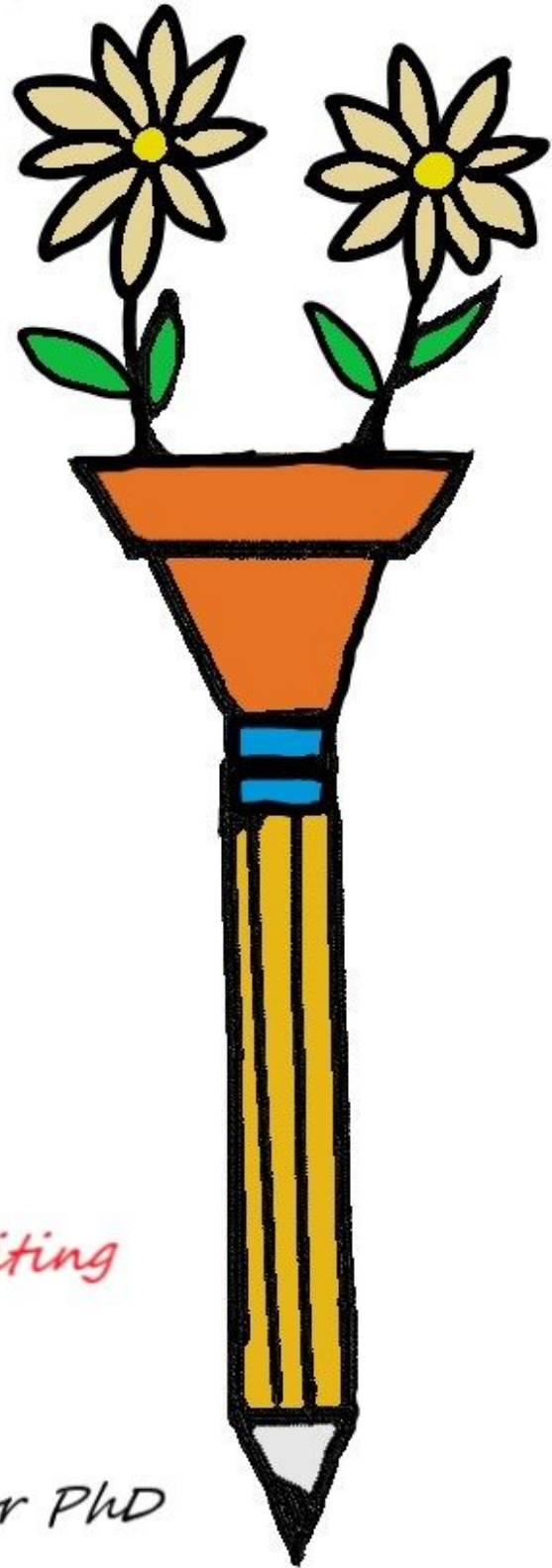


Growing
a
Writing
Practice

Non-Extractivist Writing

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Growing a Writing Practice: Non-Extractive Writing

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Introduction: Non-Extractivist Writing

I don't know how many times I have heard of students desperate to write a paper and not knowing where to start. They read the assignment, create a thesis statement, then seek out information that supports that thesis statement, writing quickly and under pressure, then rush about trying to cite what they inserted and slap together a works cited page. The authors of those articles cited are not really considered or read deeply for learning. What is needed to confirm a belief is extracted and the authors given brief citation and then dismissed. They receive the grade and the paper is thrown away and forgotten. This is where we first learn that confirmation bias is fine and that it's ok to extract what we need from others without consideration. This is extractivist writing. This is bias confirming not learning.

Sound familiar?

I always received good marks on my writing. I was lucky. I was privileged. I grew up speaking English and with a middle school English teacher. I have always been curious. I enjoyed the journey of learning. I especially enjoyed learning that challenged what I already believed and thought. In my mind, it wasn't learning unless it changed me.

But through my 32 years of teaching, I've realized that we teach writing wrong. As a matter of fact, we don't actually teach writing. We teach grammar conventions. We teach parts of speech. We teach punctuation. We teach vocabulary. But we don't actually teach people how to write, let alone well or on demand. The writing courses I have taken throughout my life were merely a confirmation that I could write. Grades were not based on what I learned or tools I mastered, but how well I wrote already.

We are also not taught how to do research. We are taught how to confirm an existing belief or bias. We are taught to begin with a hypothesis and then seek information that either proves or disproves that hypothesis. This assumes that there are only those two, binary, options. This deductive form of research is quite common. But we are also taught to begin with a particular example or instance, seek out other similar examples or instances and draw larger conclusions from that. Again, this excludes swaths of information in a bias-confirming approach. After we do the research, we are taught to insert quotations or data that backs our findings. Then make sure we include everyone we quote in a works cited page. Most people write the works cited last.

This book takes writing in a completely different direction. Inspired by Indigenous ways of knowing, 32 years of teaching in higher education, a PhD complete with dissertation, a book, 40 years of speech and debate, and creates a system of research and writing that offers tools to write well on demand, regardless of the topic in a non-extractivist way.

The best teachers don't lecture but show and take the journey with the student. Each time I teach this course, I write a paper alongside the students, showing my work. The students see, in

real-time, how an interest turns into research and then into a paper. Throughout this book, I will include examples from my own research.

Creative Writing Prompts

Throughout this guide there will be creative writing prompts. If you've ever stared at a blank computer screen and thought "I don't know where to begin" or "I just can't even start". Consider this, we warm up our bodies before we exercise. We warm up our voices before we speak or sing. We warm up our cars in winter before we drive. Yet, we expect our minds to work at top efficiency on specific tasks without any warmup. Writing prompts allow our brains to adjust to writing on demand. Consider writing creatively for five minutes before you must write for another purpose. Stop creative writing when the time sounds even if you have other thoughts. Keeping those thoughts primes the mental pump for the next time you write. We tend to write until we are empty and yet, we'd never let our phones die or our cars run out of gas and yet we do this with our minds all the time.

Activities

Note: If you read my first book, you'll know I begin with an activity. This activity informs the process. All learning begins with self-reflection and experiential-based learning offers the best way to both do and reflect.

I. Asking Good Questions

Activity

We all have things we want to learn more about. We harbour burning life questions or curiosities. Write a list of 10 questions you want to research.

Blank Pages, Burning Questions, and the Brain Train

Epistemology is how people know what they know. How do we ask questions and then seek answers? The first step to understanding how each of us thinks is unique is to write questions. If we don't understand how we think or how our unique brain works, then all research becomes difficult.

1. **The Brain Train.** Most students have what I call a Brain Train. They begin with one question and the brain takes off down that track generating similar questions. Soon the student has a page of questions. However, they are all similar in nature or content. A student may begin with "Why do trees create rings?" The next question might be "How is maple syrup created from maple trees?" Then, "How do trees know when to begin to produce leaves?" and "How do trees survive in harsh winters without leaves for sunlight?" The Brain Train is now at full speed and all the questions will be on this particular line. I coach these students to make another list on another day, or perhaps each day, and then create a list of questions that is varied but researchable. The brain train is on a different track each day and by sampling from one day to another, a more varied list of questions is created.
2. **Burning Questions.** Approximately 1/3 of students will have a list of questions ready. These are questions they've been meaning to research but haven't had time or been given license to pursue them as more than a passing fancy. These questions tend to be more philosophical such as "How can the world recover from the current environmental crisis?" But the next question will not be related except that it's been floating around in the person's mind for some time such as "How can we as a world build peace?" These are indeed important questions. However, they tend to be what a colleague once called "Wicked World Problems". That means that first they are too broad to research well or on demand and there is so much

philosophical debate that a functional understanding is not yet possible. While these are valuable questions, they are cumbersome, unanswerable, globally diverse, impossible questions. The student is proud that they've created a varied list of questions, not realizing they've also created an impossible list of questions. I coach these students to try to make their questions smaller, with defined research criteria.

3. **The Blank Page.** Finally, a smaller portion of students sit with a blank page. They sit frustrated as others seem to take off and write their questions easily and quickly. They feel the pressure and begin to doubt themselves. Why can't I come up with questions? But given time, a different environment, and the right framing of the assignment, students always come up with questions. Typically, not 10, but perhaps five solid, varied, researchable questions. This student struggles with how to begin. The classroom environment is not ideal for their mental digestion and the system shuts down. I coach these students that it's ok to not have questions now. Activities done in class also have a later due date. As they go through their day, often a question will pop up. I urge them to write it down. These students often undervalue their questions, thinking their questions aren't good enough because they come slowly along with other stimuli. However, these are often the strongest links to true curiosity.

The best questions to research are exploratory questions, not binary ones. A simple yes or no produces a false binary and limits understanding. However, asking questions that begin with how allows the researcher a look into processes. A question of why allows for the exploration of explanation, justification, causation, or motivation. Questions involving when offer timelines and rich historical sequences if all information is available. Questions involving where allow for geographical or cultural research. Less interesting are questions that involve what, as they merely identify and questions of who often result in a limited understanding of individuals and circumstances.

Such questions are best pursued when a student has a vague idea of what it is they seek. With no reference point, the pursuit of learning can be a journey without a destination or compass. More importantly, we must learn that a good question is difficult to draft.

I use the notes function on my smartphone to document questions as they come up in day-to-day life. I quickly type them in and know that the thought has been captured so that later, I can more fully frame the question.

In class, after questions are written, we discuss the different approaches to questions, it's important to learn to identify a question that can be researched from one that cannot. But how do you know if a question is researchable or not? First, putting the question in a search engine and looking at the number of results is a good test. Results over 1m are an indication that the topic is too broad. Second, breaking the question down into two- or three-word search terms and putting that into a search engine is also a good test and will likely produce more results than the question.

However, more pragmatically, these searches may produce a list of alternative vocabulary that can be used as discipline-specific search terms.

Categorizing Questions

Categorizing questions can help with the research process. Shifting questions from one form to another creates a diversity in approach that assists in clarity.

- Qualitative questions: These questions ask why, how, when, who, and what. These questions seek to explore a topic not merely answer a question.
- Quantitative questions: These questions focus on how frequently, how many, and what's the relationship. However, these questions don't seek to explore a topic. These questions are often yes or no questions. They seek to validate or invalidate by numbers.
- Descriptive questions: Seek to understand a process or situation through a thorough description. These questions are often associated with things like accidents or topics like climate crisis.
- Interpretive questions: These questions seek to explore how a topic can be viewed differently.
- Comparative questions: These questions seek to compare or contrast things.

After questions have been drafted, it's beneficial to create a list of search terms. For this, an understanding of how search engines work is needed. Search engines can only produce results of the words put into the search engine. Typically called a Boolean String, the list of words included in the search engine will result in occasions where those words appear together and typically in that sequence. Higher Education has assumed that because the generation currently enrolled was born with the internet they understand innately how the internet works. But ask the previous generation how TV works and they begin to realize that they had to be taught how to search using search engines and to search for useful and credible information.

After creating, evaluating, and considering your questions, create a list of search terms or phrases you might use to research these questions.

I maintain a list of questions and search terms. When I am stuck for something to research, I return to the list.

Leadership: Ideas and Questions

1. What are global concepts of leadership and how do they differ?
 2. What is divergent thinking, and can it be taught?
 3. What was the name of places BEFORE colonization?
 4. What is the role of art in a media-drenched society?
 5. What are the subtle signs of ageism?
 6. What thinkers have challenged convention, why and how?
 7. What is the role of higher education in an increasingly education on demand world?
 8. What are the differences between pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic education?
 9. What are the lessons learned from a global pandemic?
 10. What are the Christian, Eurocentric, patriarchal, northern hemisphere, science-dominated cultural implications for the world?
- What are global concepts of leadership and how do they differ?
 - Leadership
 - Trait Leadership
 - Trained Leadership
 - Leadership systems
 - Indigenous Leadership
 - Women In Leadership
 - Indigenous Women in Leadership

Questions for Life

1. What is the full meaning of living in a good way (minoopetatswin)
2. Why do some medicine wheels have four segments and some 28?
3. How can narrative be incorporated more into academic environments?
4. What authors are writing about Indigenous approaches to writing and research?
5. How can diverse epistemologies be embraced in educational settings?
6. How can ceremony be incorporated more into my classes?
7. How can mindfulness be incorporated more into my classes?
8. Who is writing about Indigenous experiential learning and writing?
9. How can I incorporate more activism into my classes?
10. What is the role of activism within education?

Research Question and Search Terms

- How can I incorporate more activism into my classes?
- What are some common practices of oppression in higher education?
- What are the oppressive implications of the Bell Curve?
- What is the Bell Curve?

Search term ideas

- Bell Curve as Oppression
- Bell Curve as Systemic Oppression
- History of the Bell Curve
- Oppression in Education
- Systemic Oppression in Education

Writing Prompt

Jack looked up at the huge tree. He had been looking for the source of a humming sound.

2. Analyzing Content

Returning to our 10 questions and search terms, how can we know if the content produced by a search is valid? To examine this, we will do several linked activities.

Activity

First, using the search terms generated from one of your questions, select an article to use for the next few activities.

