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Transformational Learning and Role of Self-Authorship in Developing Women Leaders

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Given the challenges of the workplace and the historic exclusion of women and people of color from positional leadership, this dual case study explores women's experiences in two graduate programs designed to support transformational learning of educational leaders. Data included participants' structured reflections on learning about leadership, examined through the lens of two adult learning theories: self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2004) and transformational learning (Brooks, 2000; Kegan, 2000). Cross-case analysis indicated that participants developed confidence in their own knowledge, articulated the importance of personal support and collaboration, gained voice to advocate for themselves and their students, and experienced a fundamental change in their sense of themselves as leaders in their schools. These findings have implications for the provision of systematic graduate instruction that supports reflection and critique, offers multiple opportunities to step into leadership roles, and integrates informational and transformational learning.

Introduction

Developing an identity as a leader is not easy for any teacher for a complex set of reasons. Learning about school leadership occurs in hierarchical settings where "leaders" are principals or central office staff. Entrenched management practices including personnel practices, union expectations, evaluation frameworks, and lack of support for adult learning limit professional expectations and opportunities for teachers to see themselves as teacher leaders or positional leaders (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Holloway, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent, & Richert, 1996; Murphy, 2005; Perrow, 2004). Teaching continues to lose status as a profession (Hurley, 2006). Teachers may struggle for authority within the profession, but they are charged to educate children. The Task Force on Teacher Leadership (2001) addresses the lack of recognition of teachers as leaders with this statement:

> Mischaracterized though they often are as incompetent know-

> nothings, teachers are, paradoxically, also widely viewed as education's "franchise players," its indispensable but unappreciated leaders in the truest meaning of the word. It is unarguable that they instill, mold, and ultimately control much of the learning and intellectual development of the young people in their charge. It would be difficult to find a more authentic but unacknowledged example of leadership in modern life. (p. 1)

In addition to organizational beliefs about teachers, societal attitudes toward women teachers confound their ability to develop as leaders (Collay, 2006; Grumet, 1980; Zinn, 1997). With the majority (75%), of public school classroom teachers being women (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007) and a small number (17%), of teachers of color (NCES, The Conditions of Education, 2007), structures to support leadership development are even more critical. The ratio of female and male principals is almost equal at the elementary level, at about 54% male and 46% female, and secondary principals are still majority male (74%), with females at 26%. "Between 1993–94 and 2003–04, the percentage of public school principals who were female increased from 41 to 56 percent in elementary schools and from 14 to 26 percent in secondary schools" (NCES, Characteristics of School Principals, 2007). Adding the characteristic of race shows that principals of color number about 17.6 % of the total (NCES, 2007).

Leadership Development

One place where teachers can find opportunities to develop as leaders is in graduate education programs. This dual case study explores how women's experiences in two graduate programs supported the development of women as educational leaders. The curriculum used in these two programs reflects the tenets of transformational learning with a focus on self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2004). Application of these two powerful theories supports teachers in transforming their identities as leaders. Such transformation is essential for all teachers, given their responsibilities in the educational enterprise and the limited opportunities to exercise formal leadership, but it is critical for women and people of color.

Educational leadership programs primarily focus on providing aspiring school leaders with information about the roles and responsibilities. Adult learning theory, however, demands greater attention to integrated learning, or what adult learning theorists call "informational" and "transformational" learning. Kegan (2000) and Drago-Severson (2004) indicate that informational learning involves increases knowledge and skills that can change adults' attitudes and possibly their competencies. They contrast transformational learning -- that which helps adults to better manage the complexities of work and life -- by examining assumptions that give them support to be confident in their own beliefs and values. Graduate education has primarily focused on the former, offering a knowledge-based curriculum for leadership. Given the challenges of the workplace and historic exclusion of women and people of color from positional leadership, this study explores how graduate education can become more transformative, supporting teachers to fully inhabit their roles as leaders in schools.

