Seductive Leadership:
Enabling or Disabling of Equitable Education?

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Introduction

William Foster's article on "Administrative Science, the Postmodern and Community" raises many important challenges to current theorizing of educational leadership (Foster, 1999). In it he aims to "move beyond those models of administration that have dominated the discipline in this century and begin to consider other ways of conceiving the field" (p. 97). He conceptualizes administration as a contested field and as such demands that it is the ethical responsibility of educational administrators to deny the "universalization of oneness" and support "the empowerment of difference." This paper is an attempt to extend Foster's project and hold him to his claim. While he explicitly sets out to make the field of educational administration relevant and accountable to "all children and their worlds," he fails to challenge his own assumptions about the seductive power of current conceptions of leadership. He ultimately reifies the cultural myth of managerial expertise by assuming the universality of its appeal and by assuming that all individuals with an interest in leadership are seduced by the current dominant system of power relations:

> leadership and seduction are the same thing; leadership is the seduction of others into a system of power relationships whose benefits go to those in power. *Leadership*…often becomes a term designed to veil the masculine dominance in a society, to seduce the rest to follow... One might read the various texts on leadership and come to a conclu-

> sion that leadership is a science, an art, a personal quality, a gift of G-d, and so on. The idea of leadership is a seductive idea because it is an attempt to solve the problems of order, metaphysics, language and history. To solve those very postmodern problems, leadership must seduce. (p. 107-108)

While I do believe that many mainstream texts on leadership are "designed to veil the masculine [White, heterosexual, ruling class…] dominance in society," and "solve the problems of order, metaphysics, language and history," I do not believe that everybody is equally seduced by these texts. However persuasive a text may be, our reading of it can never be completely determined. Given that seduction involves some level of agency on the part of the seduced, it is not surprising that a disproportionate number of those who have been seduced by the promise of leadership as the ordering of chaos are those who have been advantaged by forms of systemic discrimination such as sexism, racism, and classism, which have been used globally to achieve political consensus in a context of diversity. Foster may have been seduced by the clarifying promises of leadership, only to find later that these promises could not be achieved. He may then have set out to warn the rest of us. His warning is a valid and useful one but his experience of seduction should not be universalized to all human beings. To do so would be to deny our diverse subject positions and the inequitable networks of power within which we are embedded.

Beginning from the premise that many communities of people are seduced neither by this naturalized "order," nor by the individuals who are constructed as embodying this order, the paper continues Foster's project of challenging mainstream conceptions of administration by posing a theoretical challenge to narrow notions of educational leadership. I being by tracing relevant literature on leadership and seduction, invite you into the worlds of two fictional leaders who have successfully seduced me, identify some dangers implicit in conceptualizing any single conception of leadership as seductive, blur boundaries between "empirical data" and "fiction," and conclude by identifying implications for educational administrators and qualitative researchers. Despite the seductive promise contained within the title of this paper, I resist the urge to give birth to a new conception of leadership that promises to solve the problems of order, metaphysics, language and history.

Educational Leadership: Examining the Literature

Much of the mainstream literature on educational leadership does, as Foster suggests, attempt to solve the problems of order, metaphysics,

and history with a promising new conception or model. Managerial and technical (Evan, 1973; Fiedler, 1967; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Simon, 1947) conceptions use rational decision making and mathematical modeling to reduce the complexity of educational systems in order to simplify administration. A humanistic (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992) conception challenges the uniform reality of "the problem" by reminding us that the organization itself is a human construction made up of thinking, acting beings. Transformational and charismatic (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999) conceptions build on the human or emotional nature of organizational behaviour and focus on the qualities and practices of principals who are persuasive enough to skilfully lead a school through a particular reform effort. An Emancipatory (Corson, 2000) conception reminds us that those who are most marginalized by the education system ought to inform the decisions and policies made by the administrator. And a distributed (Gronn, 2002) conception of leadership shifts the locus of responsibility from the individual leader to the organizational team. While each of the leadership theorists cited above challenge and support existing conceptions, none significantly disrupt the hierarchical nature of the leadership structure, and none challenge the notion that leadership ought to be defined in a coherent manner. As such, when adopted as models, they tend to reify educational inequity.