1. *Assess the Source*

Is the source Credible, Current, and is the information Concrete? This is classic journalism training. We first assess if a source is credible. Now, before you assume that the source is credible, look up the word “credible” in a standard dictionary. You may be surprised. We often assume credible is trustworthy, but that is indeed not the definition. The definition is believable. How can we determine if a source is trustworthy and not just credible? Once you have the article, search for the author’s name or the publications name. Reviews of these will give you some insight. Current is another matter. How current does information have to be to be useful? Historical information will not be recent, but is it still usable? However, the most recent information is often lacking reflection. News as entertainment channels currently report the most recent information, but it is often incomplete and sometimes unverified. The test for current is can the event or topic be examined in its entirety from beginning to end. Similarly, if there is contrary content, this is a good indication that the information is complete, considered, and relatively balanced. Concrete is the most difficult to determine. This involves examining the evidence to determine if it is hypothetical or data-driven. Asking questions about the validity and origin of data or evidence is essential.

2) *Highlight the Evidence*

Next, highlight the evidence provided. Anything that has a source attached in a citation is evidence. Is the bulk of that evidence hypothetical or data-driven? After highlighting the evidence, use a different colour highlighter and highlight the topic sentence for each paragraph. This allows the evidence to be separated from the assertion. Does the evidence support the assertion? This also reveals the structural strategy of the article. If the topic sentence is first, the paragraph is deductive, beginning with a large assertion and being supported by

smaller pieces of evidence. If the topic sentence concludes a paragraph, this is inductive. The inductive strategy presents evidence with a “therefore” kind of conclusion to the paragraph.

3. Claims, Grounds, and Backing Evidence

Finally, Toulmin’s diagramming of arguments provides unique insight into the claim (assertion), grounds (criteria), and backing (evidence) involved in the argument. In class, I use the example of pets. I assert that dogs are the best pets (claim). I suggest that because dogs are smart, loyal, loving, and easily trained they make the best pets (grounds). I then provide evidence such as service dogs and search and rescue dogs. I then point out that there are leaps in this argument. It is assumed that the grounds (criteria to prove the argument) are accepted by everyone. I point out that dogs are also needy. They have to be let out regularly, whereas cats can be on their own more often than dogs. Snakes can be left for days as they eat less frequently, and they do not require being let outside. The problem with the argument is that the criteria are assumed to be common to everyone.

These three activities cultivate a keen understanding of how information and research can be useful or can be flawed.

Writing Prompt

Physics tells us matter and energy can neither be created or destroyed.

3. Summarizing and Paraphrasing

An essential skill in researching and writing is learning how to summarize and paraphrase.

Activity

Choose a short document. I typically assign the [student rights](#) section of our student association website. It's best if the document you choose is a bulleted list. Highlight the bullets according to how you would group them for your use. Then, write a single paragraph summarizing the bullets. However, there can be no direct quotations requiring paraphrasing.

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Typically, two approaches emerge.

1. Students maintain the structure of the student rights and summarize the bullet points into sentences and paragraphs. These students rely heavily on the structure provided.
2. The second group of students summarize according to rights and where the rights fall short, producing only two paragraphs but involving more critical thinking and creating a new structure.

Both approaches are valuable and valid but for different reasons. Summarizing is a key skill, but choices must be made about what to focus on and what to leave out. This approach is best when an accurate representation of content is needed. However, reflection on content and the ability to reorder the content also provides insight.

A summary utilizes the same language, however, often eliminates redundant language or unnecessary disclaimers or introductions. Conversely, paraphrasing changes language. Sometimes paraphrasing is essential to decode jargon or incorporate parsimony. Both summarizing and paraphrasing practices nurture brevity but also broaden vocabulary. Can you write it briefly? Can you write it using different terms?

Denotative and Connotative Meaning

After you've written your summary and used some paraphrasing, look up some of the terms used in a standard dictionary. There are differences in meaning, not only between dictionaries but also, there's a difference between denotative (dictionary) meaning and connotative (culturally acquired) meaning. Summarizing and paraphrasing should never alter the meaning. Understanding that people may look up terms in a dictionary provides an additional lens on clarity, diversity, and inclusion. Incorporating cultural meaning or connotative meanings can lead to misunderstanding.

A classic example I use in class is the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It is frequently summarized and paraphrased and, in most cases, this alters the meaning of that amendment.

“A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” – US Constitution

Note that the amendment states that a “well regulated militia” is necessary and therefore justifies the right to bear arms. This has been summarized and paraphrased to mean that nearly anyone has the right to bear arms. Even background checks for criminality is considered an invasion of privacy. This connotative meaning differs greatly from the denotative meaning.

Writing Prompt

Just then, Anne felt the world go black and she felt herself falling.

4. A Learning Bundle

The extractivist approach to research has students seeking out proof for a hypothesis; and fishing for supportive data. This extractivist approach limits learning and exploits authors.

Activity

Based on your selected question and search terms and seeking broadly for contrary contributions, create a “works cited”. However, I don’t call it a works cited. This is dismissive. I call this gathering of authors and articles a Learning Bundle. These serve as my teachers. This isn’t a collection of articles from which I will extract quotations and data to support an existing hypothesis. Rather, this is a list of my teachers. I read all the authors and articles, making a schedule to read each one. Contrary or contradictory contributions are essential to balanced learning. Take some time and create a learning bundle of 10 articles. Schedule time each day to read and learn from these teachers.

In using this approach over the decades, students always ask why they weren’t taught this in school before. While reading 10 articles seems daunting at first, they quickly realize that all 10 articles are not quality articles. They ask if they can swap out a lower-quality article for another one. This is one of the key benefits of this approach. Researchers can see, early on, if an article is useful or not. Also, it reveals that somewhere along their educational journey, they’ve been taught they can’t swap out one article for another. This limits their learning. Instead, I tell students that 10 articles are assigned knowing that perhaps only six will survive vetting. One good article should lead researchers to examine that article’s references where they will find other quality contributions to their learning.

Here’s a quick tip. I typically demonstrate building a learning bundle using [Google Scholar](#). I type in one of their suggestions into the search bar and use what is generated for a conversation on ways to decide what to include in the learning bundle. Google Scholar includes the journal title, date of publication, number of other authors that have cited the article, as well as how the search terms appear within the text. Google Scholar offers a “cite” key, by clicking on it, six different forms of citation are available. A quick copy of the citation, some formatting adjustments, and the citation can be easily pasted into a word document learning bundle.

I typically require APA citation formatting for my courses. While building the learning bundle, I also teach APA, MLA, and Chicago citation styles. The students learn the formats and prepare their learning bundle. Students are typically surprised at how easy it is to build a learning bundle this way. Some educators suggest that Google Scholar uses incorrect formatting. This is why I suggest students double check each citation using [Purdue’s OWL site](#). Other educators suggest that using

Google Scholar in this way is cheating. However, tools change in education. I see this as just a new tool. Like calculators, slide rules, or word processors, it's just the latest tool.

Making their way through their reading list or learning bundle, students are encouraged to find a strange computer on which to conduct another search of their search terms. Computer systems today house an algorithm that seeks to find more of what we have selected previously. This feeds a bias. Seeking out a computer that does not know us, gives us the chance to check our research results.

Finally, as students make their way through their learning bundle, they become fans of certain authors and begin to seek out other information from that author. They ask if they can include the author's other works in their learning bundle even if they don't quote that article directly. I warn them that other educators will penalize them for including references that are not used in their papers. But then tell them that I have four such works included in all my learning bundles as these authors are foundational to how I do research. They are included in each learning bundle because, without these authors, my work would be very different. Only citing the works used in a paper is also extractivist. It limits the student to only quotations or data rather than epistemologies. This exclusion limits the lens of research methods and perpetuates constructs of confirmation bias. To avoid being accused of "padding" their references, I instruct students to use the required number of references, then add these foundational references in a separate section and label them accordingly.

One of the most common stumbling blocks for students is the works cited. This is a section of a paper where errors can quickly accumulate and sabotage otherwise good work. Double checking references, formats, dates, and correcting for alterations ensures the learning bundle is formatted correctly and remains error free.

Leadership Learning Bundle

De La Rey, C. (2005). Gender, women and leadership. *Agenda*, 19(65), 4-11.

Dennis, M. K., & Bell, F. M. (2020). Indigenous women, water protectors, and reciprocal responsibilities. *Social Work*, 65(4), 378-386.

Fredericks, B., & White, N. (2018). Using bridges made by others as scaffolding and establishing footings for those that follow: Indigenous women in the Academy. *Australian Journal of Education*, 62(3), 243-255.

[Gram-Hanssen, I. \(2021\). Individual and collective leadership for deliberate transformations: Insights from Indigenous leadership. *Leadership*, 17\(5\), 519-541.](#)

[Hardison-Stevens, D. E. \(2014\). *Knowing the indigenous leadership journey: Indigenous people need the*](#)

[academic system as much as the academic system needs indigenous people \(Doctoral dissertation, Antioch University\).](#)

[Huggins, J. \(2004\). Indigenous women and leadership: a personal reflection. *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 6\(1\), 5-7.](#)

[Lawrence, B., & Anderson, K. \(2005\). Introduction to” Indigenous Women: The State of Our Nations”. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, 29\(2\), 1-8.](#)

[Long, J. E. \(2017\). Framing indigenous leadership. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4\(6\).](#)

[Maranzan, K. A., Sabourin, A., & Simard-Chicago, C. \(2013\). A Community-Based Leadership Development Program for First Nations Women: Revaluing and Honoring Women’s Strengths. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 4\(2\).](#)

[Makokis, L. J. \(2001\). *Teachings from Cree Elders: A grounded theory study of Indigenous leadership*. University of San Diego.](#)

Rosile, G. A., M Boje, D., & Claw, C. M. (2018). Ensemble leadership theory: Collectivist, relational, and heterarchical roots from indigenous contexts. *Leadership*, 14(3), 307-328.

[Sandefur, G., & Deloria, P. J. \(2018\). Indigenous leadership. *Daedalus*, 147\(2\), 124-135.](#)

[Seemiller, C., & Murray, T. \(2013\). The common language of leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7\(1\), 33-45.](#)

Sones, R., Hopkins, C., Manson, S., Watson, R., Durie, M., & Naquin, V. (2010). The Wharerata Declaration—the development of indigenous leaders in mental health. *International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*.

Voyageur, C., Brearley, L., & Calliou, B. (2014). Restorying indigenous leadership: Wise practices in community development, 329-342.

[Waters, A. \(2003\). Introduction: Indigenous women in the Americas. *Hypatia*, 18\(2\), ix-xx.](#)

[Young, A. E. \(2006\). *Elders’ teachings on Indigenous leadership: Leadership is a gift* \(Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia\).](#)

Bell Curve Learning Bundle

[Ahmann, A. \(2020\). *The Childish Insult: An Unfinished Essay Discussing Children’s Oppression*](#)

[Arellano, L. \(2022\). Questioning the science: How quantitative methodologies perpetuate inequity in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 12\(2\), 116.](#)

Carrero Pinedo, A., Caso, T. J., Rivera, R. M., Carballea, D., & Louis, E. F. (2022). Black, indigenous, and

trainees of color stress and resilience: The role of training and education in decolonizing psychology. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 14(S1), S140.

[David, E. J. R., Schroeder, T. M., & Fernandez, J. \(2019\). Internalized racism: A systematic review of the psychological literature on racism's most insidious consequence. *Journal of Social Issues*, 75\(4\), 1057-1086.](#)

[Darling-Hammond, L. \(1995\). Cracks in the bell curve: How education matters. *Journal of Negro Education*, 340-353.](#)

De Lissovoy, N. (2008). Conceptualizing oppression in educational theory: Toward a compound standpoint. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, 8(1), 82-105.

[Fendler, L., & Muzaffar, I. \(2008\). The history of the bell curve: Sorting and the idea of normal. *Educational Theory*, 58\(1\), 63-82.](#)

Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury publishing USA.

[Glymour, C. \(1998\). What went wrong? Reflections on science by observation and The Bell Curve. *Philosophy of Science*, 65\(1\), 1-32.](#)

[Grant, S., Leverett, P., D'Costa, S., Amie, K. A., Campbell, S. M., & Wing, S. \(2022\). Decolonizing school psychology research: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78\(2\), 346-365.](#)

[Kolluri, S., & Tichavakunda, A. A. \(2022\). The counter-deficit lens in educational research: Interrogating conceptions of structural oppression. *Review of Educational Research*, 00346543221125225.](#)

Newby, R. G., & Newby, D. E. (1995). The bell curve: Another chapter in the continuing political economy of racism. *American behavioral scientist*, 39(1), 12-24.

Ohito, E. O., & Oyler, C. (2017). Feeling our way toward inclusive counter-hegemonic pedagogies in teacher education. *Teacher education for the changing demographics of schooling: Issues for research and practice*, 183-198.

Price, J. D., & Cutler, C. E. (2001). Games intellectuals play: Authority, power, and intelligence. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 27(4), 477-495.

Roberts, P. (2008) Liberation, Oppression and Education: Extending Freirean Ideas. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 42(1), pp. 83-97.

Writing Prompt

You just won \$62m in the lottery. Now what?

5. Envelopes

Activity

As you read the articles in your learning bundle, begin to document the themes, topics, or concepts that come out of the reading.

I begin with sticky notes. I write the idea or theme on a sticky note and stick it to my office wall. As I continue to read, some ideas or themes repeat. On these notes I also attach a number; how often did the theme appear? From these sticky notes stuck to a wall, I can begin to organize the content of the learning bundle. I might organize the content by frequency of appearance, by point and counterpoint, or by progression or chronology. Using this approach, I can begin to construct an organized structure for what I'm learning. When I have a structure that works or when I've finished reading the learning bundle, I convert the sticky notes to a Word document. It looks like a very simple outline.

