Ethical Educational Leadership

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Untangling Ethical Dilemmas and Imagining Alternative Futures

Alana Hoare; Olubukola Bosede Osuntade; and Rumana Patel

Laura Grizzlypaws and Mixalhíts'a7

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The Eagle

nahīñ terā nasheman qasr-e-sultānī ke gumbad par tū
shāhīñ hai baserā kar pahāḌoñ kī chaTānoñ meñ
You don't have to make your nest on the dome of the
Queen's palace, oh Eagle,
you are royal, choose to reside on the peaks of mountains.
— Muhammad Iqbal (1915; trans. 1920)

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Photo by Philipp Pilz on Unsplash

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We begin our journey into ethical leadership with
the metaphor of The Eagle. Allama Iqbal's poem

challenges us to pursue greatness and to break the barriers that confine us. The "Queen" and her domain are not the height of royalty, rather, we draw from Iqbal the belief that we are all capable of royalty. We all have the capacity to be leaders on the peaks of our own mountains. The Eagle soars above all limitations; above the noise and distractions seeking out different perspectives. As Abdul Kalam poetically noted, "All Birds find shelter during a rain. But Eagle avoids rain by flying above the Clouds." Over time the Eagle fortifies itself by developing resilience and new perspectives thus allowing it to soar beyond the ordinary.

As a leader, Mother Eagle encourages and teaches the Eaglet to fly from the nest, she gives the youth room to spread his wings, yet is near enough to swoop in when needed. The wind created by the mother's wings provides lift and buoyancy, making it easier for the young Eagle to stay airborne and control his flight. This allows the Eaglet to experience flying with less effort, helping him gain confidence and develop the necessary skills to fly independently: easing the path to leadership for the young Eagle.

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Introduction

Alana Hoare; Olubukola Bosede Osuntade; and Rumana Patel

Ethical Leadership in Education

Over many years as practitioners, teachers, and researchers in higher education working to understand the nature and theory of educational leadership, it became clear to us that much of the extant literature is inaccessible. Reasons for this inaccessibility range from a lack of open content; instances of offensive and outdated language that prioritize Western belief systems; frameworks that ignore the contributions of Indigenous scholars; and minimal consideration for global contexts.

At the intersection of *educational leadership* and **open education**, we believe that there are opportunities to broaden educators' and learners' capacity to untangle major problems and issues that confront us all, particularly as educational environments become increasingly diversified.

Because theory is useful not only for understanding different perspectives of the world but also for framing educational leadership in ways that allow it to be practiced responsibly, we sought ways to make the study of **ethics** more accessible to students. We found that when students could see connections between theoretical concepts and how these concepts fit together, they had a better idea of how to collaboratively explore and use multiple frameworks to untangle ethical dilemmas.

Many scholars have previously attempted to combine

multiple ethical lenses to resolve dilemmas that educational leaders face (e.g., Starratt (1994), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), and Wood and Hilton (2012)). However, few models are as comprehensive and culturally diverse as represented in this open textbook.

Part I: Ethical Lenses

The first part of this textbook approaches theory through the diverse perspectives of women in academia from Canada, India, Nigeria, and the St'at'imc First Nation and the disciplines of agriculture, education, and engineering. These diverse viewpoints offer a richer, nuanced perspective of leadership ethics from deep within the academy — teachers, students, and formal and informal leaders — offering a hopeful and, at times, subversive approach to decolonizing educational systems.

We describe eight theoretical paradigms through which to view ethical dilemmas: St'at'imc matriarchal leadership and the ethics of justice, critique, care, self-care, community, discomfort, and the profession. We finish Part I by presenting a conceptual framework (a "Bird's Eye View") that leaders can apply for more comprehensive decision-making.

As you read this text, you will be asked to question your own beliefs about how you determine what is right and wrong. You will be asked to critically reflect on such questions as:

- How might we balance the individual needs of students and advocate for more socially just educational systems?

- What might we learn from the Land, our first

teacher, about leadership?

- How might we incorporate eco-justice into our analysis of right and wrong?

Moral decision-making and ethical leadership starts from within and gradually expands outward, growing in focus and understanding as we come to know ourselves better, as well as the communities we work within.

Part II: Ethical Dilemmas

The second part of this book engaged Master of Education students as co-authors in the development of case studies. In creating this text and as part of an assignment for a graduate course in education, student authors were asked to select a real-world example of an ethical dilemma in higher education and examine it from both a practical and theoretical perspective. Drawing on scholarly and popular research and analyzing findings from multiple ethical frames, students were asked to pose alternative approaches to resolving the dilemmas.

Open Philosophy

This textbook incorporates the concept of sustainable/ renewable assignments where students' assessments have life beyond the course (Hoare, 2024). Clinton-Lisell (2021) argued that open pedagogy provides an opportunity "for students to be knowledge creators rather than only knowledge consumers" (p. 256). It has been argued that renewable assignments may support representational

justice through the equitable expression of historically denied and underrepresented voices in educational materials and resources (Lambert, 2018). Similarly, Wilson and Montgomery (2022) highlighted how women researchers have pioneered the use of open publishing to support diverse and equitable forms of scholarship.

This book also offers an invaluable opportunity to address what McKerrow and Bullerdieck (2006) have described as the need for non-dominated discourse in educational leadership, which they proposed as a best practice for ethical educational administration. Non-dominated discourse is a framework allowing for all voices to emerge and is based on the belief that:

- The interests of each individual must be fairly considered.

- Each individual should have a fair influence over decisions emerging from discourse.

- Those affected by a decision should be a part of the decision-making process.

- Accountability must be directed toward those who are directly affected by a decision.

Because each chapter is based on the vision and understanding of its co-authors, it may not be the same conception or interpretation that readers have of the theories or dilemmas presented. Therefore, our goal is to provide a text that can be modified and supplemented by readers. The open educational resource (OER) format and Creative Commons licensing allow readers to adopt, adapt, and comment on the original content.

Other students and researchers, or even the original authors, can, therefore, create new editions of this book

that may present a different, broader, or more social understanding of these theories and dilemmas. We look forward to the evolution of these chapters and the book as a whole. We, along with the student authors, expect that this book will be useful to varied readers. We see it being used as an overview to initiate deeper exploration of *educational leadership* and *open pedagogy.*

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Education, Ethics, and Leadership

Alana Hoare; Olubukola Bosede Osuntade; and Rumana Patel

What Makes Leadership 'Ethical'?

Educational systems are becoming increasingly diverse, yet global inequities in knowledge production and exchange persist (Czerniewicz, 2013). Massification of higher education, immigration and movement of war and climate refugees and expansion of internationalization efforts in the post-secondary sector demand that educational leaders adopt more culturally responsive and critical intercultural practices (Killick, 2018). This is particularly necessary as we collaborate across cultural groups to solve complex problems.

The impetus for this book is a hope that educators can teach and students can learn in educational systems centred on ethical decision-making, where diverse perspectives and ethical epistemic lenses are considered and valued. Our research was driven by a desire to better understand how education, ethics, and leadership are interconnected. Specifically, we sought to investigate the following questions:

- What makes educational leadership 'ethical'?

- How do leaders determine what is 'right' and 'wrong'?

- As leaders, how do we ensure that equity and ethical decisions are achieved within a

> pluralistic democratic society?

- How do various forms of discrimination and privilege intersect to shape our understanding of ethical decisions?

In this chapter, we define 'ethical educational leadership' and the relationship between ethics, morals, leadership, and social systems.

Ethics

Early attempts at defining ethics are often attributed to Plato (427–347 BC), who argued that ethics are what we ought to do or how we ought to live our lives. Confucious (551–479 BC) was also concerned with teaching moral values and ethics. His moral education was based on empathy and deepening one's understanding of others (Hue, 2007). In ancient India (3000 BC–1200 AD), Vedic and Buddhist traditions similarly focused on teaching ethics and cultivating humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance, and respect for all creations of the world (Ghonge et al., 2020). In fact, if we extend our vision beyond Western philosophies, we see that ethical teachings and moral practices have deep roots in cultures and educational systems around the world, such as those outlined in the St'at'imc Nation's Seven Laws of Life (Bull, in press).

Dewey (1902) defined ethics as "the science that deals with conduct… considered to be right or wrong, good or bad." Similarly, Hosmer (1987) defined ethics as "the study of proper thought and conduct." Later, Ciulla (2003) defined the study of ethics as "what we should do and what we should be" (p. xi). In the context of educational

leadership, Starrett (2004) explained that ethics is "the study of what constitutes a moral life" (p. 5).

The study of ethics involves such questions as:

- What is right?
- What is wrong?
- How should I operate in this situation?

Ethics, then, encompasses the standards and behaviours that tell leaders how they ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves. Wood and Navarez (2014) argued that "Without an ethical foundation, leadership is nothing more than meaningless political posturing" (p. 17).

There is no universal definition of what is deemed ethical. Perceptions of ethics vary and are influenced by one's political ideology, culture, religion, lived experiences, and other contextual factors. Yet educational leaders are often confronted with the demand to provide a one-size-fits-all answer to complex problems. Ethical dilemmas emerge when leaders are forced to choose among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs, or ideas.

From our perspective, 'ethics' is a broad field that deals with what is morally 'right' and 'wrong.' In this book, we will introduce eight different ethical lenses that can be used to help leaders determine what is right or wrong depending upon the context that they find themselves in.

Ethical Dilemmas

Ethical dilemmas refer to issues that involve conflicting

moral principles. It is sometimes easy to determine what is 'wrong'; for example, corruption, fraud, abuse of power, and deception would be considered unethical by many people, yet they occur frequently throughout the world by established leaders. But even these concepts are subjective, and some will argue that if the outcome is good, then the process to get to that outcome is inconsequential. In other words, the ends justify the means.

The most challenging dilemmas occur when leaders are faced with 'right versus right' dilemmas. These types of dilemmas are characterized as either/or situations where there exists a clear opportunity cost resulting from whatever action is not pursued. There are even 'wrong versus wrong' dilemmas that leaders must navigate (Somantri & Sardin, 2017).

Ethical judgement, argued Frick et al. (2013), should be an iterative and dynamic process, where leaders draw on multiple sources of evidence, consider differing moral guideposts, and engage in conversations with others to come to a well-rounded conclusion. Importantly, leaders must be cognizant that every action taken, or any decision made can have an immediate and long-lasting impact on the lives of people and it is important to analyze and estimate the impact of decisions (Lapointe et al., 2005).

Leadership

Leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its impact on student learning. — *Leithwood et al.* (2006, p. 4)

Higher education leaders are facing increased scrutiny with

heightened awareness of corruption, academic misconduct, harassment, and fraud, as well as other unethical behaviours regularly reported in the global media. As a result, there is a stronger demand for accountability and transparency and calls for more ethical leadership.

Langlois and Lapointe (2007) argued that ethical leadership is linked to moral leadership and "constitutes the highest level in the development of knowledge and skills in postmodern leadership" (p. 249).

Ethical leadership is the pursuit of justice. Starratt (1991) posited that "We govern ourselves by observing justice" (p. 193). Yet injustice persists. McKerrow and Bullerdieck (2006) explained that there are three reasons for the continued prevalence of injustice:

- Justice simply means different things to different people depending upon their particular perspective.

- Everyone understands, rightly or wrongly, that some perspectives are privileged.

- The extent to which the privileged perspective usurps others and dominates the organizational culture is the extent to which injustice is likely to be ignored. (p. 200)

To address this, critical scholars have called for more distributed forms of leadership, arguing that "those who are vitally affected by decisions should stand in some meaningful relation to the decision-making process" (Sarason, 1999, p. 63).

Although there is no standard definition of ethics, ethicists agree that it is about relationships (Somantri & Sardin, 2017) and that these relationships are contextual. As Singer (1994) opined, "It is a set of rules, principles or

ways of thinking that guide, or claim authority to guide, the actions of a particular group" (p. 4).

While we often associate leadership in higher education with positional authority — i.e., presidents, provosts, and deans — we argue that leadership can arise from any position within an institution. From our perspective, leadership signifies an action or practice that inspires change, which is available to formal and informal leaders alike. When one combines the words 'ethics' and 'leadership,' there is an assumption that one is fulfilling their personal ethical standards and professional codes of conduct and adhering to community values through the practice of leadership. In other words, "ethical leadership is the practice of inspiring others towards a desired outcome while exemplifying an established standard of moral living" (Wood & Navarez, 2014, p. 18). It requires that leaders act in moral ways and encourage morality among others.

To develop the requisite attitudes, knowledge, and skills to be an ethical leader requires a high degree of self-awareness. It requires that leaders interrogate their own biases, values, and principles that guide their decision-making and reflect upon what they deem as 'right' and 'wrong' and how they have come to these assumptions. Ethical leaders thus place a strong emphasis on being self-critical. Somantri and Sardin (2017) described a critical, self-reflective practice as one in which leaders:

- adopt an attitude of skepticism
- question the quality of their own and others' knowledge
- scrutinize claims
- respect others

- be open-minded (p. 988)

Social Systems

All social institutions (i.e., schools, colleges, and universities) serve as sites for the reproduction of social stratification and relations (Wood & Navarez, 2014). From a social justice perspective, educational leaders' main objective is to identify structural inequities within their institutions and the false principles and assumptions perpetuated within them.

Ethical leaders must consider the various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, and how they intersect and overlap to create complex and interconnected systems of discrimination or privilege. Viewing leadership through multiple epistemic lenses forces leaders to consider how different aspects of their own and others' identity can interact to shape their experiences of oppression or privilege (Crenshaw, 1989), as well as their beliefs about what is right and wrong.

Leaders who incorporate multiple lenses into their decision-making — whether that involves interrogating systems rather than individuals, considering equity data, or investigating the root causes of a particular dilemma — recognize and address these interconnected systems of oppression to promote more inclusive and equitable learning environments. This multi-dimensional viewpoint emphasizes the importance of considering how various forms of discrimination and privilege intersect to shape individuals' experiences and access to educational opportunities.

Multi-Dimensional Moral Compass

While ethical decision-making is what leaders strive for, morality is ethics in action. Morality involves adhering to one's ethical standards through one's behaviours, thoughts, and decisions. Starratt (2004) argued that "morality is the living, the acting out of ethical beliefs and commitments" (p. 5); therefore, leaders need a moral compass to help them resolve ethical dilemmas. Wood and Navarez (2014) described a moral compass as "a personal framework of rules, principles, and virtues that guide one's actions, beliefs, and decision-making" (p. 17). In this textbook, we expand upon Wood and Navarez's compass by describing eight lenses through which leaders can view the world around themself.

The approach outlined in this textbook, which draws readers' attention to multiple epistemic lenses that should be considered when making decisions, provides a framework for more culturally responsive and socially just decision-making. In Part I of this textbook, we introduce eight ethical paradigms, which can be used to strengthen readers' ability to untangle ethical dilemmas — major problems and issues that confront us all. We then combine these lenses into a conceptual framework to show the intersections, connections, and diversions from the centre through which the leader looks out into the world. In Part II of this textbook, we provide readers with real-world case studies of ethical dilemmas in higher education and demonstrate how the multi-dimensional framework can be applied. We welcome readers to comment, critique, and imagine alternate futures to those proposed.

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Key Terms

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- **Ethics**
- **Moral compass**

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Thompson Rivers University (TRU) campuses are situated on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake) within Secwepemcúl'ecw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The rich tapestry of this land also encompasses the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Tŝilhqot'in, Nuxalk, and Dakelh. Recognizing the deep histories and ongoing presence of these Indigenous peoples, we express gratitude for the wisdom held by this land. TRU is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment, valuing education as a shared journey. The TRU Open Press, inspired by collaborative learning on this land, upholds open access principles, and freely accessible education for all.

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Includes:

- **Easy navigation.** This resource has a linked table of contents and uses headings in each chapter to make navigation easy.

- **Accessible videos.** All videos in this resource have captions.

- **Accessible images.** All images in this resource that convey information have alternative text. Images that are decorative have empty alternative text.

- **Accessible links.** All links use descriptive link text.

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Accessibility Checklist Table

Element	Requirements	Pass
Headings	Content is organized under headings and subheadings that are used sequentially.	Yes
Images	Images that convey information include alternative text descriptions. These descriptions are provided in the alt text field, in the surrounding text, or linked to as a long description.	Yes
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Tables	Tables include a title or caption.	Yes
Tables	Tables do not have merged or split cells.	Yes
Tables	Tables have adequate cell padding.	Yes
Links	The link text describes the destination of the link.	Yes
Links	Links do not open new windows or tabs. If they do, a textual reference is included in the link text.	Yes
Links	Links to files include the file type in the link text.	Yes

Video	All videos include high-quality (i.e., not machine generated) captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content.	Yes
Video	All videos with contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are described audibly in the video.	Yes
H5P	All H5P activities have been tested for accessibility by the H5P team and have passed their testing.	Yes
H5P	All H5P activities that include images, videos, and/or audio content meet the accessibility requirements for those media types.	Yes
Font	Font size is 12 point or higher for body text.	Yes
Font	Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes.	Yes
Font	Font size can be zoomed to 200% in the webbook or eBook formats.	Yes

Known Accessibility Issues and Areas for Improvement

- None

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Leadership Lenses

St'at'imc Matriarchal Leadership Ethics

Mixalhíts'a7 and Laura Grizzlypaws

"When you say ethical leadership… Do we need to put 'ethical' in there? Leadership should be ethical to be begin with, right? It's one and the same." — *Mixalhíts'a7*

Foreword

This chapter reflects a cross-cultural conversation between the book authors (Alana, Olubukola, and Rumana) and two St'at'imc matriarchs (Mixalhíts'a7 and Grizzlypaws). We have chosen to maintain the integrity of that conversation by sharing portions of the dialogue, oral stories, and lessons embedded within them to reflect and honour an Indigenous epistemology that is relational and dialogic in a way that demonstrates our commitment to decolonizing research methodologies (Smith, 2023).

The conversation that follows discusses Indigenous leadership approaches from a St'at'imc perspective. Rather than presenting the transcribed conversation verbatim, we themed portions, removing some of the small talk, filler words (e.g., "like" and "hmmm"), and unfinished thoughts that naturally occur when friends gather to ruminate on complex topics like leadership.

You will notice that we interspersed the conversation with short thematic paragraphs that we saw emerge from

the conversation. We acknowledge that the need to organize and categorize information to make the lessons explicit reflects a Western epistemology that has a preference for reductionist ideologies. This theming may detract from the typical circular, interconnected style common to many Indigenous peoples (Wilson, 2008). However, we verified that these themes accurately reflect the intent of the conversation and made changes based on our conversations with Mixalhíts'a7 and Grizzlypaws.

Author Introductions

Laura Grizzlypaws proudly identifies with her ancestral name, 'Stálhalamcen — Grizzly Paws' and is of St'át'imc descent. From the ancestral lands of her people, she emerges as an ardent advocate for Indigenous knowledge and education. With a Master of Education in Education Foundation Land-Based Education, a bachelor's degree with minors in Linguistics and First Nation Studies, and a Bachelor of Education in Curriculum Development and Instruction, Grizzlypaws is deeply committed to academic excellence. Her dedication has earned her recognition, including a Language Heroes award for her contributions to the British Columbia Salishan language family. Beyond academia, Grizzlypaws excels in music and athletics. Her albums "Come Home" and "Muzmit.stumc" reflect her commitment to language preservation and cultural expression. In athletics, she has achieved remarkable success in fitness competitions, earning medals and accolades. Grizzlypaws recently authored "Sulyalesta," a children's book celebrating St'át'imc language and culture, further solidifying her impact in Indigenous education. Currently pursuing her Doctor of Education Leadership at

Simon Fraser University, Grizzlypaws continues to merge traditional practices with contemporary education, leaving a profound legacy in Indigenous knowledge and academia.

Mixalhíts'a7, a proud member of the St'at'imc Nation and a devoted mother of three, embodies the values of her Indigenous culture in all facets of her life. She has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education degree from Simon Fraser University and a master's degree from the University of British Columbia; she is also a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Waikato in New Zealand under the supervision of esteemed scholar Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Her research intertwines academia with ancestral wisdom, centering on storywork, a profound method of healing and reclaiming narratives, focusing on the experiences of her mother and two sisters at residential school and their subsequent journey to healing. Through her research, she seeks to amplify Indigenous women voices, honour intergenerational research and resilience, and contribute to the ongoing process of truth and reconciliation. Mixalhíts'a7 is deeply committed to language revitalization efforts within her community. She is currently entering her third year in the language mentor-apprentice program for St'at'imcets. Her experience as a former classroom teacher in Indigenous-based schools further informs her research and advocacy work, grounding her academic endeavours in the realities of Indigenous education. Guided by Indigenous values of reciprocity, respect, and interconnectedness, Mixalhíts'a7 continues to be a trailblazer in the field of Indigenous education, weaving together traditional knowledge with contemporary scholarship to create meaningful change.

Critical Reflection Question

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=40#h5p-7

Historical Impacts of Colonization on Indigenous Leadership Practices

Indigenous communities have been practicing leadership since time immemorial. As Herns Jensen (2024) asserted, "Indigenous peoples' history did not begin with colonialism." However, when we engage in a conversation about Indigenous leadership, specifically St'at'imc perspectives of leadership, it is essential that we consider the impacts of colonization in Canada and how colonialism has (mis)shaped systems of governance and leadership within Indigenous communities. Kenny (2012) reminded us that Indigenous leadership has taken on many forms: "autonomy, imperialism, colonization, resistance, and renaissance" (p. 1). Here, we offer a discussion between two St'at'imc matriarchs on the ongoing processes of colonization and decolonization that influence leadership and governance in Canada, including gender roles; the

relationship between land, language, and leadership and identities for Indigenous communities; and efforts to regain traditional matriarchal leadership models amidst the ongoing struggle to integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices within a predominantly Western educational system.