In response to these mainstream conceptions of leadership, some critical educational theorists have challenged the validity of the phenomenon itself. For instance, some have described leadership as abuse (Coates, 1997), others as an alienating social myth (Gemmill & Oakley, 1997), and others still as a barrier to democracy (Goeppinger, 2002). Many feminist and anti-colonial scholars have simply omitted the word *leadership* from their writing as a way to consciously reject the exportation of an amorphous yet problematic phenomenon across time and space (hooks, 1984, 2003a; Razack, 1998; Spivak, 1996). Rather than attempting to define what leadership is, these authors and others deconstruct some of the assumptions embedded in theories of leadership. In doing so, they resist the need to solve the problems of order, metaphysics, or history through a seductive text.

Many scholars who write about leadership without necessarily naming their work as "theorizing leadership" describe and analyze conceptions of leadership for socially just change through descriptions of action research, teacher leadership, hope, vibrant counter hegemonic leadership practices, community centered transformative work, and other examples of activism (Apple, 1998; Armstrong & McMahon, 2002; Bascia & Young, 2001; Blackmore, 1999; Blumer & Tatum, 1999; Casey, 1993;

Dehli, 1984; Dehli & Januario, 1994; Dillard, 1995; Ford-Smith, 1997; Glickman, 1998; Henry, 2000; hooks, 2003b; McLaren, 1999; Solomon, 2002; Starrat, 2001, 2002; Vaid, 1995; Zuckerman, 2001). While none of them identified "seduction" as a theme in their writing, all seemed seduced by or passionate about leadership for democratic transformation (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Rather than being seduced by the "system of power relations whose benefits go to those in positions of power" (Foster, 1999), they seemed drawn in or productively seduced by the prospect of challenging inequitable educational structures. This final group of scholars provides indirect evidence that counter-hegemonic leaders or conceptions of leadership might actually seduce or draw in support for increasingly equitable education.

Seductive Leadership

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* the word *seduce* comes from the Latin roots *se* meaning "away" and *duco* meaning "to lead." If we fix the referent so that all seduction is understood as leading us away or astray from some universal good in exchange for personal power, then Foster's warning makes sense. In this case, seduction is equivalent to manipulation or indoctrination and cannot be enabling of equitable[1] forms of education because the individual being seduced is denied subjectivity and personal agency with which to challenge the durability of the inequities. In this case, we are compelled to either uncritically take up powerful positions or become paralyzed by the structures that confine us. Both options reify educational inequity. If, however, we problematize the universality of the seductive force, ask questions about the initial position from which we are led away, and ask how the seductive "they" and the seduced "we" are positioned with respect to equitable education, the notion of seduction becomes increasingly complex and potentially useful.

Other than one paragraph in Foster's (1999) article on postmodernism and administrative science, one brief article (Schmitz & Fitch, 2001) warning superintendents not to be seduced by power, and another paragraph on the links between seduction and leadership which limited the transformative potential of this connection by taking on Baudrillard's separation between desire and seduction (Ryan, 1998), I was unable to find much scholarship connecting "leadership" with "seduction." My initial hypothesis was that durable connections between seduction and leadership, particularly those enabling equitable education existed only in my mind. To test this hypothesis, I chose to conduct a small scale "empirical" study. I posed a deliberately open question to a number of students enrolled in

a graduate educational administration program asking how they defined seduction, leadership and the connections between these two concepts. Almost all defined seduction as manipulation or indoctrination and believed that combining the concepts of seduction and leadership could only be detrimental to equitable education. In spite of my findings, I continued to experience a visceral feeling that Foster's connection between seduction and leadership could be a productive tension.

Leaving educational leadership out of my search, I found and read two articles on seductive research methodology (Avis, 1993; Bjerrum Nielsen, 1995) and a feminist, cultural analysis of seduction in literature (Miller, 1990). One author (Avis, 1993) used seduction as a frame without referring to it in the text, while the other two defined seduction in a way that moved beyond manipulation and indoctrination. From a feminist, cultural studies perspective, Miller described seductions as:

> dangerous as well as delightful, resistible as well as irresistible…women may be ruined by them or made happy…in spite of all its slippery meanings and momentum, seduction must always return us to the fact of consent, to the eliciting of consent and the offering of consent…by seductions I mean all those ways in which women learn who they are in cultures which simultaneously include and exclude them, take their presence for granted while denying it, and entice them finally into narratives which may reduce them by exalting them. (Miller, 1990, p. 2)

Miller describes the phenomenon of seduction in a way that is plural, sexualized, gendered, engaged, and embodied. Rather than describing seduction as a neutral or universal term, she accounts for inequitable power dynamics, pushes us beyond the rational realm into the emotive and intuitive, and forces us to consider our vulnerability. She ultimately challenges the deterministic notion of seduction described by Foster. She makes reference to manipulation but does so in a way that involves two agents and a patriarchal power dynamic. In an era of rampant individualism and rationality, the notion of seductive leadership infuses interconnected emotionality into the work of educators. As such it helps us imagine teaching and leading as phenomena that must be constantly nurtured, fed and worked through in relation to others.