As I began to write my dissertation, my challenge was finding a way to organize the content that was adjustable and easy to use as a tool for writing. Happily, I found Dr. Sonja Foss' book [Destination Dissertation](#) at this time and attended a workshop she conducted. Her method utilized actual envelopes. Data, evidence, or quotations were highlighted and cut out of the article and placed in envelopes. As you begin to write, you can organize the quotations. This method worked well for me, but as technology progressed and I used this system more, it was clear that there were additional steps that could be added and the messy parts of actually cutting apart articles was unnecessary. But, as her work was foundational to the writing approach I now teach, I find it personally important to be respectful of the origins of the process.



Ethical Review

At this point, it's also a good idea to conduct an ethical review of all the content. Too often, we do not consider the larger ethical issues involved in writing. We must remember that all data is flawed but some data is useful. What does an ethical review consider? I advise students to investigate authors and journals. Consider paywalls and who the author is. How can authors inadvertently produce unethical content?

- Perpetuating bias
- Perpetuating harm
- Excavating articles
- Excavating data
- Research for research sake devoid of consideration or contribution
- What assumptions does the existing research make?
- Who conducted the research? Go creeping and find out who and where they are.
- Where is the research published and do those journals or websites hold bias?
- Are there perspectives that are dismissed?

Envelopes Example – Leadership Themes and Topics

1. Discussion of Western Leadership Research
 - a. Definitions
 - b. Definitions disagree
 - c. 2 schools of thought: learned capabilities or natural traits
 - d. All studies have functionally focused on men without stating it
2. Discussion of the Common problems of Colonizing leadership
 - a. Common Tropes
 - i. Women lead differently
 - ii. Woman must give up her femininity to lead
 - iii. Military teaches leadership naturally
 - iv. Hierarchy
 - v. Glass Ceiling
 - vi. Community disengagement

3. Shifts in Leadership
4. Indigenous Leadership
5. Ogimaaekwe

Envelopes Example: Bell Curves

1. What is the Bell Curve
 - a. Statistical errors and assumptions of original article
 - b. Structural assumptions from original article
2. Systems of use
 - a. Flaws of systems of use
 - i. Power
 - ii. Privilege
 - iii. Racism
 - iv. Internalized Racism
3. Changing multicultural identities
4. Evolving understanding of systems of oppression

Writing Prompt

Sam stood perfectly still not believing her eyes. In front of her stood her father.

6. Outlining

Activity

Using the envelopes created in the previous chapter, return to the learning bundle and begin to put quotations and evidence in the themes or categories created. Be sure to include the correct and complete in-text citation. Use the terms from your envelopes to construct the headings for an outline. There are several systems of outlining ranging from Roman numeral, alpha numeric to Scientific. Word has formatting for each.

Examples follow of using the envelope structure to organize key data, evidence, and quotations to start building your writing in an outline.

Outlines in this way become a way of organizing evidence or content. Quotations or data can easily be shifted or rearranged. It is easier to see redundant information and choose another strategy such as summarization. Outlines also demonstrate where there is missing information or perhaps insufficient information.

The most common errors when writing are errors of citation. In-text citation errors can add up quickly. Ensuring they are correct at the outline stage offers a level of security against errors.

Outline – Leadership

1. Discussion of Western Leadership Research

a. Definitions

i. “A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the followers to the organization’s mission and objective causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives” (Winston & Patterson, 2006, 7).

b. Definitions disagree

c. 2 schools of thought: learned capabilities or natural traits

d. All studies have functionally focused on men without stating it

i. “Leadership studies in the past few decades have come under increasing criticism for

maintaining outmoded constructs and for bearing less than scholastic integrity” (Barker, 2001, 469).

ii. “Conventional understanding of leadership has been systemically constructed from other conventional knowledge about social hierarchies, and about their command and control structures. This knowledge is then used to validate leadership theories without further critical analysis” (Barker, 2001, 473).

iii. “The canon of industrial era leadership theories is an adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church, and presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 471).

iv. “The industrial paradigm of leadership is based in an obsession with the persona of kings and conquerors that can be traced at least as far back as Biblical times” (Barker, 2001, 476).

v. “Leadership theory has been based in the understandable but incorrect perception of a direct cause-effect relationship between the leader’s abilities, traits, actions, and leadership outcomes” (Barker, 2001, 478).

vi. “The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by the position in a hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 478).

vii. “The problem with current leadership study is that it continues to focus excessively on superior/subordinate relationships to the exclusion of several functions that leaders perform and to the exclusion of organizational and environmental variables that are crucial to effectively leadership performance” (Barker, 2001, 474).

2. Discussion of the Common problems of Colonizing leadership

a. “Although difficult, it is important to have a good definition of leadership. It is one of the terms most widely used in many areas of human activity, including armed forces, business, politics, religion, and sports “(Silva, 2016, 1). ALL COLONIZING ACTIONS OR AGENTS

b. Common Tropes

i. Women lead differently

1) “I have found that there are two prevailing assumptions: the first is about leadership in general, that it is a construct that can be learned, and the second is about gender and leadership that women have a different leadership style compared to men” (de la Rey, 2005, 5).

2) “This perspective points to a distinctive leadership style associated with women, with characteristics that include being more participatory, democratic, more sensitive, nurturing and caring. Other characteristics associated with women’s leadership include good conflict management and interpersonal skills, being excellent listeners and showing tolerance and empathy” (de la Ray, 2005, 5).

ii. Traits concepts

1) “The traits commonly associated with leadership include: effective communication, task completion, responsibility, problem solving, originality, decision

making, action taking, passion, vision, ethics, humour, self-awareness, confidence, courage, experience and power” (de la Rey, 2005, 5).

iii. Woman must give up her femininity to lead

iv. Military teaches leadership naturally

1) “McClelland asserted in 1973 ‘Competency testing provided a better predictor of job success than intelligence testing and thus championed the competency movement’” (Seemiller and Murray, 2013, 33).

v. Hierarchy

1) “The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by position in a hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 478).

vi. Glass Ceiling

vii. Community disengagement

3. Shifts in Leadership

a. “A new framework for leadership studies can be built upon a direct, phenomenological experience of leadership that occurs prior to the creation or adaptation of conventional knowledge” (Barker, 2001, 483).

b. “Two key differences that distinguish the transforming system are that this system is not organized by strategic, rational thought, and b0 responds to change not as a disruptive irregularity, but as an integral element of the environment” (Barker, 2001, 487).

c. “Process and not structure is the vessel of leadership; chaos and complexity are not problems to be solved, they are the engines of evolution, adaptation, and renewal” (Barker, 2001, 489).

d. “First, leadership is a process that is not specifically a function of the person in charge. Second, leadership is a process of adaptation and of evolution; it is a process of dynamic exchange and the interchanges of value. Third, leadership is a process of energy, not structure” (Barker, 2001, 491).

4. Indigenous Leadership

a. “Ensemble leadership means every follower is a potential leader. Further, the distinction between leader and follower is blurred, in favour of a more collectivist understanding which avoids the oppositional dualism of individual/group” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

b. “Collectivism, dynamism, decenteredness, and heterarchy all are weak or missing in traditional leadership literature” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

c. “Roles of Humans: The indigenous world is non-human centric. Roles of nonhumans: Nonhumans are barely recognized in traditional leader literature, and at best, merely part of the furniture. Indigenous wisdom not only recognizes nonhuman life, but accords the natural world a starring role in providing wisdom and guidance. Relationships: We recognize that for many indigenous cultures, relationships are ends in themselves. Theories: Most traditional leadership literature still reflects cause-effect linearity, and the search for sameness and generalizability”

(Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 14).

d. “Leadership was everywhere, active in alternative – and often highly laudable forms” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

e. “Standing Rock suggested a more human set of leadership values: decentralization spirituality, self-deflecting humility, collectivism, the navigation of subgroup interests, and a sometimes contentious but epistemologically distinct diffusion of authority” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

f. “Questions are more readily talked to consensus rather than enunciated as a winning argument aimed at establishing the dominance of one position over another. It is less a question of convincing a powerful leader to take a particular action than convincing everyone of the rightness of a certain course” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 130).

5. Ogimaaekwe

a. “It is a native woman’s sacred obligation and responsibility to lead the way, through traditional women’s leadership and authority, to reclaiming the earth, humanity, and all our relations via an ecoethics of reciprocity” (Waters, 2003, xii).

6. Conclusions

- a. Leadership is not management
- b. Leadership is not for employment

Outline – Bell Curve

1. What is the Bell Curve?

a. Definitions

i. “A bell curve is a type of graph that is used to visualize the distribution of a set of chosen values across a specified group that tend to have a central, normal values, as peak with low and high extremes tapering off relatively symmetrically on either side” (TechTarget 2023)

ii. “Most of our school is still based on ‘normal’ distributions and Newtonian thinking, which breaks down reality into independent variables and cause and effect. This view of the world has permeated multiple disciplines, from medicine to statistics and management” (Gore 2022).

iii. “Most human activities, as well as many disciplines from physics and biology to linguistics, finance, and computer science, follow a Pareto distribution instead of a ‘normal’ Gaussian curve” (Gore 2022).

iv. “The joke that when Bill Gates walks into a bar, everyone in that bar becomes a millionaire on average, illustrates the point” (Gore 2022).

v. “This model holds that most phenomena occur around the middle point, while few occur at either the high or low extreme ends. An assumption of bell curve distribution permeates educational projects on several dimensions that far exceed the scope of the infamous book” (Fendler & Musaffar 2008, 63).

b. Statistical errors and assumptions

i. Price and Cutler (2001) present a literature review of the flaws of Hernstein and Murray’s work including criticisms of definitions of race and intelligence, problematic sources of data, flawed interpretation of data, leaps of logic amounting to hasty generalization fallacy, and funding for the work from sources with specific agendas.

ii. “Hernstein and Murray created a specific picture of the world: The intelligent control over themselves and society. They naturally do well in school. They gain opportunities to continue their schooling. They have choices about what profession they pursue, and once they begin working, they make good salaries. This money gives them choices about where to live and what amenities they can buy. They band together, because they attend the same colleges, they become leaders and exert control over society” (Price & Cutler 2001, 478).

iii. “The history of how quantitative epistemology came to be is rarely presented, discussed, or even mentioned in present day coursework” (Arellano 2022, 116).

iv. “For BIPOC communities, this usually means being compared to white peers. For women, this means being compared to men, and so on” (Arellano 2022, 116).

v. What is normal?

c. Social structural assumptions from the bell curve

i. “The bell curve supports three games (class systems) that are destructive” (Price & Cutler 2001, 488).

ii. “Hernstein and Murray attempted to turn back the wheels of time through asserting that there are significant differences between races and that these differences cannot be helped. The other frame that is sustained by the bell curve is that between men and women” (Price & Cutler 2001, 489).

iii. “Specifically, the creation of the construct of ‘intelligence’ was based on Eurocentric values and the subsequent creation of intelligence tests was designed to highlight the superiority of the white race, were normed on that population, and any responses that fell outside of that context were considered wrong and inferior” (Grant, et al. 2002, 348).

2. Systems of Oppression, Power and Privilege

a. Power

i. “Power may be defined as people’s access to resources that enhance their chances of getting what they need in order to lead safe, productive, fulfilling lives” (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058).

b. Privilege

i. "Privilege may be defined as unearned power that is only easily or readily available to some people simply as a result of their social group membership" (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058).

ii. "The assumption of the bell curve distribution allows for such concepts as acceptable rate of failure and the average student" (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63).

iii. "Naturalization of the bell curve is unjust because it perpetuates the inevitability of failure; we hold that the idea of failure should be attributed to popularly ascribed features instead" (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63).

iv. "The paradigms of oppression in educational research that I consider here are a) the model of cultural hegemony, b) the analysis of oppression as a matter of capitalist accumulation, c) the model of oppression as a matter of regulatory discursive norms" (Lissovoy 2008, 83).

c. Racism

i. "In schools, this systemic racism results in a series of structural and pedagogical injustices, including tracking, retention, low expectations for students of color, and generally the privileging of the needs of White students" (Lissovoy 2008, 87).

ii. "These standard methods of knowledge production and resulting knowledge products can cause harm amounting to epistemic violence" (Grant, et al. 2002, 350).

iii. "Our ideas are shaped by the social order. Under slavery and the plantation economy, the knowledge of the period reflected that social order and the social arrangements therein. Such oppression was deemed to be normal" (Newby & Newby 1995, 14).

iv. "As pointed out earlier, what passes for knowledge is not an isolated phenomenon but shaped by the political economy and social order of its day" (Newby & Newby 1995, 17).

v. "Our purpose here is to criticize one of the fundamental justifications of educational sorting practices, namely, the belief that a normal curve distribution is a representation of real things in nature" (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63).

d. Internalized Racism

i. "Eventually, members of the oppressed racial groups may no longer need society to perpetuate such inferiorizing messages, because they begin inferiorizing themselves in overt and subtle ways" (David, Schroeder, & Fernandez 2019, 1066).

3. Changing multicultural identities

4. Evolving understanding of systems of oppression

7. Writing Prompts

Throughout the guide, there have been writing prompts. With each prompt there are choices to make. The idea is simple; just write.

Activity

However, this time imagine you are in the worst possible situation you could be in. Perhaps you were travelling abroad and are now under arrest for drug trafficking. Or maybe you've been accused of a fatal hit and run. Now write three documents. The first is a journal entry documenting what happened and your responses. It should be the imagined truth. The second document is an email to the member of your family that is the least understanding. Finally, the third is a letter to a person in a position of authority who can help you.