Creating transformational pedagogy for teacher leaders

Two adult learning theories that are key to the development of teachers as leaders in graduate education programs are the work of Baxter Magolda (1998) on self-authorship and the work of Brooks (2000) on enhancing transformational learning in women. The first theoretical framework, self-authorship, is described by Baxter Magolda as a complex set of epistemological assumptions:

> Self-authorship requires complex assumptions about the nature of knowledge: namely that knowledge is constructed in a context based on relevant evidence, that evaluating evidence is necessary to decide what to believe, and that each individual has the capacity to make such decisions. Furthermore, self-authorship requires a sense of identity through which individuals perceive themselves as capable of knowledge construction. It also requires interdependence with other people to gain access to other perspectives without being consumed by them. As a result, self-authorship is more than a skill; it is a way of making meaning of one's experience. (1998, p. 41)

Baxter Magolda (1998) found that the development of self-authorship in adult learners required both substantial support and substantial challenge. In most cases, the challenges came from the workplace, but support offered within graduate education programs enhances students' transformational learning. Graduate education can be structured so teacher leaders are supported to interpret their experiences as learners, teachers and leaders. Self-authorship requires regular and systematic reflection on one's own experiences in both personal and professional settings, especially important for individuals from groups who have been excluded from leadership.

Secondly, the work of scholars such as Hayes and Flannery (2002) and Brooks (2000) is useful here because they focus on the development of women as learners. The significance of gender has been given little attention in adult learning theory, yet women now constitute the majority of learners in higher education at the bachelor's and master's degree levels. Women of color lag behind their White counterparts in overall participation, but have still made notable strides in college attendance (Hayes & Flannery, 2002). As they take their place in higher education, faculty must attend more thoughtfully to their learning.

The concepts of voice and connection in learning are central to our understanding of women as learners. Women (and men) need a curriculum that honors these concepts and provides for the development of voice and the employment of connection. Brooks (2000) suggests that "many women may not experience transformational learning as the existing theories suggest" (p. 139). She defines transformational learning as "learning that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learners' sense of themselves, their worldviews, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future" (p. 140). Brooks (2000) asserts that transformational learning for women often involves narrative processes in which women share stories in a safe context that allows them to claim their own voices. For women, "emancipating themselves from this [institutional] sexism is a process of gaining voice and taking action" (p. 152).

This study describes the pedagogical foundation of teacher leadership

preparation graduate programs in two public universities. They were designed using the tenets of self-authorship and the transformational learning of adults, often women of color, to more fully develop their identities as teacher leaders. The research question we address is: how do these theories help us to understand women's experiences in graduate education and their development as educational leaders?

Teachers come to the graduate study of teacher leadership from extremely challenging work settings, especially those who teach under-served or marginalized populations. As adult learners, they already live with "substantial challenge," one of the two essential attributes required for adult learning (Baxter Magolda, 1998). Higher education can and should be a setting where teacher leaders can obtain the "substantial support" they need to address those challenges. Given an appropriate environment, teacher leaders can attain the self-authorship required to embrace leadership roles and responsibilities. In a climate where graduate education programs are sometimes criticized for their lack of contextualized learning and lack of relevance (Levine, 2005; McClintock, 2005), we strive to investigate aspects of educational quality that include student growth and accomplishment as well as students' acquisition of important personal dispositions. This framework must begin in our own university classrooms (Brown, 2004; Collay, 2006; Rusch, 2004).

Methods

This research was conducted using qualitative methods to examine the experiences of veteran women teachers in two graduate education programs designed to foster teacher leadership. We used a constructivist paradigm, presenting two case studies and then a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). We examined the ways in which participants constructed their identity as teacher leaders (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Data was drawn from two programs, one in Hawaii and one in California. Data were triangulated through the use of multiple sources of data, which included participant observations of class sessions and structured reflections on learning and development drawn from throughout both programs. Merriam suggests "six basic strategies to enhance internal validity" (1998, p. 204). This research design uses four of these strategies: triangulation, long-term observation, collaborative modes of research, and clarifying researcher biases at the outset of the study.

Structured reflective writing occurred throughout the program, so participants in both programs crafted similar reflections at critical junctures throughout the two years, as illustrated in the following chart:

Program Element	Admissions Essay	Critical reflections on articles	Structured journal reflections	Written reflection on leadership development	Culminating master's degree project or study
Term	Entry	Throughout	Throughout	End of Year Two	End of Year Two

The data for this article were drawn from written reflections on leadership development that were part of the culminating assignment in both programs. The prompts for the final reflection were similar in that both required students to assess their development as teacher leaders, but were elicited through different prompts. The prompts are reviewed and the responses are analyzed as two individual cases and then compared through cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). The two masters programs share the following common assumptions and goals:

- Faculty provide a two-year graduate degree with a focus on teacher leadership (it is elected, rather than embedded professional development at the school site)
- The programs have reputations for being teacher-centered and emphasizing classroom practice, school leadership and school reform led by teacher leaders
- Students are credentialed teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience who move through the program with a cohort of others in like roles—neither program leads directly to principal licensure
- Students and faculty collaborate closely throughout the two-year program and students conduct applied research at their sites
- The majority of teachers in both cohorts work in high poverty, low English-skilled communities

Program differences are first: mode of delivery, as the California cohort met weekly on campus and the Hawaii cohort met for weekend classes; second, the Hawaii cohort was based in rural, geographically isolated settings, whereas the California cohort was based in an urban region.

Participants

Participants were female veteran teachers in two cohorted master's programs aimed at the development of teacher leadership in two states, California and Hawaii. The California cohort consisted of eighteen students, fifteen of whom were women that participated in the study. By ethnicity, the women are: two African-American, six Caucasian, and seven Latina. Almost all of them teach in urban, multi-lingual, immigrant-community schools. The Hawaii cohort consisted of seventeen students, fourteen of whom were women. By ethnicity, the women are eight Caucasian, four Hawaiian, and two Asian. Their age range is twenty-five to fifty-five.

A description of the study was filed with the Institutional Review Board and received approval. Students were given individual permission forms at the end of the academic year with the terms outlining a promise of confidentiality that included the use of pseudonyms and the deletion of identifying information. All participants agreed to be part of the study.

Data Collection

Written reflections on students' learning and their development as teacher leaders were collected throughout the program. For this study, the text from the final assignment was used as a primary data source. Participant observations were used as a secondary data source. Participants engaged in systematic, structured reflections that linked their own experiences as learners in graduate school to their emergent identity as leaders. Written reflections were structured throughout the two years, with culminating reflections about leadership development and their learning across the entire

program. Writing assignments were collected from every student in both cohorts who agreed to be in the study. Student reflections were reviewed through the lens of transformational learning (Brooks, 2000).

Role of the Researchers

One author is the coordinator of the program and the primary instructor for the first year of the program and advised completion of the inquiry projects. The second author is the program director and taught the introductory and final capstone courses in the program. Both authors have studied women leaders and have written previously about the challenges women face inhabiting leadership roles in PK-12 and in higher education. We believe that higher education programs play a critical role in sustaining or disrupting patterns of participation by minority leaders in educational settings.

Data Analysis

Each case was examined for emerging themes. Following within-case analysis, the researchers conducted a cross-case analysis, comparing the two cases and using both theoretical frames that grounded the development of the curriculum for each program and described earlier in this study: self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998) and transformational learning theory for women (Brooks, 2000). Both researchers reviewed the data set from both programs, treating each cohort as a case. Using the lenses of self-authorship and transformational learning, the data was coded separately by both researchers. At this point co-coder reliability was established. Both researchers were surprised by the congruence of coding categories between them. We then utilized categorical aggregation, seeking "a collection of instances from the data" (Creswell, 1998, p. 154) and searching for the emergence of issue-relevant meanings across cases. The majority of participants presented material reflecting at least three of the four themes. After the initial identification of thematic material, we selected excerpts that best exemplified each theme.

Limitations

The findings of this study are limited to the two programs from which the data were drawn and cannot be generalized to any larger population. Furthermore, the study is limited by the particular pedagogical abilities of the graduate instructors and the differences in the two program sites. While one is urban and the other chiefly rural, both programs include teachers who serve highly diverse populations of students from lower socio-economic levels. We believe the programs' powerful similarities justified their collaboration. Others may disagree.

Findings

The next section reviews findings from both cohorts, whose members wrote culminating self-assessments of their learning about leadership. We first present the Hawaii case, with the prompts, representative responses, and emergent themes. The California case follows, using the same format. Next, we present the cross-case analysis with a discussion of the common themes across the two cases and theoretical connections. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for graduate education in the light of our two theoretical constructs: self-authorship and women's transformational learning.

Hawaii case

Participants were asked to respond to 3 prompts: one invited reflection about the substantial challenges and supports for them as they completed the program, another asked about substantial challenges and supports they anticipated in work

ahead as a teacher leaders. The last prompt asked about what they had learned in the program that influenced their philosophy of education and what they now believe about education and teacher leadership. Four themes emerged from examining this case including: the importance of critical reflection on experiences, the importance of personal and professional balance, gaining voice, and seeing oneself as a leader.