  — Mixalhíts'a7: You have a system where women are the decision-makers. And then, you are forced to construct a system that is alien — a system that is patriarchal in nature. Sadly, the matriarchal conception of leadership changed with the Indian Act and with residential schools. Colonizers forced patriarchal systems upon us. Now, it seems men think, "women are below us"; that we're toxic during our moon time. Now, women must cover their bodies so that we can't see their cleavage; they must wear long skirts. That makes my mom so upset. When she was young, women didn't have those restrictions. They didn't have to cover their bodies; women weren't body shamed for showing skin. They weren't ashamed of their bodies. Colonial ideologies have changed how women are perceived; women have been devalued.

  — Grizzlypaws: Some of the concerns that arise from ethical leadership stem from historical challenges in our Indigenous communities, including the oppression that Indigenous communities have faced… centuries of colonization, oppression, and marginalization. It still creates hurdles for many Indigenous leaders to assert their role and be heard. There is a lack of representation of Indigenous leaders within their communities. Even amongst Indigenous community members, there are biases and lateral violence because of colonization, which

are perpetuated by misunderstandings and persistent discrimination from non-Indigenous peoples.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** Electing a chief and council on the reserve was a forcibly imposed colonial idea of leadership. This was how the Canadian government communicated that they did not want to promote a matriarchal system. It gave a lot of power to men and allowed that alien patriarchal system to infest on our reserves, infecting our communities. Where men were now feeling like, "Oh! I run the show!" Colonial teachings are still present and are reflected in our day-to-day life. For example, my mom talked about how we pray. She explained that when we pray, St'at'imc people do not stand up and bow our heads. But we see that happening a lot in our communities. Traditionally, we used to sit on the floor, touch Mother Earth, and look up at the sky. This causes confusion — people don't know how to behave — which has created an internal conflict within our communities. Some people will say, "Look, she's not standing while praying." But it is because we're trying to go back to the actual traditional way of doing things. The misconceptions are still strong.

Decolonization and Indigenization in Educational Leadership

The constructs of learning and leading are contextual: geographically, culturally, linguistically, and socially. Students' learning is deeply influenced by their identity: how they see themselves and how the world sees them. Yet, as Herns Jensen (2024) argued, "Western models of

education still continue to devalue and de-legitimize Indigenous knowledge systems, and public-school systems still systematically discriminate against Indigenous parents and children." Alternatively, from a St'at'imc perspective, learning is a communal endeavour. Yet Western educational systems are individualistic, competitive, and, as a result, adversarial (Blackstock, 2007).

From a St'at'imc perspective, intergenerational learning is highly valued. McLeod (2012) described an intergenerational framework for female First Nations leadership based on an adaptation of medicine wheel teachings that positions the leader as a learner informed by personal reflections on experiential relationships and connections. Yet Western educational systems often ignore students' prior learning and the learning developed through family and community connections (Chrona, 2022). As Grizzlypaws and Mixalhíts'a7 discuss, the challenge of decolonizing systems inherently designed for oppression requires a paradigm shift and reconciliation between two divergent worldviews; this requires that we go beyond superficial measures and open our minds to new ways of viewing learning and leadership. It means adopting a holistic approach to educational leadership that recognizes the interconnectedness of land, water, and all living things, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** How do you decolonize a system that was meant to oppress?

— **Grizzlypaws:** Power imbalances within educational institution create challenges for Indigenous leaders, educators, and learners, and it has impacted what we have seen and experienced serving on university committees and trying to engage in decision-making processes. There is a hard

imbalance between the traditional Indigenous approach to education and Western educational systems. There are already limited resources and a lack of support, which negatively impacts cultural preservation. Institutions set up 10-year strategic plans outlining a commitment to truth and reconciliation but then make it impossible for Indigenous leaders to follow their way of leadership. To move in the direction of Indigenous ways of leadership, we must commit to decolonization, cultural responsiveness, and inclusivity within educational institutions. It involves creating space for Indigenous leaders to be able to thrive and for non-Indigenous peoples to provide them with support without taking over or imposing their own beliefs of what "good" leadership looks like. We need to look at polices to facilitate truth and reconciliation and honour self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** Nothing is truly Indigenous unless you are out on the land, speaking the language, and following the principles and worldviews of the local Indigenous nation.

— **Grizzlypaws:** The diversity of Indigenous peoples is important with regards to the land and being the stewards of our land. For our Indigenous communities, we teach each student that it's the interconnectedness of the land, water, and all living things and that holistic approaches to education encompass physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of well-being. There must be integrity and accountability for institutions. There must be a demonstration of actions that respect the traditional knowledge systems of any cultural group. There

must be a relationship based on trust, honesty, and reciprocity that benefits the local Indigenous communities and advances the institution toward honouring reconciliation. That's pretty much it.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** The university says they want to decolonize Robert's Rules of Order. How do you do that? What does that look like? Do we have an Elder here? Do we have the voice of students? Are we doing that in an authentic way? Sometimes, it's okay to have Robert's Rules or another type of meeting structure. It has its place in the setting; it does its job, and we must do what we must do. But we can't just do something to say we decolonized it just to get the check mark. "Look at us, we decolonized our meetings and we're sitting in a circle and we're taking turns talking," but shouldn't we be doing that anyways? It doesn't need to be a decolonial Indigenous thing.

— **Grizzlypaws:** Not all Indigenous knowledge should be shared with institutions. Institutions are always grabbing and taking Indigenous knowledge for their advantage, or what they perceive as Indigenous knowledge. We must make sure there is cultural sensitivity and an environment that respects but also honours the diversity of Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** I chose the University of Waikato, New Zealand, as my university to do my PhD research because I didn't want that tokenism from another Western institution to hold space for the story that I wanted to share and the story of my mom. That give-back piece. Giving back to my mom because she's the one that drove me to education. I grew up with the belief that you need to get an

education to survive and walk in both worlds. The University of Waikato is based on Indigenous knowledge. My supervisor (Linda Tuhiwai Smith) is renowned, and I knew that our story would be safe.

St'at'imc Leadership Ethics

Kenny (2012) starts her chapter on "Liberating Leadership Theory" by calling us to "let the children lead" (p. 2) and to envelope them in the wisdoms of the land, ancestors, elders, and story. This theory of leadership is based on the belief that children are inherently good and that it is our duty to recognize and nurture their strengths (Chrona, 2022).

Alana recalls experiencing this strengths-based perspective firsthand; she has been transformed by three immersive experiential learning opportunities focused on St'at'imc family, culture, and teaching and learning. During these immersive experiences, her teachers did not tell her how to be inclusive; they modeled inclusivity, and she felt included. It was in the way they described a son as observant rather than anti-social or a daughter as brave rather than shy — with the emphasis placed on their strengths rather than perceived weaknesses. It was how events were structured so that everyone could participate in song and dance, regardless of age, skill, or access to resources. She will never forget when a St'at'imc child handed her a drum so that she could join the circle. She had never drummed before, as she was not a member of the St'at'imc community, but she felt welcomed and like she belonged.

Ethical leadership also involves cultural sensitivity and inclusion. In "Elders' Teachings on Leadership," Leon

(2012) reminded us that "providing relevant cultural content is essential in Indigenous leadership education" (p. 55). This includes acknowledging and respecting the diversity of Indigenous cultures and ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is appropriately integrated and protected within educational settings.

> **— Mixalhíts'a7:** Leadership is looking at the strength of an individual and providing a safe space and opportunities to flourish, and we need to do that right to make strong leaders that are going to be thoughtful of others. I notice the things that students gravitate towards and give them space to honour their strengths based on their personality traits and skills. I had one student that was always raising his hand, always questioning, always engaged with the topics that I was teaching. I saw him as taking a spokesperson role when things came up. I gave him opportunities to go up in front of class because that's where he really shined. Whereas others… maybe that's not their strength. Maybe they're more artistic. Our job as matriarchal leaders is to help students find their passions and their strengths and to create opportunities for them to become a leader in terms of the things that they are passionate about. We notice something in somebody, and we want them to be good at it. Like an artist, if they're carving and that's their passion; the other people might be carving too, but you notice something in an individual and so you start their training. They train to be the master of a skill that is innate but needs to be nurtured. You notice a sparkle in someone, so you make sure that they have every opportunity to be the best they can be.

> **— Grizzlypaws:** It involves rooting leadership

in the values and traditions of cultural practices of Indigenous communities. Some of the key principles of ethical leadership are looking at respecting culture, and recognizing values, culture, and traditions of that specific community. Making sure that knowledge is integrated into the community programs or the educational institutions that they are engaged with, even the curriculum decision-making processes. Cultural sensitivity must be acknowledged for ethical leaders to promote inclusion in educational settings. Leaders need to seek the input of Indigenous community members, including Elders, parents, even students, and Knowledge Keepers, and involve them in decision-making processes. St'át'imc women historically held leadership roles in their communities. For thousands of years, many Indigenous communities followed a matriarchal form of leadership and governance. Women's deep cultural knowledge and innate abilities helped create peace and prosperity within their communities. Many Indigenous women face ethical dilemmas in educational and leadership roles, including balancing cultural responsibilities with the demands of operating within a colonial framework. Much work needs to be done to reclaim and honour traditional matriarchal roles in the face of colonial influences.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** When you say ethical leadership… Do we need to put "ethical" in there? Leadership should be ethical to be begin with, right? It's one and the same.

— **Grizzlypaws:** Indigenous women have historically held important leadership roles within our families, communities, and society. Now, we are

re-teaching our families and community members and advocating for the rights of Indigenous women. Indigenous women are trying to mend our daughters, our children, our aunties, and our grandmothers so that we can regain our cultural knowledge and traditional ways and laws. Indigenous women must undergo our own healing and reconciliation process to address the historical traumas and loss of our traditional ways. A lot of the work that I do involves taking responsibility and accountability for my community's grief and loss. This involves taking accountability for the impact of colonization and oppression.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** The older generation — my mom's brothers — they know that the aunties and the woman are the ones that make decisions about family, schools, and education. The men sit and listen, and then they go and make it happen. They go and build the school or whatever needs to be done, but it's always based on the direction of the women. Leadership is communal, but the women know. They make empathetic ethical decisions. It's ingrained in them as a woman.

— **Grizzlypaws:** As members of historically matriarchal communities, women are reclaiming their role. There is an Indigenous movement of women advocating to reclaim their identities as leaders. Education is one component of reclaiming my life as a matriarchal leader. Those that do the hard work of being accountable for their grief are the ones that are going to create change.

— **Mixalhíts'a7:** When you reflect on what it means to be an Indigenous matriarch, it encompasses the four quadrants of spiritual, mental, physical, and

emotional. It means being strong and uplifting others. How are you living in relation to those four quadrants on a day-to-day basis? If you're not actively looking after yourself then how can you be a good leader? How can you make good decisions when you're eating five bags of chips? As a matriarch, you must set a good example for other women. You must actively learn your language and know your songs. You might not be an expert, but you're working at it. It's the same with your health. Like Grizzlypaws said, women must take responsibility and accountability for their actions. We need to constantly be checking in on these types of things so that our children have the capacity to be the best that they can be. I had a conversation this morning with a colleague who is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, person of colour) about leadership and taking on leadership roles, but we have no desire to be in those positions because we would be emotionally drained. We would have to conduct ourselves in a way that was inauthentic. I would struggle daily trying to maintain myself as an Indigenous person or leader. If we gave preference for an Indigenous student, or Indigenous issue, it would be seen as playing favourites. Yet, no one questions leaders who prioritize dominant norms. I see my leadership role as being in my community, focusing on teaching the Indigenous content with my children and the students. That is how I show up as a leader.

Ethical leadership from a St'át'imc perspective involves respecting and integrating Indigenous values, traditions, and knowledge systems into educational practices and decision-making processes. Ethical leaders

strive to empower and uplift learners using a strengths-based lens. The summary table below highlights the primary objectives of St'at'imc matriarchal leadership, including the core principles, which are based on the St'at'imc Seven Laws of Life (see Bull (in press) for an in-depth review of these laws), and the benefits of adopting this framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas.

Summary Table: St'at'imc Matriarchal Leadership

Primary leadership style	Matriarchal
Frame of reference	Relational, holistic, strengths-based
Objective	Prioritizing relationships; self-determination and cultural preservation
Core principles	• Health • Happiness • Generations • Generosity • Power • Pity/Compassion • Good mind/Quietness
Benefits	• Emphasis on consensus-building • Sustainability and stewardship • Intergenerational knowledge transfer • Spiritual and cultural grounding

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Return to Critical Reflective Question

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=40#h5p-8

Recommended Readings

- The St'at'imc Seven Laws of Life as Rylee Bull by Rylee Bull (in press), *Knowledge Makers*

  Daughters of Copper Woman, by Anne Cameron (1981), Press Gang Publishers (available on Internet Archive)

  Indigenous women's approaches to educational leadership: Creating space for Indigenous women in education by Robin Starr Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn and Heather J. Shotton (2019), International Journal of Human Rights Education

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Key Terms

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- **Autonomy**
- **Colonization**
- **Decolonization**
- **Indigenization**
- **Imperialism**

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Ethic of Justice

Rumana Patel

The importance of "the language of rights, is that it enables individuals and groups to demand attention from others for points of view that have been neglected" — *Fiona Robinson* (1999, p. 64)

Critical Reflective Question
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Definition

The ethic of justice emphasizes individual human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and the values of fairness

and justice (Frick et al., 2012; Shapiro et al., 2014). Beckner (2004) referred to this ethic as rule-based, as it attempts to objectively resolve ethical dilemmas through pre-established principles, rules, and laws. In this way, the ethic of justice is deontological and non-consequentialist, where the morality of an action is judged based on whether it adheres to a set of rules rather than the consequences of any action taken to resolve the dilemma.

Individuals who adhere to the ethic of justice prioritize impartiality, objectivity, and the fair treatment of all individuals based on universal principles and legislated human rights (Beckner, 2004; Robbins & Trabichet, 2009; Skoe & von der Lippe, 2002). From this perspective, the concepts of 'fairness' and 'justice' involve treating all individuals equally based on the assumption that equal access to opportunities and resources will lead to a fair and just outcome for all. In other words, a 'fair solution' is one based on general principles applied to all situations, and little consideration is given to context-specific issues, such as a person's economic status or family situation.

Consider the classic moral quandary where a person steals bread to feed their family. On one side, the act of stealing is illegal, as it violates the rights of the bread's owner. On the other side, the person's motivation is driven by a desperate need to provide for their starving family, highlighting a situation of extreme necessity and survival. This dilemma pits the principles of justice against the principles of care, raising questions about the morality of actions taken under dire circumstances.

Business ethicists Chryssides and Kaler (1996) outlined five types of justice in their analysis of corporate responsibility and equal opportunities legislation:

- **Procedural or "due process"** — treats

individuals in an impartial, unbiased, and fair manner based on application of rules and laws.

- **Substantive** — critically examines whether rules and laws result in inequitable outcomes for certain individuals or groups.

- **Retributive** — aims to right wrongs by punishing those who have violated existing rules and laws.

- **Remedial** — aims to right wrongs through remediation or reparations to counterbalance injustices that have occurred.

- **Distributive** — aims to ensure the fair allocation of benefits, opportunities, resources, and wealth among individuals in society and is concerned with how the outcomes of social policies are distributed among members of a community, with an emphasis on the good of the majority.

While the ethic of justice considers all five types of justice as defined by Chryssides and Kaler, it is primarily focused on procedural and distributive justice (Wood & Hilton, 2012). For this reason, the ethic of justice is closely aligned with transactional forms of leadership, with its focus on rules and regulations, structured environments and processes, defined tasks, and clear expectations. A study by Simola et al. (2010) of leaders and followers at a Canadian university showed that leader propensity toward an ethic of justice was significantly positively related to follower perceptions of transactional leadership but not transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership is concerned with the benefits that individuals accrue (economic, political, and

psychological) through a social exchange, such as that of a leader and follower (Northouse, 2021). Transactional leaders employ a system of reward and punishment to motivate followers that align with established standards. The ethical values congruent with transactional leadership are also closely related to the individualist underpinnings of an ethic of justice (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The following summary table highlights the main objectives of the ethic of justice, core principles, and benefits of adopting this framework for analysing ethical dilemmas.

Summary Table: Ethic of Justice

Primary leadership style	Transactional leadership
Frame of reference	Adherence to universal laws, rules, and codes
Objective	Uphold fairness and individual human rights
Core principles	• Impartial and objective • Fairness and equality • Rule of law • Protection of universal human rights • Democracy
Benefits	• Reduces institutional liability and legal risk • Maintenance of good standing with regulating bodies (e.g., accreditors and government) • Consistent application of rules • Clear expectations, rewards, and punishments • Individuals have right to "due process"

Historical Origins

The ethic of justice has long been informed by a Western worldview; as such, it has been dominated by an

individualist ontology, assuming that each person is autonomous, has moral agency, and is responsible for their own actions. Two contemporary scholars are often attributed for our current understanding of the ethic of justice in education: John Rawls and Lawrence Kohlberg.

John Rawls

American philosopher John Rawls (1971) sought to create a framework for moral reasoning based on objectivity (free from personal biases, emotions, and subjective influences) and impartiality (a system that treats all people and perspectives fairly and equally, without favouritism or bias). In 1971, Rawl's *Theory of Justice* outlined the concept of "justice as fairness," where he argued that individuals should select principles of justice behind a "veil of ignorance." By being ignorant of our circumstances (e.g., social status, religious beliefs, class, race, gender, and (dis)ability), he believed that people could make objective decisions about how societies should function and agree upon a "social contract" to govern how the world should work. Rawl's proposed social contract was designed as a general agreement by representatives of all adult members of a society; as such, the point of view of justice was represented as an agreement by free and equal persons (Freeman, 2023).

Rawls (1971) outlined several stages for developing and implementing this social contract:

1. **Original position** — where individuals select principles of justice behind a veil of ignorance, ensuring impartiality by hiding their personal characteristics and social status.

2. **Constitutional convention** — where individuals partially lift the veil of ignorance so they can understand their societal context but not their personal identities. They then draft a constitution based on the chosen principles, ensuring majority rule and equal liberties for voting and holding government positions.

3. **Legislation** — where lawmakers, still unaware of their personal circumstances, formulate laws that comply with principles of liberty and difference (described below).

4. **Implementation** — where judges apply these laws, with the veil of ignorance fully removed.

Two primary principles supplement Rawls' veil of ignorance, as described by Freeman (2023): the liberty principle and the difference principle.

- **Liberty principle** — based on the belief that the social contract should try to ensure that everyone enjoys the maximum liberty possible without intruding upon the freedom of others.

    ◦ Basic liberties include freedom of conscience, thought, expression, and association; freedom and integrity of the person with the right to hold personal property; and equal political liberties and rights protected by the rule of law.

- **Difference principle** — based on the belief that the social contract should guarantee that everyone has an equal opportunity to prosper.

- ◦ If there are any social or economic differences in the social contract, they should help those who are the worst off.

- ◦ It requires economic inequalities of income, wealth, powers, and prerogatives to be arranged to maximally benefit the least advantaged members of society, making them better off than they would be in any alternative economic system.

- ◦ To ensure that these opportunities are genuinely fair, the state is responsible for providing essential services like education, training, basic income, and healthcare for all citizens.

Lawrence Kohlberg

Twentieth-century American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg is often credited for his influence on our current understanding of the ethic of justice. Like Rawls, Kohlberg (1973) viewed moral conflicts as abstract logical problems that could be resolved by following pre-determined laws and rules, or a social contract. According to Kohlberg, contextual factors such as someone's personal situation, emotional condition, or difficulties in performing tasks should be eliminated from the decision-making process, and people should face the consequences of their actions when they break the social contract.

Kohlberg's (1973) model of moral reasoning enhanced Rawls' theory of justice by offering a

developmental perspective on how people come to adopt just principles. While Rawls' theory outlined the principles of justice chosen from an original position behind a veil of ignorance, Kohlberg's developmental stages explained the cognitive and moral progression that enables individuals to understand and apply these principles.

Kohlberg (1973) suggested that abstract reasoning based on universal ethical principles represented the highest developmental stage of moral maturity. He outlined three levels of moral reasoning:

1. **Pre-conventional** — individuals base their moral decisions on personal consequences, such as avoiding punishment or seeking rewards.

2. **Conventional** — marked by a focus on societal rules and norms, where individuals aim to uphold laws and social conventions.

3. **Post-conventional** — involves abstract reasoning guided by universal ethical principles like justice, equality, and human rights, which go beyond specific laws and social agreements.

Critique of Rawls and Kohlberg

Kohlberg's work has been critiqued from a gender-based perspective, most notably by Carol Gilligan (1982), a student of Kohlberg, who challenged his lack of inclusion of women and girls in his research and therefore, his assumption that what is just and unjust is the same for everyone. Gilligan further critiqued Kohlberg for focusing on hypothetical dilemmas rather than using real-world examples in his research to support his model of moral reasoning.

Alternatively, Gilligan studied women who were confronted with real dilemmas and, through her research, discovered the ethic of care — a relational ontology for moral reasoning that emphasizes interconnections between people and seeks creative ways to benefit everyone involved rather than focusing on individual rights and self-interest (Simola et al., 2010). Gilligan further argued that men have a tendency to make decisions from a justice orientation, whereas women have a propensity to make decisions from a care orientation (and some research supports this claim). However, cultural background has been found to be a more accurate predictor of justice and care orientations (see Strater (2023) for a gender-based analysis of the ethic of justice).

Emerging research and postmodern scholars have demanded that justice be reframed from an individualist ontology to a relational and care-based one, while others have argued for an ecological perspective. For example, Thomas E. Randall (2023) called for a critical rethink of the ethic of justice framework and argued that an individualist ontology is antithetical to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Randall believed that structures of power and dependency promote or impede access to basic human rights in a global context and, therefore, human rights should be viewed through a relational ontology, where "an individual's interests are intertwined with those around them" (p. 562).