In order to merge the rational with the emotional and relational, education must also permit social transformation:

> As opposed to assault, seduction conveys a dimension of voluntarily being swept off one's feet. As opposed to conversation, seduction implies that one loses one's senses for a moment…the audience's only chance of taking on the role of subjects, in a textual seduction is to lose their senses first. (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1995)

As people interested in challenging traditional, rational notions of leadership, we need to lose control for a moment. We do not need to lose complete control and thus exchange our agency for passive manipulation but we certainly need to remove the academic prohibition on emotions and intuition. This loss of control pushes us beyond what *is* to think about what *might be*. Without becoming vulnerable to a new way of thinking, it is difficult for us to grow. Democratic transformation and societal learning demand momentary losses of control. If educational administrators allow their assumptions to be challenged and become increasingly sensitive to these changes from the perspective of those who work against the grain (Simon, 1992) of centralized reform, democratic transformation seems more likely.

I am not suggesting that a loss of control, a blurring of the rational and emotional, or a need to be swept off ones feet necessarily promote increasingly equitable leadership; however, I am suggesting that the forces which are able to motivate leadership initiative in people are varied enough to challenge Foster's more universal conception of seductive leadership as manipulation. Rather than conceptualizing people as dupes incapable of resistance to the powerful lure of leadership, we ought to consider more systemic reasons for the durability of dominant, mainstream conceptions of leadership. Perhaps it is the need of educational leadership theorists to generate a coherent model explaining the phenomenon (as is evident in studies of managerial, technical, humanistic, charismatic, transformational, emancipatory, or distributive leadership) that feeds the problem. Coherent conceptions of leadership evident in any one model cannot be uniformly seductive or meaningful to all. By assuming coherence or consensus in a socially, politically, and economically diverse society, these conceptions of leadership necessarily privilege some and marginalize others. It is difficult to imagine many people being blindly seduced into leadership positions structured to marginalize them. Rather those who are seduced by the parsimonious promises of these theories tend to be those who already enjoy a great deal of social privilege, and whose lives are reflected in each of the models. Foster's limited vision of patriarchal leadership as something that necessarily seduces fails to take into account the communities of people who are partially excluded from its seductive appeal. If we are serious about making educational leadership a more equitable, accessible, democratic, or socially just option, we need to begin to challenge the coherence of these theories. Those who are multiply marginalized within the education system are likely in a better position to begin this project of challenging simplistic, formal, hierarchical leadership, as they are less likely to be seduced by models that alienate them. The experi-

ences of these people can serve to rupture the mythology that dominant texts on leadership are universally seductive.

Until this point I have focused almost exclusively on the ways in which narrow notions of seductive leadership can be detrimental to equitable education. It seems to me, however, that seduction may also provide a more liberating function. Faceless, decontextualized individuals are not blindly sucked into leadership positions or into believing in certain conceptions of leadership. Rather, socially located people with more or less access to inequitable governance structures make decisions to take on particular responsibilities. Individuals can only be seduced into leadership if there is something appealing or desirable about the position. If what is most appealing or desirable is neither the power nor the promise that we may become magically endowed with the ability to single-handedly solve all that ails the world, but rather the possibility that we may act collectively with those who are seduced by equally valid but currently marginalized notions of leadership, we will be in a better position to work against educastional inequities.

The connection between educational leadership and socially just action is unlikely to be explicitly addressed through a discipline that values rationality over emotionality and control over radical change. The popular conception of seduction as manipulation further restricts the likelihood that leadership theorists will recognize seductive leadership for equitable education as a legitimate or positive force. Seduction as pure manipulation strips away the agency and passion from the concept and characterizes those who are intrigued by new ideas as victims. Given the inherent limitations of rational theories of leadership within the field of educational administration, I decided to expand my literature review to include works of fiction. This approach enabled me to stand back from mandated rationality for a moment and challenge rather than feed into traditional forms of governance which privilege those who are already advantaged by hierarchical power structures. It also enabled me to flesh out the abstract concept of seductive leadership.