Critical reflection on experiences.

Participants described making meaning of events within and beyond the school as they made connections. An Asian-American woman stated: "I really understood the value of keeping a professional journal in order to sort through and to review the multitude of information and to make personal sense of it all." When considering supports, a Native Hawaiian teacher recalled: "From this experience I have gained a better understanding of what teachers do for students… I will never teach math, but I know what it felt like to be inadequate at something and my math teacher gave me hope." A White teacher realized that surviving a difficult leader was instructive when she stated: "This experience has become an incredible support for me, however. I know how not to behave as a leader."

Personal and professional balance (Interdependence).

Participants identified the central role of family and colleagues in their professional development. A Native Hawaiian woman first described a key supporter as: "My longtime boyfriend, father of my children . . . and has been my rock and my greatest critic. In essence, because my husband is my rock and my critic, he is a support as well as a challenge." She also placed family support in the challenge column: "My greatest challenge throughout my journey has been time, and the management of time to balance work, school and family…with my mother-in-law's dramatic change in health and the new role of primary caregiver, we have been in crisis mode…." Another Native Hawaiian woman described the work/mothering dilemma:

> I often hear of teachers who become mothers and in turn stop working as hard or caring as much, simply because they cannot even if they want to. This saddens me and I certainly do not want to be one of 'those teachers.' Therefore, I am stuck between deciding on furthering my career or my personal life.

In addition to family and peers, supervisors play a role in providing support for work/graduate school balance. A White woman recalled: "My principal is so supportive, humane, filled with soul and spirit when it comes to running ahead to create solutions and contribute to the community."

Gaining voice (describing worldviews, understanding their pasts, future).

Gaining voice requires that one hears herself. An Asian-American woman observed, "In the course of life, one must stop to listen to her/her own heartbeat and to have intellectual discourse with her own voice without someone thinking you are losing it as you think out loud to yourself!" A Native Hawaiian woman reconciled with a past learning experience: "It took me a long time to understand math, but I had to stop being fearful of it." The ability to ask for what's needed is part of gaining one's voice as a teacher. A White woman described how her principal responded when she asked for support in pursuing graduate education and starting new programs: "He has said yes to anything

related to my masters program, when I have asked, as well as yes to creative teaching proposals for the high school." She also described getting what she needed in terms of work setting:

> Through the Future Travel exercise we did yesterday I realized something new: this year with my office away from the intense chaos, overlooking the beautiful track and field, I feel that I am now in a peaceful, beautiful environment, even though I'm at the same school.

Seeing one's self as a leader.

Taking new leadership roles was challenging, yet empowering. A Native Hawaiian women described the magnitude of her new role: "My performance in the position of Project Coordinator is also a substantial challenge because it requires me to learn the ropes of this huge and overwhelming machine—the university—so that I can manage this grant properly and successfully." For some, becoming a teacher was in itself a big step toward leadership: another Native Hawaiian described the pride of her family in recognizing her professional transition: ". . . being the first to graduate from college and to become a professional. I often hear my grandmother telling someone how proud she is of me, 'the school teacher.'"

Participants gave examples of how they now see themselves as leaders. A White woman compared earlier professional experiences with current actions:

> Prior to this program I did not see myself as leading other teachers. Now I am actively leading in my school in a variety of ways and see my leadership roles growing in the coming months and years. I am actively involved in the union as a representative. I collaborate regularly with key leaders in the school to plan student activities and fundraisers. I organize teams of teachers to attend trainings and workshops, and I informally mentor other teachers on campus. I have gained confidence and skills much more quickly than I had imagined or originally anticipated.

A Native Hawaiian woman described her victory learning management skills and the importance of asking for help:

> To assist me in my organizational nightmare, I accepted help from a college student who needed practicum hours for a class she was taking at the local community college….she was a huge benefit and blessing to me…. If I had to do it all by myself I would have been fired by Christmas.

Summary of Hawaii themes

These four themes reflect transformational learning on the part of women graduate students grappling with their identity as leaders. Some noted the benefits of keeping a journal, while the quality of the reflections speaks to the power of doing so. Cohort members describe the challenges of balancing their personal goals with professional aspirations, while at the same time, appreciating the emotional support of family and friends. Gaining voice through speaking up about one's beliefs and asking for support was an important transition toward seeing one's self as a leader. Noting role changes toward formal leadership was also evident in their reflections, as they describe recognition from others and taking greater responsibilities. These themes

represent transformational learning about leadership.