Others have called for an ecological framing of justice, which stretches beyond that of human rights to consider the rights of all living things, including the land. As Blackstock (2007) noted, "Western thought places importance on individuals and the fulfilment of individual rights" (p. 5). As a result of an insatiable desire for human

advancement, growth, and dominance, humans face danger from climate change, which will affect basic rights to life, health, and subsistence and "increase the number of people suffering from death, disease and injury from heatwaves, floods, storms, fires and droughts" (Confalonieri et al., 2007, p. 393), particularly among poorer nations. Climate change threatens the basic rights of individuals. Arguably, a paradigmatic shift is required; one which is more closely aligned with Indigenous worldviews that "hold the land and life knowledge in a sacred trust for the generations to follow" as opposed to "many Western peoples [who] believe they can own land and knowledge and use it for individual benefit with little concern for future generations" (Blackstock, 2007, p. 1).

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

Leaders whose moral reasoning is informed by a justice paradigm emphasize legal compliance, ensuring actions and decisions are grounded in established laws and ethical standards. They prioritize due process and procedural justice, treating all parties in disputes fairly (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). They may acknowledge the imperfections of certain rules, yet they abide by and enforce them until improvements have been made. This is perceived to be an objective way to resolve dilemmas because contextual factors (e.g., personal, cultural, and historical) are not taken into consideration.

Smith (2000) argued that the ethic of justice offers a set of rules at the general level from which leaders can begin their moral deliberations, but he cautioned that other ethical paradigms (e.g. care) should inform moral decision-

making. For example, culturally diverse contexts can be seen as an obstacle to universalism and individualism, which underpin the ethic of justice. Educational leaders who work within multicultural and increasingly globalized contexts are called to adopt equity, diversity, and inclusion policies and work towards decolonization and Indigenization in response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) and, in Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) Calls to Action.

Therefore, it is important to question the true universality of so-called universal principles. These principles are often established from a specific reference point, and if multiple perspectives are not included in their formulation, their universality is questionable (Engster & Hamington, 2015; Makoff & Read, 2016).

Benefits of Ethic

While the ethic of justice has been presented as non-consequentialist — where the morality of an action is judged based on whether it adheres to a set of rules, rather than the consequences of the action — in today's world, educational leaders are called upon to acknowledge, examine, and address the systemic inequities inherent in educational systems. When leaders analyze the outcomes of actions taken and view justice through a consequentialist lens, there is potential to provoke policy changes and embrace relational and ecological ontologies of justice (Zembylas, 2010).

The importance of "the language of rights," as Robinson (1999) highlighted, "is that it enables individuals

and groups to demand attention from others for points of view that have been neglected" (p. 64). As previously discussed, calls for a relational framing of justice have the potential to address the limitations of an individualist frame. For example, Jan Hare (2022), an Anishinaabe scholar and educator from the M'Chigeeng First Nation, called for a relational approach to justice and made the case for a rights-based approach to Indigenous education, grounded in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Hare argued that Indigenous rights to education, language, and culture must be advanced on Indigenous terms. Teacher education in 'right' relations with Indigenous people requires that post-secondary institutions comply with their obligations to live up to responsibilities when part of a relationship (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2021).

Drawbacks of Ethic

Much of what has been written about the ethic of justice is based on a Western philosophical framing of liberal and individualistic ideals first positioned by white male European and American philosophers and enshrined in human rights legislation. For example, Rawls' (1971) theory of justice was based on a representative group of "adult members" and "free and equal persons." As Botting (2016) noted, these rights have historically been limited to "white, middle-class, tax-paying, property-owning male subjects who wished to enjoy the powers of self-governing republican citizens" (p. 40).

Much of the literature lacks a critical awareness of the relational contexts of power and privilege. As a result, universal and liberal rights are based on a Western

perception of reality that ignores issues of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, eco-justice, and capitalism. In this vein, human rights are defined from a Western perception of morality and positioned as superior to other cultural and ethical variations, such as humans' relationship with the land and the rights of LGBTQIA+, immigrants, and refugees. Notably, as Engsjö-Lindgren (2021) argued, universal laws and human rights were initially defined at a time when women and Indigenous peoples were not seen as full members of society and anti-LGBTQIA+ laws saw the criminalization of people who did not follow heteronormative standards.

Our current understanding of the ethic of justice is based on an anthropocentric worldview, where the rights of humans supersede all else, often to the detriment of other species and the environment. The ethic of justice has been heavily critiqued by scholars of the ethics of care, community, and critique for its narrow focus on Western thought, which was spread by European imperialism and colonization and has led to forms of epistemic injustice, where the ideas of the colonizers are treated with respect and those of the colonized are belittled, ignored, erased, or persecuted.

The ethic of justice has also been critiqued for being impersonal and detached, failing to adequately consider the emotional or relational aspects of ethical dilemmas, which could lead to decisions that lack empathy and compassion (Alolo, 2006). By focusing primarily on abstract principles and rights, justice-based ethics run the risk of dehumanizing individuals and reducing moral considerations to legalistic or rule-based frameworks (Engster & Hamington, 2015). This can undermine the recognition of the unique worth and dignity of each person.

Return to Critical Reflective Question

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=34#h5p-18

Recommended Readings

- *Episode 1 – Futures of Indigenous Education: Living in Right Relations* [32:09 min] by Dr. Jan Hare (2002), Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne

- "A Care Ethical Justification for an Interest Theory of Human Rights" by Thomas E. Randall (2023), *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*

- "Transformational Leadership and Leader Moral Orientation: Contrasting an Ethic of Justice and an Ethic of Care" by Sheldene K. Simola et al. (2010), *The Leadership Quarterly*

Key Terms

- **Deontological**
- **Ecological**
- **Epistemic injustice**
- **Individualism**
- **Liberalism**
- **Non-consequentialist**
- **Ontology**

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Ethic of Critique

Alana Hoare

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." — *Paulo Freire* (1970)

Critical Reflective Question

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https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=30#h5p-9

Definition

The ethic of critique is strongly rooted in the context of the struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed and the fight to preserve culture and language. It is aimed at amplifying the voices of those who lack power, privilege, or influence.

It further seeks to empower marginalized communities to become agents of change by promoting a reflective evaluation of society and culture and challenging established power (Berges Puyo, 2022).

Critical ethicists are anti-dogmatic and reject **absolutisms**. They hold critique and dialogue as fundamental values. As Freire (1970) argued:

> If the structure does not permit dialogue the structure must be changed… Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence… To alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects.

One of the primary goals of critical ethicists is to create space for people affected by systemic inequities to express their opinions, contribute their points of view, be heard, and, ultimately, bring about changes that make the situation more equitable (Langlois, 2011). They seek to uncover instances in which one person or group benefits at the expense or detriment of others.

It is an ethic centred on increasing accessibility, awareness, and change. It is focused on empowerment, equity, diversity, and increasing cultural proficiency (Vogel, 2012). Moreover, it aims to eliminate exploitation of others, which requires leaders and educators to engage in advocacy efforts and, at times, take risks. Thus, critical ethicists are not concerned with rules, laws, or programs aimed at benefit maximization. Rather, they challenge notions of democracy and fairness and are concerned with linguistic and cultural survival, regardless of the size of the group or whether the group is of the majority.

One of the core principles of critical ethicists is, not surprisingly, 'critique.' Critique involves a thorough evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a subject or

system. Educational leaders who are guided by an ethic of critique are primarily focused on critiquing institutional bureaucracy and educational systems, which "propagate social reproduction, dehumanize, oppress, marginalize, and alienate" (Wood & Navarez, 2014, p. 70). Leaders examine bureaucratic elements by searching for claims of uniform fairness and accountability, including:

- uncovering sexism or racism during the hiring process
- prejudice towards other cultures
- unfair representation on committees
- distribution of tasks based on gender
- implementation of policies without genuine engagement from those impacted
- inequitable distribution of resources
- restricted access to professional networks based on social status (Langlois, 2011)

The summary table below highlights the main objective of an ethic of critique, core principles, and benefits of adopting this framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas.

Summary Table: Ethic of Critique

Primary leadership style	Moral leadership
Frame of reference	Critical theory
Objective	Social justice
Core principles	• Critique of power and privilege • Dialogue • Emancipation • Empowerment • Transparency
Benefits	• Cultural preservation • Increased awareness of unjust systems and practices • Increased representation and amplification of voices historically silenced and oppressed • Promotion of justice • Greater access to education and information

Historical Origins

The ethic of critique was first proposed by Robert J. Starratt (1991), who emphasized ethical behaviour as that which addresses inequities among individuals and groups

who experience discrimination due to factors such as race, class, gender, and ability. When these factors impact one's power, voice, treatment, and access to resources and benefits, it is considered unjust.

Frankfurt School and Marxism

The roots of this ethical paradigm date back much further than Starratt's original work in the 1990s to the 1920s and 1930s when a group of scholars known as the Frankfurt School in Germany articulated critical theory. Critical theory was formulated by such key thinkers as Iris M. Young, Jurgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno, among others (Langlois, 2011). They sought to "liberate human beings from circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244)

Critical scholars were particularly concerned with understanding and critiquing the social, political, and cultural conditions of their time, especially due to the rise of fascism and the spread of mass media and consumer culture. After World War II, many members of the Frankfurt School emigrated to the United States, where they continued to develop and refine critical theory.

One can go back even further in time to find critical influences from 18th century Marxist philosophy. Marxism is a social, political, and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848/1888), which focuses on the critique of capitalism, the role of ideology in maintaining dominant social structures, the analysis of class struggle, and how these concepts inform the development of society. Marxism seeks to understand the underlying structures of society, particularly the economic base (the means of production) and the superstructure (the institutions and ideologies that arise from the economic

base) and how these structures shape social relations and history.

Robert J. Starratt and Paulo Freire

While Marxism tends to focus more narrowly on economic factors and class struggle, critical theory broadens the scope of analysis to include other forms of oppression, such as those based on gender, sexuality, race, ability, neurodivergence, and other social categories. From the perspective of the critical ethicist, Starratt (1991) argued that:

> no social arrangement is neutral. It is usually structured to benefit some segments of society at the expense of others. The ethical challenge is to make these social arrangements more responsive to the human and social rights of all the citizens, to enable those affected by social arrangements to have a voice in evaluating their results and in altering them in the interests of the common good and of fuller participation and justice for individuals (pp. 189–190).

Starratt's (1991) framing of critique moved from that of critical scholars' focus on the political and social arena to that of educational systems. His theory was also influenced by critical emancipatory scholar and pedagogist Paulo Freire (1970), whose work was deeply rooted in the idea of *conscientização*, or critical consciousness. Freire argued that education should not be a process of mere transmission of knowledge from teacher to student but rather a dialogical process in which both teachers and students engage in critical reflection and inquiry. His approach challenged traditional power dynamics in education and aimed to empower students to become active

participants in their own learning and in the transformation of society. For Freire, education should not only equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to understand the world but also empower them to take action to change it.

Educational Systems, Community, and Culture

McKerrow and Bullerdieck (2006) expanded upon the notion of critique in education through their work on non-dominated discourse, which they described as "an inclusive process for democratizing educational organizations, avoiding hierarchical bureaucracy, and appreciating legitimate decision-making authority in every context" (p. 199). In a non-dominated classroom, the "teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (p. 59).

Community consultation is a common expectation of educational leaders today; however, critical ethicists demand that leaders move beyond simple consultation to true engagement through meaningful dialogue. Freire (1970) believed that "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress."

Glass and Martinez (1993) defined legitimate social choice as "one that has the consensus of a community of citizens and that consensus was reached in open and undominated discourse" (p. 10). For McKerrow and Bullerdiek (2006), this requires that:

> First, the interests of each individual must be fairly considered… Second, each individual should have a fair influence over decisions emerging from the discourse… Third, those affected by a decision should be a part of the decision-making process…

> Finally, accountability must be directed toward those who are directly affected by any decision… for example, professors and teachers would be primarily, but not exclusively, accountable to their students. Administrators would be accountable to their faculty (p. 199).

This conception of leadership is reinforced by the governing principles of the Okanagan people and based on The Four Chiefs Enowkinwixw Discourse (Armstrong, 1999), which follows a philosophy of voluntary cooperation. The term Eníowkin refers to "coming to understanding through a gentle integrative process" (p. 1) to restore wholeness to a community fragmented by colonization. From this perspective:

> Real democracy is not about power in numbers, it is about collaboration as an organizational system. Real democracy includes the right of the minority to a remedy, one that is unhampered by the tyranny of a complacent or aggressive majority (Armstrong, 1999, p. 4).

The ethic of critique is linked to the notion of culture and concerned with the role that educational systems play in passing along culture to youth. More specifically, it is concerned with cultural preservation. From a critical perspective, an educational system that fails to respect and uphold the worldview(s) held by the people it serves constitutes, as Freire (1970) admonished, "cultural invasion, good intentions not withstanding."

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

Educational leaders who follow a critical ethic are

committed to uncovering, challenging, and overcoming inequities through social justice. Their primary mission is to emancipate and empower the oppressed. They see their primary role as educators to "transform educational institutions into locales for empowerment; rather than factories which fulfil the hierarchical needs of a stratified society" (Wood & Navarez, 2014, p. 70). Educational leaders' responsibility is thus to "to uncover, expose, and redress such injustice via social justice" (p. 73), which begins first by critiquing one's own assumptions, biases, privileges, and influence in society.

Berges Puyo (2022) demanded that educational leaders question their own representation of power to illuminate flaws within the educational system and to ask themselves:

- Are the laws, rules, and regulations fair?

- Are constitutional rights protected?

- Is there any discrimination allowed for any reason?

- Are the rights of all students, faculty, and staff protected? (p. 145)

Collegial Governance

The ethic of critique and collegial governance in higher education are both concerned with promoting democratic values and fostering a culture of critical inquiry and shared decision-making. Collegial governance refers to a model of governance in which decisions are made through collaborative processes involving faculty, staff, and students. This model emphasizes shared responsibility and participation in decision-making, rather than top-down

authority. Collegial decision-making thus involves "conferring, collaborating, and gaining consensus" (Austin & Jones, 2016, p. 125).

Clark et al. (2009) argued that "University governance is marked by a level of decentralization that is matched in few other organizations. At every level, consensus is the holy grail of decision-making" (p. 73). Traditionally, the professoriate is granted authority and responsibility for academic matters as individual professionals and through internal academic bodies. Collegial governance is fundamentally a process in which faculty and administrators make decisions concerning academic matters in an open, responsible, and democratic process.

In higher education, collegial self-governance is realized through department meetings and a committee structure — hiring committees, tenure committees, curriculum committees, and so on. Collegial governance involves the rights and duties of faculty to contribute to open debate and decision-making and the obligation to participate in governance processes. In Western educational systems, Robert's Rules of Order are often embedded in governing bylaws ("Robert's Rules of Order," 2024). These rules of order are designed as vehicles to carry out the majority's will, which can create disparity and injustice for the minority. As a result, this can lead to division, polarity, and ongoing dissension. As Armstrong (1999) argued, "This type of process is in fact a way to guarantee the continuous hostility and division that give rise to aggressive actions that can destabilize the whole community, creating uncertainty, distrust, and prejudice" (p. 4).

Non-Dominated Discourse

Increased calls for morally sound decision-making at all levels of post-secondary organizations demand attention to what McKerrow and Bulldieck (2006) have described as the need for non-dominated discourse in educational leadership. Non-dominated discourse is a framework allowing for all voices to emerge. Additionally, McKerrow and Bulldieck ask us to be wary of:

> the potential for organizations to grow and accrue economic, social, or cultural capital at the expense of individuals or groups of individuals… particular concerns are the unexamined rationalization for centering the organization at the expense of the individual, the possibility of exploitation, and the subsequent legitimization of unencumbered organizational growth (p. 199).

Alternatively, critical scholars and the Okanagan people assert that morally sound decision-making processes seek to build solidarity and outcomes that will be acceptable, by informed choice, to all who will be affected. The Enowkinwixw Discourse model is thus one that educational leaders may want to turn to as a more ethically sound decision-making process. As Armstrong (1999) described:

> Its collaborative decision-making engages everyone in the process; decisions are not handed down by leaders "empowered" to decide for everyone. It is a negotiated process that creates trust and consensus because the solution belongs to everyone for all their own reasons (p. 5).

Critical scholars and educators celebrate, amplify, and empower historically silenced voices in education to support collaborative decision-making. In sum, the ethic

of critique is aimed at disrupting hierarchies increasingly prevalent in neoliberal institutions today.

Benefits of Ethic

Many benefits can be derived from following an ethic of critique. It encourages individuals to think critically and analytically, leading to deeper understanding and more conscientious leadership and scholarship — a hallmark of higher education. Critique holds institutions and educational leaders accountable for their actions and decisions, requiring that their actions are in line with institutional values and strategic priorities. The ethic of critique helps leaders move beyond what Langlois (2011) described as "moral innocence," in which one assumes that 'this is the way things are,' to a deeper understanding of their own potential complicity in legitimizing norms and laws designed to oppress.

A discussion on the ethic of critique in this textbook would be incomplete without mention of its connection to the philosophy of open education, which has a primary aim of affordability, inclusivity, equity, learner agency, and relevance (Roberts, 2020). More specifically, as Robert-Crews (2023) highlighted, open education asks us to consider:

- Whose knowledge is considered valuable?
- Who is centred in educational systems?
- Why do curricula centre certain histories?

Fundamentally, open education as a critical practice is about increasing representation, democratizing education,

and addressing systemic barriers to information and education (Lambert, 2018; Bali et al., 2020; Robert-Crews, 2023). The idea of openness as a critical practice is about interrogating institutional frameworks that limit or restrict access to information; claiming authority over and withhold certain knowledges and restrict platforms for disseminating information; and ultimately, questioning individuals and groups that stand to profit from those who are marginalized by the system. Ethical educational leadership can emerge through the philosophy of open education, as a means for empowering educators and learners (Hylen, 2006) and increasing accessibility, affordability, and representational justice.

Drawbacks of Ethic

While the ethic of critique can be a powerful tool for promoting social justice, there are potential drawbacks to consider. Critique can lead to polarization and division, especially when those in positions of power are challenged and their influence is destabilized. This can result in an 'us versus them' mentality, particularly when those involved in decision-making are guided by differing ethical lenses. Notably, there is often incompatibility between those who prioritize an ethic of justice and those who follow an ethic of critique.

Educational leaders who follow an ethic of critique assume a certain degree of risk, comparable to those who follow an ethic of discomfort (see chapter "Ethic of Discomfort"). In their study of principals in Canadian French-language schools, Langlois and Lapointe (2007) found that early career principals were less likely to adopt an ethic of critique. Instead, their decisions were more

heavily guided by an ethic of justice. Similarly, research by Smithers et al. (2021) found that tenured professors were unlikely to challenge dominant discourses, speak out against unfair policies, or advocate or mitigate risks for precarious non-tenured researchers in their employ.

One could posit that this is due to a sense of insecurity and reliance on the perceived protections that rules and laws provide for those in positions of power. As Smithers et al. (2021) noted, remaining silent may be a "means of safeguarding their own employment in unstable times." Or perhaps educational leaders are hesitant to engage in critique because they lack a deep understanding of the complexities of educational systems and may be overwhelmed by the immensity of overcoming such structural challenges hindering equity; therefore, they are effectively incapacitated by the gravity of challenging the status quo. Langlois and Lapoint (2007) found that it was not until later in their careers that school principals felt confident enough to take risks and challenge social norms.

Critical ethicists are willing to forgo one's own well-being and self-interest to right historical wrongs. However, rarely have educational leaders in North America gone beyond performative measures. This is in part because it requires the decentring of settler colonial perspectives and the repatriation of Indigenous land and life (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Perhaps this is also due to the risk of burnout that many critical scholars experience; constantly challenging existing norms and structures can be emotionally and intellectually draining (Clarke Gray, 2020).

Return to Critical Reflective Question

Critical scholar Paulo Freire (1970) argued that "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=30#h5p-10

Recommended Readings

- "The Four Chiefs Enowkinwixw Discourse" by Jeannette C. Armstrong (1999) in *Ecoliteracy: Mapping the Terrain* (edited by Zenobia Barlow), Centre for Ecoliteracy (available on Simon Fraser University's website)

- *Pedagogy of the Opressed* by Paulo Freire (1970), Continuum International Publishing Group

- "Best Practice for Ethical Educational Administration: Non-dominated Discourse" by Kelly McKerrow and Erin Bullerdieck (2006) in

Unbridled Spirit: Best Practices in Education Administration — The 2006 Yearbook of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (edited by Frederick L. Dembowski and Linda K. Lemasters), Pro>Active Publications (available on the ERIC database)

Key Terms

- **Absolutism**
- **Anti-dogmatic**
- **Bureaucracy**
- **Capitalism**
- **Collegial governance**
- **Critique**
- **Decolonization**
- **Fascism**
- **Ideology**
- **Marxism**
- **Non-dominated discourse**
- **Open education**

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Ethic of Care

Olubukola Bosede Osuntade

"There is a difference between merely recognizing students' struggles or offering a generic kindness for kindnesses' sake, what renowned feminist and educator Nel Noddings would call "caring-about" instead of "caring-for."" — *Janice Niemann* (2024)

Critical Reflective Question

Leaders who follow an ethic of care are motivated to act. Care-based leadership requires much more than a feeling of caring for another; it requires leaders to challenge the status quo. Nel Noddings (1984) opined that care ethics are present "when people genuinely care enough about another's unjust situation to respond to it by taking corrective action" (cited by Bass, 2012, p. 76).

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Definition

The ethic of care emphasizes the role of empathy, compassion, and responsiveness in determining moral conduct. According to Noddings (2013), it is "an invitation to see things from an alternative perspective," (p. 32), thus calling on leaders to look beyond their own needs to those of others. The ethic of care emphasizes a relational and context-sensitive approach to professionalism and is focused on the nuances of interpersonal interactions (Gilligan, 1982) and the interdependence between individuals.

