COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Pratfalls, pitfalls, and passion: The melding of leadership and social justice

Donnette J. Noble, Ph.D.

Roosevelt University, Assistant Professor and Chair, Organizational Leadership Program,
   djnoble@roosevelt.edu

Abstract. Frequent conflicts over money, land, power, and other resources make it difficult for some societies to find or sustain any sense of equilibrium. Additionally, racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, educational, and political injustices, among others, require that leaders increase their understanding and commitment to social justice. Such efforts are critical in light of the vastly disparate opinions and increasingly polarized positions at the heart of contentious relationships that exist among people. This paper explores the origins of social justice, discusses the definition and perceptions of social justice, introduces the relationship between social justice and leadership, addresses current social and environmental conditions, presents challenges for leaders in terms of addressing social justice, and offers implications for socially just leadership.

Keywords: social justice, inequality, equilibrium

Introduction

Leaders are the architects of social influence and sometimes their motivation is altruistic while at other times it is quite the opposite. Leaders have used their powers to ensure or squelch advancement, enable or impede governments, organize or disrupt labor, facilitate or oppose movements, protect or harm vulnerable populations, eradicate or exacerbate human suffering, cure or foment social ills, and expand or limit knowledge, among other things. Regardless of individual motivation, leading is messy and fraught with trials and tribulations. There is also a certain mystique and some confusion surrounding the concept of leadership because there is no standard definition of leadership (Chemers 2000; Fritz, Lunde, Brown, & Banset, 2004; Jago, 1982; Kellerman & Webster, 2001; Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001; Pfeffer, 1977; Rockman & Waterman, 2008; Sashkin, 2004; Yukl, 2013 as cited in Noble (2015) and no standard for practice. Indeed, the approaches to leadership are as dramatically different as one leader is to the next.

Assuming, however, the aim of one's leadership is generally altruistic and focused on the promulgation of some greater good, the wellbeing of people who will be affected by the outcomes of leadership decisions must be considered. This is where social justice -- the full and equitable participation of all people in a society, the fair and humane distribution of resources, as well as making a priority of people's physical and psychological safety (Morgan & Vera, 2006) -- comes in. Rawls (1999) contends that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions" (p. 3) but societies and their institutions are seldom well ordered and are not necessarily adept at meeting the needs or wants of their citizens. Additionally, what *is* or *is not* right, moral, ethical, fair, or just is frequently in dispute (Rawls, 1999).

Although the theory of social justice remains largely ill defined (Bankston, 2010; Boyle, 2011; Buettner-Schmidt & Lobo, 2011; Noonan, 2011; Torres-Harding, Steele, Schulz, Taha, & Pico, 2014; Wolterstorff, 2013), Jost and Kay (2010) have synthesized various

philosophical treatments and created a general definition of social justice that can help leaders and others better understand the concept. Their definition describes a state of affairs in which the benefits as well as the burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation of principles. Their definition also emphasizes the establishment of procedures, norms, and rules for guiding the various forms of decision-making that leaders must embrace in order to support more just societies.

Just societies are those wherein the preservation of basic rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups are ensured and the premise that all people will be treated with dignity and respect is honored. The basic obligations attendant to social justice typically include a fair system of law and due process, equal access to opportunities, the protection of human rights, the fair and impartial distribution of resources, goods, and services, as well as the care and concern for vulnerable, marginalized, disenfranchised, and disadvantaged populations. The clashing ideals of secular humanism -- a rejection of theistic religious beliefs and biblical doctrines combined with a view that the world is understandable through the power of reason (Steffy, 2010) -- and religious attachment -- an intrinsic religious orientation that is predicated on the existence of God or a higher power and adheres to a well-defined religious doctrine (Allport & Ross, 1967; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Whitley & Kite, 2010) -- however, can cloud those particular obligations. While the theory centering on the creation of socially just societies seems fairly straightforward, the reality and practice is often tenuous and has been for as long, perhaps, as human civilizations have existed.

Cronin and Genovese (2012) contend that "effective leaders learn to exploit contrary and divergent forces" and they must be savvy synthesizers of disparate information, integrative thinkers, and be able to live with ambiguous demands and shifting expectations (p. 2). These particular leadership skills and abilities are more important than ever as the twenty-first century gives way to globalism and communities become more heterogeneous. Issues related to social justice will likely command considerable attention in the years to come as people who share a common experience of oppression will increasingly demand equality and greater access to opportunity and resources (Chin & Trimble, 2015).

Social Justice

The precepts and merits of social justice (sometimes regarded as distributive justice) have been deliberated by the world's foremost thinkers throughout history and the consensus appears to be that the term itself was first introduced in the 1840s by a conservative Italian Jesuit priest named Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio (Behr, 2003, 2011; Burke, 2010, Romani, 2014). Taparelli's musings about social justice were in response to the beginning of the Risorgimento (Burke, 2010). The Risorgimento was a movement of war and diplomacy that developed as a result of the need to facilitate a national consciousness and unify the politically dysfunctional Italian peninsula (Beales & Biagini, 2013; Burke, 2010).

While Taparelli may have been the first to elaborate on the concept of social justice -- a system of natural-law reasoning that could be used to address a range of social and political issues (Behr, 2003, 2011) -- it was a liberal Catholic priest, Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, who popularized the notion in his 1848 book, *Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale (The Constitution Under Social Justice)*. According to Rosmini (1882), political philosophy should be cognizant of the "end toward [which a] civil society must continually move" (p. 384). The "end" was defined as public prosperity that is dependent upon "justice and the concord of the citizens." He challenged governments to maintain and strengthen the primary forces on which the existence of a particular society rests while at the same time warning them to follow the theory of changes. He proclaimed that citizens should be allowed to "attain temporal prosperity in accordance with the principles of morality" and that this in turn would foster a "good [and] proper human nature" and people would be "quiet and harmonious" (p. 385) in their satisfaction.