Students often do this assignment with partners. I encourage this so that they become comfortable with peer edits and collaborative work. It's also more fun. Then, we debrief the work. First, students learn that they understand how to use different levels of formal tone depending on the reader. They know already what professional tone to use. They know already how to do a basic reader analysis. But we can ask better questions to further this such as what level of education does the reader possess? What is my relationship to the reader? How old is the reader? Where is the reader geographically located? Next, students see that they organized each document differently. The first is often chronological. This document focuses on the sequence of events. The second is topical. This document focuses on topics and events but not necessarily in chronological order. The third is often geographical. This often focuses on locations, assistance, and systems. Finally, students realize they also understand different modes of persuasion we learn from Aristotle: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. One document focuses on events and fault (ethos). Another will focus on emotional elements (pathos). Finally, one will focus on logic (logos).

Writing Prompt

Jim crouched as low as he could and stayed absolutely still.

8. Rough Draft

Activity

Using your envelopes and outline as if they were writing prompts, begin to draft your paper ignoring an introduction and conclusion. Begin at any point in your envelopes or outline and begin to add your analysis. Consider this part of writing as adding narration or curation to the content you've already assembled.

Here are some questions that may help.

- What does your data teach you?
- How do different authors compare?
- What is the progression of the topic?
- If we link two pieces of data, what do we learn?
- What authors contradict each other and how?

Also consider the format of the paper.

- Document should have 1" margins.
- Document should have 12 point font size.
- Document should use a professional font.
- Either indent or double space between paragraphs, but not both.
- Create a title page, running head, and insert page numbers.

Throughout the use of this approach, students have commented on how easy it was not only to write the paper, but to exceed the expected page count or word requirement. Editing for brevity is often easier than expounding to meet a minimum requirement.

Example: Leadership

Stepping Back and Stepping Up: Ogimaa Ekwe, Indigenous Women in Leadership

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

March, 2023

Envelopes

1. Discussion of Western Leadership Research
 - a. Definitions
 - b. Definitions disagree
 - c. 2 schools of thought: learned capabilities or natural traits
 - d. All studies have functionally focused on men without stating it
2. Discussion of the Common problems of Colonizing leadership
 - a. Common Tropes
 - i. Women lead differently
 - ii. Woman must give up her femininity to lead
 - iii. Military teaches leadership naturally
 - iv. Hierarchy
 - v. Glass Ceiling
 - vi. Community disengagement
3. Shifts in Leadership
4. Indigenous Leadership
5. Ogimaaekwe

Outline

1. Discussion of Western Leadership Research
 - a. Definitions
 - i. "A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the followers to the organization's mission and objective causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives" (Winston & Patterson, 2006, 7).
 - b. Definitions disagree
 - c. 2 schools of thought: learned capabilities or natural traits

d. All studies have functionally focused on men without stating it

i. "Leadership studies in the past few decades have come under increasing criticism for maintaining outmoded constructs and for bearing less than scholastic integrity" (Barker, 2001, 469).

ii. "Conventional understanding of leadership has been systemically constructed from other conventional knowledge about social hierarchies, and about their command and control structures. This knowledge is then used to validate leadership theories without further critical analysis" (Barker, 2001, 473).

iii. "The canon of industrial era leadership theories is an adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church, and presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy" (Barker, 2001, 471).

iv. "The industrial paradigm of leadership is based in an obsession with the persona of kings and conquerors that can be traced at least as far back as Biblical times" (Barker, 2001, 476).

v. "Leadership theory has been based in the understandable but incorrect perception of a direct cause-effect relationship between the leader's abilities, traits, actions, and leadership outcomes" (Barker, 2001, 478).

vi. "The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by the position in a hierarchy" (Barker, 2001, 478).

vii. "The problem with current leadership study is that it continues to focus excessively on superior/subordinate relationships to the exclusion of several functions that leaders perform and to the exclusion of organizational and environmental variables that are crucial to effectively leadership performance" (Barker, 2001, 474).

2. Discussion of the Common problems of Colonizing leadership

a. "Although difficult, it is important to have a good definition of leadership. It is one of the terms most widely used in many areas of human activity, including armed forces, business, politics, religion, and sports "(Silva, 2016, 1). ALL COLONIZING ACTIONS OR AGENTS

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2) "This perspective points to a distinctive leadership style associated with women, with characteristics that include being more participatory, democratic, more sensitive, nurturing and caring. Other characteristics associated with women's leadership include good conflict management and interpersonal skills, being excellent listeners and showing tolerance and empathy" (de la Ray, 2005, 5).

ii. Traits concepts

1) “The traits commonly associated with leadership include: effective communication, task completion, responsibility, problem solving, originality, decision making, action taking, passion, vision, ethics, humour, self-awareness, confidence, courage, experience and power” (de la Rey, 2005, 5).

iii. Woman must give up her femininity to lead

iv. Military teaches leadership naturally

1) “McClelland asserted in 1973 ‘Competency testing provided a better predictor of job success than intelligence testing and thus championed the competency movement’ (Seemiller and Murray, 2013, 33).

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vii. Community disengagement

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a. “A new framework for leadership studies can be built upon a direct, phenomenological experience of leadership that occurs prior to the creation or adaptation of conventional knowledge” (Barker, 2001, 483).

b. “Two key differences that distinguish the transforming system are that this system is not organized by strategic, rational thought, and b0 responds to change not as a disruptive irregularity, but as an integral element of the environment” (Barker, 2001, 487).

c. “Process and not structure is the vessel of leadership; chaos and complexity are not problems to be solved, they are the engines of evolution, adaptation, and renewal” (Barker, 2001, 489).

d. “First, leadership is a process that is not specifically a function of the person in charge. Second, leadership is a process of adaptation and of evolution; it is a process of dynamic exchange and the interchanges of value. Third, leadership is a process of energy, not structure” (Barker, 2001, 491).

4. Indigenous Leadership

a. “Ensemble leadership means every follower is a potential leader. Further, the distinction between leader and follower is blurred, in favour of a more collectivist understanding which avoids the oppositional dualism of individual/group” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

b. “Collectivism, dynamism, decenteredness, and heterarchy all are weak or missing in traditional leadership literature” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

c. “Roles of Humans: The indigenous world is non-human centric. Roles of nonhumans: Nonhumans are barely recognized in traditional leader literature, and at best, merely part of the furniture. Indigenous wisdom not only recognizes nonhuman life, but accords the natural world a starring role in providing wisdom and guidance. Relationships: We recognize that for many

indigenous cultures, relationships are ends in themselves. Theories: Most traditional leadership literature still reflects cause-effect linearity, and the search for sameness and generalizability” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 14).

d. “Leadership was everywhere, active in alternative – and often highly laudable forms” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

e. “Standing Rock suggested a more human set of leadership values: decentralization spirituality, self-deflecting humility, collectivism, the navigation of subgroup interests, and a sometimes contentious but epistemologically distinct diffusion of authority” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

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a. “It is a native woman’s sacred obligation and responsibility to lead the way, through traditional women’s leadership and authority, to reclaiming the earth, humanity, and all our relations via an ecoethics of reciprocity” (Waters, 2003, xii).

6. Conclusions

- a. Leadership is not management
- b. Leadership is not for employment

Rough Draft

Stepping Back and Stepping Up: Ogimaa Ekwe, Indigenous Women in Leadership

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

Introduction

We are living amid a leadership crisis. Models of leadership long taught in higher education and in professional development systems have created an unsustainable environment. But how did we get here? How did we develop the heroic icon-based systems of leadership? Leadership scholarship has long been criticized for examining phenomenological elements of leadership focusing on individuals but ignoring the environment. The western, Eurocentric, Christian, capitalistic, competitive, hierarchical, patriarchal systems have resulted in superior/subordinate systems rife with issues.

But what can be done? What other models of leadership are there?

In Indigenous culture, the answer would be simple: ask the grandmothers.

As an Indigenous person this is where the journey would begin. Ask the grandmothers. As an educator within higher education for 30 years, this has also been where things begin. Ask the grandmothers.

This research is a project born of frustration. 2018 saw me working on programs to assist Indigenous

communities. The project was to examine systems of leadership that were not discussed outside communities. This research examines leadership models, methods, limitations, and shifts to arrive at a place where we can begin to have valuable conversations about leadership.

Discussion of Western Leadership Research

Leadership has a long and storied history. “The industrial paradigm of leadership is based in an obsession with the persona of kings and conquerors that can be traced at least as far back as Biblical times” (Barker, 2001, 476). Monuments cover the world depicting great leaders. Histories from every corner of the globe fill history books delineating the tales of heroic leadership. But look again. The monuments are of a kind. They depict singular leaders in distinct times with often common characteristics, usually espousing a western Eurocentric and even Christian form of leadership. “The canon of industrial era leadership theories is an adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church, and presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy” and is male (Barker, 2001, 471).

Educational programs and private consultants profit billions from the supposed ability to train leaders or to create systems of leadership. But these systems deny some of the strongest forms of leadership. These systems try to devalue differing leadership epistemologies.

Definitions

Most academic articles begin with definitions. However, leadership scholars can't agree on a definition. Scholars can't even agree on the realm of reality in which leadership might be defined. Definitions focus on traits of iconic individuals in extraordinary times or deconstruct phenomenon to determine strategic processes or competencies that might be mined and sold as leadership training.

While some focus on the outcomes or functions of leadership, others focus on the situation. Winston and Patterson (2006) write, “A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the followers to the organization's mission and objective causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives” (7). However, Silva (2016) focuses on the situations requiring leadership. “Although difficult, it is important to have a good definition of leadership. It is one of the terms most widely used in many areas of human activity, including armed forces, business, politics, religion, and sports “(Silva, 2016, 1). It is important to note that these perspectives reflect a colonizing approach and one that focuses on the roles of men in a Eurocentric culture. There is a weakness in “Western-oriented leadership in being rooted in the cultural history of mythical heroes and suggests that Western leaders are overly representative of the stereotype of white middle class males” (Long, 2017, 250).

The definitions provided see leadership as a person with inherent or teachable traits, or as an activity, something someone does. Some even focus on the relationship between leader and follower. But NONE provide a holistic approach. All Western Eurocentric Christian based models of leadership ignore the environment and cultures that do not view leadership as a single person activity to press progress. As the dominant literature focuses on iconic heroic individuals without broader context, limited paradigms emerge. The literature is separated into two main categories; teachable capabilities and inherent traits. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of leadership studies, spanning the history of the discipline have focused on men as the universal without stating that the sample or exemplar population was male. This among other limitations, such as the commodification of capabilities, has led to a crisis within

leadership scholarship. “Leadership studies in the past few decades have come under increasing criticism for maintaining outmoded constructs and for bearing less than scholastic integrity” (Barker, 2001, 469).

Veering away from scholarly research into conventional empirical information, leadership scholarship has shifted to reflect attainable systems of outcomes and controls. “Conventional understanding of leadership has been systemically constructed from other conventional knowledge about social hierarchies, and about their command and control structures. This knowledge is then used to validate leadership theories without further critical analysis” (Barker, 2001, 473). Barker (2001) continues, “Leadership theory has been based in the understandable but incorrect perception of a direct cause-effect relationship between the leader’s abilities, traits, actions, and leadership outcomes” (478).

These studies assume that leadership is granted by some system, therefore the true leadership lies within that system. “The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by the position in a hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 478). But this is a dangerous assumption. This hierarchical focus creates a demand for superior and subordinate roles. Barker asserts, “The problem with current leadership study is that it continues to focus excessively on superior/subordinate relationships to the exclusion of several functions that leaders perform and to the exclusion of organizational and environmental variables that are crucial to effectively leadership performance” (474).

Reflecting on these common limitations and concepts, several other problematic elements become clear. De la Ray (2005) states, “I have found that there are two prevailing assumptions: the first is about leadership in general, that it is a construct that can be learned, and the second is about gender and leadership that women have a different leadership style compared to men” (5). This assumes that gender roles are binary, static, and that leadership styles can be categorized using gender. Not only does this exclude a large portion of the nonbinary population, but also assumes that all genders fall into similar behaviours regardless of cultural influence or understanding. Even the constructs allocated to women speak of a Eurocentric Western colonizing competitive capitalistic patriarchal leadership construct. “This perspective points to a distinctive leadership style associated with women, with characteristics that include being more participatory, democratic, more sensitive, nurturing and caring. Other characteristics associated with women’s leadership include good conflict management and interpersonal skills, being excellent listeners and showing tolerance and empathy” (de la Ray, 2005, 5).

Even if we leave gender roles behind, traits associated most commonly with leadership fall into similar lines. “The traits commonly associated with leadership include: effective communication, task completion, responsibility, problem solving, originality, decision making, action taking, passion, vision, ethics, humour, self-awareness, confidence, courage, experience and power” (de la Rey, 2005, 5).

The construct of leadership as a commodity to be bought through a handbook comes from McClelland (1973). Seemiller and Murray (2013) revisit McClelland to examine the diffusion of McClelland like competency programs within higher education and other post-secondary training programs. “McClelland asserted in 1973 ‘Competency testing provided a better predictor of job success than intelligence testing and thus championed the competency movement’” (Seemiller and Murray, 2013, 33). Seemiller and Murray (2013) found that, indeed, the competency approach permeates higher education, particularly business and public administration programs. But do these programs produce leaders or managers? The primary difference is that leaders do not necessarily exist within a hierarchy, but managers do. “The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by position in a hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 478). If a leader is defined by their position within a hierarchy, then their vision is not their own, but is commuted from the top down. Compliance becomes more necessary than following.