Care ethics stress the real-world application of ethics, in contrast to other moral theories that prioritize theoretical concepts or idealized situations. According to Held (2006), providing care necessitates making moral choices in real-would circumstances based on an awareness of the dynamics and connections at play. Traditional ethical theories that place a higher priority on impersonal laws, norms, and individual rights, such as the ethic of justice, are antithetical to the ethic of care. Leaders who follow an ethic of care abhor notions of superiority and the hierarchical approach that dominates classrooms, boardrooms, and managerial structures. Instead, a feminist

lens is applied to leadership and pedagogy (Arrey & Reynolds, 2023).

Moral theories like utilitarianism and deontology, which frequently place a higher value on universality and impartiality than on connections and care, are especially criticized by care theorists. According to Tronto (1993), a stance of care is in opposition to an unbiased, neutral viewpoint and is instead based on paying close attention to and responding to the needs of others.

Leaders who follow an ethic of care practice empathy and are attuned to their emotions and the emotions of those in their care. Leaders foster a culture of empathy and relational accountability, and they prioritize the well-being and development of their students and colleagues. Louis' (2016) review of the literature on the ethic of care identified three characteristics of caring relationships:

- **Situational** — where care is not universalistic or rule-bound but rather specific to the situation in which it might be offered.

- **Motivational displacement** — where the person providing care behaves in a selfless way such that the need of the other person supersedes their own needs.

- **Authentic** — where caring requires genuineness by the person offering care and must be experienced as genuine by the person receiving care.

Instilling a care ethic has long been a component of education. According to Noddings (2012), the ethical philosophy of care dictates that educators' professional behavior be driven by a crucial dedication to the academic and general well-being of their students. Noddings

contended that educators must embrace and take responsibility for fostering close, meaningful, and caring relationships with their students, given the degree to which the quality of care affects students' learning and academic success.

Educational leaders who follow an ethic of care demonstrate compassion for others, encourage open communication with students, work collaboratively, and offer support in the form of affirmation and encouragement (Owens & Ennis, 2005). The ethic of care approach to educational leadership is not without difficulties; while caring relationships should ideally be reciprocal, relationships between a teacher and a student and educational administrator and faculty and staff are inherently unequal.

The summary table below highlights the main objective of an ethic of care, its core principles, and the benefits of adopting this framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas for decision-making in educational leadership.

Summary Table: Ethic of Care

Primary leadership style	Feminist leadership
Frame of reference	Others' well-being
Objective	Take action to benefit others; challenge the status quo
Core principles	- Interdependence - Empathy and compassion - Contextual understanding - Responsiveness to needs and relationality - Place the needs of others above those of the self, potentially sacrificing personal well-bring for others
Benefits	- Emphasis on relationships - Nuanced understanding of moral dilemmas encourages flexibility in decision-making - The needs of vulnerable or marginalized individuals and groups are prioritized - Enhanced social well-being and racial inclusion

Historical Origins

Care has deep roots in human history, evident in ancient societies where individuals cared for family members and community members. In ancient Greece, care was often associated with the concept of philanthropy, which encompassed notions of benevolence, kindness, and concern for others' well-being (Nussbaum, 1996). Philosophers such as Aristotle emphasized the importance of care in the context of ethics and moral philosophy. Aristotle's concept of *philia* — or love, friendship, and affection — underscored the significance of interpersonal relationships and the moral obligation to care for others (Aristotle, trans. 1999).

Foundation of Care Theory

The ethic of care was developed in response to traditional moral theories that ignored feminist critiques of them (Baier, 1994; Held, 2006, 2015; Walker, 1989). Research has shown that women tend to engage in caring more than men (Barnes, 2012), and it has been established that women consider care a moral virtue (Hanen & Nielsen, 1987; Kittay & Meyers, 1987). Dimensions of the ethic of care can be traced back to the work of feminist philosophers and social theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, who critiqued initial studies that gendered moral judgements and perpetuated discriminatory beliefs about how relationships of care and connection influence decision-making; for example, where a boy would make a "just" decision, a girl seemed "unsure" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 204). Exploring individual caring relationships that lead to understanding how and why moral decisions are made,

regardless of gender, became the foundation of care theory (Mays, 2020). It is based on the idea that moral judgments should be made with others' welfare, empathy, and compassion in mind (Kohlberg, 1984).

Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Other Care Scholars

One of the leading figures in the development of the ethic of care is Carol Gilligan (1982). In her influential book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Gilligan argued that there is a different moral voice or perspective that women tend to rely on when making decisions. This voice is centered upon relationships, empathy, and care rather than abstract moral principles. Gilligan identified that educational leaders who follow an ethic of care tend to risk self-harm and their own self-interests as they advocate against the injustices of institutional policies.

The ethic of care in relation to education is commonly associated with feminist, educator, and philosopher Nel Noddings (2002), who, for the past 35 years, has been studying and developing an ethic of care, prioritizing the importance of relationships in education. Noddings (2015) argued that "*all* teachers are moral educators [with a responsibility to produce] better adults" (p. 235). Noddings (2003) further developed the concept of care in her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Like Gilligan, she argued that care is a fundamental aspect of human nature crucial for ethical living and that ethical actions should be guided by the principles of care, compassion, and empathy, rather than universal rules. From Gilligan (1982) and Nodding's (2013) perspective, an ethic of care encompasses a wide

range of dimensions, including physical, emotional, and social.

In 1990, Collins framed the ethic of caring within Black feminist theory as foundational to African American women's epistemology, which, she argued, encompasses history, culture, and experiences with expressiveness, emotion, and empathy. In 2009, Bass's study of five female African American school principals showed a tendency to assume the role of "other mother" in students' lives, and they frequently admitted to breaking the rules in the best interests of the children they cared for, risking their own self-interests and making sacrifices to combat injustices in institutional policies.

Social Justice and Culture

Care is increasingly recognized as a central component of social justice movements. Care ethics makes the case that moral behavior ought to consider each person's wants and interests in addition to advancing justice and fairness (Held, 2006). Joan Tronto (1995) developed a framework for understanding care as a political and ethical practice, essential for building more just and equitable societies. She argued that

> Care may be ubiquitous in human life, but it has remained hidden from the conceptual lenses of social and political thought. As a result, to place care at the center of human life requires that we rethink many of the assumptions that we make about social and political theory. At the outset, care begins from a different understanding of human nature and human interaction (p. 142)

It is important to note that different cultures have their own understandings and practices of care, shaped by

cultural norms, values, and traditions; for example, some Indigenous cultures prioritize collective forms of care that extend beyond individual relationships to encompass community and ecological well-being (Nouwen, 2012). Within the Secwépemc nation, for example, the *yecwmíṅmen* were considered the caretakers of the surrounding lands and resources; the Secwépemc recognized, respected, and honored one another as family and relatives throughout Secwepemcúĺecw (Ignace & Ignace, 2017).

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

"Social inclusion, respect, care, and social justice are at the heart of the ethical city." — *Barrett et al.* (2016, p. 5)

Although Gilligan and Nodding's ethic of care is based on the relationship between the educator and the student, their ethical framework can also be applied to educational leadership, as it has important theoretical consequences for leaders in educational settings. The ethic of care has the power to influence educational leadership and promote an empathetic and compassionate culture. For example, during the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic, several inspirational female leaders selflessly led countries and universities through crisis by centering relationships, generosity, and ingenuity. New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Arden (Simpson et al., 2021), and British Columbia's provincial health officer, Bonnie Henry

(Hayhurst, 2020), were applauded for their care-based approach.

Care-oriented leaders use restorative practices — which put healing, understanding, and accountability first — to resolve conflict or harm within the learning community (Wachtel & McCold, 2000). To mend fences and promote a sense of community, leaders provide forums for discussion, empathy, and atonement (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Jean Lipman-Blumen's (2000, 2017) connective leadership theory, which aims to build and sustain community through reciprocal relationships, offers a complementary leadership model for the ethic of care. Similarly, Gerri Perreault's (2005) metaphor of leadership as friendship, while admittedly idealistic, offers a beacon of hope for educational leaders with its optimistic view of human nature.

Feminist Leadership

Stajkovic and Stajkovic (2023) viewed ethics through the presence of a female leadership advantage — a concept first proposed by Helgesen (1990), which suggested that women, in comparison to men, might be more effective leaders when organizations are in crisis — and an ethics of care, which they dubbed an *ethics of care leadership*. Within their framework:

> *ethics* means that care is wanted and unobtrusive, *care* is a value, and *leadership* is the practice of attentiveness toward others, responsiveness to their needs, and cultivating caring relationships (p. 700).

Stajkovic and Stajkovic's (2023) empirical research showed that an ethics of care leadership in the context of the urban revitalization crisis in the United States was

associated with better economic health, including the reduction of education and poverty gaps and evidenced leadership that balances social and economic prerogatives. Results from 272 US cities over nearly four decades revealed that cities with female mayors were associated with greater racial inclusion and better economic health. They found that ethics of care leadership (ECL) occurs as:

> an activity that involves expenditure of physical and mental energy; it is not a mere attitude, such as "I do not care for this or that", nor is it just a warm feeling for someone. ECL is a behaviour aimed toward the well-being of a relationship and those in the relationship… the interests of those caring and those who are cared-for are interwoven rather than independent or competing, and caring is voluntary rather than contractual (p. 702).

Educational Leaders and Care Theory

The culture of educational institutions is greatly influenced by those in formal leadership positions. Educational leaders who follow an ethic of care deal with injustices by using their power to bend the rules and regularly risk their reputations for those they serve who can offer them little in return (Bass, 2009). They prioritize building strong relationships with faculty, students, and other members of the community to create the groundwork for cooperation, trust, and effective communication, which helps leaders understand the needs and concerns of the members of their community (Beatty & Brew, 2018).

Care ethics-guided educational leaders understand that students are multifaceted people with a range of needs and experiences. By attending to students' academic demands and their social, emotional, spiritual, and physical

requirements, leaders can assist in supporting students' and colleagues' holistic development and well-being (Woloshyn et al., 2019). Advocating for fairness and inclusion and removing systemic barriers to learning and opportunities for achievement are key components of care-oriented leadership in education (Giroux, 2005).

Benefits of Ethic

One of the central tenets of care ethics is the cultivation of empathy and compassion. Noddings (2003) contended that caring requires individuals to attune themselves to the experiences and emotions of others, leading to a more compassionate and empathetic approach to moral deliberations. Viewing leadership through the lens of care can help individuals make ethical choices that prioritize the well-being and interests of others. By considering the potential consequences of their actions and the impact on others, individuals can make more informed and considerate decisions. This empathy has been shown to positively impact individuals' personal and professional relationships, leading to increased compassion and support (Raab, 2014). A care-based approach to leadership requires open, honest, and empathetic communication. By actively listening to others and seeking to understand others' needs and concerns, research has shown that educational leaders demonstrate enhanced communication skills and ability to resolve conflicts (Lin, 2023).

Some critics have argued that the emphasis on personal relationships and contextual responsiveness may be less relevant in situations involving large-scale social, political, and economic structures and that care theory may not always be applicable in complex situations where

multiple stakeholders are involved, for example, in resource allocation decisions. However, recent research by Stajkovic and Stajkovic (2023) provided credible evidence to counter this claim, showing that female mayors practicing an ethic of care leadership across 272 regions in the United States resulted in improved social and economic well-being for both givers and receivers.

By prioritizing the needs and feelings of others, individuals can experience increased satisfaction, happiness, and overall improved mental well-being (Tronto, 1993). Caring involves "a relationship between at least two persons, the cared-for and the caregiver" (Tronto, 1993), which leads to the development of a sense of community and cooperation within groups. By promoting empathy and concern for others, communities can become more cohesive, resilient, and sustainable (Barret et al., 2016).

Drawbacks of Ethic

The ethic of care has been criticized for its limited applicability beyond certain contexts, such as intimate relationships or caregiving professions, raising questions about its adequacy as a comprehensive ethical theory (Held, 2006). Critics further argue that leaders who practice an ethic of care may undervalue the individual autonomy and agency of others, particularly in situations where caring obligations conflict with individual rights or freedoms, as was argued by Kittay (2011), who advocated for the rights of people with disabilities, including the right to make independent decisions even if they need the physical assistance of others.

Other scholars have argued that care ethics provides

inadequate guidance for resolving complex moral dilemmas or conflicts of care and lacks clear principles or decision-making procedures (Walker, 2007). Unlike other moral theories that offer clear principles or rules to guide ethical decision-making, care ethics may be perceived as lacking clarity in providing specific moral guidelines (Sander-Staudt, 2011). This ambiguity may make it difficult for individuals to apply care ethics consistently across different contexts. Care theory has also been criticized for prioritizing emotions over rational analysis and impartiality (Baier, 2005), which critics have cautioned may result in inconsistent and unpredictable moral judgements and favouritism (Sander-Staudt, 2010). When individuals rely on empathy and emotions to guide their ethical judgments, they may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes, which can result in discriminatory behaviours.

Some scholars have argued that care ethics perpetuate gender essentialism by associating caring virtues with femininity and overlooking the caring contributions of men (Noddings, 2013; Tong, 1998). This gender essentialism may reinforce traditional gender roles and limit opportunities for gender equality. Despite the recognition that gender and caring qualities exist on a continuum rather than a male/female binary, recent research suggests that care work in the academy falls disproportionately on women, which was particularly true during the global pandemic, and as a result, women are at risk of higher rates of burnout (Clarke Gray, 2020).

Clarke Gray reiterated the disconnect between academic expectations and personal well-being. She highlighted inherent contradictions within higher education, where students are expected to excel academically and manage their mental health and personal challenges. This pressure can lead to a toxic environment

that exacerbates mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. Clarke Gray argued that universities often fail to create an environment that values and supports all students, regardless of their backgrounds or identities. While more attention has been given to the well-being of students in recent years, there continues to be a disconnect between academic goals and personal well-being (both faculty and students).

Return to Critical Reflective Question

Care theorists and scholars consistently find that leaders who follow an ethic of care demonstrate selflessness and make sacrifices to protect others, even at the risk of personal or self-harm.

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Recommended Readings

- "Fostering an Ethic of Care in Leadership: A Conversation with Five African American Women" by Lisa Bass (2009), *Advances in*

Developing Human Resources

- "Is Teaching a Practice?" by Nel Noddings (2003)*, Journal of Philosophy of Education*

- "Ethics of Care Leadership, Racial Inclusion, and Economic Health in the Cities: Is There a Female Leadership Advantage?" by Kayla Stajkovic and Alexander D. Stajkovic (2024)*, Journal of Business Ethics*

Key Terms

- **Compassion**
- **Empathy**
- **Feminist**
- **Gender essentialism**
- **Interdependence**
- **Justice**
- **Relationality**
- **Well-being**

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Ethic of Community

Rumana Patel

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Critical Reflective Question

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Definition

The ethic of community is underpinned by the belief that everyone is responsible for leadership. In other words, anyone who cares about student success and what happens within a post-secondary institution recognizes that working toward social justice is a communal responsibility rather than the purview of a transformational "heroic" leader with a vision (Furman, 2004).

This ethical paradigm shifts the locus of moral agency to the community as a whole. Moral leadership is thus

distributed and requires that all members of the community develop and practice interpersonal and group skills, such as working in teams, engaging in ongoing dialogue, and navigating evolving community discourse within an increasingly polarized society (Furman, 2004; Barcinas & Fleener, 2023).

In addition to being a communal affair, the ethic of community is processual, meaning that "community" is not a product nor a tangible entity but rather an ongoing set of processes led by educators and students committed to these processes. When community is defined as a process, it is based on relationships, which are dependent upon communication, reciprocity, respect, dialogue, and collaboration rather than a set of shared values (Furman, 2002).

Furman (2004) argued that it is more important to inspire commitment to these processes than commitment to the metaphor of "community as an end product" (p. 221). Informed by the concept of deep democracy (Mindell, 2002; Barcinas & Fleener, 2023), the ethic of community is an ecosystem in which the health of the system is dependent on everyone having opportunities and developing capacities to engage and practice a form of governance in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty.

As people work together within the ethic of community framework, they are focused on enhancing the collective well-being and common good of a community over individual self-interests (Furman, 1998). Leaders who follow this ethical paradigm value the ideals of a democratic system and are committed to open inquiry and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. From this perspective, a democratic community is defined as a participatory way of life, a process "not a stagnant end" (Kahne, 1996, p. 34).

This ethical paradigm demands that leaders foster connections through dialogue, collaboration, and shared experiences rather than focusing solely on individual values or top-down decision-making. Leaders promote a collective approach to moral agency and emphasize the importance of community-building processes. The following summary table highlights the main objectives of an ethic of community, core principles, and benefits of adopting this framework for analysing ethical dilemmas.

Summary Table: Ethic of Community

Primary leadership style	Distributed Leadership
Frame of reference	Leadership as a communal responsibility and processual
Objective	Prioritize communal values over individual interests; foster a shared responsibility for leadership
Core principles	• Importance of social contexts and social practices • Deep democracy • Social justice • Communal values • Shared responsibility • Critique of liberal individualism and the "heroic" leader concept
Benefits	• Active participation of all community members in decision-making • Collective well-being • Respectful of community cultural wealth • Draws upon collective wisdom • Enhanced communication • Cultural preservation

Historical Origins

The ethic of community was originally articulated by Gail C. Furman (2004), an American educator whose research focused primarily on school leadership. However, this ethical paradigm has roots in Ancient Greece along with the concept of "the common good," the critique of liberal individualism, the ethical theory of democratic communitarianism, John Dewey's (1916, 1927) understanding of democracy, and deep democracy (Green, 1999; Barcinas & Fleener, 2023).

Plato's and Aristotle's City-State

In Ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle envisioned a city-state, the former in the Republic (375 BC) and the latter in Politics (350 BC). Plato emphasized the importance of justice and harmonious functioning of the state to achieve the common good, whereas Aristotle argued that the purpose of the state is to promote the good life for its citizens. For Aristotle, the common good was the ultimate end of political life and achieved through the virtuous actions of individuals within the community. Plato and Aristotle had differing views on the organization of the city-state, with Plato focusing on a structured hierarchy based on specialization and virtue and Aristotle emphasizing the importance of political participation, balanced governance, and ethical virtue in creating a flourishing community. Aristotle believed that:

"a city is not simply a concentration of needs and a division of the means of production. Right from the start

something else is needed — justice, the power of what is
better over what is less good" — *as cited by Rancière*
(2004)

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Aristotle's ideas laid the groundwork for understanding the role of communal values in the development of Western societies and influenced the ethical theory of communitarianism. The roots of communitarianism can also be found in other ancient civilizations and religious traditions. Societies depicted in texts like the Hebrew Bible, Christian New Testament, early Islamic notions of shura, and Confucianism all embraced ideas of community, shared values, and collective well-being (Etzioni, 1996, 2014). These early doctrines highlighted the significance of communal harmony, social cohesion, and collective responsibility.

Communitarianism

Communitarianism is an ethical and political theory that emerged in the late 20th century. It placed a strong emphasis on the community and the common good as central to societal well-being. Communitarians argued that individuals are not isolated entities but are inherently social beings with interconnected relationships and obligations to the larger society; they believed that a sense of community is essential for a flourishing society and that individuals should prioritize the needs of the community over their own self-interests (Chang, 2022; Etzioni, 2014; Friedman, 1994; Golby, 1997).

During the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st, liberalism and individualism were heavily critiqued, as scholars and activists advocated for the common good

and shared values within communities instead of individual rights at the detriment of the community. Modern communitarianism emerged as a response to American philosopher John Rawls (1971) and his foundational work *A Theory of Justice* (which informed our understanding of the ethic of justice). Communitarians contested Rawls' notion that the primary role of government is to justly secure and distribute liberties and economic resources and the notion of state neutrality, advocating for a collective understanding of what constitutes the good; they opposed universalistic strategies that aimed to force a uniform set of ideals upon heterogeneous cultures (Bell, 2024; Etzioni, 2014; Golby, 1997).

Critics of liberalism in the 1980s were troubled by the adverse social and psychological impacts of modern liberal societies, such as alienation, greed, loneliness, urban crime, and high divorce rates (Bell, 2001). These issues spurred a second wave of communitarian thinkers in the 1990s, such as Israeli sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1996, 2014) and American politician William Galston (1993), who concentrated on advocating for social responsibility and implementing policies to reinforce communal life. Their ideas were disseminated through the flagship communitarian periodical *The Responsive Community* and *Etzioni's Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies*.

Bell (2024) articulated three forms of communal life that are commonly accepted by modern communitarians:

- **Communities of place** — based on geographical locations and aim to preserve the unique character of local areas.

- **Communities of memory** — include groups that share histories, such as nations or ethnocultural groups.

- **Psychological communities** — involve face-to-face interactions characterized by trust and cooperation, such as families and small work groups.

Communitarians face challenges in balancing these forms of communal life. For instance, promoting workplace communities might undermine family life. Similarly, Etzioni's proposals for pro-family measures may conflict with his call for increased civic engagement. Striking a balance between communal responsibilities and individual rights is one of communitarianism's central principles (Chang, 2022; Etzioni, 2014).

Although communitarians acknowledged the value of individual autonomy, they contend that it should only be used within the parameters of a common set of standards and values that advance the common good. This school of thought aims to promote cooperation and solidarity among society's members by creating a sense of mutual obligation and belonging (Chang, 2022).

Deep Democracy

Gail C. Furman's (2004) ethic of community was influenced by John Dewey's (1916, 1927) understanding of democracy, which related to experience, self-expression, and ongoing learning. Dewey (1899) argued that democracy occurs through civic engagement and debate that is informed, reasoned, and deliberative. Scholars have argued that democratic methods, rules, and laws alone do not create a sense of community (Mindell, 2002); instead, what is needed is deep democracy, which Barcinas and Fleener (2023) define as "the intellectual and practical commitment to equity, freedom, and self-determination

through shared power and popular participation in free and just (sovereign) communities" (p. 133).