Rosmini advocated for policies that would support civil societies in their natural and normal constitutions that would be based upon the equilibriums of 1) population and wealth, 2) wealth and civil power, 3) civil power and material force, 4) civil and military powers and knowledge, and 5) knowledge and virtue. Any political means by which a civil society moves closer to these five equilibriums is good, according to Rosmini (1882, p. 385), and all those that do the opposite are bad.

While some people may feel social justice and the common good are inextricably connected (Nitsch, 2005) juxtaposed opinions, contradictory findings, and confounding ideologies (Massaro, 2012) have blurred the boundaries for others. A median of 60% of people in 44 advanced and emerging economies polled by the Pew Research Center feel that inequality (a significant factor contributing to social injustice) is a major problem yet majorities or pluralities in 38 of those nations contend that people are still better off in free market economies even though some people are rich and others are poor ("Emerging", 2014). In fact, people in the emerging economies are much more optimistic about the future and the related opportunities than those in advanced economies.

Regardless of such optimism, the world is beset with contentious existences and there are frequent conflicts over money, land, power, and other resources that in turn make it difficult for some societies to find or sustain any sense of equilibrium. Unfortunately, underrepresented, marginalized, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised populations are often disproportionately and negatively effected by disequilibrium. The collective reaction of people when they are discomforted by the imbalance surrounding them is reflected in their national character, laws, and practices and hanging in the balance of the apparent discontent in some societies are myriad issues related to social justice. Technological advances and increasingly complex social structures add to the challenges leaders face when building bridges and securing systems that are socially just. To many people, social justice, despite its myriad challenges, is not just a matter worthy of attention, it is a moral imperative (Hemphill, 2015).

Current Conditions

There is increasing concern about the sustainability of the world in its current and predicted states (Ehrlich & Tobias, 2014) either socially or environmentally and these concerns have special implications for leaders in the area of social justice. Economic and social developments have dramatically changed the lifestyles and social structures of many nations thus forcing the discourse to focus on the diversification of inequalities (Turhan, 2010) and a need for more attention to social justice. The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2014), the United Nations (2006), the World Health Organization (WHO 2010, 2012), the International Labour Organization (ILO 2013, 2014) and others (Bernstein, 2010; Bloom et al., 2011; Donlan & Kroll, 2014; Forsyth, 2013; Hagmann, 2001; Kochhar, 2014; Lekovic, 2012; Lloyd, 2001; Marmot & Bell, 2012; Moreno, 2014; Porta, Arcia, Macdonald, Radyakin, & Lokshin, 2011; Powledge, 2010; Rabiei, 2014; Stavrakantonaki, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; UNDESA, 2014; van der Hoeven, 2010; Walraven, 2011), have identified six critical areas of concern globally that are contributing to disequilibrium and an array of injustices that require attention. The areas of concern are 1) environmental issues, 2) social issues, 3) labor issues, 4) economic inequality, 5) geopolitical dynamics and, 6) leadership issues and challenges.

Environmental issues

More than 90% of the disasters that occur worldwide are the result of events connected to extreme weather conditions and patterns (Ebi, 2011). Even though the debate over climate change continues there is consensus among many scientists and scholars that weather patterns are changing and becoming more severe (Ebi, 2011; Ort & Ainsworth, 2012) and that the increasing weather extremes will underlie the more serious physical and economic effects of climate change (Repetto & Easton, 2010). In 2007, for example, extreme weather events

accounted for 95% of the disaster-related fatalities in the United States (U.S.) as well as 80% of the nation's $82 billion in economic losses that year (Ebi, 2011).

Erratic weather patterns and the effects of climate change also suggest that agriculture and food production will be negatively impacted (Luck, Spackman, Freeman, Trebicki, Griffiths, Finlay, & Chakraborty, 2011) and disproportionately affect those who already have difficulty accessing food. Among the concerns is that Africa and Asia will lose significant portions of their maize and rice crops (Powledge, 2010). The maize yield in the U.S. has also been impacted and in 2012 it was 25% lower than expected. Similarly, the soybean yield was 14% lower than expected. Both are the result of the most severe and extensive drought experienced in the past 25 years (Ort & Ainsworth, 2012).

Food insecurity has resulted in one out of every five people in the developing world being chronically undernourished with nearly one-quarter of the world's population facing an economic water shortage due to a lack of infrastructure to obtain water from streams or aquifers (Noble, 2015). Nearly 80% of the world's population is exposed to high levels of threat to water security (Vörösmarty, McIntyre, Gessner, Dudgeon, Prusevich, Green, Glidden, Bunn, Sullivan, Liermann, & Davies, 2010) and water use is growing at more than twice the rate of population growth resulting in water scarcity and water stress (UNDESA, 2014).

There are also the millions of premature deaths worldwide (approximately 3.7 million in 2012 alone) that are the result of outdoor air pollution. "Higher ozone concentrations are associated with a range of health problems and…based on scenarios of future emissions and weather patterns in Europe and North America, it seems likely that ozone concentrations will increase" (Ebi, 2011, p. 925). According to the WHO (2014), people living in low and middle-income nations disproportionately experience the burden of outdoor air pollution with the greatest concentration of premature deaths occurring in Western Pacific and Southeast Asian regions.