California case

Members of the California cohort were asked to respond to prompts about the Mindscapes (the department version of the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders or CPSELs) for their final assignment. The Mindscapes are based on the state leadership credential standards, with an emphasis on the development of "bold, socially responsible leaders." (Szabo, Hoagland, Lambert, Lopez, Starnes, Stern, Storms, & Vieth, 2001). Participants were asked to reflect on their leadership development throughout the program, specifically addressing: accomplishments and strengths, insights into learning or learning experiences, and continuing challenges or gaps. The four themes that emerged in the California case were: the power of conducting inquiry, the power of collaboration, gaining voice and seeing oneself as a leader.

Conducting inquiry led to confidence as a learner, teacher and leader.

Many members of this cohort studied the problems of English language learners or ELLs. One senior teacher, a Latina, described her inquiry: "Our school's CELDT (English Learner literacy) scores jumped dramatically that year and our principal attributed part of the success to our shining light on a once invisible population." Another Latina took her curriculum leadership beyond her school: "An area I have grown has been [leading] the development of frameworks and program structures at the district level." Spanish speaking teachers are generally expected to translate for non-Spanish speakers, and cross-cultural ambassadorship goes with the job. One teacher noted,

> Working with other colleagues at our school to help Spanish-speaking parents and their children has been insightful . . . Learning about inquiry research is helping me become more analytical, inquisitive, and is helping me to frame my questions in a more productive ways.

The power of collaboration.

Even the most experienced teachers recognized the need to collaborate more skillfully in order to effect change. A mid-career White woman reflected: "I have learned that I thrive in a cooperative setting. I get energy in working with others who also seek change for the sake of equity and justice. I no longer work in isolation." A younger cohort member described the development of her skills this way:

> I have learned that in a group process, it is necessary for group members to disagree and be able to move forward with a common goal. Many times our working sessions have turned into heated discussions over one person's view over another's. As a result of working through these situations, I have realized the importance of listening to the needs of others along with voicing my own.

One of few Latinas on her staff, she is also learning to hold her own as an equal. This teacher was very appreciative of her grade level team: "Working with colleagues in the upper grades has been a positive and rewarding experience for me. The best part about working with such a wonderful, collaborative team is that everyone is dedicated and willing to help one another."

Gaining voice through speaking truth and taking action.

Many actions cohort members identified involved the development of their own voices as leaders (e.g. speaking up against racism, speaking to the principal to advocate for the purchase of technology items). A young Latina who found herself the voice of the bilingual team noted: "I find myself bringing up issues that I do not think I would have brought up before, and thinking more towards the common good for all of our students." This teacher had been critical of her colleagues outside of school, but finally took her concerns directly to her staff:

> Another area of significant growth [for me] is being vocal when people make insensitive comments. Students, co-workers, family friends at times make rude comments about other people's differences or disabilities. I feel one powerful way to combat racism and crude remarks is to make people conscious that words can hurt people.

Another Latina who advocated for non-English speakers on a daily basis, reflected: "Once you know of the problems of students in an urban school and community, you must act and not turn a blind eye."

Seeing one's self as a leader.

When asked to describe their accomplishments as leaders, many of the California cohort discussed both school level (PTA, working with Spanish speaking parents, facilitating meetings) and district level activities (designing curriculum, developing program structures, etc.). A formerly quiet White woman who became more outspoken during the two-year program stated:

> I am concerned about being able to stand by my convictions. I am proud of all that I have learned and want to continue being a lifelong teacher leader, but when everyone around you is pushing their agenda, how do you continue to fight the good fight and not lose faith?

A young Latina described her change in stance this way: "I never saw myself as a leader, I always thought of myself as a follower. This program has really allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and stand up for what I believe." Another Latina, an adult immigrant with a very strong Spanish accent described:

> Facing the reality of learning English . . . I just said, 'you are right; I have an accent, but I do not think with an accent, and I will help my students as much as I can. I will make sure to make them feel comfortable about themselves and about the things they can do.

This woman had a strong partnership with a White, bi-lingual colleague. Her White partner in their parent engagement effort inquiry project reflected:

> I find that "we" as a community are stronger and more resilient that any single person can be working for system change on her
>
> own . . . I need to continue to plant seeds of positive connections between parents, staff, and families and explore ways to include veteran teachers in the process in a positive way.