Shifts in Leadership

However, there is a shift happening not only within leadership scholarship, but within a broader understanding of the implications of changing the focus of leadership. Shifting away from a heroic icon emphasis and diagnostic, leadership is beginning to see the forest. Leadership is beginning to see the environments of leadership, time lines of leadership, community leadership, and leadership as a process not a product. Several authors are shifting leadership research attention. “First, leadership is a process that is not specifically a function of the person in charge. Second, leadership is a process of adaptation and of evolution; it is a process of dynamic exchange and the interchanges of value. Third, leadership is a process of energy, not structure” (Barker, 2001, 491).

Barker (2001) spends a lot of intellectual capital examining a process oriented leadership stating, “Process and not structure is the vessel of leadership; chaos and complexity are not problems to be solved, they are the engines of evolution, adaptation, and renewal” (489). But then also falls into the trap of trying to create a structure or framework. “A new framework for leadership studies can be built upon a direct, phenomenological experience of leadership that occurs prior to the creation or adaptation of conventional knowledge” (Barker, 2001, 483).

Indigenous Leadership

There are other options. Historically misunderstood and devalued, scholars are taking a deeper look into Indigenous leadership. It’s becoming clearer this time because Indigenous authors are involved. Organizations and communities understand that a single leader has inevitable drawbacks. However, Indigenous leadership, or Ensemble leadership builds community, momentum, decreases burn out and is invariable inclusive. “Ensemble leadership means every follower is a potential leader. Further, the distinction between leader and follower is blurred, in favour of a more collectivist understanding which avoids the oppositional dualism of individual/group” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

The problematic superior/subordinate relationship is gone and replaced by a collective community which makes decisions cooperatively. “Collectivism, dynamism, decenteredness, and heterarchy all are weak or missing in traditional leadership literature” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

Similarly, others are included in the community such as nonhumans, expanding responsibility to include the environment as well as learning from the environment. Rosile, Boje, and Claw (2018) explain these dynamics and shifts, “Roles of Humans: The indigenous world is non-human centric. Roles of nonhumans: Nonhumans are barely recognized in traditional leader literature, and at best, merely part of the furniture. Indigenous wisdom not only recognizes nonhuman life, but accords the natural world a starring role in providing wisdom and guidance. Relationships: We recognize that for many indigenous cultures, relationships are ends in themselves. Theories: Most traditional leadership literature still reflects cause-effect linearity, and the search for sameness and generalizability” (14).

Sandefur & Deloria (2018) hold up protests at Standing Rock as an example of ensemble Indigenous diversified human and nonhuman leadership. They state, “Leadership was everywhere, active in alternative – and often highly laudable forms” (126). “Questions are more readily talked to consensus rather than enunciated as a winning argument aimed at establishing the dominance of one position over another. It is less a question of convincing a powerful leader to take a particular action than convincing everyone of the rightness of a certain course” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 130).

This unified vision and ensemble leadership allow for a level of unparalleled leadership. “Standing Rock suggested a more human set of leadership values: decentralization spirituality, self-deflecting humility,

collectivism, the navigation of subgroup interests, and a sometimes contentious but epistemologically distinct diffusion of authority” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

Ogimaa Ekwe

While this focus on ensemble leadership is heartening, it misses the point. This scholarly paper removes an essential construct long silenced. It gives the impression that any group or ensemble can create this form of collectivism. However, as givers of life, the beings connected to the spirit world able to bring forth new souls from the other side and with the responsibility for that life; Indigenous leadership collectives have always been women. The grandmothers in circle were the leaders. Waters (2003) informs us that, “It is a native woman’s sacred obligation and responsibility to lead the way, through traditional women’s leadership and authority, to reclaiming the earth, humanity, and all our relations via an ecoethics of reciprocity” (xii).

It is important to note that this form of community guidance is not unique to any one area. This approach was common place across Turtle Island prior to contact and removal.

In 2018, I led a team of Indigenous women student researchers to examine Ogimaa Ekwe, or the Indigenous understanding of women in collective or ensemble leadership. It’s is first important to understand the translation and distinction between Ogimaa and leadership. While reading through the western Eurocentric, competitive, capitalistic, hierarchical, patriarchal forms of leadership, it becomes clear why this understated, cooperative, patient, matriarchal, matrifocal, long lens ensemble leadership is not examined. There are no heroes. There are no icons. There are only the core values of the Seven Sacred teachings, the value of the next seven generations, and all our relations. This is no simple system that can be packaged and commodified. This is a culture of Ogimaa, or stepping up to serve, then stepping back.

In 2018, we conducted 25 interviews with Manitoba Indigenous women from five communities. These women not only served as individuals in managerial roles of necessary institutions, they also served within the community in other capacities such as organizing ceremonies or solving community issues.

The women were asked 15 questions regarding their roles and Ogimaa. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Four key themes quickly emerged.

*Each had gone away to school or develop understanding, but felt compelled to return to serve their community. The community was paramount. The community was not merely a set of people, but people and nonhuman relations in a particular place that was THEIR land.

*Each relied heavily on community connections for insights and solutions. There was no official gathering of women to make decisions. But the women gathered for full moon ceremonies or sweats and in this environment collectively made decisions to act to bring about change. They enacted change in their places of employment and at home. These changes sent a powerful message to the community and the community listened.

*Each relied heavily on each other for shared knowledge, decision making, and support. None believed they had the knowledge or understanding to do all that must be done. They discussed, drummed, sang, and sweat together. This shared understanding and value based approach to community creates a heterarchal structure, or ensemble leadership.

*None believed that their role was a rung on a ladder to more power, leadership, or control, but rather believed it was their job to do their best to groom and make room for the next woman in the circle, or Ogimaa Ekwe.

Braiding Work (Combining Concepts)

For more than 400 years leadership scholars have professed to understand the secrets of successful leadership. Hundreds of books have been written on the topic in the last few years alone. But the Western Eurocentric Christian Competitive Capitalistic hierarchical patriarchy systems continue to fail. Statuses continue to topple. Organizations are realizing that managers are not leaders.

Scholars are shifting away from hero icon worship constructs of leadership. However, hundreds of programs still exist that claim to teach and train leadership utilizing this approach. The commodification of leadership is the paramount ethical concern about leadership. Other systems of leadership, ecosystems, cultural systems, ensemble systems of leadership place relationships and shy away from leadership remuneration models for a more holistic, engaged, and ethical approach to leadership. However, without a culture that values relationships with humans and nonhumans above all else, they systems will continue to fail. Even Indigenous scholars writing from a place of cultural understanding edit or omit key cultural and value information that inevitably renders what they offer paralyzed.

Indigenous leadership is not about any individual. Ensemble leadership, as some authors have called it, is a collectivist, community based, collaborative way to make decisions and establish priorities. However, even these must be deeply steeped in two ideas. First, it is clear that we must value the elder women (Mindemooyen) or she who hold the relations together that must be communally at the center of all systems. Second, it is the Indigenous culture and teachings that create an environment based in love, respect, humility, truth, honesty, courage, and wisdom that ensures not just ethical pursuits, but pursuits with which people will rise and feel honoured to engage. Finally, it is the shared burden that allows individuals to avoid burn out that is so prevalent. When the circle is the medicine, there is no burn out.

Indigenous women have been silenced and dismissed by dominant hero icon based systems of leadership that oppress the subordinate and devalue deeply held beliefs for efficiency and progress. But these prices are too high. It is only a return to deeply held seven sacred teachings, the grandmothers circle, and a desire for the thriving continuation of the next seven generations that will see true leadership. That is a leadership that is collective, supportive, inclusive, and reflective.

Learning Bundle

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Example: Bell Curve

The Bell Curve: Norms as Oppression

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

June 27, 2023

Research Question and Search Terms

How can I incorporate more activism into my classes?

What are some common practices of oppression in higher education?

What are the oppressive implications of the Bell Curve?

What is the Bell Curve?

Bell Curve as Oppression

Bell Curve as Systemic Oppression

History of the Bell Curve

Oppression in Education

Systemic Oppression in Education

Envelopes

1. What is the Bell Curve

- a. Statistical errors and assumptions of original article
- b. Structural assumptions from original article

2. Systems of use

a. Flaws of systems of use

- i. Power
- ii. Privilege
- iii. Racism
- iv. Internalized Racism

3. Changing multicultural identities

4. Evolving understanding of systems of oppression

Rough Draft

1. What is the Bell Curve?

Someone mentions the bell curve and most people believe they understand what that means. The common perception is that the bell curve visually depicts normal distribution of nearly all things. The standard definition: “A bell curve is a type of graph that is used to visualize the distribution of a set of chosen values across a specified group that tend to have a central, normal values, as peak with low and high extremes tapering off relatively symmetrically on either side” (TechTarget 2023) is a bit misleading. It must first be understood that “normal” doesn’t exist. Normal has become a term used to describe the mean or average. This conflated with the idea of normal by its binary of abnormal produces a poor understanding of mean or average. Indeed, the bell curve does not depict normal distribution, but rather a distribution of means or averages. The confusion of denotative and connotative meanings produces poor implementation

of the bell curve into areas where its use enforces a form of sorting into normal and abnormal categories. For example, “Most of our school is still based on ‘normal’ distributions and Newtonian thinking, which breaks down reality into independent variables and cause and effect. This view of the world has permeated multiple disciplines, from medicine to statistics and management” (Gore 2022). But is the ubiquitous use of the bell curve appropriate across so many disciplines where the dichotomy of normal and abnormal also produces prejudicial sorting?

There are alternatives to the bell curve. “Most human activities, as well as many disciplines from physics and biology to linguistics, finance, and computer science, follow a Pareto distribution instead of a ‘normal’ Gaussian curve” (Gore 2022). Pareto distribution examines ratios rather than averages. Pareto suggests that 80% of the intended results come from 20% of the sample. For example, within management, 80% of the outstanding work comes from 20% of the employed. Another example might be that 80% of charitable donations come from 20% of the population. If the bell curve were used instead, the results would be skewed into averages creating an unclear depiction spreading distribution over a larger field misrepresenting contributions. “The joke that when Bill Gates walks into a bar, everyone in that bar becomes a millionaire on average, illustrates the point” (Gore 2022). The use of averages or normal distribution using the bell curve is not always appropriate or helpful but rather dramatically misrepresents information. The bell curve pulls all factors toward a central distribution or average or mean. “This model holds that most phenomena occur around the middle point, while few occur at either the high or low extreme ends. An assumption of bell curve distribution permeates educational projects on several dimensions that far exceed the scope of the infamous book” (Fendler & Musaffar 2008, 63).

The “infamous book” referred to is *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray in 1994. This book utilized the bell curve to examine human behaviour, education, wealth distribution, geography and intellect. However, this book, is an example of where not to implement the bell curve.

b. Statistical errors and assumptions

Price and Cutler (2001) present a literature review of the flaws of Herrnstein and Murray’s work including criticisms of definitions of race and intelligence, problematic sources of data, flawed interpretation of data, leaps of logic amounting to hasty generalization fallacy, and funding for the work from sources with specific agendas. “Herrnstein and Murray created a specific picture of the world: The intelligent control over themselves and society. They naturally do well in school. They gain opportunities to continue their schooling. They have choices about what profession they pursue, and once they begin working, they make good salaries. This money gives them choices about where to live and what amenities they can buy. They band together, because they attend the same colleges, they become leaders and exert control over society” (Price & Cutler 2001, 478). Is this supported by quantitative data: Statistics? But aren’t statistics foolproof? Isn’t quantitative data objective?

In fact, no. All data is flawed. The way data is collected is often flawed. The nature of data gathering in general is flawed as in any sample, many potential responses are excluded, and outliers are discarded, invariably skewing results toward an inaccurate average. The field of quantitative criticism seeks to examine exactly that kind of sample skew. Within the bell curve, that sample skew shifts normal toward a white, male, Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalistic, competitive average that is not exemplified in reality. Quantitative Criticism or Quantcrit is the analysis of quantitative methods for flaws of data and analysis. Statistics, in this way, have been historically used to validate white superiority and other inferiority. “The history of how quantitative epistemology came to be is rarely presented, discussed, or even mentioned in present day coursework” (Arellano 2022, 116). Such quantitative perceived infallibility perpetuates racism,

sexist, and classist stereotypes. “For BIPOC communities, this usually means being compared to white peers. For women, this means being compared to men, and so on” (Arellano 2022, 116).

What is normal?

c. Social structural assumptions from the bell curve

Considering that the bell curve omits outliers and establishes the mean or average as normal, disciplines have made structural decisions based on this flawed information. First, as stated earlier, the establishment of average as the norm indicates that anything outside that average or norm is abnormal. This produces a binary. Male and female, black and white, rich and poor, smart and stupid, college bound and labour bound, average and below average are the common binary systems created by the bell curve that are not accurate when placed in comparison to reality. “The bell curve supports three games (class systems) that are destructive” (Price & Cutler 2001, 488). The binary nature of the bell curve discards all other elements that may contribute to the establishment of the average. Privilege is not considered, but race is creating an inaccurate attribution system. “Hernstein and Murray attempted to turn back the wheels of time through asserting that there are significant differences between races and that these differences cannot be helped. The other frame that is sustained by the bell curve is that between men and women” (Price & Cutler 2001, 489). The bell curve asserts universal forms of intelligences. “Specifically, the creation of the construct of ‘intelligence’ was based on Eurocentric values and the subsequent creation of intelligence tests was designed to highlight the superiority of the white race, were normed on that population, and any responses that fell outside of that context were considered wrong and inferior” (Grant, et al. 2002, 348). Through this lens, it is evident that the quantitative sample for intelligence tests is dramatically skewed. Depending heavily on epistemicide, a single form of intelligence is measured, and averages created by, again, omitting outliers and producing a binary of normal and abnormal where, in reality, a universe of epistemologies and intelligences exists.