Social Issues

The economics of personal wellbeing -- healthcare, education, and systems of social support, for example -- run parallel to fiscal realities. As it relates to healthcare, there have been two historically opposing methods of distribution; those who can afford the costs associated with healthcare receive healthcare and those who can't afford health related expenses, simply go without (Kerbo, 2012). There are however, distinct differences in how healthcare is extended.

Men and women are affected by many of the same health conditions or concerns but women experience them differently. The prevalence of poverty and economic dependence among women, for example, in combination with their experiences related to violence, gender bias, discrimination, limited power, and their lack of influence in decision-making processes are social realities that have had an adverse impact on women's health (WHO, 2008, p. 12). Children face particular health challenges as well. These challenges are often related to the various stages of children's physical and mental development and this population is especially vulnerable to malnutrition and infectious diseases. There are also more than 650 million people worldwide who have a disability of one form or another. Two-thirds of these people live in developing nations and most of them have long been neglected and marginalized by their respective states and societies (WHO, 2008, p. 16).

The high levels of educational inequality throughout the world are resulting in lower levels of innovation, lower levels of production efficiency, and the continued transmission of poverty (Noble, 2015). Sixty-nine percent of children in low income countries are receiving no post primary education, 40% of out-of-school children are living in conflict ridden countries, millions of children are forced out of school every year because of natural disasters, and women account for two-thirds of world's illiterate adults (UN Global Education Initiative, n.d.). Less than half (48.3%) of the world's pre-primary age children were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2010 and, while student enrollment has increased worldwide

compared to the year 2000, it has been stagnant since 2008 (World Bank, n.d.). The obvious disparities in access to education based on gender, income, and location continue to be problematic.

While the benefits of diversity are clear (Bell, 2012), racism and xenophobia, and all sorts of intolerances increasingly foster division and create suspicion and hatred among communities (Barroso, 2014). Nonetheless, international migration is a reality; people in developed, underdeveloped, and emerging economies are becoming more and more integrated as goods, services, knowledge, and information is shared and as people move about more freely (Barroso, 2014). Migration, immigration, and colliding cultures are not without problems, however.

Labor issues

There were 197 million eligible job seekers without jobs worldwide (a quarter of whom lived in advanced economies) in 2012 in addition to 39 million unemployed workers who had simply given up and dropped out of the job market. The International Labour Organization (ILO) expected that the number of unemployed people worldwide would rise by another eight million in 2014 (2013). While some economies and labor markets are rebounding, namely in the U.S. with 11.2 million new jobs over 58 straight months of growth and the gross domestic product (GDP) hitting its highest mark in four years (Gillespie, 2015), there is concern over persistent jobless growth globally. Jobless growth is a phenomenon in which economies exiting recessions demonstrate economic growth while merely maintaining or, in some cases, decreasing the levels of employment (Summer, 2014).

Vulnerable populations are the least likely to be organized into trade unions, least likely to be employed, are often in poor health, and can easily fall prey to safety and environmental hazards. They are least likely to have access to effective forms of social security and other protections, and they remain largely invisible to policy and decision-makers in governments, urban and rural development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, science and research institutions, banks and credit institutions, as well as to many civil society organizations and groups (Hurst, Termine, & Karl, 2007).

Economic inequality

When it comes to social justice (or lack thereof) the most significant contributing factor is economic inequality. "Inequality is one of the key challenges of our time [and] is one of the most visible aspects of a broader and more complex issue" and is one "that entails inequality of opportunity and extends to gender, ethnicity, disability, and age, among others" (Mohammed, 2014, para. 1). According to the United Nations (2006), the disparities among the *haves* and the *have nots* have been increasing dramatically since the 1980s. As discussed in Noble (2015), as of 2014 there were 1,645 billionaires living in the world and controlling the economy with an aggregated net worth of $6.4 trillion (Donlan & Kroll, 2014). A tiny fraction of them (approximately 4% or 67 in total) owned assets at that time equal to the combined total assets of the 3.5 billion people who make up the lower economic half of the world's population (Moreno, 2014).

Even in the U. S. which is commonly viewed as one of the most socially advanced, economically powerful, and politically astute and adept nations in the world, equality has not yet been achieved (Kerbo, 2012). In fact, the wealth gap between upper-income and middle-income families is the widest on record (Fry & Kochhar, 2014). But, there is far more to the story of inequality in America. The economic downturn between 2005 and 2009 according to Kochhar, Fry, and Taylor (2011), resulted in inflation-adjusted median wealth falling by 66% among Hispanic households and 53% among Black households but just 16% among White households. These declines have left the typical Black, Hispanic, and White households with wealth (assets minus debt) respectively of $5,677, $6,325, and $113,149. These figures are demonstrative of a race-based economic inequality. So, while the median household income

between 2009 and 2013 was $53,000 and 65% of the population enjoyed home ownership, some 15% of the population was still living below the poverty level during the same time (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

While income (money, wages, and payments) is highly unequal in the U.S., wealth (economic value that is bought, sold, stocked for future disposition, or invested in order to bring an economic return) is even more so. Inequality in the U.S. is the highest among all major industrial nations (Kerbo, 2012) and the economic imbalance effects many other facets of the nation including civil power.