Mindell (2002) described deep democracy as an ecosystem in which the health of the system is dependent on everyone having opportunities and developing capacities to engage and practice a form of governance in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty. Barcinas and Fleener (2023) drew connections between this framing of democracy with adult education and lifelong learning, where students develop "capacities to navigate evolving community discourse" (p. 135) and "embrace innovation, creativity, disruption, and paradigmatic shifts as worldviews are disrupted and challenged" (p. 138).

Social Justice

Nourishing a strong, democratic community requires continuous effort and commitment from all involved. In education, the concept of community is likened to a place of belonging, where all members feel valued and respected and are engaged in collaborative efforts.

Furman and Starratt (2002) problematized and redefined the concept of community to emphasize acceptance and celebration of difference rather than a focus on sameness and homogeneity. They argued for a new understanding of community based on interconnectedness, interdependence, and cultural capital exchange between educational institutions, the surrounding community, and the larger global community.

This redefined community is characterized by a sense of global interdependence, ecological sustainability, and global survival, highlighting the important link between educational institutions and broader social contexts. This reframing of community shifts organizations from an

isolationist and competitive perspective to one focused on building strong partnerships with their surrounding communities.

Furman (2004) emphasized the connection between moral leadership and social justice education when she argued that:

"social justice cannot be realized given the status quo of hierarchical relationships in schools and the assumption that moral leadership is the purview of heroic leaders in administrative positions, and the dearth of opportunities for full participation and open inquiry" (p. 229).

Furman believed than an ethic of community could be the vehicle for working toward social justice because it centres leadership practice as a communal process.

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

The ethic of community has most commonly been associated with school leadership; however, Wood and Hilton (2012) applied this ethic to community college leaders. Furthermore, Barcinas and Fleener (2023) and others have drawn parallels between adult learning and deep democracy; therefore, it can inform ethical educational leadership practices today.

Ethic of Justice vs. Care

Western post-secondary systems are grounded in an ethic

of justice, which focuses on rights, laws, and public policy for ethical guidance, and government legislation is aimed at accountability. How willing are we to acknowledge that educational institutions, both their structures and cultures, have a history of and remain, in many ways, unsupportive and/or hostile to students and their communities?

This is highly relevant in a time of truth and reconciliation, as Indigenous knowledges and ways are accepted (or not) by colonial academia (Smith & Smith, 2019) and as the globalization of post-secondary education challenges WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic) views of academic integrity and plagiarism (Leask, 2007). Leaders must critically examine and question the rule of law, as it relates to service, equity, and the local community; moreover, post-secondary leaders must be prepared, when necessary, to bend and adapt rather than be rigid with policy.

Describing an educational institution as a community means acknowledging and enhancing the relationships, mutual dependencies, and exchange of cultural assets and resources among the institution, its local environment, and the broader global society (Furman & Starratt, 2002). This perspective of an educational community contrasts with common leadership structures that tend to be hierarchical and restrict participation in decision-making processes to a privileged few. Alternatively, leaders who follow an ethic of community engage with diverse viewpoints and celebrate differences.

Community Cultural Wealth

As post-secondary institutions become increasingly more diverse, it is important that educational leaders appreciate the cultural assets that students and employees carry with

them. Yosso (2005) defined six types of cultural assets, referred to as "community cultural wealth," that highlight the positive influence of students' home communities:

- **Aspirational** — students' hopes and dreams.

- **Linguistic** — students' various language and communication skills (e.g., storytelling, multilingual, memorization, attention to detail, tone, and rhythm).

- **Familial** — students' social and personal human resources drawn from extended family and community networks.

- **Social** — students' peers and social contacts.

- **Navigational** — students' skills and abilities that they use to navigate social institutions and educational spaces (i.e., how they navigate unsupportive or hostile environments).

- **Resistance** — students' ability to secure equal rights and collective freedom through a historical legacy of injustice and resistance.

Yosso (2005) designed this model to capture the talents, strengths, and experiences that students from marginalized communities bring with them to university and aimed to disrupt the narrative that students are empty vessels waiting to be filled by their instructors. Rather, students bring with them prior knowledge and experience that contributes to the overall collective wisdom of the institution, including their instructors and peers.

Beware Deficit-Thinking

Unfortunately, deficit-thinking is common in Western organizational development theory (Stavros et al., 2003), social science research (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008), and performance measurement (Anderson & Smylie, 2009). Leaders must be cautious of how student success is framed because deficit thinking negatively impacts racially marginalized people.

Benefits of Ethic

Globally, a prioritization of efficiency and consumerism, such as measuring return on investment through graduate outcomes (Schneider & Peek, 2018), has shifted the focus away from an ethic of community and the cultivation of diverse cultural knowledge and histories of marginalized communities. Instead, attention is diverted to competition, global rankings, revenue generation, and labour market outcomes, as is evidenced by:

- Recruitment beyond catchment areas
- Growth in advertising and marketing
- Reduction or elimination of arts-based programming (e.g., visual arts, music, philosophy, and history)
- A burgeoning bureaucratic and managerial culture.

Driving this cultural orientation is a neoliberal philosophy of post-secondary education, which assumes that "the only knowledge worth pursuing is that with more or less

immediate market value" (Busch, 2017, xii). The problem with this short-sighted thinking is that the market does not help educational leaders address the social processes aimed at coordinated efforts and commitment to quality, nor the systemic inequities perpetuated by meritocracies.

Adopting an ethic of community has been shown to reduce student isolation by fostering a sense of belonging, which in turn boosts achievement through teamwork and shared learning responsibilities and promotes collegiality among educators, encouraging deep connections and shared governance and decision-making, and can lead to a more supportive work environment (Beck & Murphy, 1996; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Shouse, 1996). For example, Crawford (2017) found that the incorporation of the ethic of community into leadership practices when addressing concerns related to undocumented immigrants in the United States resulted in more inclusive decisions that benefitted the entire school community.

Drawbacks of Ethic

Enacting an ethic of community centred on principles of deep democracy — communal processes, lifelong learning, and shared responsibility — is not without its challenges. Recent research theorizes the erosion of democracy is caused by the rise of populism and totalitarianism and influence of a "post-truth" era (Barcinas & Fleener, 2023; Fleener & Barcinas, 2022; Hoggan-Kloubert & Hoggan, 2022; Petrie et al., 2019; Schroeder et al., 2019). Information privilege, censorship, curriculum bans (e.g., anti-SOGI movements in Canada and anti-DEI movements in the USA), and public discourse permeated with racist,

xenophobic, and openly violent messages restricts our ability to meaningfully engage in rational discourse.

Additionally, Barcinas and Fleener (2023) acknowledged generational shifts driving preferences for "less ambiguity, shorter information loads, and truncated learning and decision processes" (p. 132). They further rang alarm bells about "increasingly networked and diluted/polluted adult networks and webs of communication and influence [that] are more readily influenced, pressured, and derailed with potential "viral" challenges" (p. 132). To promote a democratic ecosystem, Barcinas and Fleener wondered:

- How can we excuse vile, hateful, and aggressive ideas or actions and, at the same time, make space for opposing discourse?

- How could communities acknowledge multiple polarized contexts without sliding into violence or a breakdown of caring, civil communities? (p. 132)

Thus, it becomes increasingly important for post-secondary leaders and communities to consider how they can help members develop the necessary skills for rational discourse within an increasingly chaotic and technology-enhanced society.

Additionally, as leaders try to balance a social justice agenda with the concept of "the greatest good for the greatest number," tensions among community members will emerge and concessions and sacrifices will need to be made. Resource allocation poses a significant challenge, as leaders must equitably distribute limited resources to meet both individual and community-wide needs. Scholars have also questioned whether it is possible to promote

and engage in communal processes in institutions that are marked by political and power struggles and where strong, decisive leadership may be necessary (Furman, 2003).

Finally, the ethic of the community has been criticized for the lack of empirical evidence supporting it as a standalone paradigm. Minimal research has been conducted on the ethic of community and its benefits, and what exists is predominantly centred on schools (as opposed to other educational systems, such as post-secondary). Over the past 20 years, few studies have focused on the ethic of community as a central theme, and scholars have debated whether the ethic of community is a dimension within existing frameworks or a standalone paradigm.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2022) argued that community is a key aspect of the ethic of the profession, with its focus on relationships between individuals and local communities. Noddings (1992) and Gunzenhauser et al. (2023) referred to dimensions of community within their definitions of the ethic of care and advocated for a community-based ethics of caring, where everyone works together to protect and enhance the integrity of the educational experience. Stefkovich (2013) argued that focusing on the ethic of community as its own paradigm, as Furman (2004) advocated for, overemphasizes processes over people, potentially sidelining individual relationships.

Return to Critical Reflective Question

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https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=28#h5p-14

Recommended Further Readings

- "Adult Education, Futures Literacy, and Deep Democracy: Engaging Democratic Visioning and Anticipatory Futures for More Sustainable Futures" by Susan J. Barcinas and M. Jayne Fleener, *Adult Learning*

- "The Ethic of Community" by Gail C. Furman, *Journal of Educational Administration*

- "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth" by Tara J. Yosso, *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*

Key Terms

- **Communal**
- **Communitarianism**
- **Community cultural wealth**
- **Deep democracy**
- **Neoliberalism**
- **Processual**

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Ethic of Self-Care

Olubukola Bosede Osuntade

"We behave in ways detrimental to ourselves and others because we think it an unpardonable mistake not to do as our neighbours do." — *Mary Astell* (1697)

> **Critical Reflective Question**
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Definition

This chapter views an ethical approach to leadership as one concerned largely with the self and its care as an act of resistance. Our rendering of the ethic of self-care draws upon the foundational works of Mary Astell's (1666–1731)

gendering of the ethic of the self as a feminist project; Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) ethic of self-care, which is rooted in concepts of intellectual independence and free speech; along with more modern interpretations influenced by Black feminism, eco-feminism, and critiques of wellness from notable scholars like Sara Ahmed and Audre Lorde.

Mary Astell

The ethic of self-care refers to a philosophical and moral framework that emphasizes the importance of individuals attending to their own emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Curry & Epley, 2021). Mary Astell (1697) advocated for practices of the self, which involved bodily practices of withdrawal and meditation. According to Astell, self-care required "disengagement from the senses, the passions, and the love (or more accurately, the desire) of material things" (Broad, 2015, p. 35). For Astell, an ethical person was one who regulated their passions and harnessed rather than succumbed to their natural desires. Thus, to be ethical consisted of mastering one's passions and mind (Webb, 2021).

The ethic of self-care is also an act of resistance. Astell (2002) heavily critiqued the notion of "customs," or forces of social habit. She explained:

We behave in ways detrimental to ourselves and others because we think it an unpardonable mistake not to do as our neighbours do, and part with our Peace and Pleasure as well as our Innocence and Virtue, merely in compliance with unreasonable Fashion… Custom, that merciless torrent, [accounts for] all that Sin and Folly in the World (pp. 67–68).

Astell argued that custom has taught women to

devalue themselves and place their worth in bodily appearance (Webb, 2021); thus, an ethic of self-care, from a feminist perspective, aims to disrupt expectations imposed upon women in leadership and to find ways for women to break free "of the tyrannous grip of sexist custom" (p. 29).

Michel Foucault

Foucault's perspective on the ethic of self-care is deeply intertwined with his broader philosophical views on power, knowledge, and the self. He argued that modern societies have developed a form of power that operates through the regulation and normalization of individuals' behaviours and identities. In this context, self-care becomes a crucial practice for individuals to resist and navigate these mechanisms of power. Foucault (1997) urged us to challenge how history and 'truth' are constituted and presented to us; he insisted on the ethical value of curiosity: "Curiosity marks a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way" (p. 325).

From a Foucauldian perspective, an ethical leader is thus one who challenges the status quo and unceasingly engages in a continuous critical practice of the self. To follow an ethic of self-care requires ongoing critical reflection on how one is governed by external forces, including how they may be influenced by societal expectations and institutional norms. Engaging in this kind of cerebral exercise can be a way to cultivate a sense of autonomy and self-empowerment, as it allows individuals to develop their own ways of thinking and being in the world.

Ethic of Self

Astell and Foucault emphasized the relationship between the self and others, noting the role of friendship as fundamental to an ethic of the self (Broad, 2015; Webb, 2021). Writing, journalling, or seeking guidance from a friend can assist in developing the self.

It is important to note that the ethic of self-care is focused on developing oneself as more morally and ethically enlightened; it is not about dictating the morality of others. Rather, it is a deeply personal exercise. Therefore, ethical educational leaders should not impose their beliefs upon others; instead, they should encourage their colleagues to engage in similar processes of self-creation and critical self-analysis, promote intellectual independence, and dismantle structures that stand in stark contrast to this goal.

Leadership

The ethic of self-care is not typically associated with a specific leadership style, as it is primarily focused on critiquing power structures and institutions through self-critique rather than prescribing specific leadership approaches. However, the concepts can be applied to leadership in interesting ways, such as exploring the relationship between intellectual independence, free speech, and anti-authoritarian leadership. The summary table below highlights key aspects of this ethic including the primary objective and core principles, and benefits of adopting this frame of reference for decision-making.

Summary Table: Ethic of Self-Care

Primary leadership style	Anti-authoritarian leadership
Frame of reference	Self-critique; the self as a continuous project
Objective	Challenge the status quo
Core principles	• Self-awareness • Self-discipline • Intellectual independence • Free inquiry • Skepticism
Benefits	• Personal development and transformation • Resistance to oppressive power structures • Lifelong learning • Knowledge production

Historical Origins

Socrates (469–399 BCE) and ancient ethicists understood that caring for oneself was to exhibit an attitude not only toward oneself but also toward others and the world, attending to one's own thoughts and attitudes in self-reflection and meditation and engaging in ascetic practices aimed at realizing an ideal state of being. In Ancient

Greece, Socrates went about Athens questioning its citizens about their unexamined way of life; he spent his time prodding people into thinking (Ozmon & Craver, 1990). According to Socrates, philosophy is a practice essential to one's ethical development, for it is a spiritual commitment to the truth that requires self-disciplined attention to the character of one's thinking. Ancient Greeks also emphasized exercise, diet, and moderation in life as important dimensions of self-care.

The works of Mary Astell and other 17th century moral philosophers have been compared to "self-help manuals buttressed with psychology, speculative law, and religion" (Garrett, 2013, p. 30). These early texts counselled readers by offering techniques for cultivating the self and promoting happiness. While Astell's writings were concerned with intellectual growth, her primary audience for the ethic of self-care was women. She arrived at a time when female virtue was associated with beauty. Astell (2002) was troubled by this gendering of women and advocated for women to turn their attention to their "own minds" (p. 52) and "souls" (p. 54) to increase their role in society.

Critiques

While attention to the development of the self as an ethical practice is deeply rooted in ancient traditions, it has been criticized as "something somewhat suspect… gladly denounced as being a kind of self-love, a kind of egoism or individual interest in contradiction to the care one must show others or to the necessary sacrifice of the self" (Fornet-Betancourt et al., 1987, p. 115-116). This rejection of self-care has been connected to the rise of Christianity, which emphasized salvation as the renunciation of the self.

The rejection of self-care as an ethical practice has been further exacerbated by feminist ethics of care which, it has been argued, failed to theorize self-care and the affective/emotional labour of care work (Lloro-Bidart & Semenko, 2017).

Similarly, Foucault's work has been criticized for failing to recognize how caring work "can overburden the truth-sayer with negative emotions… emotions that might be exacerbated if the educator also engages in activism" (p. 21). Zuckerwise (2024) further criticized Foucault for taking for granted one's freedom; she challenged: "Foucauldian self-care, not unlike the Greco-Roman context that so inspired it, is thus the province of those subjects whose liberation is not in question: again, namely white men" (p. 587).

Modern Day Self-Care

In recent years, the concept of self-care has been popularized and is often associated with ideas of how people should look after themselves, such as taking a hot bath, going for a walk, doing yoga, or getting a massage. Encouragement to engage in self-care abounds and is largely targeted at women.

Webb (2021) argued that self-care "has been diluted and commodified, untethered from the political" (p. 101). As Orgad and Gill (2022) highlighted, the relationship between self-care and 'white wellness' is privileged in that the ability to care for oneself and one's access to self-care resources (e.g., health insurance and benefits, fashion, lifestyle indulgences, and vacations) continues to be radically unequal. Audre Lorde attempted to call attention to this violent and oppressive culture — one that dictated how women should behave — by insisting that she and

other marginalized women mattered and that they were worthy of care (Kisner, 2017).

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

For Foucault (1997), self-care involves not just physical health but also the cultivation of the self in ways that resist authoritarian forms of leadership. This includes practices of self-examination, reflection, and transformation aimed at challenging established modes of thought and behaviour. In essence, self-care becomes a form of resistance and a means of creating new forms of subjectivity that are not wholly determined by external powers.

Foucault (2002) argued that ethics should not be understood as a set of universal moral principles but rather as practices through which individuals shape their own ethical selves, which involves a continual process of self-examination and transformation, guided by the goal of achieving greater freedom and autonomy. Not surprisingly, Foucault's work has been linked to continuing education and lifelong learning as an ethic of self-care (Rosetto & Doro, 2021).

In the context of higher education leadership, one can draw parallels between Foucault's ethic of self-care and concepts of free inquiry, intellectual independence, and academic freedom. In *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault (1982) stated: "To put one's freedom to use and thereby experience it as something other than a static condition: 'what is ethics if not the practice of freedom?'" (p. 28). Foucault frequently cited educational institutions as sites where normalization occurs, thus calling attention to the need for educational leaders to critically examine

institutional structures that inhibit resistance to these norms.

Truth in Academia

Mourad (2017) drew attention to the challenges that exist in Western higher education institutions in his essay on *Social Control and Free Inquiry*. Specifically, he highlighted the limitations of criteria used to validate what is accepted as truth in academia. For example, he noted the dominant preference for the scientific method and quantitative methods, works published in English, reductionistic approaches to knowledge-creation, and "highly localized or specialized topics that present a precise approximation of reality" (p. 332). Calls for decolonizing research methodologies have been occurring for decades (Smith, 2023), yet systems are slow to change.

Much like the ethics of critique and discomfort, educational leaders who follow an ethic of self-care are motivated to attend to their relationship with the truth. Foucault (1990b) perceived 'coming to know' as a philosophical activity fundamentally oriented to the care of the self, for truth, he believed, is pursued in philosophy for its own good and the sake of ethical development. It would, therefore, be unethical to blindly follow the rules.

However, leaders must avoid imposing their beliefs on others; instead, they should encourage their colleagues to engage in similar processes of free inquiry, draw their own conclusions, and uphold the principles of academic freedom. Foucault (1985) was particularly distressed by external forces that "try, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity" (p. 9). Thus, ethical leadership, from

this perspective, is not about telling others what to think but rather creating an environment that promotes freedom of thought.

Benefits of Ethic

Foucault described the ethic of self-care as an 'aesthetic of existence,' or living one's own life as a work of art — an ongoing process of self-creation and making oneself and one's life beautiful (Webb, 2021). This process is linked to liberation and resistance against domination and oppressive power structures. By caring for oneself, Foucault argued, individuals can resist the normalization of behaviours and ideas imposed by societal norms.

Astell's insights into the ethic of self-care are particularly salient today, with society's obsession with one's physical appearance, clothes, and beauty. Social media and entertainment have long defined women according to their appearance. However, from Astell's perspective, beauty as a defining feature of women's virtue will never be empowering, regardless of whether women feel good doing so (Webb, 2021). This philosophical viewpoint gives leaders tools to begin to unpack misogynistic beliefs and practices.

Building on Astell, Foucault, Lorde, and Ahmed's interpretations of self-care, leaders can work to create communities and ethical friendships to collectively enact resistance and transformation.

Drawbacks of Ethic

Throughout this chapter, numerous critiques of Ancient

Greek and Foucauldian interpretations of the ethic of self-care were identified. Notably, they ignore the risks that women, particularly racialized women, Indigenous, and queer scholars face in their pursuit of free inquiry and practice of decolonial pedagogies and research methodologies. Constantly fighting systems that were designed to oppress can lead to compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, loneliness, and burnout (Bamonti et al., 2014; Beddoe, 2013; Lewis & King, 2019).

Lorde (1988) critiqued Foucault's concept of self-care, particularly in the context of marginalized individuals. While Foucault advocated for self-care as a form of resistance against oppressive power structures, Lorde argued that for marginalized groups, self-care alone is not enough. She believed that true liberation and empowerment required collective action and solidarity. She emphasized the importance of self-care as a political act, but she also stressed the need for community support and systemic change. She believed that individuals should not be solely responsible for their well-being in the face of societal injustices. Instead, she called for a more holistic approach that included both self-care and collective action to challenge and change oppressive systems.

Similarly, Sara Ahmed who, in 2014, wrote a blog post titled *Self-care as Warfare* argued that:

> In directing our care towards ourselves we are redirecting care away from its proper objects… And that is why in queer, feminist and anti-racist work self-care is about the creation of community, fragile communities, assembled out of the experiences of being shattered. We reassemble ourselves through the ordinary, everyday and often painstaking work of looking after ourselves; looking after each other.

> This is why when we have to insist, I matter, we
> matter, we are transforming what matters. (para. 39)

Ahmed (2014) challenged neoliberal forms of self-care that hold individuals personally responsible for their emotional well-being; without institutional protections, she argued, the act of self-care can become political warfare, with women topping the list of casualties. From this perspective, the ethic of self-care, to be fully realized, is a relational process, requiring us to not only look after ourselves but to look after each other.

Lloro-Bidart and Semenko (2017) have taken this one step further by highlighting the need to examine "how the self is constituted not only through relations with other humans, but living others and the material world" (p. 21). They called for broader conceptions of relationality that consider all living things, including nature. Additionally, they argued that an eco-feminist ethic of self-care requires that educational institutions provide "time and space for the expression of emotions as part of truth-telling" (p. 21).