2. Systems of Oppression, Power and Privilege

Two groups receive inordinate advantages from the current use of the bell curve. Those two groups are people with power and people with privilege. “Power may be defined as people’s access to resources that enhance their chances of getting what they need in order to lead safe, productive, fulfilling lives” (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058). Power in this case is the power to justify the use of an oppressive tool within inappropriate circumstances. “Privilege may be defined as unearned power that is only easily or readily available to some people simply as a result of their social group membership” (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058). In the case of the bell curve, privilege is being a part of the group embraced by the testing mechanisms which create opportunities based on scores of intelligence with a narrow scope. Normalizing an average and below average distribution creates an environment where there is a statistically validated expectation of failure. If there is a norm there must be an abnormal. “The assumption of the bell curve distribution allows for such concepts as acceptable rate of failure and the average student” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63). This produces an environment of the acceptance of failure as predictable, particularly within certain samples or populations. “Naturalization of the bell curve is unjust because it perpetuates the inevitability of failure; we hold that the idea of failure should be attributed to popularly ascribed features instead” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63). Education, psychology and many other disciplines now have an excuse to dismiss segments of the sample as the bell curve predicts their inevitable failure. This is particularly tragic in areas of health care and education.

Within education, there is an overwhelming pressure to meet the standards of average distribution. Those

that fall outside that average are selected out of the normal distribution and labeled as other. The expectation of the norm is oppressive. Students are not only expected to perform intellectually within averaged or normal parameters, but also to behave within a culturally oppressive system of homogenized social structures. Classes are arranged by age, not ability. Bathrooms and activities are arranged by binary gender assignment. Characters in books, math problems, daily work are all presented in this normative lens. Within education, students are pushed toward concepts of monetary gain rather than intellectual or epistemological diversity and contribution. “The paradigms of oppression in educational research that I consider here are a) the model of cultural hegemony, b) the analysis of oppression as a matter of capitalist accumulation, c) the model of oppression as a matter of regulatory discursive norms” (Lissovoy 2008, 83).

Racism

What is to be gained by the oppression of the non-average? A Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalist system requires the subjugation of a segment of the population to allow for the accumulation of power and wealth by another segment of the population. In an educated social system, this must appear to be a natural or normative distribution in order to mask the oppression. The political and social economies of developed nations requires the silent subjugation of the non-average in order to establish the dominance of the oppressor. The political economy and social order prioritize certain types of intelligence testing school children for that propensity and leaving the rest with few alternatives. “In schools, this systemic racism results in a series of structural and pedagogical injustices, including tracking, retention, low expectations for students of color, and generally the privileging of the needs of White students” (Lissovoy 2008, 87). Standardized testing, assignments, universal rubrics and instruction result in the homogenization of the educational population. Students learn the industrial model of education preparing them for a life of labour. Only certain forms of intelligence are rewarded. The rest are denied and oppressed through systems of denial. “These standard methods of knowledge production and resulting knowledge products can cause harm amounting to epistemic violence” (Grant, et al. 2002, 350).

“Our ideas are shaped by the social order. Under slavery and the plantation economy, the knowledge of the period reflected that social order and the social arrangements therein. Such oppression was deemed to be normal” (Newby & Newby 1995, 14). In other words, we consider it normal for students of color to underperform in academics but expect them to excel within physical elements of education such as athletics. The athletic field becomes the new cotton field and the athlete the new unintelligent slave. “As pointed out earlier, what passes for knowledge is not an isolated phenomenon but shaped by the political economy and social order of its day” (Newby & Newby 1995, 17). And yet, concepts of normative testing, distribution, and a system of false averages dominates systems that produce oppression in the wake. “Our purpose here is to criticize one of the fundamental justifications of educational sorting practices, namely, the belief that a normal curve distribution is a representation of real things in nature” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63).

Internalized Racism

Such systems reinforce the social systems of oppression. Those unsuccessful in school see few options after school. Some call this the “prison pipeline”. When the youth see no options for success, they turn to crime. They are caught, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned and the system congratulates itself on correctly identifying those with potential and those without. Such a system works so well because youth don’t see the oppression. As labels are layered daily in education, the youth internalize those labels. “Eventually, members of the oppressed racial groups may no longer need society to perpetuate such inferiorizing messages, because they begin inferiorizing themselves in overt and subtle ways” (David,

Schroeder, & Fernandez 2019, 1066). Once individuals internalize those messages, they no longer need a system to categorize them, they do it themselves and to their own children.

Changing multicultural identities

Evolving understanding of systems of oppression

3. Braiding Works

How can it be that this system of sorting oppression still operates? The bell curve is integrated as an objective measure of intelligence without critical questions about the skewed nature of statistics or the diversity of intelligence. Humans are compared to a fictional average that is redrafted as normal and by the binary nature also outlines abnormal. Dozens of authors have critically analyzed the bell curve and found it inappropriate as a tool of measurement. Still, the bell curve remains in use. The bell curve is used to justify concepts of unbiased assessment. However, statistically and rationally, researchers understand this is a falsehood. Scholars have demonstrated that the bell curve is skewed, racist, limiting, binary, and unethical. Its use leads to blanket racism and ablism. It eventually leads to internalized racism and intergenerational internalized racism.

How can it be that this system is still in use? It allows institutions the false perception of objectivity. It allows higher education the perception of prestige of intellect. It perpetuates justifications of segregation. It condemns entire populations to lives less than they deserve mired in a system of oppression.

A braid is strong because the strands are bonded together. Even if braided loosely, the braid is still stronger by far. If those not embraced by the averages and norms of the bell curve were to call its use into question and demand a detailed description of its implementation and scholarly justification of its utility, perhaps then, braided together, the bell curve could be revealed for what it is.

Bell Curve Learning Bundle

Ahmann, A. (2020). *The Childish Insult: An Unfinished Essay Discussing Children's Oppression*.

Arellano, L. (2022). Questioning the science: How quantitative methodologies perpetuate inequity in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 12(2), 116.

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- Roberts, P. (2008). Liberation, oppression, and education: Extending Freirean ideas

9. Conclusions, Introductions and Headings

Activity

As you reread your paper thus far, highlight the topic sentence of each paragraph. This should serve as a summary of your paper. It is also a good approach for creating an abstract. Write your conclusion after the body of your paper is complete.

Your conclusion has three parts.

- Summarize the paper.
- What's the main lesson learned?
- What are the gaps or next steps?

After you've written the conclusion, write an introduction.

- What does the reader need to know to understand the paper?
- What's the context or back story?
- What is your contention or claim?
- What can the reader expect in this paper?

While most educators frown upon personal statements of positionality to the topic, most qualitative researchers consider this statement essential. No research is without bias. If the bias is not acknowledged or stated, it is considered unethical. Similarly, your connection to the topic can sometimes lend credibility to the work.

Your headings should serve as street signs providing direction for the reader. One-word headings are often too short, but long sentences can lead to jumps in content. Similarly, the formatting of headings is another area of common concern and for students a loss of marks.

[APA Style](#) offers a summary and illustration of the common heading structures in APA, which we've summarized below. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) will have descriptions of heading styles for other citation formats.

Level	APA Heading Format (7th ed.)
1	Centered, Bold, Title Case Text begins on a new line (indent first line)
2	Left-aligned, Bold, Title Case Text begins on a new line (indent first line)
3	Left-aligned, Bold, Italic, Title Case Text begins on a new line (indent first line)
4	Indented, Bold, Title Case, Period. Text begins on the same line.
5	Indented, Bold, Italic, Title Case, Period. Text begins on the same line.

10. Peer Review and Revision

Activity

Select a small circle of individuals with whom you will share your work. Understand it is an exchange. However, there are a few guidelines for sharing work and assisting others with their work.

- Create a group of individuals that would review each other's work.
- Be kind and constructive.
- Highlight sentences or sections that are problematic.
- Don't suggest language changes or word choice changes.
- Only point out areas that were problematic for you as the reader.
- Highlight topic sentences and evidence.

When you receive your document back and it is highlighted, have a conversation about the highlighting. Using your experience from paraphrasing, is it possible to reword the highlighted elements? Using what you know about denotative and connotative meanings is it possible there is a misunderstanding within the writing. If the highlighted materials is a quotation or evidence, ensure that the citation is correct. Next consider if a summary or paraphrase of the quotation would serve the reader better.

Finally, consider reading your paper aloud. The tone should be professional, yet conversational. There should be no verbal stumbling blocks and the content should flow easily when spoken.

Example: Leadership

Stepping Back and Stepping Up: Ogimaa Ekwe, Indigenous Women in Leadership

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

March, 2023

Stepping Back and Stepping Up: Ogimaa Ekwe, Indigenous Women in Leadership

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

Abstract

We are living amid a leadership crisis. Models of leadership long taught in higher education and in professional development systems have created an unsustainable environment. Leadership has a long and storied history. Monuments cover the world depicting great leaders. They depict singular leaders in distinct times with often common characteristics, usually espousing a western Eurocentric and even Christian form of leadership. Educational programs and private consultants profit billions from the supposed ability to train leaders or to create systems of leadership. But these systems deny some of the strongest forms of leadership. These systems try to devalue differing leadership epistemologies. The definitions provided see leadership as a person with inherent or teachable traits, or as an activity, something someone does. Some even focus on the relationship between leader and follower. But NONE provide a holistic approach. Not only does this exclude a large portion of the nonbinary population, but also assumes that all genders fall into similar behaviours regardless of cultural influence or understanding. Even the constructs allocated to women speak of a Eurocentric Western colonizing competitive capitalistic patriarchal leadership construct. However, there is a shift happening not only within leadership scholarship, but within a broader understanding of the implications of changing the focus of leadership. There are other options. Historically misunderstood and devalued, scholars are taking a deeper look into Indigenous leadership. The problematic superior/subordinate relationship is gone and replaced by a collective community which makes decisions cooperatively. Indigenous leadership is not about any individual. Ensemble leadership, as some authors have called it, is a collectivist, community based, collaborative way to make decisions and establish priorities. In 2018, we conducted 25 interviews with Manitoba Indigenous women from five communities. These women not only served as individuals in managerial roles of necessary institutions, they also served within the community in other capacities such as organizing ceremonies or solving community issues. Indigenous women have been silenced and dismissed by dominant hero icon-based systems of leadership that oppress the subordinate and devalue deeply held beliefs for efficiency and progress. This research provides four key definition differences as well as placing women in the center of the conversation about leadership.

Stepping Back and Stepping Up: Ogimaa Ekwe, Indigenous Women in Leadership

Dr. La Royce Batchelor

Introduction

We are living amid a leadership crisis. Models of leadership long taught in higher education and in professional development systems have created an unsustainable environment. But how did we get here? How did we develop the heroic icon-based systems of leadership? Leadership scholarship has long been criticized for examining phenomenological elements of leadership focusing on individuals but ignoring the environment. The western, Eurocentric, Christian, capitalistic, competitive, hierarchical, patriarchal systems have resulted in superior/subordinate systems rife with issues.

But what can be done? What other models of leadership are there?

In Indigenous culture, the answer would be simple: ask the grandmothers.

As an Indigenous person this is where the journey would begin. Ask the grandmothers. As an educator within higher education for 30 years, this has also been where things begin. Ask the grandmothers.

This research is a project born of frustration. 2018 saw me working on programs to assist Indigenous communities. The project was to examine systems of leadership that were not discussed outside

communities. This research examines leadership models, methods, limitations, and shifts to arrive at a place where we can begin to have valuable conversations about leadership.

Discussion of Western Leadership Research

Leadership has a long and storied history. “The industrial paradigm of leadership is based in an obsession with the persona of kings and conquerors that can be traced at least as far back as Biblical times” (Barker, 2001, 476). Monuments cover the world depicting great leaders. Histories from every corner of the globe fill history books delineating the tales of heroic leadership. But look again. The monuments are of a kind. They depict singular leaders in distinct times with often common characteristics, usually espousing a western Eurocentric and even Christian form of leadership. “The canon of industrial era leadership theories is an adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church, and presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy” and is male (Barker, 2001, 471).

Educational programs and private consultants profit billions from the supposed ability to train leaders or to create systems of leadership. But these systems deny some of the strongest forms of leadership. These systems try to devalue differing leadership epistemologies.

I teach academic writing utilizing a diverse epistemological approach that some would argue is teaching writing backwards. However, it has proven most effective. This research was also born of that process as I write alongside my students as they write. This process begins with not a hypothesis, but a desire to learn. From that desire a learning bundle is created. This process began with the search terms leadership language. This produced millions of articles but most were dated and colonial. Next, the terms *women in leadership* were used to demonstrate to students how to narrow search terms. Finally, the search terms *Indigenous women in leadership* was used. From this the Learning Bundle is created. This is a reading list; a list of teachers. The articles are sorted and highlighted using Toulmin. Students and I create envelopes using Sonja Foss's (2015) method of research from Destination Dissertation. Envelopes allow for another level of evaluation and organization. From this, information and evidence are placed where they belong and an outline forms. Students then find it easy to curate their learning.