Geopolitical dynamics

On the heels of the Cold War, prevailing views were that the world had moved toward a more liberal and democratic consensus. "The break-up of the Soviet bloc, the integration of Russia and China into the global economic system and a fresh wave of democratic transitions, from Latin America to Eastern Europe, led many to believe that superpower rivalries were finished [and] that globalization, the free market and the 'interdependence' of countries would make wars less likely" (Eide, 2014, para. 1). Clearly, that has not been the case.

The Pew Research Center (PEW) has been tracking the perceptions of people in 44 countries in five distinct regions of the world over the last decade to determine what threats they deem are of most significance. The threats included religious and ethnic hatred, AIDS and other diseases, pollution and environmental issues, nuclear weapons, and inequality. Based on median percentages, PEW ascertained that religious and ethnic hatred is viewed as the greatest threat to the world's future by people in 11 of those 44 countries, most of which are in the Middle East (Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, and Tunisia) but also included two from Europe (France and the United Kingdom), one from Africa (Nigeria), and four Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia) ("Global Attitudes", 2014).

Only within the confines of continental Africa were AIDS and other diseases viewed as the greatest threat. While in the Asian nations (Thailand, Philippines, China, and Vietnam) and in some Latin American nations (Mexico, Columbia, Peru, and Nicaragua) -- all considered low-cost economies for manufacturing -- pollution and environmental issues were viewed as the most threatening. Understandably Japan (the only nation in existence to suffer a nuclear attack) considers nuclear weapons to be the greatest threat by a significant margin. That same concern was also shared by people in Russia and Ukraine in Europe, Turkey in the Middle East, Pakistan in Asia, and in five Latin American nations (Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, El Salvador, and Mexico) ("Global Attitudes", 2014).

The nation's hardest hit in recent years by economic turbulence and downturns viewed inequality as the greatest threat. Spain reported the highest concern (58%) followed by Greece (43%), and Germany (34%). Eight other nations (Argentina, France, Ghana, Italy, Jordan, Poland, South Korea, and the U.S.) also viewed inequality as the greatest threat ("Global Attitudes", 2014). Interestingly, while more than a quarter of the total U.S. population (27%) felt that inequality is the greatest threat, such fears typically follow political party lines; 25% of Democrats viewed inequality as posing the greatest threat whereas only 21% of Republicans did. Republicans (35%) thought religious and ethnic hatred is the greatest threat to the world while only 15% of Democrats agreed ("Global Attitudes", 2014).

The world has shifted, more or less, from one that feared superpowers, super money, and strong opposing states to one that worries about the weakened state of nations, the break up of countries, and the global reach of non-state terrorist networks (Eide, 2014). During the Industrial Revolution people turned to political nationalism in an effort to protect and shelter their interest and though this practice may have waned for a while, people are returning to and mobilizing old loyalties and traditional identities in an effort to insulate themselves against economic disruption and the social dislocation of globalization, which threatens to end traditional customs, values, and ways of life (Brown, 2015).

Leadership issues and challenges

The World Economic Forum conducts annual surveys with the intent to promote an understanding of global issues and illuminate trends that will require attention in the 12-18 months following the data collection period. The global trends are compiled using a Delphi Method wherein a team of experts (professionals and leaders who serve on Global Agenda Councils) undergo several rounds of structured, anonymous questioning. The 2014 survey (projecting trends for 2015) produced qualitative and quantitative findings and involved 1,767 participants from Asia, Europe, North America, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa and represented the following stakeholders; business (43%), academia (22%), civil society (19%), government (9%), and international organizations (7%).

Eighty-six percent of the respondents to the survey on the global agenda agree that there is a leadership crisis in the world today and it is likely the result of the international community failing to address "any major global issue in recent years" (Shahid, 2014, para. 1). Governments continue to grow despite being plagued by decades of factional alignment, dynasty building, and corruption but it's not just governments that have apparently betrayed people's confidences. Religious leaders, according to the survey findings, were the only people to rank lower than governments in terms of a crisis of leadership. Despite the frustration with a lack of leadership, respondents did identify several virtues that they would like leaders to embrace including a global interdisciplinary perspective, long-term and empirical planning, strong communication skills, a prioritization of social justice and wellbeing over financial growth, as well as empathy, courage, morality, and a collaborative nature (Shahid, 2014).

While there are a great many good things going on around the world at any given time, there are still a multitude of negative forces at play and the practice of leadership must shift based on the economic consequences of social decisions (Mintzberg, Simon, & Basu, 2002) and vice versa. While current shifts in the dynamics of power and influence may seem dramatic, the shifting paradigms of leadership are nothing new. Since before the Ottoman Empire and well after the end of the First and Second World Wars, old and great powers have waned as new ones have grown in influence (Woods, 2014). As people have become more sophisticated in their understanding of the world around them and as these new realms of influence take root it is imperative that leaders are encouraged to protect those who are socially vulnerable with policies, procedures, and protocols that support social justice. Unfortunately, that imperative is sometimes overlooked.

Discussion and conclusion

Figurative firewalls will not insulate people from the "intensifying global competition, energy constraints, climate change, and political instability" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 1) and other social, environmental, political conditions; therefore, leaders must prepare themselves for unfamiliar challenges in times of uncertainty or crisis. There is a liability however, that people in positions of authority will try to solve problems from their default positions with short-term fixes as opposed to thoughtfully considered options that will lead to long-term solutions. Without sufficient urgency, the bridges of social justice cannot be built, particularly if large segments of the population continue to be ignored or worse, dismissed. "The art of leadership in today's world involves orchestrating the inevitable conflict, chaos, and confusion of change so that the disturbance is productive rather than destructive" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 3).