Two Seductive Leaders: Literature Review Part II

I have been seduced by many leaders in my life and I have always been grateful to them. These leaders have included teachers, rabbis, friends, camp counselors, authors, poets, lovers, family, and community members. Rather than quieting my critical spirit, those leaders who have been able to seduce me have encouraged me to challenge my assumptions and ask questions about leadership. What happens when we resist the urge to follow? What happens when those of us who may be

placed on the margins refuse to take our seats? What happens when we understand our perspectives as powerful and refuse to be intimidated by those with many privileges? What happens when we ourselves have many privileges including the opportunity to ask questions? What can a person who is interested in challenging the center, the status quo, the dominant power structures do if s/he would like to move beyond despair to influence the world in which s/he lives?

Perhaps because the "problems" I have set out to "solve" as a teacher have had to do primarily with issues of equity and social justice, the leaders who have been most convincing, appealing or seductive to me have been those who have revealed rather than "veiled the masculine dominance in society" (Foster, 1999). They have challenged me to open my eyes to inequity as a systemic problem underlying our governance structures. They have made visible the marginalizing decisions of others who have constructed inequity as background noise or disorder in their quest to solve problems of order, metaphysics, language and history. Beyond my own preferences, I imagine this unveiling of marginalizing forces would resonate with at least some individuals and communities of people who come crashing up against dominant structures daily. In the next two pages I bring to life two leaders who have seduced me through their counter-hegemonic activisim. My description is personal, idealistic, and not meant to be universalized. It is simply one vibrant example of a challenge to Foster's assertion that seductive leadership necessarily reinforces dominant power dynamics. I caution the reader not to see in my specific description a desire to generalize some abstract form of leadership. It is in this journey from the intimate to the abstract where seduction sheds its appeal and becomes merely formulaic mass manipulation. Perhaps if anything is to be generalized it is the exercise of looking within one's communities for conceptions of leadership that challenge dominant discourses and finding the time and space to articulate these multiple ideals.

The two leaders who have seduced me recently are both fictitious characters. Lilian Nattel's *Misha* (Nattel, 1999) and Kim Chernin's reinvented *Eve* (Chernin, 1987) help me imagine leadership as a hopeful, resistant, transformative phenomenon. Lillian Nattel's novel *The River Midnight* takes place in *Blaszka*, a fictional village set in 1894 Poland. We as the readers are invited to enter *Blaszka* by a teacher who is retelling the story of Misha, the midwife/healer, to a group of eager children. We know less than the children and must take our cues from them.

> In a small house off the village square, an old woman is teaching the little girls their letters. Tell us about Misha, they beg. We want to hear the story about Misha and Manya again. Please, please. The old

> woman puts down her pencil. 'Well, I knew Misha's mother very well. She was so happy when she had a daughter, but she had one fear. Do you know what that was?' The children shake their heads. 'That her daughter would turn out like Manya. You've heard of Mayna, haven't you?' Yes, yes, the little girls say, Mayna the witch comes in the night to steal away wicked children. 'But you're not wicked children, are you?' The girls shake their heads, no, no, no. 'Now listen carefully, children. Before Misha, there was Blema, her mother. Before Blema was Miriam, Misha's grandmother. And before Miriam was?' Who? The children ask. 'Manya!' The old woman leans forward, wriggling her clawed fingers at the children until they squeal. 'Oh, Manya was bigger than any man, and no one could tame her until they put her to death for casting spells. Blema was afraid that her baby should turn out like Manya, G-d forbid. So Blema named her baby Miriam after her own mother, who was a good woman. Modest and quiet. Like you girls, yes? But you can't cheat fate, children. 'Blema carried her baby in a shawl on her back when she went to the peasants' cottages. The peasants liked to play with the little one. They called her Marisha, you know that's Polish for Miriam. But the baby couldn't say Marisha or even Miriam. What came out was Misha. The peasants said it must be her true name, and that, since *misha* means bear in Polish, the girl would grow up to be as dangerous as a mother bear. And because Misha is a man's name among the Russians, she would also be as fierce as a Cossak. This is what came to be. I'm sure you heard your mothers say so. 'When a woman is in childbirth, even the Angel of Death is afraid of Misha.' (1999, 15-16)