Definitions

Most academic articles begin with definitions. However, leadership scholars can't agree on a definition. Scholars can't even agree on the realm of reality in which leadership might be defined. Definitions focus on traits of iconic individuals in extraordinary times or deconstruct phenomenon to determine strategic processes or competencies that might be mined and sold as leadership training.

While some articles focus on the outcomes or functions of leadership, others focus on the situation. Winston and Patterson (2006) write, “A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the followers to the organization's mission and objective causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives” (7). However, Silva (2016) focuses on the situations requiring leadership. “Although difficult, it is important to have a good definition of leadership. It is one of the terms most widely used in many areas of human activity, including armed forces, business, politics, religion, and sports” (Silva, 2016, 1). It is important to note that these perspectives reflect a colonizing approach and one that focuses on the roles of men in a Eurocentric culture. There is a weakness in “Western-oriented leadership in being rooted in the cultural history of mythical heroes and suggests that Western leaders are overly representative of the stereotype of white middle class males” (Long, 2017, 250).

The definitions provided see leadership as a person with inherent or teachable traits, or as an activity, something someone does. Some even focus on the relationship between leader and follower. But NONE provide a holistic approach. All Western Eurocentric Christian based models of leadership ignore the environment and cultures that do not view leadership as a single person activity to press progress. As the dominant literature focuses on iconic heroic individuals without broader context, limited paradigms emerge. The literature is separated into two main categories; teachable capabilities and inherent traits. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of leadership studies, spanning the history of the discipline have focused on men as the universal without stating that the sample or exemplar population was male. This among other limitations, such as the commodification of capabilities, has led to a crisis within leadership scholarship. "Leadership studies in the past few decades have come under increasing criticism for maintaining outmoded constructs and for bearing less than scholastic integrity" (Barker, 2001, 469).

Veering away from scholarly research into convention empirical information, leadership scholarship has shifted to reflect attainable systems of outcomes and controls. "Conventional understanding of leadership has been systemically constructed from other conventional knowledge about social hierarchies, and about their command and control structures. This knowledge is then used to validate leadership theories without further critical analysis" (Barker, 2001, 473). Barker (2001) continues, "Leadership theory has been based in the understandable but incorrect perception of a direct cause-effect relationship between the leader's abilities, traits, actions, and leadership outcomes" (478).

These studies assume that leadership is granted by some system, therefore the true leadership lies within that system. "The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by the position in a hierarchy" (Barker, 2001, 478). But this is a dangerous assumption. This hierarchical focus creates a demand for superior and subordinate roles. Barker asserts, "The problem with current leadership study is that it continues to focus excessively on superior/subordinate relationships to the exclusion of several functions that leaders perform and to the exclusion of organizational and environmental variables that are crucial to effectively leadership performance" (474).

Reflecting on these common limitations and concepts, several other problematic elements become clear. De la Ray (2005 states, "I have found that there are two prevailing assumptions: the first is about leadership in general, that it is a construct that can be learned, and the second is about gender and leadership that women have a different leadership style compared to men" (5). This assumes that gender roles are binary, static, and that leadership styles can be categorized using gender. Not only does this exclude a large portion of the nonbinary population, but also assumes that all genders fall into similar behaviours regardless of cultural influence or understanding. Even the constructs allocated to women speak of a Eurocentric Western colonizing competitive capitalistic patriarchal leadership construct. "This perspective points to a distinctive leadership style associated with women, with characteristics that include being more participatory, democratic, more sensitive, nurturing and caring. Other characteristics associated with women's leadership include good conflict management and interpersonal skills, being excellent listeners and showing tolerance and empathy" (de la Ray, 2005, 5).

Even if we leave gender roles behind, traits associated most commonly with leadership fall into similar lines. "The traits commonly associated with leadership include: effective communication, task completion, responsibility, problem solving, originality, decision making, action taking, passion, vision, ethics, humour, self-awareness, confidence, courage, experience and power" (de la Rey, 2005, 5).

The construct of leadership as a commodity to be bought through a handbook comes from McClelland (1973). Seemiller and Murray (2013) revisit McClelland to examine the diffusion of McClelland like

competency programs within higher education and other post-secondary training programs. “McClelland asserted in 1973 ‘Competency testing provided a better predictor of job success than intelligence testing and thus championed the competency movement’” (Seemiller and Murray, 2013, 33). Seemiller and Murray (2013) found that, indeed, the competency approach permeates higher education, particularly business and public administration programs. But do these programs produce leaders or managers? The primary difference is that leaders do not necessarily exist within a hierarchy, but managers do. “The assumption that the leader is the source of leadership also implies that the leader is defined by position in a hierarchy” (Barker, 2001, 478). If a leader is defined by their position within a hierarchy, then their vision is not their own, but is commuted from the top down. Compliance becomes more necessary than following.

Shifts in Leadership

However, there is a shift happening not only within leadership scholarship, but within a broader understanding of the implications of changing the focus of leadership. Shifting away from a heroic icon emphasis and diagnostic, leadership is beginning to see the forest. Leadership is beginning to see the environments of leadership, time lines of leadership, community leadership, and leadership as a process not a product. Several authors are shifting leadership research attention. “First, leadership is a process that is not specifically a function of the person in charge. Second, leadership is a process of adaptation and of evolution; it is a process of dynamic exchange and the interchanges of value. Third, leadership is a process of energy, not structure” (Barker, 2001, 491).

Barker (2001) spends a lot of intellectual capital examining a process-oriented leadership stating, “Process and not structure is the vessel of leadership; chaos and complexity are not problems to be solved, they are the engines of evolution, adaptation, and renewal” (489). But then also falls into the trap of trying to create a structure or framework. “A new framework for leadership studies can be built upon a direct, phenomenological experience of leadership that occurs prior to the creation or adaptation of conventional knowledge” (Barker, 2001, 483).

Indigenous Leadership

There are other options. Historically misunderstood and devalued, scholars are taking a deeper look into Indigenous leadership. It’s becoming clearer this time because Indigenous authors are involved. Organizations and communities understand that a single leader has inevitable drawbacks. However, Indigenous leadership, or Ensemble leadership builds community, momentum, decreases burn out and is invariable inclusive. “Ensemble leadership means every follower is a potential leader. Further, the distinction between leader and follower is blurred, in favour of a more collectivist understanding which avoids the oppositional dualism of individual/group” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

The problematic superior/subordinate relationship is gone and replaced by a collective community which makes decisions cooperatively. “Collectivism, dynamism, decenteredness, and heterarchy all are weak or missing in traditional leadership literature” (Rosile, Boje, and Claw, 2018, 2).

Similarly, others are included in the community such as nonhumans, expanding responsibility to include the environment as well as learning from the environment. Rosile, Boje, and Claw (2018) explain these dynamics and shifts, “Roles of Humans: The indigenous world is non-human centric. Roles of nonhumans: Nonhumans are barely recognized in traditional leader literature, and at best, merely part of the furniture. Indigenous wisdom not only recognizes nonhuman life but accords the natural world a starring role in providing wisdom and guidance. Relationships: We recognize that for many indigenous cultures,

relationships are ends in themselves. Theories: Most traditional leadership literature still reflects cause-effect linearity, and the search for sameness and generalizability” (14).

Sandefur & Deloria (2018) hold up protests at Standing Rock as an example of ensemble Indigenous diversified human and nonhuman leadership. They state, “Leadership was everywhere, active in alternative – and often highly laudable forms” (126). “Questions are more readily talked to consensus rather than enunciated as a winning argument aimed at establishing the dominance of one position over another. It is less a question of convincing a powerful leader to take a particular action than convincing everyone of the rightness of a certain course” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 130).

This unified vision and ensemble leadership allow for a level of unparalleled leadership. “Standing Rock suggested a more human set of leadership values: decentralization spirituality, self-deflecting humility, collectivism, the navigation of subgroup interests, and a sometimes contentious but epistemologically distinct diffusion of authority” (Sandefur & Deloria, 2018, 126).

Ogimaa Ekwe

While this focus on ensemble leadership is heartening, it misses the point. This scholarly paper removes an essential construct long silenced. It gives the impression that any group or ensemble can create this form of collectivism. However, as givers of life, the beings connected to the spirit world able to bring forth new souls from the other side and with the responsibility for that life; Indigenous leadership collectives have always been women. The grandmothers in circle were the leaders. Waters (2003) informs us that, “It is a native woman’s sacred obligation and responsibility to lead the way, through traditional women’s leadership and authority, to reclaiming the earth, humanity, and all our relations via an ecoethics of reciprocity” (xii).

It is important to note that this form of community guidance is not unique to any one area. This approach was common place across Turtle Island prior to contact and removal.

In 2018, I led a team of Indigenous women student researchers to examine Ogimaa Ekwe, or the Indigenous understanding of women in collective or ensemble leadership. It’s is first important to understand the translation and distinction between Ogimaa and leadership. While reading through the western Eurocentric, competitive, capitalistic, hierarchical, patriarchal forms of leadership, it becomes clear why this understated, cooperative, patient, matriarchal, matrifocal, long lens ensemble leadership is not examined. There are no heroes. There are no icons. There are only the core values of the Seven Sacred teachings, the value of the next seven generations, and all our relations. This is no simple system that can be packaged and commodified. This is a culture of Ogimaa, or stepping up to serve, then stepping back.

In 2018, we conducted 25 interviews with Manitoba Indigenous women from five communities. These women not only served as individuals in managerial roles of necessary institutions, they also served within the community in other capacities such as organizing ceremonies or solving community issues.

The women were asked 15 questions regarding their roles and Ogimaa. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Four key themes quickly emerged.

*Each had gone away to school or develop understanding, but felt compelled to return to serve their community. The community was paramount. The community was not merely a set of people, but people and nonhuman relations in a particular place that was THEIR land.

*Each relied heavily on community connections for insights and solutions. There was no official gathering of women to make decisions. But the women gathered for full moon ceremonies or sweats and in this

environment collectively made decisions to act to bring about change. They enacted change in their places of employment and at home. These changes sent a powerful message to the community and the community listened.

*Each relied heavily on each other for shared knowledge, decision making, and support. None believed they had the knowledge or understanding to do all that must be done. They discussed, drummed, sang, and sweat together. This shared understanding and value-based approach to community creates a heterarchical structure, or ensemble leadership.

*None believed that their role was a rung on a ladder to more power, leadership, or control, but rather believed it was their job to do their best to groom and make room for the next woman in the circle, or Ogimaa Ekwe.

Braiding Work (Combining Concepts)

For more than 400 years leadership scholars have professed to understand the secrets of successful leadership. Hundreds of books have been written on the topic in the last few years alone. But the Western Eurocentric Christian Competitive Capitalistic hierarchical patriarchy systems continue to fail. Statues continue to topple. Organizations are realizing that managers are not leaders.

Scholars are shifting away from hero icon worship constructs of leadership. However, hundreds of programs still exist that claim to teach and train leadership utilizing this approach. The commodification of leadership is the paramount ethical concern about leadership. Other systems of leadership, ecosystems, cultural systems, ensemble systems of leadership place relationships and shy away from leadership remuneration models for a more holistic, engaged, and ethical approach to leadership. However, without a culture that values relationships with humans and nonhumans above all else, they systems will continue to fail. Even Indigenous scholars writing from a place of cultural understanding edit or omit key cultural and value information that inevitably renders what they offer paralyzed.

Indigenous leadership is not about any individual. Ensemble leadership, as some authors have called it, is a collectivist, community based, collaborative way to make decisions and establish priorities. However, even these must be deeply steeped in two ideas. First, it is clear that we must value the elder women (Mindemooyen) or she who hold the relations together, that must be communally at the center of all systems. Second, it is the Indigenous culture and teachings that create an environment based in love, respect, humility, truth, honesty, courage, and wisdom that ensures not just ethical pursuits, but pursuits with which people will rise and feel honoured to engage. Finally, it is the shared burden that allows individuals to avoid burn out that is so prevalent. When the circle is the medicine, there is no burn out.

Indigenous women have been silenced and dismissed by dominant hero icon-based systems of leadership that oppress the subordinate and devalue deeply held beliefs for efficiency and progress. But these prices are too high. It is only a return to deeply held seven sacred teachings, the grandmothers circle, and a desire for the thriving continuation of the next seven generations that will see true leadership. That is a leadership that is collective, supportive, inclusive, and reflective. We must seek and ask the grandmothers.

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Example: The Bell Curve

The Bell Curve: Norms as Oppression

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June 27, 2023

The Bell Curve: Norms as Oppression

Rough Draft

Introduction

As long as there has been education, there have been systems to assess the impact of education. Early on in the practice of mass education, students would ascend from one level to the next. But as class sizes grew, it became necessary to differentiate between levels of understanding. Grading systems were created. Systems are created by those in control of the system. Those in control of the systems often don't realize how biased the systems of assessment are. The bell curve is one such system.

However, the bell curve, applied in a diverse and varied system becomes a tool of oppression. The bell curve has been implemented nearly universally across disciplines where it does not make sense. The bell curve has been used as an excuse to oppress and label. The bell curve has been used as the statistical backbone that justifies the adjustment of grades and expectations.

As an educator, I have on several occasions been instructed to utilize a bell curve for assessment. The justification has been that it negates grade inflation and provides statistical justification for assessment schemes. The bell curve, a binary system of analysis for averages, is a poor system to assess multivariate systems of assessment and analysis as it removes outliers and seeks to justify the mean.

What is the Bell Curve?