During a time of unprecedented globalization, myriad social crises, and cultural uncertainties, it becomes ever more important that values founded on human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity are not taken for granted (Barroso, 2014). Headlines, such as, *When children suffer and die in Gaza. Who notices?* (Shawa, 2015) tend to make readers uncomfortable but they are nonetheless intrinsic to questioning subjective realities and challenging the collective sensitivities of thoughtful people. But if ideologies are to become

meaningful and useful, it becomes necessary to accept that ideologies are not superficial labels nor are they a bundle of topical positions. They are rather, central components of each "individual's general life orientations" (Smith, Oxley, Hibbing, Hibbing, & Alford, 2011, p. 378). Regardless of individual life orientations, societies develop social contacts that establish rules, norms, and behaviors for guiding human behavior. Often used within the context of political communities, social contract theory is believed to have developed in opposition to the notion of divine rights for kings and the aristocracy (Armstrong, 2009; Reiner, 2010). From Hobbes to Locke to Rousseau to Kant and Marx and beyond, there has been an ebb and flow to the philosophical thought attendant to social contracts but the moral components of human behavior (including those related to social justice) are deservedly getting more attention in contemporary arenas.

Attention to social justice recognizes that the patterns of thought and behavior that support any manifestations of oppression are not natural or inherent to the human experience. It has been suggested that when such manifestations do exist, all members of a given society are responsible for the resulting disunity and inequity (Love, 2010). Accordingly, all members of a given society have a responsibility to reject discomforting ideologies and oppressive practices, and to demand change that will result in the inclusion and fair treatment of all people. Any such efforts will require individual initiatives but they must also be "embedded in social engagement" (Mintzberg, Simons, & Basu, 2002, p. 69)

If leaders are to be proponents for cultural diversity and become stewards of social justice, they must also be properly equipped with the language necessary to articulate the experiences of the past, present, and future (Tharp, 2012, pp. 20-22). The six following foundational terms are critical to this endeavor:

1) *Privilege* – benefits that some people receive based on who they are, not because of anything they've done or accomplished.
2) *Oppression* – benefits that are denied to some people based on who they are, not because of anything they have done, not done, accomplished or failed to accomplish.
3) *Cultural salience* – the perceived prominence of social identities relative to another given specific situations, experiences, and contexts related to privilege or oppression; social identities become more or less salient to self and others, which in turn, influences intrapersonal reflections, interpersonal interactions, and worldviews —all of which can either challenge or reinforce systems of social inequality.
4) *Intersectionality* – the influence of a unique constellation of social identities in terms of how people perceive each of the identities they simultaneously possess. These constellations provide each person with experiences and realities that may differ from others who share one or more of the same social identities.
5) *Critical consciousness* – refers to a cognitive process that leads to an awareness of how multiple societal systems (e.g. social, political, economic) and levels (e.g., individual, communal, institutional) create and perpetuate the notions of privilege and oppression. To be critically conscious, one must maintain an active and dynamic awareness of how diversity exists and operates within a particular society.
6) *Social equity* – refers to the fair access to resources and opportunities for various social-identity groups. Using the term equity alone does not guarantee that the needs, privilege, and oppression of various groups will be explicitly considered.

Avoiding the use of appropriate social justice terminology, according to Tharp (2012), is to risk a vital step in the creation of a socially aware and just community inasmuch as appropriate language is necessary to standardize the critical consciousness of a population.

Efforts to embrace social justice, however, require attention far beyond just word selection. Adaptive leadership practices that hinge on assessing the issues or problems and carefully analyzing a range of interventions, establishing collaborative relationships among decision-makers and stakeholders (including vulnerable populations), contemplating consequences, and monitoring outcomes should also be engaged. The perpetuation of social

justice also commands that any lessons learned along the way also be incorporated into future decisions (Ebi, 2011). Leaders who are adaptive and can fluctuate to harness the turbulence of the present to bring closure to the past and along the way, they start changing the rules, redefining situations, and reshaping the way the future can be addressed (Heifetz, Grahow, Linsky, 2009).

With the array of social problems confronting people on a daily basis it is not surprising, that leadership scholars and practitioners would welcome opportunities at this juncture to engage in a social justice agenda that will subvert present day injustices and embrace roles that will transform the art and practice of leadership. Doing so will raise the consciousness of others, as Burns (1978) suggested, to higher levels of ideals and moral values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism.

Diligence is necessary as are patience, empathy, and a willingness to overcome convention, complacency, and the status quo as people engage in a genuine effort to find answers to difficult questions such as; What are the communal values, ideals, and beliefs? What connects and/or alienates people? What practices are supporting communal values, ideals, and beliefs? What practices are eroding communal values, ideals, and beliefs? Who is being excluded and why? Who has the power, resources, and motivation to help and change the trajectory?

Embracing disequilibrium and forcing people to confront the potentially disastrous consequences of maintaining the status quo can be, according to Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) a particularly effective mechanism for producing a more positive and productive environment. Granted, there is no guarantee that, when people are shrouded in uncertainty transformational change can be achieved but, there are situations that warrant unconventional leadership approaches. Creating disequilibrium for the ultimate purpose of achieving equilibrium is a delicate matter but it can be accomplished. In doing so, it is particularly important to depersonalize conflict so that disagreements remain focused on issues and thereby creating a culture of courageous conversation where candor is respected and dissenters, who can provide crucial insights, are shielded from the pressure to remain silent (pp. 4-5).