Misha is a seductive leader for me. She does not seduce by convincing me that a contested topic is an uncontested one (Foster, 1999). Rather she draws me in through her thinking and being by taking up a controversial position. She embodies all that little girls are warned not to become. She is pregnant and unmarried, wears her hair down without covering it, and laughs out loud in the face of danger. She is strong, kind and knowledgeable. She takes care of the men and women in her community and is not easily intimidated. She is secretly respected by all, even those who warn their children not to become her. She allows her mother and those inside and outside of her community to inform her name but ultimately she names herself. In a country and time where Jewish men had few rights and Jewish woman had fewer, she retained her power. Even the Angel of Death is afraid of her. She allows future generations of Jewish women and possibly others in similar positions to mentally free ourselves from the structures that would hold us still.

Eve, as she is constructed through the Bible and rabbinic commentary seems to lie in contrast to Misha. She is condemned rather than revered for her lack of obedience. If, however, we listen to Kim Chernin tell the story of Eve, the similarities between her and Misha become visible:

> In my reading of her tale Eve becomes a heroine of disobedience, our culture's first compulsive eater. Eve broke a food taboo. By eating a food she was not supposed to eat she became responsible for the fall of man. But Eve, by eating the apple, also unstitched the authority of the ruler who had established the taboo. When Eve fell, the terrifying power of the G-d worshiped through obedience to his diet fell with her. In this sense: Eve is a rebel, the first woman to challenge the subjugation of woman in the patriarchal garden…Eve our rebel has been forbidden two things in the Garden of Eden. One of them is knowledge. The other is food. She knows the risks involved but goes ahead anyway and consumes knowledge. Therefore we ask: what kind of knowledge is this, associated with food, for which this first woman was compulsively hungering? Could it be knowledge of her capacity to become something far different than the Father G-d, creating her in his image, intended her to be? … In our contemporary reliving of that tale, the woman who will emerge from us is as yet unknown. But she is there, waiting for us to call her up out of the good, dark earth of our possibilities. This is a visionary moment, as all creation must be. There we are, kneeling down in the dirt, shaping a female with as many breasts and arms as will be required for her to step out into a world not yet ready to receive her. Yes, she is there, waiting for us to breathe life into her." (Chernin, 1987, p. xvi-xxi)

My interest in introducing Chernin's reinvented Eve and Nattel's mythical Misha to an audience of leadership theorists is to challenge the notion that there is societal consensus about the characteristics, skills, and organizational structures that make or support effective leaders. These two fictionalized women are seductive leaders to me precisely because they repture dominant assumptions about strong leadership. They are embedded in their respective communities (not endowed with formalized decision-making authority). They rupture the dominant ideology from time to time within those structures (rather than aiming to mend existing societal ruptures). And they overtly challenge (rather than reinforce) patriarchy through their actions. It is these three qualities that make them seductive to me, and these three qualities that simultaneously challenge Foster's equating of seduction, leadership, and mainstream ideology. However, while universalizing my ideal might change the body and characteristics of the leader, the exercise would leave traditional patriarchal concepts of charismatic leadership (House, 1977; Yukl, 1994) intact. Eve and Misha speak to me, not because they represent "best practices" for all, but rather because they are part of the mythology that informed my youth as a Jewish girl. They allow me to maintain ties with my community and family while gently challenging the structures that confine me. I can be seduced by Chernin's Eve without feeding into hierarchical, positional leadership because that very seduction exposes

rather than mystifies dominant patriarchal power structures. Still, if I impose these two personally seductive leaders onto others and develop a new conception of leadership on the basis of what I have learned from these fictitious leaders, I will do nothing to challenge inequitable and undemocratic governance structures. The charismatic leader will have acquired breasts and the ability to challenge some inequities but the problem of coherent, parsimonious leadership will remain unaltered. As I understand it this exchanging of leadership conceptions is one of the primary pitfalls of many educational leadership theorists. The potential for democratic transformation comes in the collection of stories about personally seductive leaders for large numbers of people who occupy diverse social, organizational, economic, and political locations.

Blurring Empiricism through Two Examples with Educational Currency

Some may argue that I am losing myself in fiction and cannot legitimately use mythical characters to critique traditional leadership structures. In doing so, however, they would be assuming a rigid distinction between fiction and non-fiction (Portelli, personal communication, 2004). One of the strongest distinctions between fiction and "empirical reality" is that the fiction constructed by those in positions of decision making authority is most likely to become mandated "empirical reality," while the fiction constructed by those who challenge the universal reality or inevitability of current social structures is most likely to be described as "dreamy idealism." Through this mechanism, distinctions between "empirical reality" and "fiction" serve to reinforce dominant constructions of reality.