Moreover, when tied to notions of wellness and well-being popularized and commodified in Western society, the ethic of self-care can reinforce existing forms of power and social stratification, as individuals with more privilege find it easier to prioritize well-being (e.g., attending a yoga class, getting a massage, and going on vacation) over those who are less advantaged. Access to resources and support for self-care are unevenly distributed, exacerbating existing disparities and inequalities, which can result in further marginalization and discrimination.

Return to Critical Reflective Question

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https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=38#h5p-16

Recommended Readings

- "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom" by Michel Foucault (1997) in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (edited by Paul Rabinow), The New Press

- "Toward a Feminist Ethic of Self-Care for Environmental Educators" by Teresa Lloro-Bidart and Keri Semenko (2017), *The Journal of Environmental Education*

- ""I Am Writing You in Reference to Myself": White Wellness, Black Feminism, and the Politics of Self-Care" by Lena Zuckerwise (2024), *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

> **Key Terms**
>
> - **Academic Freedom**
> - **Burn-out**
> - **Compassion fatigue**
> - **Free inquiry**
> - **Vicarious trauma**

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Ethic of Discomfort

Alana Hoare

"Equality is fine as a transitional demand, but it's dishonest not to recognize it for what it is – the easy route. There is a difference between saying 'we want to be included' and saying 'we want to reconstruct your exclusive system.' The former is more readily accepted into the mainstream." — *Reni Eddo-Lodge* (2017, pp. 184–185)

Critical Reflective Question

Increasingly, there have been demands for university campuses to be more inclusive with vision and values statements promoting inclusive excellence, "where all feel welcome, safe, accepted and appreciated" (Simon Fraser University, n.d.). However, the term 'inclusive' has a contested and complex history, particularly as it relates to educational environments.

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Definition

Leaders who are guided by an ethic of discomfort assume that discomfort, pain, and suffering (to a certain degree) can be useful in disrupting one's "cherished beliefs and assumptions" (Boler, 1999, p. 176).

Ethnocentrism

The dominant group tends to believe that the norms they follow represent the 'natural' way human beings do things; thus, those who behave otherwise are judged as morally wrong. This viewpoint is ethnocentric, which refers to the practice of judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture. This often leads to the belief that one's own culture is superior to others. Ethnocentrism can manifest in various ways, such as viewing other cultures as primitive, uncivilized, or inferior to one's own.

An ethic of discomfort can help leaders question their own participation in perpetuating discriminatory beliefs and practices. It calls leaders and educators to question

their complicity in reifying racist and misogynist beliefs. Leaders are further called to acknowledge the limits of their own knowledge, to be, as Foucault (1994) urged, "very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar little known horizon" (p. 448).

Challenging 'Safe Spaces' and Normative Assumptions

Leaders who adopt an ethic of discomfort challenge the notion of 'safe spaces,' which have long been popularized as places designed to protect people from psychological harm (Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2023). Zembylas (2017) argued that:

> there are no safe classrooms spaces, if one considers that conditions of power and privilege always operate in them… Safety cannot be constructed as the absence of discomfort; experiencing discomfort should not be confused with the absence of safety.

Discomfort can then be used as a tool by leaders and educators to "unsettle a comfortable narrative around a specific social issue" (Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2023, p. 346). Wilson et al. (2023) further promoted "an ethos of disruption" (p. 346) for unsettling prevailing norms. This requires that educational leaders create "disruptive moments of sharing and listening openly to each other's stories" (Zemblyas, 2017, p. 8), as well as acknowledge the power dynamics that govern the classroom and institutional decision-making structures.

Educational leaders who follow this theory regularly interrogate normative assumptions that underpin and drive educational policies and institutional governance (Burns, 2017). Leaders question their deeply held assumptions and beliefs and engage in active rather than passive empathy,

requiring not only a desire for change but also action (Zembylas, 2017).

The summary table below highlights the main objective of an ethic of discomfort, its core principles, and benefits of adopting this framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas and making decisions.

Summary Table: Ethic of Discomfort

Primary leadership style	Transformational
Frame of reference	Social justice
Objective	Question and disrupt one's beliefs and assumptions
Core principles	• Embracing discomfort • Critical reflection and self-awareness • Active empathy • Continuous learning • Social responsibility
Benefits	• Social change • Personal growth • Enhanced empathy • Improved decision-making

Historical Origins

Shoshana Felman

The notion that discomfort is not only inevitable but also ethical was initially suggested by Shoshana Felman (1992) in her work on the role of crisis in listening to stories of suffering and trauma from her experience teaching about the Holocaust. Felman asked educators: "Is there a relation between crisis and the very enterprise of education?… Is there a relation between trauma and pedagogy?" (p. 18). She concluded that "when teaching engenders some sort of crisis in the student, and this is done with care about students' well-being, then there is potential for transformation" (Zembylas, 2015, p. 164).

Felman (1992) called for educators to theorize norms and how they operate constructively or destructively in educational institutions. Discomfort, then, she argued, can be used as a tool by educators for individual and social transformation:

> If teaching does not hit upon some sort of crisis, if it does not encounter either the vulnerability or the explosiveness of a (explicit or implicit) critical and unpredictable dimension, it has perhaps not truly taught . . . I therefore think that my job as a teacher, paradoxical as it may sound, was that of creating in the class the highest state of crisis that it could withstand, without "driving the students crazy," without compromising the students' bounds (p. 53).

Michel Foucault

The 'ethic of discomfort' was first articulated by Michel

Foucault (1994) in his essay "For an Ethic of Discomfort." Foucault asserted that discomfort could serve as an antidote against dogmatism and complacency. He advised:

> never to consent to being completely comfortable with one's own presuppositions. Never to let them fall peacefully asleep, but also never to believe that a new fact will suffice to overturn them; never to imagine that one can change them like arbitrary axioms, remembering that in order to give them necessary mobility one must have a distant view, but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself. To be very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little known horizon, that every certainty is sure only through the support of a ground that is always unexplored. The most fragile instant has its roots. In that lesson, there is a whole ethic of sleepless evidence that does not rule out, far from it, a rigorous economy of the True and the False; but that is not the whole story (p. 448).

Foucault viewed ethics as a continuous, ongoing practice of self-reflection and a trajectory towards a more critical understanding of oneself (Omohovere, 2022). This is quite distinct from position stating, whereby a person takes a stance on a particular issue or topic. Viewing ethics as a process, then, requires that leaders become reconciled with uncertainty and embrace vulnerability and ambiguity of the self. They must, as Zemblyas (2017) challenged, "acknowledge the limits of knowing the other and the ethical claim that unknowability makes" (p. 11).

Pedagogy of Discomfort

In 1999, Megan Boler first coined the term 'pedagogy

of discomfort,' which has since been expanded upon by Michalinos Zembylas, Claire McGlynn, and others. These social justice scholars argued that students' experiences of discomfort are pedagogically valuable in learning about the victims of justice. This pedagogical approach is "grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits, and normative practices that sustain social inequities and create openings for individual and social transformation" (Zembylas, 2015, p. 163).

Teachers who adopt this approach challenge students to critically analyze their ideological values and beliefs in relation to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Such a pedagogy, argued Zembylas (2015), "has at its aim to uncover and question the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines, and unconscious complicity with hegemony" (p. 166). When educators and students closely problematize their habits, they may begin to identify their unconscious privileges and the invisible ways in which they perpetuate the dominant ideology (McIntosh, 1989).

Ethic of Violence and Nonviolence

In 2005, Judith Butler furthered the conversation by introducing the dual concepts of the 'ethic of violence' and 'ethic of nonviolence.' She highlighted that violence is frequently inflicted on those who do not conform to the dominant ethical norms, for example, when students or employees are forced to accept a collective ethos about what is considered 'right' and 'wrong.' Leaders who have failed to engage in the necessary work of unpacking the complexity and ambiguity of existing conditions, and who have not supported students and employees in this work,

are guilty of ethical violence (Zemblyas, 2015). An ethical norm, therefore, becomes violent when it is imposed in the name of universal principles (e.g., democracy and justice).

If ethical violence is the insistence of uniform thinking, then, in contrast, nonviolence is the process of interrupting dominant narratives. From a Foucauldian perspective, the critique of the self is an important tool in the constitution of nonviolent ethics. Foucault (1979) advised that people should problematize manifestations of discomfort "without portraying them as acts of bad faith or cowardice, to open a space for movement without slipping into prophetic posture" (p. xxvii).

Pedagogic Dissonance

The ethic of discomfort can be linked to Jansen's (2009) pedagogic dissonance, which occurs when one's assumptions are shattered, and post-conflict pedagogy, which is founded on hope (Freire, 1992). As Vandeyar (2019) argued, "In a post-conflict society the former oppressor and the oppressed do not get caught up in a blaming game" (p. 1789); rather, "This kind of critical pedagogy recognizes the power and the pain at play in school and society, and their effects on young people, and then asks how things could be better" (Jansen, 2009, p. 154).

Situated Within Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

Although Foucault's ethic of discomfort is based on the social and political arena, and Boler and Zembylas's

pedagogy of discomfort is situated within the classroom, their ethical frameworks can also be applied to educational leadership, as they have important theoretical consequences for leaders in educational settings.

Universities have long been positioned as places where students are exposed to a wide range of ideas, including those that may be discomforting or challenge their beliefs, to encourage critical thinking and intellectual growth. But for a long time, university campuses were relatively homogenous. With the increasing number of students from diverse cultures entering universities, the need for educators to effectively communicate across cultures has increased.

Challenging Dominant Narratives

For over a decade, social justice scholars have argued that the obligation of educational leaders to guarantee a 'safe space' is an impossible and sanitizing task (Boler, 2004; Zembylas, 2017). From this perspective, people should be wary of leaders who ask, "why can't we all just get along?" As Zembylas (2015) identified, "the assumption about safe speaking in which all shared ideas can be engaged respectfully and critically is illusory due to the embodied and historical differences of students and teachers" (p. 165).

Slee (2009) cautioned that empowerment, a key concept of inclusive leadership, caters to those already empowered. Research has demonstrated that Western-centric frames dictated what was considered inclusive in an educational setting (England & Brown, 2001). Common guidelines for inclusive educational settings are often not responsive to power relations; for example, advocating for fairness by allowing equal time for all narratives assumes

that all narratives have equal airtime in our everyday lives (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2016).

Some scholars have recommended restricting dominant narratives to create greater equality (e.g., see Sensoy & Diangelo, 2016). While Burns (2017) posed the question: "Perhaps the question now is not so much how do we move 'towards inclusion'…, but what do we do to disrupt the construction of centre from which exclusion derives?" (p. 790).

From this ethical orientation, educational leaders are obligated to question hierarchical structures and power dynamics within educational institutions. They must critically examine the way decisions are made and how policies are implemented, seek to create more equitable environments, and move away from universal norms of 'justice,' 'fairness,' and 'democracy.' As leaders, they must model and promote critical thinking and questioning among students and staff. Further, they should encourage a culture of intellectual curiosity and openness to new ideas, which can lead to a deeper understanding of complex issues and a willingness to challenge prevailing norms and assumptions.

Transformational Leadership

The ethic of discomfort closely aligns with the theory of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of leaders challenging the status quo and the need to critically examine existing power structures and norms to bring about transformation. Transformational leadership is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, which requires that leaders assess followers' motives and needs and assume that followers bring their whole selves into the workplace

(Northouse, 2019). It is a relational form of leadership that emphasizes the importance of reciprocity and consideration of multiple perspectives, whereby both the leader and follower work towards raising one another's level of morality (Northouse, 2019). Additionally, it is concerned with the collective good and calls leaders to transcend their own interests for the sake of others (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leadership has the potential to positively influence peoples' moral identities and emotions (e.g., empathy and guilt), thereby enhancing moral decision-making and action (Zhu et al., 2011).

The role of the transformational leader is to discern how far they can push others to a point of discomfort without causing harm. Importantly, this requires that leaders have trusting relationships with others, as well as an awareness of the diverse experiences of their community, as they will need to draw upon deeply held "internalized cultural logics to create greater insight and behaviour change" (Burns, 2017, p. 791).

Note that this ethical perspective does not follow a consensus-based model nor distributed form of leadership. It assumes that there is an inherently differential power relationship between the leader and the follower, and therefore, positional authority is prioritized. Therefore, leaders must first have a critical awareness of their own attachments to particular narratives before they demand others do this work; importantly, leaders must embed themselves as participating members in the conversations, modelling vulnerability and uncertainty.

Benefits of Ethic

While there is a certain degree of risk associated with

adopting this ethical frame, it has great potential for transformative change and developing intercultural understanding of leaders, followers, educators, and students. Embracing discomfort can lead to personal growth by expanding one's understanding of the world and oneself. Experiencing discomfort can enhance empathy by providing insights into the experience of others, thus promoting a greater understanding of diverse perspectives.

Vandeyar (2019) argued that the most effective way to develop intercultural understanding and empathy is through experiential learning that fosters an ethic of discomfort and pedagogic dissonance; "such learning will create opportunities for diverse groups of academics to walk in the shoes of another and to experience discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes first-hand" (p. 790). One successful method used worldwide is the practice of Story Circles (Deardorff, 2020) for developing intercultural competencies. Story Circles focus on a process of listening, self- and other-awareness, reflection, sharing, empathy, and relationship building.

This ethic has the potential to influence social change. Many students around the world are taught in oppressive classrooms "by academics who are demeaning, unprofessional, and use their power in ways that discriminate unfairly against students" (Shay, 2016, p. 3). When educators and leaders realize that they are not merely conduits of curriculum and educational policies but rather complex beings working within and potentially contributing to value systems, they may be motivated to problematize these systems by analyzing dominant discourses and meaning-making practices within educational and administrative policies (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

Drawbacks of Ethic

Leaders who follow an ethic of discomfort assume a certain degree of risk, particularly those who work within polarized contexts where ethical and political ideologies are imposed by those in authority and the academic freedom of faculty is challenged by political and social structures.

In recent years, there have been more attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the United States of America, for example, Republican lawmakers have introduced 40 anti-DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) bills targeting higher education institutions since 2022, which prohibit educators from teaching about systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege (Insight into Diversity, n.d.). Similarly, in Canada, anti-SOGI protests over sexual orientation and gender identity curriculum in Canadian schools have occurred across the country. Nationalist policy agendas around the world restrict what can be taught, either covertly (e.g., fear tactics) or overtly (e.g., changes to legislation), which require leaders to interrogate their own complicity in perpetuating racist and discriminatory beliefs and practices.

Similarly alarming are attacks on academic freedom — a fundamental principle of higher education that permits scholars to pursue and advance knowledge that serves society. Academic freedom involves three aspects:

- research and teaching that furthers knowledge and understanding

- adhering to the ethical and methodological standards of one's discipline

- participation in collegial or shared governance

> to ensure that decisions affecting academic life in the university are based on scholarly expertise (Baugh et al., 2021)

In Europe, research and teaching are under pressure due to political constraints, including government foreign policy and societal expectations. Seckelmann et al. (2021) highlighted the following threats to academic freedom within the European context:

- the economic orientation of university governance, which emphasizes efficiency, competition, and external evaluation
- new rules concerning trigger warnings, speech restrictions, and ethics commissions

As a result, leaders who adopt an ethic of discomfort need to be cognizant of the environment within which they work and the potential risks they may be taking for themselves and their organizations, colleagues, and students. While this chapter offers a hopeful alternative to the status quo, it may require that leaders adopt a subversive approach to decolonizing educational systems.

It also may require that leaders be willing to empathize with students and colleagues who hold racist and misogynist beliefs and not be dismissive or undervalue their perspectives, in order to facilitate transformation without causing division. Zembylas (2017) described this as a willingness to make oneself "strategically sceptic in order to empathise with the troubled knowledge students carry with them, even when this troubled knowledge is disturbing to other students or to the teacher" (p. 13).

Educational leaders' ability to understand their own belief systems and the value systems of others may affect

their success in responding to diversity. Before leaders consider adopting this ethical approach to decision-making, they need to ask themselves the following questions:

- Am I ready to unlearn, re-learn, and fundamentally transform as an individual and an academic?

- Am I literate about the historical injustices and diverse intellectual debates within my discipline, within the academy, and within the community in which I live and work?

- Am I willing to address issues of power and belonging and dismantle colonized structures and practices within my institution?

- Am I willing to walk in the shoes of another and to experience discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes first-hand? (Vandeyar, 2019)

Return to Critical Reflective Question

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=32#h5p-4

Recommended Readings

- "Ethic of Discomfort: Is Asking for Nude Lipstick Racist?" by Edgar A. Burns (2017), *Race Ethnicity and Education*

- "Practicing an Ethic of Discomfort as an Ethic of Care in Higher Education Teaching" by Michalinos Zemblyas (2017), *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* (CriSTaL)

- "Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education" by Ozlem Sensory and Robin DiAngelo (2014), *Democracy & Education*

Key Terms

- **Academic freedom**
- **Active empathy**
- **Dogmatism**
- **Ethnocentrism**
- **Inclusive excellence**
- **Neoliberalism**

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Ethic of the Profession

Alana Hoare

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"They set an example for the institution by showing respect for others, serving others, being just and honest, and building community." — *Smith & Fox* (2019, p. 77)

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Definition

The ethic of the profession offers a decision-making strategy for educational leaders and can be used as an analytic tool for reflection. Leaders who follow an ethic of the profession adopt a multi-dimensional approach to decision-making and consider multiple ethical frames (i.e., justice, care, critique) and codes of ethics: both professional and personal. The professional ethic is characterized as deontological, which refers to the moral obligation of leaders (i.e., whether actions are right or wrong) and axiological (the values or ideals that guide ethical behaviour), meaning that the established codes and values of the profession act as a standard for ethical behaviour (Wood & Hilton, 2012).

Ward (2020) defined the ethic of the profession as "Dynamically located in the professional decision-making context to encourage the educator to contemplate multiple perspectives when arriving at a professional decision about an ethical dilemma" (p. 44). Through ethical pluralism, leaders recognize that there are multiple ways to view and approach an ethical dilemma and that these differing viewpoints may conflict with one another. Leaders who follow this paradigm acknowledge that there is more than one way to resolve a problem. Leaders who apply an ethic of the profession to their practice "evaluate situations and alternative choices from several ethical viewpoints, weighing costs and benefits of alternatives before making a decision and taking action" (Smith & Fox, 2019, p. 76).

While guided by a set of professional standards, this ethic is highly personalized, requiring leaders to develop and reflect upon their own personal and professional codes. One who follows this ethic assumes that standardized

professional ethical codes are limited in their value (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022); therefore, educational leaders need to establish their own ethical codes "based on life stories and critical incidents" (p. 24).

First and foremost, the ethic of the profession places the best interests of the student at the centre of all ethical decision-making. From this perspective, educational leaders are called to provide a safe, respectful learning environment, and promote quality teaching (Gurley et al., 2023). This ethical paradigm further calls leaders to consider community values — both institutional as well as the community within which the institution is situated — and to be cognizant of the needs of the local community (Wood & Hilton, 2012), whether they be economic or social.

The summary table below highlights key aspects of this ethic including complementary leadership styles, the primary objective and core principles, and benefits of adopting this frame of reference for decision-making.

Summary Table: Ethic of the Profession

Primary leadership style	Servant leadership; Stewardship
Frame of reference	Multi-dimensional / multi-ethic (justice, critique, care) Professional norms and standards; personal code of ethics; community values
Objective	Best interests of the student
Core principles	• Responsible stewardship of resources. • Providing an environment suitable for learning. • Strong commitment to providing equitable opportunities for education. • Avoidance of abuse of positional power and personal gain or advancement.
Benefits	• Personalized, iterative process. • Informed by an established set of professional standards. • Strengthened relationships with community. • Prioritizes the safety and happiness of students.

Historical Origins

Robert J. Starratt

The ethic of the profession emerged from the work of Robert J. Starratt (1994), who proposed a multi-dimensional ethical framework that included the ethics of justice, critique, and care. Starratt argued that this pluralistic approach to ethical decision-making must consider moral considerations, practical applications, and contextual factors; he emphasized the need for educational leaders to cultivate a deep moral awareness and a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Additionally, Starratt highlighted the role of dialogue and reflection in ethical decision-making, suggesting that educators should engage in ongoing conversations about ethics and morality to develop their ethical reasoning skills. Therefore, according to Starratt, ethical educational leadership is a collaborative, self-reflective, and lifelong learning process. However,, Starratt (2017) cautioned that the ethical behaviour of the leader of an organization has a considerable effect on the ethical behaviour of others within the organization; therefore, the moral conduct and values of the leader should be carefully assessed prior to placing them within a position of power.

Best Interests of the Student

Shapiro and Gross (2013) expanded upon Starratt's multi-dimensional framework by articulating the ethic of the profession. Their model emerged from case study investigations of ethical dilemmas in schools. Shapiro and Gross argued that a professional ethic must centre the best

interests of the student at the heart of all decision-making. Specifically, they prioritized the three R's: each students' rights, responsibilities, and respect. Frick et al. (2013) posited that the best interest of the student means "safety, happiness, an opportunity to have an education, providing an environment suitable for learning, learning per se, achievement in particular forms of knowledge deemed important by a wider society, and being equipped to live a good life" (p. 222).

From this perspective, "the educational leader makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision-making" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022, p. 27). Expanding upon this idea, Smith and Fox (2019), argued that the best interest of the student comes first, then is followed by the best interest of the educational institution, and then the best interest of employees.

Frick et al. (2013) challenged Shapiro and Stefkovich's framing of 'the best interest of the student.' They called for a clear distinction between the best interests of one student and the best interests of the community of students.

Situation-Based Ethics

Smith and Fox (2019) acknowledged that the primary influences on ethical decision-making are the personal experiences of educational leaders. As such, decisions are often based on prior experience and personal knowledge, views, and values rather than ethical or philosophical theories or frameworks. They described this as "ethics as situation-based" (p. 82). In Perry's study of Massachusetts superintendents in the USA, leaders most cited their respective experience, education, upbringing, values, and

beliefs as the guiding rules that informed their decision-making.