Adaptive leadership practices employ opportunities to mobilize the resources of people to thrive in a challenging world (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009) and the information gathered along the way can be used to revise policies, procedures, and practices, and to create avenues for raising awareness, liberating the oppressed, contesting archaic social and institutional programs, forging alliances, and securing appropriate representation for those who need it most. These actions will help to level playing fields, right wrongs, and enhance the lives of people who have either slipped through the cracks of society or were intentionally prevented from enjoying its comforts.

The world is organized in a way that encourages people to use difference as a mechanism to "include or exclude, reward or punish, credit or discredit, elevate or oppress, value or devalue" others (Johnson, 2006, p.16) but that is no excuse for a failure to act swiftly and responsibility when it comes to social justice. The antecedents of social justice are respect, political will, popular support, justness, and equity. When addressed appropriately and responsibly, the consequences of social justice will be peace, liberty, and the just ordering of society with the sufficiency of social determinants to support health, safety, and security for all of society's members (Buettner-Schmidt & Lobo, 2011).

Perceptions of justice change with time and seem wholly dependent upon specific events and within certain contexts. Social justice, in terms of religion, is regarded as a virtue, moral duty, or obligation. In philosophy it is still considered a virtue but it also encompasses equality and fairness. Legal institutions are likely to consider social justice in terms of a just ordering of society and a remedy for oppression (Buettner-Schmidt & Lobo, 2011). Regardless of the context, social justice should be treated logically and thoughtfully, and should be supported by facts (Mintzberg, Simons, & Basu, 2002).

There are a number of implications for leadership within the context of how social justice

has been illuminated in this article. Applying the literature on leadership to modern-day problems of social justice suggests that leaders could be more effective when addressing social justice by first recognizing that there are different cultural conceptualizations of social justice as well as different perceptions of accountability. Leaders must also be aware of the epistemological development and worldviews of the people they are trying to influence when it comes to the type of transformative change that is often associated with social justice.

Additionally, leaders should address the issues of social justice within the intersection of critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastion, 2006). Critical consciousness demands that all aspects of "difference" should be considered and the pedagogical treatment of knowledge among different populations should be accepted. It should be acknowledged that the leadership skills necessary for envisioning social systems that are just are distinct from the skills necessary to implement and support a new system of social justice.

Strong leaders can lead people astray or they can lead them in desirable directions; leaders have been credited with moving humanity toward individual freedom, social justice, and tolerance and there are some who have been responsible for "the most horrible crimes and extravagant follies that have disgraced the human race" (Cronin & Genovese, 2012). The bottom line is that leaders have choices. They can live, lead, and manage their enterprises with a focus on calculating and scheming, self-benefit, and keeping score. Or they can open themselves to another way of conducting their affairs and engage with people and life in such a way as to restore a sense of balance (Mintzberg, Simons, & Basu, 2002); a balance grounded in social justice that will protect a collective humanity and respect the dignity of each individual.

References

Allport, G. W. & Ross, J. M. (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 5, 432-443.

Armstrong, S. J. (2009). Social contract theory. In J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman (Eds), *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 2. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2009. 251-253. *Gale Virtual Reference. Library*.

Bankston, C.L. III. (2010). Social justice: Cultural origins of a perspective and a theory. *The Independent Review*, 15(2), 165-178.

Barroso, J.M. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: Immigration.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/in-focus/

Beales, D., & Biagini, E.F. (2013). *The Risorgimento and unification of Italy* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Behr, T. C. (2003). Luigi taparelli D'azeglio, S.J. (1793-1862) and the development of scholastic natural-law thought as a science of society and politics. *Journal of Markets and Morality,* 6(1), 99-115.

Behr, T. C. (2011). Luigi Taparelli and a catholic economics. *Journal of Markets and Morality*, 14(2), 607-611.

Bell, M. (2012). *Diversity in organizations* (2nd ed.). Mason, OH: Cengage.

Bernstein, M. (2010). Celebration and suppression: The strategic uses of identity by the lesbian and gay movement. In McAdam, D. & Snow, D.A (Eds.). *Readings on social movements: Origins, dynamic and outcomes* (pp. 499-518). New York: Oxford.

Bloom, D.E., Cafiero, E.T., Jané-Llopis, E., Abrahams-Gessel, S., Bloom, L.R., Fathima, S., Feigl, A.B., Gaziano, T., Mowafi, M., Pandya, A., Prettner, K., Rosenberg, L., Seligman, B., Stein, A.Z., & Weinstein, C. (2011). *The Global Economic Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Boyle, E.J. (2011). Social justice: Addressing the ambiguity. *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 14(2), 96-117.

Brown, G. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: Intensifying nationalism.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/8-intensifying-nationalism/

Buettner-Schmidt, K. & Lobo, M.L. (2011). Social justice: A concept analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 68(4), 948-958. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2011.05856.x

Burke, T. P. (2010). The origins of social justice: Taparelli d'azeglio. *Modern Age*, 52(2), 97-106.

Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership.* New York: Harper & Row.

Capper, C.A., Theoharis, G., & Sebastian, J. (2006). Toward a framework for preparing leaders for social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44(3), 209-224.

Chemers, M. M. (2000). Leadership research and theory: A functional integration. *Group Dynamics Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4(1), 27-43.