To illustrate my point, I will briefly contrast two educational documents; a policy paper warning of the dangers of low standards (NCEE, 1983), and a theoretical text warning of the dangers of neoliberalism (Freire, 1998). While some may argue that the policy backgrounder *A Nation at Risk* is a straightforward description of empirical reality, and Freire's call for a belief in utopia is an example of dreamy idealism, many critical theorists would disagree. Given the inequitable power structures in society, those in positions to write their fictions into history are also in positions to make formal educational policy. If they believe an entire nation will be put at economic risk because teachers and children are failing to meet particular Eurocentric standards, they may write this version of reality into policy and generate programs to solve it. It then becomes a legitimate empirical practice to study the resulting policy document and program implementation. Policy critics are in a position

to identify the weaknesses of the policy through the study of negative effects (eg., that many students and teachers are placed at risk by these solutions), but they may not rearticulate "the problem" without being labeled pessimistic, unrealistic, or impractical. By forcing even the policy critics to respond to the warning constructed by official decision makers, we are reinforcing the truth claim imbedded in dominant policies.

It is instructive at this point to contrast *A Nation at Risk* with an anti-hegemonic warning generated by an educational theorist:

> There are times when I fear that someone reading this, even if not yet totally converted to neoliberal pragmatism but perhaps somewhat contaminated by it, may think that there is no more place among us for the dreamer and the believer in utopia. Yet what I have been saying up to now is not the stuff of inconsequential dreamers. It has to do with the very nature of men and women as makers and dreamers of history and not simply as casualties of an a priori vision of the world. (Freire, 1998, 41)

Freire's work has been described by some as standing a great distance from empirical reality; however, in a world where the current state of affairs is vastly inequitable, the only real chance of socially just change lies in constructing a world that could be, but is not yet. Ideals by their very nature are difficult to achieve but this challenge on its own does not legitimate a fatalistic attitude. Work classified as "fiction" is often necessary to challenge the status quo. It allows authors and readers the freedom to attribute more agency to their protagonists than may be possible through current societal and institutional structures.

The study of leadership should not be limited to the content of refereed journals. In very concrete ways, we can all turn to our favourite piece of writing for inspiration, whether or not it has met an academic standard set by those in positions of decision making authority. Certain forms of regulation may be momentarily bypassed as we dare to dream. Freire's work is not fiction. Rather, it is a snapshot of reality we have yet to achieve. *A Nation at Risk* is not reality. Rather it is a record of the dominant ideology at a moment in time. This comparison of two texts with currency in the educational discourse of the early 21st century serves to highlight the point that distinctions between fiction and reality are tenuous at best. Secondarily it serves to support my use of Nattel's Misha and Chernin's Eve as legitimate sources of data.

Conclusions?

I initially set out to explore the theoretical value of Foster's (1999) connection between seduction and leadership by problematizing the

universality of "good" or "effective" leadership, asking questions about the initial position from which we are led away, and describing how the seductive "they" and the seduced "we" are positioned with respect to equitable education. By superimposing two fictional characters who have seduced me through their feminist agency onto the separate bodies of academic literature dealing with seductive texts and democratic leadership, I feel that I have carved out a personally contextualized notion of seductive leadership that challenges Foster's assertion that all leadership and seduction feed into dominant patriarchal governance structures. In terms of the initial position from which "we" are led away, I feel that I am led away from despondency and paralysis in a structural system that does not always accommodate me by leaders who seduce me into thinking that it is possible for people on the margins of dominant society to refuse to take their/our seats. This sort of hope may seem utopian but without an ideal world to strive for, our daily actions reinforce the inequitable social structures that exist today. Finally, if we consider how the seductive "they" and the seduced "we" are positioned with respect to equitable education, it seems the "they" (for example Misha, Neo-Eve, and other seductive leaders who challenge societal injustice) exist in the hearts and minds of some educators working towards equitable change. The "we" (myself and other educators who allow ourselves to be swept off our feet by personally seductive leaders who challenge social inequities) have a more pragmatic role. We are in a position to challenge the material inequities we encounter on a daily basis through our "everyday acts" (Smith, 1987), plan lessons in accordance with equitable principles, facilitate students' exploration of these ideas, collaborate with others working towards similar goals, and inform policy at the micro, meso, or even macro level. In the spaces between policy generation and mediation, these fictional characters have the power to direct, inspire, and sustain our hopes and efforts.