Ward (2020) offered that there is potential to extend this ethical frame by adding Bullough's (2011) ethic of probability which "opens for consideration the teacher's calculation of consequences [and] the cost/benefit analysis of teacher actions" (p. 41).

While this ethical perspective demands that leaders consider multiple viewpoints when making decisions and values democracy, equity, and social responsibility as part of the decision-making process, it ultimately assumes that the educational leader will have the final authority. Perry (2018) found that the application of rules, principles, and theories is deeply influenced by educational leaders' stories and personal experiences, as well as the traditions and virtues inherent within the institutional culture and local community. In other words, this ethical perspective does not follow a consensus-based model nor distributed form of leadership, and therefore, positional authority is prioritized.

Situated within Educational Leadership

Educational leaders working within the public domain are expected to behave ethically and follow professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Moreover, they are expected to be good stewards of educational resources. Smith and Fox (2019) added that leaders "help one another to make the college stronger… being honest… being true to the cause of the college" (p. 83). These ethical behaviours and values

are strongly influenced by cultural norms and, therefore, contextually dependent.

Historic vs. Contemporary Professional Ethic

For post-secondary leaders, codes of ethics can originate from the local level (e.g., institutional mission, values, and goals), the system level (e.g., legislative mandates and government priorities), and the societal level (e.g., social, cultural, and economic factors). Historically, professional ethics have been grounded within the justice paradigm, which is equated with standardized codes, rules, and principles and often enacted through professional standards. Additionally, they have been associated with a utilitarian perspective of "doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people (i.e., students)" (Smith & Fox, 2019, p. 81).

However, more contemporary views of the professional ethic require leaders to adopt a critical and care-based approach to leadership and consider the unique circumstances surrounding a problem, which may require that leaders 'bend the rules' or question who the rules are intended to serve. Lashley (2007) argued that educational leaders need to move beyond strict compliance with established rules and instead strive to balance students' individual rights and freedoms while aiming for the common good.

Successful educational leaders are cognizant of the institutional culture in which they practice and the communities in which the institution is located. Tensions can arise when a leader's personal and professional codes of ethics clash, among educational leaders who follow different ethical codes, or when an individual's codes are

incongruent with those of the local community (Shapiro & Stefkovic, 2022).

Complex Decision-Making

Perry (2018) argued that educational leaders must ask what the profession would expect of them and consider the best interests of the students, with particular attention to the needs of highly diverse populations. Scholars have argued that educational leadership often involves "decision-making in the gray" (Smith & Fox, 2019, p. 81); therefore, theory and practice should co-inform decision-making. As Wood and Hilton (2012) noted, "ethical issues are multi-faceted, meaning that each stage in the model is fluid, dynamic, and multidimensional" (p. 197). Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach is rarely sought from this ethical viewpoint. Consequently, this ethic follows a dynamic decision-making process that must consider questions of equity and the evolving needs of students.

To assist leaders with complex decision-making, Perry (2018) advised that leaders develop a set of core values and that organizational supports support educational leaders with reflecting upon and examining ethical frameworks and core values guided by principles of "safety, security, and protection" (p. 63). This sentiment is shared by Shapiro and Stefkovich, who suggested that educational leaders articulate a 'statement of role morality' (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994) and reflect on "what they perceive to be right or wrong and good or bad, who they are as professionals and as human beings, how they make decisions, and why they make decisions" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022, p. 25).

Servant Leadership

Leadership styles that complement an ethic of profession include servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), whereby leaders prioritize serving the needs of others over personal gain or advancement. As Wood and Hilton (2012) noted, educational leaders have a "duty to their institutional personnel… [and] responsibilities to the students that they serve" (p. 205).

Servant leadership involves putting the needs of others first. The ethic of the profession reinforces this idea by emphasizing the best interest of the student in all decision-making processes. Additionally, servant leaders lead by example, embodying the values and principles of the educational institution in which they serve; "they set an example for the institution by showing respect for others, serving others, being just and honest, and building community" (Smith & Fox, 2019, p. 77).

Stewardship

Stewardship is another primary leadership style often associated with the ethic of the profession. Leaders see themselves as stewards of their profession, responsible for upholding its values and ensuring its long-term sustainability and student success. It requires "responsible stewardship over resources, personnel, and students" (p. 197), as well as promoting "collective and individual student accomplishment" (Frick et al., 2013, p. 221).

Stewardship leadership emphasizes taking a long-term perspective and considering the impact of decisions on future generations. Educational leaders must consider the long-term implications of their actions and act in ways

that promote the sustainability and well-being of their organization and profession.

Benefits of Ethic

It has been argued that a multi-dimensional approach to ethics offers leaders the opportunity to explore complex ideas and philosophies through multiple epistemic lenses by engaging them with theoretical and practical aspects of ethical leadership and governance (Stefanovic, 2023). Moreover, an intersectional viewpoint can enhance leaders' ability to untangle major problems and issues that confront us all. This perspective includes the ethics of justice, care, and critique and involves consideration of community standards and norms and the standards, professional norms, and indicators of professional leadership.

While ethical decision-making is complex, the ethic of the profession provides a toolbox for moral leaders. Educational theorists consider the educator's role as not only a transmitter of knowledge but also a moral agent responsible for the ethical and moral development of students. Through activities like "rule referencing; maximizing benefit; assessing one's character, motivation, and disposition; responding with empathy and personal investment; being reflective; and maintaining an open posture" (Frick et al., 2013, p. 208), leaders are better prepared to find a solution in the best interest of the student. Following the ethic of the profession contributes to leaders' professional development and continuous improvement by encouraging individuals to continually reflect on their leadership practice and seek ways to improve (ideally in conversation with others).

This dynamic, fluid process allows leaders a significant degree of autonomy while balancing obligations to the educational community. As Wood and Hilton (2012) noted, leaders have a duty to their board members, institutional personnel, and the students they serve to foster a collegial environment. Importantly, following ethical standards and codes of conduct can help to reduce the risk of legal issues and conflicts of interest, particularly when a leader carefully documents their decision-making processes and can provide a strong rationale for their conclusions.

Drawbacks of Ethic

Educational leaders have a wide range of responsibilities concerning student safety and security, budget and facilities, quality curriculum, and community impact; however, decisions that have an effect on people are often the most difficult to make (Perry, 2018). Leaders must simultaneously act in the individual interests of students while considering the collective best interests of all students.

Competing notions of individual freedoms and rights — prominent values within a liberal democracy, such as Canada — often create challenges for educational leaders. As Ward (2020) noted, there exists "a lack of consensus, consistency, and global standardization of what is ethical" (p. 39). As previously noted in this textbook, much of the existing literature on ethical educational leadership ignores the contributions of Indigenous scholars and global contexts. The authors argue that educational leaders must reflect upon their positionality and identify the ethical paradigm(s) from which they approach the ethical

decision-making process: educators should become more familiar with the paradigms that most often influence their own ethical decisions. The ethic of the profession is a starting point for ethical leaders to consider multiple perspectives when making decisions, but it is not the endpoint.

Tensions between diverse ethical perspectives related to education (i.e., its purpose, who it should be for, how it should be delivered, and what should be delivered) converge with personal moral values and professional and/ or community standards and expectations for professional practice. This can often result in a "moral dissonance, or a classing of codes" (Frick et al., 2013, p. 215).

Return to Critical Reflective Question

Frick et al. (2013) challenged Poliner Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2022) framing of 'the best interest of the student.' They questioned whether we think every institution or every classroom ought to be expected to meet every need of every student. Leaders are challenged to simultaneously act in the individual interests of students and the collective best interests of all students.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:
https://leadershipethics.pressbooks.tru.ca/?p=36#h5p-6

Recommended Reading

- "Responding to the Collective and Individual "Best Interests of Students": Revisiting the Tension Between Administrative Practice and Ethical Imperatives in Special Education Leadership" by William C. Frick, Susan C. Faircloth, and Karen S. Little (2013), *Educational Administration Quarterly*

- "Ethical Decision-Making Needs for Emerging Community College Leaders" by Douglas A. Smith and Emily C. Fox (2019), *New Directions for Community Colleges*

- "Reconceptualizing the Teaching of Ethics in a Global Classroom" by Shakoor Ward (2020), *International Journal of Ethics Education*

> **Key Terms**
>
> - **Axiological**
> - **Deontological**
> - **Ethical pluralism**

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Bird's Eye View

Alana Hoare; Olubukola Bosede Osuntade; and Rumana Patel

Summary of Ethical Paradigms

Ethics refers to considerations about what is 'right' and what is 'wrong.' The eight lenses help leaders determine what is right and wrong from different perspectives. There is no hierarchy among the lenses (i.e., one is not better than the other); although, at times, people have been guilty of reinforcing one lens at the expense of another. Each lens on its own has strengths and drawbacks, leaving potential gaps in our peripheral vision. The aim is to combine multiple lenses to deepen our analysis of ethical dilemmas and become more thoughtful, reflective, and ethical leaders.

An advanced understanding of ethical theories allows leaders to better understand themselves and those around them and motivates them to consider the contextual factors and concerns relevant to a given circumstance. This can provide leaders with a more holistic understanding of phenomena (e.g., competing interests, power structures, and social and cultural factors) surrounding dilemmas. This also helps leaders become more attuned to the decision-making considerations and processes adopted by others and can facilitate collaboration across groups. In the next part of this book, you will apply the eight ethical paradigms to real-world ethical dilemmas.

St'at'imc Matriarchal Leadership Ethics

St'at'imc Matriarchal leadership ethics acknowledge the inherent rights of Indigenous women in making decisions regarding their community's health, and preserving their culture, language, and connection to the Land. Leaders who follow this ethic empower youth by nurturing their strengths and enveloping them in the wisdom of the ancestors, Elders, and Land. This ethic is based on the belief that children are inherently good and that it is our duty to recognize and nurture their strengths. St'at'imc Matriarchal leadership ethics emphasize consensus-building, intergenerational knowledge transfer, cultural preservation, and prioritize Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

Ethic of Justice

The **ethic of justice**, which forms the structure binding Western society, is a decision-making paradigm that relies upon existing codes, laws, legislation, and policies to determine the appropriate course of action in each circumstance. It is a rule-based decision-making perspective. Leaders who follow this ethic value maintaining order in society through a fair and even application of universal standards. Uniformity and universal individual rights are highly valued. All individuals are treated the same and justice is distributed with exact similitude.

Ethic of Critique

The **ethic of critique** is antithetical to the ethic of justice

and aims to dismantle the structures that bind society in the pursuit of more equitable outcomes. Leaders who follow this ethic believe that the 'rule of law' was created by those in power to maintain their power and to subjugate or oppress the powerless. Leaders aim to disrupt the status quo and advocate for the interests and needs of those underrepresented and underserved in education by critiquing, challenging, and changing the social structures and systems.

Ethic of Care

An **ethic of care** is also juxtaposed to an ethic of justice. The ethic of care emphasizes the significance of empathy, compassion, and responsiveness in directing moral conduct; it is a relational process focused on building connection and trust. Leaders who follow an ethic of care prioritize the well-being, dignity, and best interests of those whom they serve and are motivated to act. Care-based leadership requires much more than a feeling of caring for another; it requires leaders to challenge the status quo.

Ethic of Community

The **ethic of community** is underpinned by the belief that everyone is responsible for leadership. Anyone who cares about student success and what happens within post-secondary institutions recognizes that working toward social justice is a communal responsibility rather than that of a "heroic" leader with a vision. This ethical paradigm shifts the locus of moral agency to the community as a whole. Moral leadership is thus distributed and requires that all members of the community develop and practice

interpersonal and group skills, such as working in teams, engaging in ongoing dialogue, and navigating evolving community discourse within an increasingly polarized society. In addition to being a communal affair, the ethic of community is *processual*, meaning that "community" is not a product nor tangible entity, but rather an ongoing set of processes led by educators and students committed to these processes. When community is defined as a process, it is based in relationships, which are dependent upon communication, reciprocity, respect, dialogue, and collaboration rather than a set of shared values.

Ethic of Self-Care

The **ethic of self-care** follows the ethic of critique; however, it is aimed inwardly at the self as the vehicle for disrupting and resisting dominant ideologies. It demands that leaders actively question and resist forms of power that operate through the regulation and normalization of individuals' behaviors and identities by challenging how history and 'truth' are constituted and taught. To follow an ethic of self-care requires ongoing critical self-reflection on how you are governed by external forces, including how you may be influenced by societal expectations and institutional norms. This ethic is focused on developing oneself as more morally and ethically enlightened; it is not about dictating morality to others — it is anti-authoritarian in nature. It emphasizes the moral importance of self-nourishment and resilience, a perspective that is distinct in its focus compared to other ethics that may prioritize outward responsibilities over self-care.

Ethic of Discomfort

The **ethic of discomfort** follows the ethic of critique and self-care in a pursuit to disrupt and challenge dominant narratives and structures that perpetuate discriminatory, racist, and misogynist beliefs and practices. Leaders who adopt this approach challenge themselves and others to critically analyze their ideological values and assumptions. To do this may require that they feel pain and discomfort by experiencing discrimination and oppression firsthand, even if artificially, and to 'walk in someone else's' shoes' to build empathy and the ability to see things from another person's point of view. The ethic of discomfort is different from other paradigms that may seek to mitigate discomfort.

Ethic of the Profession

The **ethic of the profession** is a multi-dimensional approach for decision-making that considers the ethics of justice, critique, and care alongside the leader's personal and professional codes of ethics. The ethic of the profession places the best interests of the student at the centre of all ethical decision-making. From this perspective, educational leaders are called to provide a safe, respectful learning environment, and promote quality teaching. They are informed by an established set of professional standards and must be responsible stewards of institutional resources.

Framework for Ethical Decision-Making: "Bird's Eye View"

Drawing upon a vast body of literature, this book described eight ethical paradigms, as illustrated in figure below: St'at'imc Matriarchal leadership ethics, and the ethics of justice, critique, care, self-care, community, discomfort, and the profession. Leaders who are well-versed in multiple ethical paradigms and who consider different perspectives when making decisions are more reflective than reactive. Leaders with a strong grounding in the eight paradigms critically examine their prior assumptions, dispositions, and propensity towards certain decision-making approaches. They better understand themselves and are more effective at responding to ethical dilemmas in a culturally diverse environment.
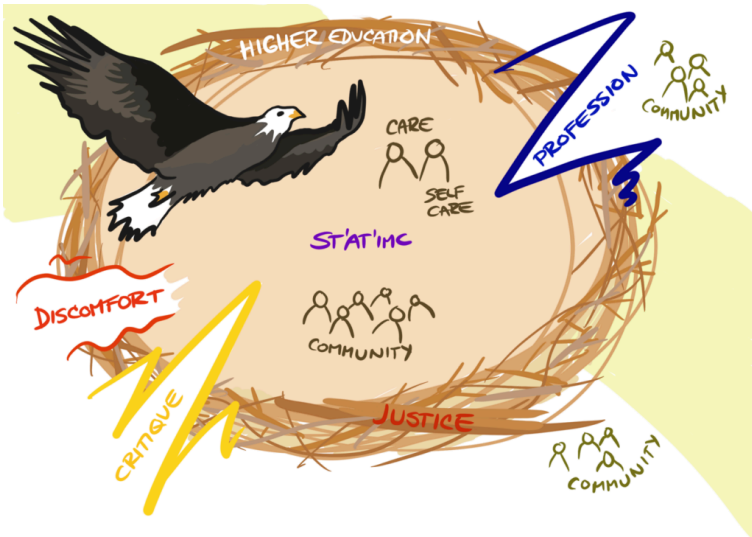
Conceptual Model: Bird's Eye View (working draft; artistic credit Marie Bartlett, 2024, June 28)

Moral decision making starts first with the self by examining and interrogating our own beliefs and assumptions about what we consider right and wrong. It then expands outwards by considering those whose well-being we are responsible for (e.g., students) and then to the broader community and communities that we serve, respecting community values, supporting their priorities, language revitalization and land rights, and ensuring cultural sovereignty.

From there, we must attend to the laws, policies, and regulations of the educational profession and institutions in which we work, and the broader rules established where we live and those of our global collaborators. Once we are familiar with these laws, we must critically evaluate the ways in which they may cause harm, produce and reproduce iniquities, as well as the privileges they afford some while denying others.

Finally, we must be willing to sit within an uncomfortable reality that our actions may contribute to ableist, classist, racist, and, ultimately, systemic inequities. Educational leaders must be cognizant that every action taken or any decision made can have an immediate and long-lasting impact on the lives of people.

If we approach our work through a strengths-based lens (similar to that of matriarchal leadership) and eco-feminist views on the ethic of care:

- How might we balance the individual needs of students and advocate for more socially just educational systems?

- What might we learn from the land, our first teacher, about leadership?

- How might we incorporate eco-justice into our analysis of right and wrong?

Moral decision-making using a bird's eye view starts from within and gradually expands outward, growing in focus and understanding. As we evolve and mature as leaders and as systems change and we gain more experience, decision-making must be considered as a never-ending cycle. Once we grasp the full picture, it is essential to revisit and re-evaluate our beliefs and assumptions continually and be open to humbly admitting mistakes and changing one's course of action, when appropriate, particularly as new information arises or the impact of our actions has unintended results. As educational leaders, we have the capacity to be change agents, and the change begins within us.

Ethical Dilemmas

Eagle soaring (Designed by Freepik) [*Freepik Terms of Use*](#)

Tu ShaheeN Hai Parwaaz Hai Kaam Tera Tere Saamne
Aasman Aur Bhee Hain
You are the great Eagle, your passion is flight, look
ahead,
there are more skies to transcend.
— Muhammad Iqbal (1915; trans. 1920)

In Part II of this book, Master of Education students from a university in the interior of British Columbia, Canada, share their analysis of real-world dilemmas in higher education as part of an assignment for a leadership course.

The student population is diverse with representation from countries around the world, including Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Iran, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, to name a few. They offer diverse perspectives, informed by their lived experience, social positions, disciplinary backgrounds, and cultural histories.

The course EDUC 5990*: Ethical Concerns and Contemporary Issues in Higher Education Leadership* was first offered in September 2024. It was designed with a critical open education philosophy in mind, and incorporated sustainable/renewable assignments. The major project for the course was a case assignment.

Case Study Assignment

In teams, students co-created a case study by investigating and critiquing leadership approaches to an ethical dilemma in higher education. The cases were informed by a literature review of scholarly and popular sources. Using the template provided, students wrote a critical analysis of a leader's decision-making process, discussed the impact of their decision on multiple community members and groups (i.e., students, faculty, surrounding community), and proposed an alternative solution using multiple ethical lenses.

Ethical Dilemmas Case Study: Assignment Criteria and Templates

Literature Review

- Case Study Literature Search and Thematic Analysis Grid (PDF)

- Thematic Analysis Grid Template (excel spreadsheet)

Case Study

- Ethical Dilemmas Case Study Assignment and Template (PDF)

Engaging students as co-authors of this text, we strived to empower them as change agents "as they investigated and gathered data on their community, its cultures, and its problems" (Furman, 2004, p. 227). This represents a shift from the neoliberal view of students as consumers (Brown, 2015) to primary researchers and active agents in their learning and that of others (Hoare & Goad, 2021).

Students' case studies will be published in January 2025. Once available, we encourage readers to critique the students' analysis of the cases and the relevance and feasibility of their imagined alternative solutions to the dilemmas.

Open Anthology of Cases: Note to Faculty Considering Adopting this Assignment

To facilitate a growing collection of academic works that are freely accessible to the public, we provide this space as an open anthology. If you are a faculty member teaching a similar course in leadership ethics and are looking for a platform for students to share their case studies, please contact Alana Hoare at ahoare@tru.ca to discuss publishing students' work in this text.

If you choose to adopt or adapt this textbook, please consider filling out this survey to help us better understand how it is used and fits with the needs of our readers.

References

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Case Study #1

Forthcoming January 2025.

Case Study #2

Forthcoming January 2025.

Author Bios

This open educational resource draws on the voices of women in academia from Canada, India, and Nigeria, spanning the disciplines of agriculture, education, and engineering. This collaborative approach to writing brought together multiple worldviews and challenged us to critically examine our own assumptions, biases, and preferences for moral conduct. We encourage educational leaders to adopt Foucault's practice of "living one's own life as a work of art" and viewing the self as a continuous project. We hope you will join us on this journey of "coming to know."

> — *Alana, Olubukola, and Rumana*

Alana Hoare

Alana Hoare, EdD

Alana is an assistant teaching professor in the School of Education at Thompson Rivers University whose academic interests focus on the role of cultures and epistemologies and their influence on educational systems. She has an Doctor of Education in educational leadership from Western University, where she explored culturally responsive governance and planning in higher education. Alana's works focus on critical approaches to open education and agency, gender, and power in leadership and sport, spanning practice and policy. Previously, Alana taught elementary school and adult English language learners. She also spent nearly a decade as a quality

assurance practitioner and maintains a research program in this field. You can find Alana at ahoare@tru.ca

Olubukola Bosede Osuntade

Osuntade Olubukola, PhD

Olubukola is a graduate student in the School of Education at Thompson Rivers University. She holds a PhD in agricultural extension and rural development from the Federal University of Agricultures in Nigeria. She is a teacher, researcher, and consultant, having taught both undergraduate and graduate students in Nigeria, with a focus on rural sociology, agricultural extension, diffusions, and innovations. She has participated in project planning, management, and reporting in agriculture and developmental studies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her passion for teaching brought her to Canada to pursue a Master of Education degree, with a focus on policy studies and educational leadership. Olubukola's research interests also include climate smart agriculture and the intersection of gender, race, and student status (i.e., domestic,

international) on access to education and leadership opportunities. You can reach Olubukola at osuntadeo22@mytru.ca

Rumana Patel

Rumana Patel, MEng

Patel is an engineer, educator, and feminist scholar from Gujarat, India. She holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in industrial engineering. With nearly seven years of experience as an assistant professor in the Mechanical Engineering department at a private engineering college in India, Rumana also served as a training and placement officer and head of the Entrepreneurship cell. Her deep passion for education led her to become an astronomy educator

for elementary and high school students, where she was confronted with the stark educational inequalities faced by students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This experience fuelled her commitment to advocating for accessible and equitable education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Currently, Rumana is pursuing a Master of Education degree at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Canada. Her personal philosophy, shaped by her upbringing in a small village within a close-knit community, emphasizes the importance of communal spirit, responsibility, and contributing to society. She remains steadfast in her mission to ensure that every learner has the opportunity to receive a quality education.

