military leaders such as Sun Tzu, Napoleon, or Alexander the Great. Some suggest that Plato’s discussion of what makes a good leader and how to educate him marks the beginning of leadership studies. Yet, despite the fact that thinking about and studying leadership is centuries old, for our purposes, formal studies of administration may be said to have begun with the management studies of the early twentieth century. These early conceptions drew heavily on ideas from scientific management theories as well as transactional approaches to leadership which tended to emphasize exchange, division of labor between workers and “bosses,” time and motion studies, and the notion of a scalar chain as the appropriate structure for meaningful organizational communication. In these approaches, administrators did the thinking and the workers performed what was often manual or heavy labor (Fayol, [1916]1997; Taylor, [1912]1990). Although widely critiqued, the influence of these approaches still persists in business and industry, in governmental and nonprofit organizations, as well as in educational institutions and may be seen in top-down managerial approaches aimed at exercising control over an organization or a group of people.

Administration, management, and leadership were seen as synonyms, with the desired outcomes, regardless of the term used, being efficiency, effectiveness, and profit, often with little regard to the disparate and lived experiences of workers or participants and without consideration of how power and

privilege perpetuate the status quo. Nevertheless, with management theorists like Mary Parker Follett ([1940]1973) and others, values and more collaborative and participatory approaches simmered under the surface.

By 1978, when James McGregor Burns wrote his seminal book, *Leadership*, there was recognition that a new approach was needed. He first described the heavy reliance on transactions and then introduced a new approach he called *transforming leadership*, an approach he believed responded to the need for a revolution – “a complete and pervasive transformation of an entire social system” (p. 202) and “*real change* – that is, a transformation to the marked degree in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives” (1978, p. 414, italics in original).

In the next decade, Foster, too, recognized the futility of overemphasizing managerial functions and argued that

The idea of leadership as a transforming practice, as an empowerment of followers, and as a vehicle for social change has been taken, adapted, and co-opted by managerial writers so that now leadership appears as a way of improving organizations, not of transforming our world. (1989, p. 45)

Leadership, he believed, needed to be “fundamentally addressed to social change and human emancipation” (1986, p. 48), to be “critically educative,” and to not “only look at the conditions in which we live” but decide how to change them (p. 185).

Twenty years later, Oakes and Rogers picked up Foster’s critique of managerial approaches and decried what they saw as the continued overemphasis on rational and technical reform. They called for more activist and more community-based approaches to leadership and change and argued that:

Technical changes by themselves, even in the hands of committed and skillful “change agents” or backed by court orders, are too weak to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of racial inequality. At root, the cultural norms of meritocracy and the politics of privilege are impervious to so puny attack. (2006, pp. 21–22)

Although the above statement highlights racial inequality, the premise holds for other kinds of inequality including social class, religion, language, culture, as well as environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Oakes and Rogers go on to argue that

when educators step in and speak and act for less powerful communities, they do nothing to build the local community power necessary to change the cultural and political asymmetries that sustain the very [...] inequities they seek to disrupt. (2006, p. 31)

Oakes and Rogers argue that the work of John Dewey can provide some guidance for moving forward, in that Dewey calls for a “revitalized public” and “an agenda of activist, educative politics” that could build a new social order. They argue that Dewey’s participative social inquiry requires engaging those most affected by inequality, ensuring access to knowledge and its construction, adopting a critical stance, and developing a transformative goal (pp. 39–41).¹ With them, I posit that an activist reform strategy, including a new approach to leadership, is necessary to dislodge the inequities firmly entrenched by a long history of overt discrimination combined with often unacknowledged implicit bias and privilege. This is exactly what *TLT*, emerging from Burns’ (1978) *transforming leadership* is intended to do.

An Overview of Transformative Leadership

Based on the writing and interpretations of numerous scholars in countries throughout the globe, transformative leadership

Begins with critical reflection and analysis and moves through enlightened understanding to action – action to redress wrongs and to ensure that all members of an 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. (Shields, 2010, p. 572)

TLT as it has more recently been articulated is a comprehensive approach to leadership based on two fundamental premises or hypotheses and eight specific tenets. Although sometimes articulated in educational terms for leaders of schools and formal educational organizations (Shields, 2020), the premises may be broadly stated as followed:

1. The first premise is that whenever participants in an organization feel disrespected, excluded, or marginalized, are worried about how they will be treated, or what failure might mean for their social or cultural group,

they will be unable to work to their full potential, to fully participate, and hence, their individual achievement will be limited.

2. The second premise is that when people are both encouraged and enabled to participate fully in the deliberative processes and actions of an institution or organization, capacity and civic participation are developed, and our very democratic society is strengthened.

To achieve these two outcomes, the following eight tenets help leaders to work toward desirable socially just, inclusive, equitable, and excellent outcomes for their organization as well as for more global transformation:

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change;
- the need to deconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice and to reconstruct them in equitable ways;
- the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;
- an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;
- a focus on democracy, emancipation, equity, and justice;
- an emphasis on interconnectedness, interdependence, and global awareness;
- the necessity of balancing critique with promise; and
- the call to exhibit moral courage. (Shields, 2016)

Taken together, the tenets offer guidance for leaders wanting to effect change. They are not, however, a series of sequential steps or prescriptions. They do not prescribe either what to do, or how to do it, but ask leaders to ground their practices in a desire for the kind of revolution that Burns called for – revolution he argued later that responds “to the billions of the world’s people in the direst want” (2003, p. 2). Nevertheless, it is important to begin with the first two tenets and then to determine how to proceed. As a whole, TLT asks leaders to work *with* others, to build capacity, to develop other leaders (not followers) to achieve a desired and equitable outcome. Transformative leaders are not only those who hold formal positions of leadership but also those who exercise leadership through their influence in multiple, informal spheres. Moreover, TLT requires leaders to engage in ongoing deep and critical reflection, thoughtful and respectful dialogue, sometimes courageous confrontation, and consistent action.