Chin, J.L. & Trimble, J.E. (2015). *Diversity and leadership.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cronin, T.E. & Genovese, M.A. (2012). *Leadership matters: Unleashing the power of paradox.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Donlan, K.A. & Kroll, L. (2014, March 3). Inside the 2014 Forbes billionaires list: Facts and figures. *Forbes.* Retrieved from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/luisakroll/2014/03/03/inside-the-2014-forbes-billionaires-list-facts-and-figures/

Ebi, K. (2011). Climate change and health risks: Assessing and responding to them through 'adaptive management'. *Health Affairs* (Project Hope), 30(5), 924-930. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0071

Ehrlich, P.R. & Tobias, M.C. (2014). *Hope on earth: A conversation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eide, E.B. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: Rising geostrategic competition.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/4-rising-geostrategic-competition/

Forsyth, J. (2013). Time for universality to reduce inequity. *The Lancet* (British edition), 382(9899), 1161-1163.

Fritz, S., Lunde, J., Brown, W., & Banset, E. (2004). *Interpersonal skills for leadership* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Fry, R. & Kochhar, R. (12/17/2014). *America's wealth gap between middle-income and upper-income families is widest on record.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/17/wealth-gap-upper-middle-income/

Gillispie, P. (2015). US economy misses its mark at the end of 2014. Retrieved from: http://money.cnn.com/2015/01/30/news/economy/us-gdp-disappoints-2-point-6-percent/index.html?iid=H_E_News

Hagmann, M. (2001). The world in 2050: More crowded, urban, and aged. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 79(5), 484-487.

Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). Leadership in a (permanent) crisis. *Harvard Business Review.* Retrieved from: http://www.ocvets4pets.com/archive17/Leadership_in_a__Permanent__Crisis_-_HBR.org.pdf

Hemphill, B. (2015). Social justice as a moral imperative. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 3(2), article 9. DOI:10.15453/2168-6408.1150

Hurst, P., Termine, P., & Karl, M. (2007). Agricultural workers and their contribution to sustainable agriculture and rural development. Retrieved from: http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/engl_agricultureC4163.pdf

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013). Global employment trends 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_202215.pdf

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2014). *Report VI: Employment policies for sustainable recovery and development.* Geneva: International Labour Office.

Jago, A. (1982). Leadership: Perspectives in theory and research. *Management Science*, 28(3), 315-336.

Johnson, A.G. (2006). *Privilege, power, and difference.* Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Jost, J.T. & Kay, A.C. (2010). Social justice: History, theory, and research. In Fiske, S. T., Gilbert, D. T., Gardner, L., (Eds.). *Handbook of Social Psychology* (5th ed) (pp. 1122-1165). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Kellerman, B., & Webster, S.W. (2001). The recent literature on public leadership reviewed and considered. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 12(4), 485-514.

Kerbo, H.R. (2012). *Social stratification and inequality: Class conflict in historical, comparative, and global perspectives.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kochhar, R. (3/13/2014). *10 projections for the world population in 2050.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/03/10-projections-for-the-global-population-in-2050/

Kochhar, R., Fry, R., & Taylor, P. (2011, July). *Wealth gaps rise to record highs between Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-betweenwhites-blacks-hispanics/

Lekovic, V. (2012). Neoliberal marginalization of social component in transition countries. *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 8(3), 55-63.

Lloyd, C. (2001). *World population in 2050: assessing the projections: discussion.* Conference Proceedings, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 46. Retrieved from: http://www.fedinprint.org/items/fedbcp/y2001n46x12.html

Lord, R.G., Brown, D.J., Harvey, J.L., & Hall, R.J. (2001). Contextual constraints on prototype generation and their multilevel consequences for leadership perceptions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 12(3), 311-338.

Love, B.J. (2010). Developing a liberatory consciousness. In Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W.J., Castaneda, C., Hackman, H.W., Peters, M.L., & Ximena Zuniga (Eds). *Readings for diversity and social justice*, 2nd ed. (pp. 599-603). New York: Routledge.

Luck, J., Spackman, M., Freeman, A., Trebicki, P., Griffiths, W., Finlay, K., & Chakraborty, S. (2011). Climate change and diseases of food crops. *Plant Pathology*, 60(1), 113-121. doi:10.1111/j.1365-3059.2010.02414.x

Marmot, M., & Bell, R. (2012). Fair society, healthy lives. *Public Health*, *126 (supplement 1)*, 4-10.

Massaro, T. (2012). *Living justice: Catholic social teaching in action* (2nd ed). Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.

Mintzberg, H., Simons, R., & Basu, K. (2002). Beyond selfishness. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *44*(1), 67-74.

Mohammed, A. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: Deepening income inequality.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/1-deepening-income-inequality/

Moreno, K. (2014, March 25). The 67 people as wealthy as the world's poorest 3.5 billion. *Forbes*. Retrieved from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinsights/2014/03/25/the-67-people-as-wealthy-as-the-worlds-poorest-3-5-billion/

Morgan M. & Vera E. (2006) *Encyclopedia of multicultural psychology*. Sage Reference, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Nitsch, T.O. (2005). Economics, social justice and the common good: Roman-Catholic perspectives. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 32(6), 554-569.

Noble, D.J. (2015). Leading in a world yearning for social justice. In Sowcik, M., Andenoro, A., McNutt, M., & Murphy, S. (Eds). *Leadership 2050: Critical challenges, key contexts, and emerging trends (pp. 43-57).* Emerald Publishers: Bingley, UK.

Noonan, J. (2011). Life value and social justice. *Studies in Social Justice*, 5(1), 1-10.