Someone mentions the bell curve and most people believe they understand what that means. The common perception is that the bell curve visually depicts normal distribution of nearly all things. The standard definition: "A bell curve is a type of graph that is used to visualize the distribution of a set of chosen values across a specified group that tend to have a central, normal values, as peak with low and high extremes tapering off relatively symmetrically on either side" (TechTarget 2023) is a bit misleading. It must first be understood that "normal" doesn't exist. Normal has become a term used to describe the mean or average. This conflated with the idea of normal by its binary of abnormal produces a poor understanding of mean or average. Indeed, the bell curve does not depict normal distribution, but rather a distribution of means or averages. The confusion of denotative and connotative meanings produces poor implementation of the bell curve into areas where its use enforces a form of sorting into normal and abnormal categories. For example, "Most of our school is still based on 'normal' distributions and Newtonian thinking, which breaks down reality into independent variables and cause and effect. This view of the world has permeated multiple disciplines, from medicine to statistics and management" (Gore 2022). But is the ubiquitous use of the bell curve appropriate across so many disciplines where the dichotomy of normal and abnormal also produces prejudicial sorting?

There are alternatives to the bell curve. "Most human activities, as well as many disciplines from physics and biology to linguistics, finance, and computer science, follow a Pareto distribution instead of a 'normal' Gaussian curve" (Gore 2022). Pareto distribution examines ratios rather than averages. Pareto suggests that 80% of the intended results come from 20% of the sample. For example, within management, 80% of the outstanding work comes from 20% of the employed. Another example might be that 80% of charitable donations come from 20% of the population. If the bell curve were used instead, the results would be

skewed into averages creating an unclear depiction spreading distribution over a larger field misrepresenting contributions. “The joke that when Bill Gates walks into a bar, everyone in that bar becomes a millionaire on average, illustrates the point” (Gore 2022). The use of averages or normal distribution using the bell curve is not always appropriate or helpful but rather dramatically misrepresents information. The bell curve pulls all factors toward a central distribution or average or mean. “This model holds that most phenomena occur around the middle point, while few occur at either the high or low extreme ends. An assumption of bell curve distribution permeates educational projects on several dimensions that far exceed the scope of the infamous book” (Fendler & Musaffar 2008, 63). The “infamous book” referred to is *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray in 1994. This book utilized the bell curve to examine human behaviour, education, wealth distribution, geography and intellect. However, this book, is an example of where not to implement the bell curve.

Statistical Errors and Assumptions

Price and Cutler (2001) present a literature review of the flaws of Herrnstein and Murray’s work including criticisms of definitions of race and intelligence, problematic sources of data, flawed interpretation of data, leaps of logic amounting to hasty generalization fallacy, and funding for the work from sources with specific agendas. “Herrnstein and Murray created a specific picture of the world: The intelligent control over themselves and society. They naturally do well in school. They gain opportunities to continue their schooling. They have choices about what profession they pursue, and once they begin working, they make good salaries. This money gives them choices about where to live and what amenities they can buy. They band together, because they attend the same colleges, they become leaders and exert control over society” (Price & Cutler 2001, 478). Is this supported by quantitative data: Statistics? But aren’t statistics foolproof? Isn’t quantitative data objective?

In fact, no. All data is flawed. The way data is collected is often flawed. The nature of data gathering in general is flawed as in any sample, many potential responses are excluded, and outliers are discarded, invariably skewing results toward an inaccurate average. The field of quantitative criticism seeks to examine exactly that kind of sample skew. Within the bell curve, that sample skew shifts normal toward a white, male, Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalistic, competitive average that is not exemplified in reality. Quantitative Criticism or Quantcrit is the analysis of quantitative methods for flaws of data and analysis. Statistics, in this way, have been historically used to validate white superiority and other inferiority. “The history of how quantitative epistemology came to be is rarely presented, discussed, or even mentioned in present day coursework” (Arellano 2022, 116). Such quantitative perceived infallibility perpetuates racism, sexist, and classist stereotypes. “For BIPOC communities, this usually means being compared to white peers. For women, this means being compared to men, and so on” (Arellano 2022, 116).

Considering that the bell curve omits outliers and establishes the mean or average as normal, disciplines have made structural decisions based on this flawed information. First, as stated earlier, the establishment of average as the norm indicates that anything outside that average or norm is abnormal. This produces a binary. Male and female, black and white, rich and poor, smart and stupid, college bound and labour bound, average and below average are the common binary systems created by the bell curve that are not accurate when placed in comparison to reality. “The bell curve supports three games (class systems) that are destructive” (Price & Cutler 2001, 488). The binary nature of the bell curve discards all other elements that may contribute to the establishment of the average. Privilege is not considered, but race is creating an inaccurate attribution system. “Herrnstein and Murray attempted to turn back the wheels of time through asserting that there are significant differences between races and that these differences cannot be helped.

The other frame that is sustained by the bell curve is that between men and women” (Price & Cutler 2001, 489). The bell curve asserts universal forms of intelligences. “Specifically, the creation of the construct of ‘intelligence’ was based on Eurocentric values and the subsequent creation of intelligence tests was designed to highlight the superiority of the white race, were normed on that population, and any responses that fell outside of that context were considered wrong and inferior” (Grant, et al. 2002, 348). Through this lens, it is evident that the quantitative sample for intelligence tests is dramatically skewed. Depending heavily on epistemicide, a single form of intelligence is measured, and averages created by, again, omitting outliers and producing a binary of normal and abnormal where, in reality, a universe of epistemologies and intelligences exists.

Systems of Oppression, Power and Privilege

Two groups receive inordinate advantages from the current use of the bell curve. Those two groups are people with power and people with privilege. “Power may be defined as people’s access to resources that enhance their chances of getting what they need in order to lead safe, productive, fulfilling lives” (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058). Power in this case is the power to justify the use of an oppressive tool within inappropriate circumstances. “Privilege may be defined as unearned power that is only easily or readily available to some people simply as a result of their social group membership” (David, Schroder, & Fernandez 2019, 1058). In the case of the bell curve, privilege is being a part of the group embraced by the testing mechanisms which create opportunities based on scores of intelligence with a narrow scope. Normalizing an average and below average distribution creates an environment where there is a statistically validated expectation of failure. If there is a norm there must be an abnormal. “The assumption of the bell curve distribution allows for such concepts as acceptable rate of failure and the average student” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63). This produces an environment of the acceptance of failure as predictable, particularly within certain samples or populations. “Naturalization of the bell curve is unjust because it perpetuates the inevitability of failure; we hold that the idea of failure should be attributed to popularly ascribed features instead” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63). Education, psychology and many other disciplines now have an excuse to dismiss segments of the sample as the bell curve predicts their inevitable failure. This is particularly tragic in areas of health care and education.

Within education, there is an overwhelming pressure to meet the standards of average distribution. Those that fall outside that average are selected out of the normal distribution and labeled as other. The expectation of the norm is oppressive. Students are not only expected to perform intellectually within averaged or normal parameters, but also to behave within a culturally oppressive system of homogenized social structures. Classes are arranged by age, not ability. Bathrooms and activities are arranged by binary gender assignment. Characters in books, math problems, daily work are all presented in this normative lens. Within education, students are pushed toward concepts of monetary gain rather than intellectual or epistemological diversity and contribution. “The paradigms of oppression in educational research that I consider here are a) the model of cultural hegemony, b) the analysis of oppression as a matter of capitalist accumulation, c) the model of oppression as a matter of regulatory discursive norms” (Lissovoy 2008, 83).

Racism in the Bell Curve

What is to be gained by the oppression of the non-average? A Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalist system requires the subjugation of a segment of the population to allow for the accumulation of power and wealth by another segment of the population. In an educated social system, this must appear to be a natural or normative distribution in order to mask the oppression. The political and social economies of developed nations requires the silent subjugation of the non-average in order to establish the dominance of the

oppressor. The political economy and social order prioritize certain types of intelligence testing school children for that propensity and leaving the rest with few alternatives. “In schools, this systemic racism results in a series of structural and pedagogical injustices, including tracking, retention, low expectations for students of color, and generally the privileging of the needs of White students” (Lissovoy 2008, 87). Standardized testing, assignments, universal rubrics and instruction result in the homogenization of the educational population. Students learn the industrial model of education preparing them for a life of labour. Only certain forms of intelligence are rewarded. The rest are denied and oppressed through systems of denial. “These standard methods of knowledge production and resulting knowledge products can cause harm amounting to epistemic violence” (Grant, et al. 2002, 350).

“Our ideas are shaped by the social order. Under slavery and the plantation economy, the knowledge of the period reflected that social order and the social arrangements therein. Such oppression was deemed to be normal” (Newby & Newby 1995, 14). In other words, we consider it normal for students of color to underperform in academics but expect them to excel within physical elements of education such as athletics. The athletic field becomes the new cotton field and the athlete the new unintelligent slave. “As pointed out earlier, what passes for knowledge is not an isolated phenomenon but shaped by the political economy and social order of its day” (Newby & Newby 1995, 17). And yet, concepts of normative testing, distribution, and a system of false averages dominates systems that produce oppression in the wake. “Our purpose here is to criticize one of the fundamental justifications of educational sorting practices, namely, the belief that a normal curve distribution is a representation of real things in nature” (Fendler & Muzaffar 2008, 63).

Internalized Racism after the Bell Curve

Such systems reinforce the social systems of oppression. Those unsuccessful in school see few options after school. Some call this the “prison pipeline”. When the youth see no options for success, they turn to crime. They are caught, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned and the system congratulates itself on correctly identifying those with potential and those without. Such a system works so well because youth don’t see the oppression. As labels are layered daily in education, the youth internalize those labels. “Eventually, members of the oppressed racial groups may no longer need society to perpetuate such inferiorizing messages, because they begin inferiorizing themselves in overt and subtle ways” (David, Schroeder, & Fernandez 2019, 1066). Once individuals internalize those messages, they no longer need a system to categorize them, they do it themselves and to their own children.

Braiding Works

The bell curve is integrated as an objective measure of intelligence without critical questions about the skewed nature of statistics or the diversity of intelligence. Humans are compared to a fictional average that is redrafted as normal and by the binary nature also outlines abnormal. Dozens of authors have critically analyzed the bell curve and found it inappropriate as a tool of measurement. Still, the bell curve remains in use. The bell curve is used to justify concepts of unbiased assessment. However, statistically and rationally, researchers understand this is a falsehood. Scholars have demonstrated that the bell curve is skewed, racist, limiting, binary, and unethical. Its use leads to blanket racism and ableism. It eventually leads to internalized racism and intergenerational internalized racism. It allows institutions the false perception of objectivity. It allows higher education the perception of prestige of intellect. It perpetuates justifications of segregation. It condemns entire populations to lives less than they deserve mired in a system of oppression.

The bell curve and the misleading data it depicts, specifically in education, is a functional tool for

oppression. Standardized tests are created by those representing the systems of power and privilege, negating other intelligences and epistemologies, normalizing a Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalistic, competitive, colonizing, scarcity-based system.

A braid is strong because the strands are bonded together. Even if braided loosely, the braid is still stronger by far. If those not embraced by the averages and norms of the bell curve were to call its use into question and demand a detailed description of its implementation and scholarly justification of its utility, perhaps then, braided together, the bell curve could be revealed for what it is.

Bell Curve Learning Bundle

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II. Spit Shine and Polish

Activity

With a finalized project, remove all unnecessary pieces such as research questions, search terms, envelopes and outline. All that should remain is the title page, paper, and works cited. Rename the file but keep both files.

In the era of AI generated papers, it is an extra layer of protection to maintain files of your work. Also, a paper should return at least three assets back to the writer. A simple grade is insufficient. Considering the grade as the primary asset of the paper cheats the writer. With each paper there is essential learning and development. Aside from the grade, the writer could also present the information at conferences, at work, or begin a blog documenting a learning journey. Many universities house journals that receive student work. Consider submitting work to these journals.

As for my work, I first submit each paper to a professional organization where I can discuss it with a group of peers and receive feedback. Sometimes, I submit the papers for publication. Most often the papers or research find a home with a client or becomes the foundation for presentations and public speaking engagements. The research always enriches my other work.

Similarly, I maintain the list of questions, envelopes, outlines, rough drafts, and final submissions. Some research supports subsequent work. In other words, the same learning bundle can give rise to several papers. For example, a learning bundle on folklore and recitation gave rise to four papers. Two papers focused on folklore created by recitation using the Gettysburg Address and the poem In Flanders Fields. But this also gave rise to two other papers on the renaming of places as a system of Indigenous erasure and the creation of new folklore to replace the Indigenous narrative already in place.

Research is designed to create learning. Learning is designed to alter the thought processes of the individual encountering the learning. Learning is meant to functional and used daily.

12. Other Formats and Approaches

Activity

As a student, gather your course outlines together and consider if they contain assignments such as a compare and contrast paper or a reading reflection paper.

The following may assist you in writing those papers. You can use the same approach for several writing assignments.

Writing on Topics:

If you are asked to write on a particular topic:

- Ask questions about the topic area.
- Gather a learning bundle.
- Create envelopes while reading.
- Fill envelopes with data in an outline form.
- Write a rough draft.
- Seek peer review.
- Revise and submit.

Compare and Contrast

If a course asks you to compare and contrast:

- make envelopes for author 1 and author 2
- how do they compare?
- use the envelopes to make an outline
- write a rough draft
- seek peer review

- revise and submit

Read and Respond

If a course asks you to read and respond...

- create envelopes from readings
- reactions
- outline readings context
- research exploring readings context
- write a rough draft
- seek peer review
- revise and resubmit

**Here's what the author says... Here's
what I say.**

They say, I say.