Summary of California themes

Four themes from the leadership development reflection are presented here. In this case, the power of conducting inquiry or applied research figured prominently in cohort members' reflections. The next theme, collaboration, was described as a benefit and a challenge, and speaks to the importance of teachers working closely together to resolve challenging problems. Gaining voice through taking action was presented in a variety of ways, as examples of actions were evident in response to all three prompts. Teacher leaders identified continuous movement toward visible leadership roles, as they reflected on the different ways they now lead and the thinking that informed their transformation.

Next, we present the cross-case analysis with a discussion of the common themes across the two cases. The chart below shows four themes derived from each cohort, the cross-case analysis, and the alignment with the two theories about transformational learning presented earlier.

Cross-Case Analysis

Hawaii	California	Common themes (cross-case analysis)	Alignment with theories
Journaling and critical reflection on experiences	Conducting inquiry led to confidence as a learner, teacher and leader	Focused, applied reflection and critique, trusting one's perceptions, legitimizing one's experiences	Capable of knowledge construction Baxter Magolda 1998
Personal and professional integrity	The power of collaboration	Recognizing the importance of personal support and the power of collaborating with others	Interdependence Baxter Magolda 1998 Relatedness, separateness, and competence Brooks 2000
Gaining voice (by articulating one's perceptions, experiences)	Gaining voice (by taking actions that reflect beliefs)	Gaining voice by examining one's beliefs, speaking one's truth, taking actions based on beliefs	Moving from silence to voice, inaction to action Brooks 2000
Seeing one's self as a leader	Seeing one's self as a leader	Identity development	Fundamental change in learners' sense of themselves Brooks 2000 Sense of identity Baxter Magolda 1998

Although the prompts for the culminating reflections were framed differently, participants' responses were surprisingly consistent. We found four common themes running through both cases: focused, applied reflection and critique that served to legitimate experience, recognizing the importance of personal support and the power of collaboration, gaining voice and developing one's identity as a leader.

Knowledge construction as described by Baxter Magolda (1998) was a central and consistent theme throughout the two cases. The California members expressed their growing confidence as learners through reflections about their applied research projects. In Hawaii, regular journal keeping supported reflection and critique that led to the integration of personal and professional values. The second theme, interdependence (Baxter Magolda, 1998; Brooks, 2000), is represented in participant reflections about knowing when and how to collaborate, as well as gaining confidence when going it alone. Gaining voice, or moving from inaction to action (Brooks, 2000) is demonstrated in both cohorts through participant examples of work challenges where they took a risk to express their beliefs and/or took actions based on beliefs. Finally, participants in both cohorts saw their emergent professional identities as leaders developing (Baxter Magolda, 1998; Brooks, 2000).

Focused, applied reflection and critique, trusting one's perceptions, legitimizing one's experiences.

The use of focused, applied reflection in both programs helped participants to trust their perceptions and legitimize their experiences. The systematic use of reflection assisted in the development of self-authorship and the ability to construct knowledge. This practice supports the narrative practices that are also central to transformative learning in women. For example:

> Through the self-awareness gained by journaling, I have gained greater integrity or wholeness as well as *self-authorship* (independent knowing) since by writing I can face my challenges, acknowledge my strengths, envision my dreams, and develop my own perspective without being overwhelmed by others.

In addition, she noted that "journal writing last year enabled me to plan successful strategies for the Visual Arts team and now to develop an expanded team of visual and performing arts faculty in the new Fine Arts department."

> Assigned readings in the curriculum influenced teacher leaders, as in the following: When I became physically exhausted at the end of the school year, the following excerpts from our readings on Courage (Gendler; Staub II) uplifted me and reminded me that I can heal old and new wounds and move forward with renewed conviction, 'Courage comes from the heart and must return to it consistently for guidance and renewal.'

A Latina teacher who struggles with English related: "Learning about inquiry research is helping me become more analytical, inquisitive, and is helping me to frame my questions in a more productive ways." She also noted that, "our children's needs continue to be systematically ignored, but we as school leaders continue to advocate for them," as she described striving to obtain transportation for families that wish to be enrolled at her school for the

bilingual program. Another Latina teacher was painfully honest in this self-assessment:

> Prior to partaking in the inquiry process development of lessons was just another tedious task that I had to do. I have learned that lessons are more effective when they are planned with a specific focus in mind and collaborating with colleagues. It never occurred to me that conducting research and gathering data would provide me with the tools to enhance my students' learning.