Ort, D. R., & Ainsworth, E. (2012). Focus on climate change. *Plant Physiology*, 160(4), 1675-1676. doi:10.1104/pp.112.900450

Pew Research Center (2014). Global attitudes project: Middle Easterners see religious and ethnic hatred as top global threat. Retrieved from http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/16/middle-easterners-see-religious-and-ethnic-hatred-as-top-global-threat/

Pew Research Center (2014). Global attitudes project: Emerging and developing economies much more optimistic than rich countries about the future. Retrieved from http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/09/emerging-and-developing-economies-much-more-optimistic-than-rich-countries-about-the-future/

Pfeffer, J. (1977). The ambiguity of leadership. *Academy of Management Review,* 2(1), 104-112.

Porta, E., Arcia, G., Macdonald, K., Radyakin, S., & Lokshin, M. (2011). *Assessing sector performance and inequality in education.* Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Potok, M. (2014). The year in hate and extremism 2013. *Intelligence Report,* 154, Spring.

Powledge, F. (2010). Food, hunger, and insecurity. *Bioscience*, 60(4), 260-265.

Rabiei, A. (2014, November). Global approach for comparing the mortality rate from natural disasters and its relationship to the income level and development indices of the countries. In *142nd APHA Annual Meeting and Exposition (November 15-November 19, 2014)*. APHA.

Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice.* Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press.

Reiner, T. (2010). Social contract theory. In Bevir, M. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of political theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Repetto, R., & Easton, R. (2010). Changing climate, more damaging weather. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 26(2), 67-74.

Rockman, B.A. & Waterman, R.W. (2008). *Presidential leadership: The vortex of power.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Romani, R. (2014). Liberal theocracy in the Italian risorgimento. *European History Quarterly*, 44(4), 620-650.

Rosmini-Serbati, A., 1797-1855. (1882). *The philosophical system of Antonio Rosmini-Serbati.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. England; United Kingdom: Translated by Thomas Davidson.

Rowatt, W. C., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2002). Two dimensions of attachment to god and their relation to affect, religiosity, and personality constructs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(4), 637-651.

Sashkin, M. (2004). Transformational leadership approaches: A review and synthesis. In Antonakis, J., Cianciolo, A.T., & Sternberg, R. J. (Eds.). *The nature of leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Shahid, S. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: A lack of leadership.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/3-lack-of-leadership/

Shawa, N. (2015, January 29). Children suffer and die in Gaza. Who notices? *The Chicago Tribune*, Section 1, p. 20

Smith, K. B., Oxley, D. R., Hibbing, M. V., Hibbing, J. R., & Alford, J. R. (2011). Linking genetics and political attitudes: Reconceptualizing political ideology. *Political Psychology*, 32(3), 369-397.

Stavrakantonaki, M. (2014, November). Economic Inequality and Population Health. In *142nd APHA Annual Meeting and Exposition (November 15-November 19, 2014)*. APHA.

Steffy, H.L. (2010). Secular Humanism. In Hunt, T.C., Carper, J.C., Lasley II, T.J., & Raisch, C.D. (Eds). *Encyclopedia of educational reform and dissent* (pp. 809-811). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Summer, L. (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015: Persistent jobless growth.* Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/2-persistent-jobless-growth/

Tharp, D.S. (2012). A language for social justice. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, May/June, 21-23.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 221-258.

Torres-Harding, S.R., Steele, C., Schulz, E., Taha, F., & Pico, C. (2014). Student perceptions of social justice and social justice activities. *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice,* 9(1), 55-66.

Turhan, M. (2010). Social justice leadership: Implications for roles and responsibilities of school administrators. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 1357-1361. DOI:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.334

United Nations. (2006). The international forum for social development: Social justice in an open world - The role of the United Nations. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2014). Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.shtml

United Nations (UN) Global Education Initiative, (n.d.).
Retrieved from: http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/about.html

United States Census Bureau (2014). Quick Facts.
Retrieved from: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html

van der Hoeven, R. (2010). *Labour markets trends, financial globalization and the current crisis in developing countries*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2010/wp99_2010.pdf

Vörösmarty, C.J., McIntyre, P.B., Gessner, M.O., Dudgeon, D., Prusevich, A., Green, P., Glidden, S., Bunn, S.E., Sullivan, C.A., Liermann, C., & Davies, P.M. (2010). Global threats to human water security and river biodiversity. *Nature*, 467, 555-561. doi:10.1038/nature09440

Walraven, G. (2011). *Health and poverty: Global health problems and solutions*. London: Earthscan.

Whitley, B. E., & Kite, M. E. (2010). *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Wolterstroff, N. (2013). All justice is social but it's not all social justice. *Philosophia*, 41, 383-395. doi:10.1007/s11406-013-9432-7

Woods, N. (2014). *Outlook for the global agenda 2015: Leadership*. Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/global-leadership-and-governance/new-structures-of-governance/

World Bank (n.d.). Educational quality: A global report.
Retrieved from: http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/wStateEdu/StateEducation.aspx

World Economic Forum (WEF). (2014). *Outlook on the global agenda 2015*.
Retrieved from: http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/

World Health Organization (WHO). (2008). *The right to health: Fact sheet no. 31*.
Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/hhr/activities/Right_to_Health_factsheet31.pdf?ua=1

World Health Organization (WHO). (2010). *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/4/10-010410/en/

World Health Organization (WHO). (2012). *Interesting facts about aging*. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/ageing/about/facts/en/

World Health Organization (WHO). (2014). *Ambient (outdoor) air quality and health.* Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs313/en/

Yukl, G. (2013*). Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.