I have not done exactly what I have set out to do but the journey has been instructive. If nothing else, I have privileged notions of leadership that are not explicitly documented in the formal, peer-refereed, academic literature. While I know that seduction can be a manipulative force in traditional settings, it may also loosen the grip, if only mentally and momentarily, of sexist, classist, racist and otherwise oppressive environments. As such it has a function that may not only disable but also enable equitable education. Misha and Eve laugh in the face of patriarchal forms of leadership that deny many actors our agency. Combined with leaders who challenge racist, classist, and neo-colonial forms of leadership, they give larger numbers of people the hope to dream and the courage to search for spaces to initiate and sustain democratic

transformation. As such they add a measure of optimism and agency to Foster's deterministic assertion that all of us are seduced by patriarchal systems of leadership.

Since most of the research I found on leadership does not mention seduction, I have relied on my own visceral reaction to Foster's connection between these two concepts to guide my paper. I have listened to the voices of colleagues who have been kind enough to share their views with me, have looked beyond traditional sources of empirical knowledge, and have tried ultimately to challenge the need for theoretical coherence with respect to educational leadership. In the section that follows, I will identify practical and theoretical implications of this conceptual work.

Implications for Educational Administrators and Qualitative Researchers

Scholars who research leadership and governance issues in educational administration, particularly those who do so from a critical perspective (Apple, 1998; Bates, 1982; Foster, 1986, 1999; Giroux, 1983; Ryan, 1998), need to consider what they have assumed to be the foundation of the field. Coherent theories of leadership presented in peer refereed journals cannot be the only foundation. Additionally, theorizing must not be restricted to the construction of new and improved conceptions or models of leadership that emulate what they perceive to be "best practices." Generalizing these models would simply reinforce narrow notions of educational leadership constructed by a small minority of people in positions of decision making authority. Those scholars who have occupied the centre of the field need to recognize that they cannot transform the field simply by interviewing individuals from multiple communities and reporting the analysis of their results. Rather, individuals who have been traditionally marginalized by the education system need to have the opportunity to include their ideals and dreams in formal decision making processes.

For leadership to support democratic transformation, engage multiple actors, and be seductive, attractive or appealing to all members of a diverse, democratic society, it must be accessible, embodied, context-sensitive, and multiply defined. Coherent definitions conceived by a few and imposed on the rest cannot by definition be representative. For these few, current notions of leadership may be a reflection of daily life. But for the majority of us who crash up against inequitable power structures from time to time, current leadership conceptions are less likely to be uniformly empowering, enabling, appealing or seductive. Education for democratic transformation demands the simultaneous emergence of

multiple notions of educational leadership and responsibility twinned with increased access to resources and decision making.

In addition to any implications specific to those who are conceptualizing and theorizing leadership, scholars interested in qualitative research methodologies more broadly might choose to draw from this paper an invitation to move beyond their traditional use of data sources. Those power structures that contribute to inequity are the same ones that define how "rigorous" research ought to be done in a way that ultimately limits what counts as evidence. One way to expand the scope and broaden traditional qualitative research methodology is to study phenomena through literature (published, unpublished, academic, poetic, spoken, "fiction," "non-fiction"), visual art, religious services, protests and other community events, the stories parents tell their children or the nuanced observations community members make when they work through difficult situations. Even in formal organizations, it is possible to expand our notion of leadership by attending to the actions of those who do not hold positions at the top of the institutional hierarchy and who do not benefit from the current governance structures. We will all then come to our theorizing with a wealth of experience that may be formally counted as evidence.

All human beings who live and breathe know something about leadership. In addition to a serious critique of the inequitable structures that comprise our current education system, we all need to remain open to critique from people whose stories and conceptions of leadership differ from our own. In order to do this, we need to recognize the limitations of our own worldviews. As our collective, multifaceted conceptualizations of leadership begin to reflect the understandings of all individuals who live in our society, we will begin to move closer to achieving our stated ideal of representative, educational democracy.

Note

[1] By "equitable" education, I mean education that challenges systemic sexism, racism, classism and other oppressive forces in society.

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