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Glossary

Absolutism

Absolutism refers to a political theory or system where a ruler, typically a monarch, holds absolute power, unrestricted by a constitution, laws, or other governing factors. In absolutist regimes, the ruler's authority is considered to be derived from divine right or is seen as absolute and unquestionable. Absolutism often involves centralized control over government, economy, and society, with the ruler having final say in all matters of state.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the principle that individuals involved in academia, including students, teachers, and researchers, have the right to freely inquire, discuss, publish, and teach without fear of censorship, restraint, or reprisal. It encompasses the freedom to pursue research, express ideas, and engage in open debate within the academic community, even when those ideas may be controversial or challenge prevailing beliefs. Academic freedom is considered essential for the advancement of knowledge and the fulfillment of the educational mission of universities and research institutions.

Active Empathy

Active empathy refers to a form of empathy that involves not just understanding or feeling what another person is experiencing but also actively engaging with them to communicate that understanding and provide support or assistance. It goes beyond passive acknowledgment of someone's feelings to actively showing compassion, offering help, or taking action to alleviate their distress or improve their situation. Active empathy involves listening attentively, showing genuine concern, and responding empathetically to the emotions and needs of others.

Anti-dogmatic

Refers to a stance or attitude that is opposed to dogma, which is defined as a set of principles or beliefs that are accepted without question or doubt. Being anti-dogmatic means being skeptical of rigidly held beliefs and being open to questioning, inquiry, and revision of ideas based on evidence and reason. It involves a willingness to consider alternative viewpoints and to critically evaluate established beliefs rather than accepting them uncritically.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the ability or right of an individual, group, or entity to self-govern, make independent decisions, and act according to their own principles or rules without external influence or coercion. Autonomy is often associated with freedom and self-determination, allowing individuals to

choose their own paths, make their own choices, and take responsibility for their actions. In contexts such as ethics, higher education, law, and politics, autonomy is considered a fundamental principle that underpins concepts of individual rights and moral agency.

Axiological

Axiological pertains to the branch of philosophy that deals with values, such as those of ethics, aesthetics, or religion. It involves the study of principles and values, including ethical values, and is concerned with what is deemed valuable or worthwhile. Axiological considerations often play a role in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and they can vary widely between individuals, cultures, and societies.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy refers to a system of administration characterized by hierarchical authority, standardized procedures, and a specialization of functions. In a bureaucratic system, tasks and responsibilities are divided among different levels of personnel, each with their own area of expertise and authority. Decisions are made according to established rules and procedures, and there is a clear chain of command through which instructions and information flow. Bureaucracy is often associated with large organizations, such as government agencies or corporations, where efficiency, consistency, and adherence to rules are valued. However, bureaucracy can also be criticized for being slow, inflexible, and impersonal, leading to inefficiencies and frustrations.

Burn-out

Burn-out is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress, particularly in the context of work. It often results from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production, such as factories, businesses, and resources, with the goal of generating profit. In a capitalist system, the production and distribution of goods and services are primarily driven by the forces of supply and demand in a free market. Key features of capitalism include: private property, market economy, profit motive, competition, and limited government intervention. Capitalism has been a dominant economic system in many parts of the world, particularly in Western countries, and has been associated with economic growth, innovation, and wealth creation. However, it has also been criticized for fostering inequality, environmental degradation, and social alienation.

Collegial governance

Collegial governance refers to a model of decision-making and administration where decisions are made collectively by a group of colleagues or peers who share responsibility for the organization's management and direction. In higher education, collegial governance typically involves faculty

members, administrators, and students working together to make decisions on matters such as curriculum development, academic policies, hiring and promotion of faculty, and budget allocation. This model is based on the principle of shared governance, where community members have a say in the decision-making process rather than decisions being made solely by top-level administrators.

Colonization

Colonization refers to the process by which a foreign power establishes control over a territory, often with the intent of settling its own people there, exploiting the resources of the land, and exerting political and economic dominance. Historically, colonization has been associated with European expansion from the 15th century onwards, leading to the establishment of colonies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Colonization often had devastating effects on Indigenous populations, including displacement, genocide, violence, and cultural assimilation.

Communal

Communal refers to the practices, values, and behaviours that emphasize the well-being and interests of the group or community as a whole rather than focusing solely on individual needs and desires.

Communitarianism

Communitarianism is a philosophical and social ideology that emphasizes the importance of community in the development and sustenance of

individual identity and values. It advocates for a balance between individual rights and social responsibilities, arguing that the well-being of the community is essential for the well-being of its members. Communitarianism posits that personal identities and values are largely shaped by communal relationships and cultural contexts, and therefore, policies and practices should support and nurture these communal bonds.

Community cultural wealth

Community cultural wealth includes the cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged. Various forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth include aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. These forms of capital draw on the knowledge students of colour bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom.

Compassion

Compassion is the emotional response to the suffering of others that involves a genuine desire to help alleviate that suffering. It encompasses empathy and an active willingness to provide support, comfort, and assistance.

Compassion fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion

for others, often described as the negative cost of caring. It is commonly experienced by professionals in caregiving roles, such as healthcare workers, therapists, social workers, and emergency responders. Compassion fatigue can develop over time due to prolonged exposure to the suffering of others and the stress of providing care.

Critique

Critique refers to a detailed analysis, assessment, or evaluation of something and involves examining the strengths and weaknesses of the object of critique and offering a reasoned judgment or opinion about its merits or shortcomings. In academic contexts, critique often involves a systematic and rigorous examination of ideas, arguments, or works, with the aim of identifying logical inconsistencies, factual errors, or underlying assumptions. Critique is a fundamental aspect of scholarly discourse, helping to refine and advance knowledge by subjecting ideas to critical scrutiny and debate. Critique should not be confused with mere criticism, which may be more casual or subjective in nature. A critique is typically more thorough and analytical, drawing on evidence and reasoning to support its conclusions.

Decolonization

Decolonization refers to the process by which colonies or territories that were under the control of foreign powers gain independence and sovereignty. It involves dismantling colonial systems of government, economy, and culture, and establishing self-governing institutions by the formerly colonized peoples.

Decolonization is not just a political process but also involves addressing the legacies of colonialism, including social, economic, and cultural inequalities, and reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, languages, and traditions.

Deep democracy

Deep democracy is an ecosystem in which the health of the system is dependent on everyone having opportunities and developing capacities to engage and practice a form of governance in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Deontological

Deontological ethics is a moral theory that focuses on the inherent rightness or wrongness of actions themselves rather than the outcomes of those actions. In deontological ethics, certain actions are considered morally obligatory, regardless of their consequences, based on principles or rules. The word "deontological" is derived from the Greek word "deon," which means "duty." According to this ethical framework, individuals have a moral duty to act in accordance with certain rules or principles, such as honesty, fairness, or respect for others, regardless of the consequences.

Dogmatism

Dogmatism refers to the tendency to assert opinions or beliefs as if they are incontrovertibly true, often without considering evidence, alternative viewpoints, or adequate justification. Dogmatism is often

associated with closed-mindedness and intolerance of differing perspectives. It can hinder intellectual inquiry and inhibit the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate.

Ecological

Explores how entities and their interactions within ecosystems exist and relate to one another. It emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all components within an ecological system, including both living organisms and their physical environment. Ecological ontology often involves examining how these relationships shape the identities and roles of different entities within the ecosystem, and it can extend to discussions about sustainability, environmental ethics, and the impact of human activities on natural systems.

Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves recognizing others' emotions, putting oneself in their place, and responding appropriately to their emotional state.

Epistemic injustice

Refers to the harm done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower. This can involve *testimonial injustice*, which occurs when a speaker's credibility is unjustly dismissed due to prejudice, for example, if someone is not taken seriously because of their gender, race, or social status; or, *hermeneutical injustice*, which occurs when there is a gap in

collective interpretive resources, preventing someone from making sense of their social experiences, for example, before the term "sexual harassment" was widely known, many women's experiences in the workplace were not adequately understood or articulated. Epistemic injustice highlights how social power dynamics can interfere with the process of knowledge production and dissemination, leading to systemic inequities for certain groups.

Ethic of Care

An ethic of care is also juxtaposed to an ethic of justice. The ethic of care emphasizes the significance of empathy, compassion, and responsiveness in directing moral conduct; it is a relational process focused on building connection and trust. Leaders who follow an ethic of care prioritize the well-being, dignity, and best interests of those whom they serve.

Ethic of Community

The ethic of community is underpinned by the belief that everyone is responsible for leadership. Anyone who cares about student success and what happens within post-secondary institutions recognizes that working toward social justice is a communal responsibility rather than that of a "heroic" leader with a vision. This ethical paradigm shifts the locus of moral agency to the community as a whole. Moral leadership is thus distributed and requires that all members of the community develop and practice interpersonal and group skills, such as working in teams, engaging in ongoing dialogue, and navigating evolving community discourse within an increasingly

polarized society. In addition to being a communal affair, the ethic of community is *processual*, meaning that "community" is not a product nor a tangible entity but rather an ongoing set of processes led by educators and students committed to these processes. When community is defined as a process, it is based on relationships, which are dependent upon communication, reciprocity, respect, dialogue, and collaboration rather than a set of shared values.

Ethic of Critique

The ethic of critique is antithetical to the ethic of justice and aims to dismantle the structures that bind society in the pursuit of more equitable outcomes. Leaders who follow this ethic believe that the 'rule of law' was created by those in power to maintain their power and to subjugate or oppress the powerless. Leaders aim to disrupt the status quo and advocate for the interests and needs of those underrepresented and underserved in education by critiquing, challenging, and changing the social structures and systems.

Ethic of Discomfort

The ethic of discomfort follows the ethic of critique and self-care in a pursuit to disrupt and challenge dominant narratives and structures that perpetuate discriminatory, racist, and misogynist beliefs and practices. Leaders who adopt this approach challenge themselves and others to critically analyze their ideological values and assumptions. To do this may require that they feel pain and discomfort by experiencing discrimination and oppression firsthand, even if artificially, and to 'walk in someone else's'

shoes' to build empathy and the ability to see things from another person's point of view. The ethic of discomfort is different from other paradigms that may seek to mitigate discomfort.

Ethic of Justice

The ethic of justice, which forms the structure binding Western society, is a decision-making paradigm that relies upon existing codes, laws, legislation, and policies to determine the appropriate course of action in each circumstance. It is a rule-based decision-making perspective. Leaders who follow this ethic value maintaining order in society through a fair and even application of universal standards. Uniformity and universal individual rights are highly valued. All individuals are treated the same and justice is distributed with exact similitude.

Ethic of Self-Care

The ethic of self-care follows the ethic of critique; however, it is aimed inwardly at the self as the vehicle for disrupting and resisting dominant ideologies. It demands that leaders actively question and resist forms of power that operate through the regulation and normalization of individuals' behaviours and identities by challenging how history and 'truth' are constituted and taught. To follow an ethic of self-care requires ongoing critical self-reflection on how one is governed by external forces, including how they may be influenced by societal expectations and institutional norms. This ethic is focused on developing oneself as more morally and ethically enlightened; it is not about dictating morality to others

— it is anti-authoritarian in nature. It emphasizes the moral importance of self-nourishment and resilience, a perspective that is distinct in its focus compared to other ethics that may prioritize outward responsibilities over self-care.

Ethic of the Profession

The ethic of the profession is a multi-dimensional approach for decision-making that considers the ethics of justice, critique, and care alongside the leader's personal and professional codes of ethics. The ethic of the profession places the best interests of the student at the centre of all ethical decision-making. From this perspective, educational leaders are called to provide a safe, respectful learning environment and promote quality teaching. They are informed by an established set of professional standards and must be responsible stewards of institutional resources.

Ethical Pluralism

Ethical pluralism is the view that there are multiple, equally valid ethical principles or moral values that can guide human conduct. According to ethical pluralism, different cultures, societies, or individuals may hold diverse ethical beliefs and values, and there is no single, universal set of moral principles that applies to all situations or contexts. Ethical pluralism acknowledges the existence of multiple valid ethical perspectives and seeks to understand and respect the diversity of ethical beliefs and values. It recognizes that what is considered morally right or wrong can

vary depending on the cultural, historical, and social context.

Ethics

Ethics refers to the moral principles or values that guide individuals and groups in determining what is right and wrong. Ethics provide a framework for making decisions and evaluating actions based on principles such as fairness, justice, honesty, and respect for others. Ethical considerations are central to many aspects of human life, including personal behaviour, interactions with others, professional conduct, and societal norms. Ethics help to define what is considered morally acceptable and unacceptable, and they play a crucial role in shaping individual and collective behaviour.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture, often accompanied by a tendency to view other cultures or ethnic groups from the perspective of one's own, leading to a bias in favour of one's own group and a tendency to judge others based on one's own cultural standards. Ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and conflicts between different cultural or ethnic groups.

Fascism

Fascism is a political ideology and movement that emphasizes authoritarianism, nationalism, and totalitarianism. Fascist regimes are characterized by

dictatorial power, suppression of opposition, strong regimentation of society and the economy, being anti-democratic, and often involves a policy of aggressive nationalism and racism.

Feminist

A feminist is someone who advocates for gender equality and the rights of women. Feminism is a movement and ideology that seeks to address and dismantle the systemic inequalities, discrimination, and injustices faced by women and other marginalized genders.

Free inquiry

Free inquiry is the principle that individuals should have the freedom to investigate, question, and explore ideas, information, and theories without undue restriction or interference. It is a foundational concept in academia and intellectual discourse, emphasizing the importance of open and critical thinking in the pursuit of knowledge.

Gender essentialism

Gender essentialism is the belief that there are inherent, fixed characteristics, attributes, and roles that are intrinsic to one's gender. It posits that men and women have distinct and natural traits that determine their behaviour, abilities, and social roles.

Ideology

Ideology refers to a set of beliefs, values, and ideas

that shape an individual's or group's understanding of the world, their place in it, and their goals and aspirations. Ideologies often encompass political, social, economic, and cultural beliefs and can influence how people interpret events, make decisions, and interact with others. Ideologies can be both explicit and implicit, shaping both individual beliefs and broader societal norms and structures. They can be based on a variety of sources, including religion, philosophy, history, and cultural traditions, and can vary widely across different cultures, societies, and historical periods.

Imperialism

Imperialism is a policy or practice by which a country extends its power, influence, or control over other territories, often through colonization or military force. Imperialism involves the domination of one state or society over another, typically for economic, political, or strategic reasons. Historically, imperialism has been associated with European powers expanding their empires through colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Imperialist powers sought to exploit the resources and labour of colonized territories, establish political control, and impose their culture and values on Indigenous populations.

Inclusive Excellence

A concept used in education and organizational settings to describe a commitment to creating environments that are diverse, equitable, and inclusive while also striving for excellence in all aspects of their

operations. The idea is that excellence and diversity are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing. By embracing diversity and inclusivity, organizations can leverage a wider range of perspectives, experiences, and talents, leading to better outcomes and a more vibrant and innovative community. In the context of education, inclusive excellence emphasizes the importance of creating learning environments that are welcoming and supportive of students from all backgrounds while also promoting high academic standards and achievement for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or other characteristics.

Indigenization

Indigenization refers to the process of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, values, and practices into educational, cultural, social, and political institutions that have historically marginalized or excluded Indigenous peoples. Indigenization involves incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching into curriculum and pedagogy, as well as creating learning environments that are culturally relevant and respectful of Indigenous cultures and languages. It is also seen as a way to revitalize and preserve Indigenous cultures, languages, and knowledge systems.

Individualism

Individualism is a social and political philosophy that emphasizes the moral worth and autonomy of the individual. It advocates for the individual's rights, independence, and self-reliance, often highlighting

the importance of personal freedom and self-determination. Individualism values the unique qualities and personal agency of each person, promoting the idea that individuals should be free to pursue their own goals and interests without undue interference from societal institutions, such as the government or community.

Interdependence

Interdependence is the mutual reliance between two or more groups, individuals, or systems. It emphasizes that entities are interconnected and depend on each other for resources, support, and functioning, highlighting the importance of cooperation and collaboration.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept used to describe how different forms of discrimination, oppression, and privilege intersect and interact with each other, creating unique experiences of discrimination and privilege for individuals who hold multiple marginalized identities. Originally developed within feminist theory, intersectionality recognizes that individuals may experience discrimination or privilege not just based on a single factor, such as gender, race, or class, but rather as a result of the complex interplay of these and other factors. For example, a black woman may experience discrimination differently than a white woman or a black man because her experiences are shaped by both racism and sexism, and these forms of discrimination intersect in her life.

Justice

Justice refers to the principle of fairness and moral rightness. It involves the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, ensuring that individuals receive what they are due, whether in terms of rights, opportunities, or treatment. Justice seeks to uphold the law and protect individuals from injustices and discrimination.

Liberalism

Liberalism is a political and philosophical ideology centered on the principles of individual freedom, equality, and democracy. It advocates for a political system that protects individual rights, promotes civil liberties, and ensures a fair and just society through the rule of law and democratic governance.

Marxism

Marxism is a social, political, and economic theory based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It is a critical framework that analyzes the capitalist system and advocates for its transformation into a more equitable and just society. Key concepts of Marxism include historical materialism, class struggle, capitalism, socialism, and communism.

Moral compass

A moral compass refers to an individual's innate sense of right and wrong, which guides their decisions and actions. It is the internalized set of values, principles, and beliefs that helps a person determine what is

morally right or wrong in a given situation. A moral compass is shaped by a variety of factors, including upbringing, culture, religion, and personal experiences. It helps individuals navigate ethical dilemmas and make decisions that align with their values and principles.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a political and economic ideology that emerged in the 20th century and is characterized by a belief in free-market capitalism, limited government intervention in the economy, and the promotion of individual freedom and choice. Neoliberalism advocates for reducing government regulation and control of the economy, privatizing public services and industries, and promoting free trade and globalization. Critics of neoliberalism argue that it leads to increased inequality, undermines social welfare programs, and prioritizes profit over human well-being and environmental sustainability. They argue that neoliberal policies can exacerbate poverty, weaken labor rights, and lead to financial instability.

Non-consequentialist

Non-consequentialism, also known as deontological ethics, is a moral theory that asserts that the rightness or wrongness of actions does not depend solely on their consequences. Instead, non-consequentialists argue that certain actions are morally required, forbidden, or permissible based on rules, duties, or intrinsic moral principles, regardless of the outcomes they produce.

Non-dominated discourse

Non-dominated discourse is a framework allowing for all voices to emerge and is based on the belief that the interests of each individual must be fairly considered; that each individual should have a fair influence over decisions emerging from discourse; that those affected by a decision should be a part of the decision-making process; and, that accountability must be directed toward those who are directly affected by a decision.

Ontology

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics in philosophy that studies the nature of being, existence, and reality. It deals with questions related to what entities exist, how they can be grouped, and how they relate within a hierarchy. For example, an individualist ontological perspective emphasizes the primacy and independence of individual entities over collective or relational aspects. In this view, the basic units of reality are individuals, and the properties and identities of these individuals are not fundamentally dependent on their relationships with others. Alternatively, an ecological ontological perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of entities within an ecosystem, where the identity and existence of each entity are deeply intertwined with the relationships and interactions they have within their environment (e.g., viewing trees as part of a complex web of life involving animals, fungi, and microorganisms in the soil).

Open education

Open education refers to a philosophy and approach to education that emphasizes the creation, sharing, and use of educational resources and practices that are free to access, use, adapt, and share. Open education is based on the principles of openness, inclusivity, and collaboration, and it seeks to make education more accessible, affordable, and flexible for learners around the world.

Processual

Processual is an adjective derived from the word "process" and refers to anything related to or characterized by processes. It emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of phenomena, highlighting how they unfold over time through a series of steps or stages.

Relationality

Relationality is the concept that identity, understanding, and existence are shaped by relationships and interactions with others. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within a social context, where meaning and self-concept are co-constructed through relationships.

St'at'imc Matriarchal Leadership Ethics

St'at'imc matriarchal leadership ethics acknowledge the inherent rights of Indigenous women in making decisions regarding their community's health, and preserving their culture, language, and connection to

the land. Leaders who follow this ethic empower youth by nurturing their strengths and enveloping them in the wisdom of their ancestors, Elders, and land. This ethic is based on the belief that children are inherently good and that it is our duty to recognize and nurture their strengths. St'at'imc matriarchal leadership ethics emphasize consensus-building, intergenerational knowledge transfer, cultural preservation and prioritize Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

Vicarious trauma

Vicarious trauma, also known as secondary traumatic stress, refers to the emotional and psychological impact experienced by individuals who are exposed to the trauma of others through their work or personal relationships. This type of trauma often affects professionals who provide care or support to trauma survivors, such as therapists, social workers, healthcare workers, first responders, and even legal professionals.

Well-being

Well-being is the state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy. It encompasses various dimensions, including physical health, emotional and mental health, social connections, and a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life. Well-being is a holistic measure of an individual's overall quality of life and satisfaction.

Versioning History

The table below reflects a record of changes made to the book *Ethical Educational Leadership* since its original publication on July 24, 2024.

Version	Date	Description of Change
1.1		

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Adoption Form