The element of knowledge construction demonstrated here is characterized as "self-authorship" by Baxter Magolda (1998) who argues "knowledge is constructed in a context based on relevant evidence" (p. 41). These emergent leaders are making meaning of their experiences, past, present, and future, to reframe their professional identity as "leaders, not followers," and "actively leading in their schools." Knowledge construction occurs in both personal and professional settings, and these women express the powerful influences of family and colleagues on their understanding of their emerging identity. They learn from and within their relationships, while also remarking on the dilemmas created by the ever-present challenge of balancing personal and professional demands.

Recognizing the importance of personal support and the power of collaborating with others.

Often attributed to a more feminine approach to leadership, collaboration was a central theme as teachers in both programs talked about the value of personal support and peer collaboration. The use of a cohort structure adds a sense of connection and support to their work in graduate education. From the Hawaii cohort, one woman stated:

> The idea of self-authorship made a big impact…. I am now able to trust in myself as a professional teacher based on my experience, classes, and feedback from my colleagues. I have developed an interdependence with other people, teachers and administrators, that I was unable to attempt prior to the Master's program.

One member of the Hawaii cohort described a colleague who was key to her success in the program: "My supports have been my fellow cohort members, but in particular, one person. We have been going to school together for several years and have always helped each other."

In California, participants made many observations about the importance of collaborating. Noted one Latina: "A leader is not a person who gives orders or works alone to complete a task. A leader is a person who works collaboratively with other teachers for the common good of the school." In assessing her growth against the program standards, another member noted that taking positional leadership "challenges my leadership options because I am a woman (and Latina). I had to go against some family members who blamed me for being a bad person, mother, and wife for not staying at home as a traditional woman." Another woman who focused on building relationships with parents stated:

> Working for a large community, I had no experience planning and organizing events for larger audiences. Working with others helped me realize that all of us

> have strengths and weaknesses, but to make things work we need to rely on each others' strengths.

Baxter Magolda (1998) and Brooks (2000) underscore the importance of connection and interdependence in transformational learning. This theme is described by Baxter Magolda in the context of self-authorship as "require[ing] interdependence with other people to gain access to other perspectives without being consumed by them" (1998, p. 41). Brooks (2000) states that recognizing the complex interdependence women experience in personal and professional settings is central to transformational learning. She notes, " . . . the developmental challenge for women is to integrate their inclination toward relatedness with a need for separateness and competence so that they won't totally subsume their own sense of identity and power" (p. 148). She asserts that women of color face a particular challenge if they are too relational, as they need to create and maintain a sense of self in the midst of negative societal messages.

Gaining voice and taking action

There were many instances where participants described examining beliefs, speaking truth (sometimes to power), and taking actions based on beliefs. In the Hawaii cohort, one woman stated: "I have learned to disconnect from those that are negative and now have the strength to speak up and tell some committee members when they are being petty or too negative." One first generation college graduate, a Native Hawaiian who has gone on to graduate school, took a big step in becoming a teacher at all. "My family is also quite proud of me, being the first to graduate from college and to become a professional."

Members of the California cohort expressed greater voice. A quiet, working class White woman declared:

> I now speak my truth, which has been a huge area of growth for me. My truth is what I believe or my opinion about subjects. There are many teachers who have very strong opinions about what they believe. When speaking with them, it seemed I could not get a word in, nor would I want to [draw] the potential backlash. But now this has changed. I am able to speak up and let people know when I see inequities or when I have a different insight into a situation. I realize there may still be backlash, but now I know I must not be silenced anymore.

A Latina woman from her school stated: "I began to take a more proactive approach by speaking to the other teachers in the upper grades and having them write the principal a letter . . . urging her to purchase these vital items [technology] for our classroom." A White woman in the cohort recognized that she had also become more proactive with her peers in this reflection:

> I find myself willing to take on more risk and uncertainty in areas beyond our specific inquiry project. I have facilitated parent and staff meetings using a collaborative model. Our master's program cohort team guided our faculty to re-examine the core literature used at our school site, updating it to better reflect world cultures.

Brooks (2000) asserts that transformational learning for women often involves narrative processes in which women share stories in a safe context that allows them to claim their own voices. Brooks declared, "Furthermore, all women, regardless of social position or ability to acknowledge it, are victims of institutionalized sexism. Emancipating themselves from this sexism is a process of gaining voice and taking action" (p. 152).

Seeing one's self as a leader

Women in both programs reported an increased sense of their ability to lead. Experiences during their graduate programs showed them the ways and means available to them to take leadership actions. From the Hawaii cohort, one woman stated, "Prior to this program I did not see myself as leading other teachers. Now I am actively leading in my school in a variety of ways and see my leadership roles growing in the coming months and years." Another woman noted:

> It is not that I hope that doors will swing open, but that I will be prepared for opportunity when it knocks. I feel much more in control of my destiny. Rather than reacting to conditions as they arise, I have charted my own course.

Some leadership actions teachers took were internal. One Native Hawaiian woman, for example, described her experiences with discrimination in school and her own inner work to transform her views of the ways in which she was mistreated:

> Many of my teachers were negative, however, I learned from those experiences. It takes a while to see the gifts that negativity brings, however these experiences are like unfinished precious stones that one works to heal and eventually they end up among the diamond keepsakes that we carry through our lives.

A Latina in the California cohort noted: "I never saw myself as a leader, I always thought of myself as a follower. This program has really allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and stand up for what I believe." Another member of the cohort, a White woman who is bilingual in Spanish, described how she and colleagues had joined the PTA: "to organize the first Multicultural Festival at our school, and I helped them translate all the information needed for parents for this event. We had a large response and contributions from the Spanish speaking families." In this next example, a Latina teacher recalled her leadership development as she moved from translating to advocating for parents "I took the parents to the office so they could speak with the principal."

Both theories address the importance of identity development. Brooks (2000) defines transformational learning as "learning that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learners' sense of themselves, their worldviews, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future" (p. 140). Baxter Magolda notes that:

> Self-authorship requires a sense of identity through which individuals perceive themselves as capable of knowledge construction. It also requires interdependence with other people to gain access to other perspectives without being consumed by them. As a result, self-authorship is more

> than a skill; it is a way of making meaning of one's experience. (1998, p. 41)

The focus on reflection in these graduate programs provides opportunities for making meaning of both past and present experiences. In addition, these teacher leaders report constructing new understandings of what it means to be a leader. Each has reported the ways in which their understanding of themselves has lead to a clearer view of how they might lead within their schools and within the profession as a whole.

Gaining a strong sense of one's self as a leader is evident throughout both programs and is evident in the reflections above. Such transformation is complex and yet possible with the right support—with multiple, varied opportunities to make meaning and a safe place to do it, the teacher leaders in these cohorts are clearly able to describe how they learned about themselves as leaders. The common themes that emerged from both cohorts responding to somewhat different prompts about leadership development lend credence to the importance of designing transformational learning opportunities for women leaders.

Implications for Transformational Learning and Leadership Development

The leadership development described by these participants closely reflects the dimensions of transformational learning posited by Baxter Magolda (1998) and Brooks (2000). Within similar structures for reflection on learning about leadership, women leaders in both cohorts described constructing knowledge about themselves as leaders; gaining integrity as they balanced personal and professional needs and reconciling their beliefs with their colleagues' beliefs through debate and dialogue. They noted the power and importance of interdependence, while still finding their voices by stating their beliefs and taking action, and they gained a leader's identity at their schools, districts, and beyond.

The purpose of the study was to use theories of transformational learning to better understand how women, particularly women of color, experience learning about leadership in graduate school. The cross-case analysis shows evidence that adult learners, in this case, primarily women of color, engaged in an iterative cycle of reflection and meaning-making about their roles as leaders. Connecting reflection to action occurred within the framework of graduate education programs designed to support leadership development.

A more deliberate use of transformational learning pedagogy has potential to support and sustain leaders through their professional transition into more visible, powerful roles in schools. Here are some recommendations designers of graduate pedagogy that reflect the tenets of transformational learning:

1. Provide systematic instruction that supports focused, applied reflection and critique.

Participants described a range of work and life experiences that they now characterize as "leadership." Women need a safe learning environment in which they can use structured, narrative processes to re-define themselves as leaders. We believe that reflection and action are iterative, that each informs the other as adult learners take new actions as leaders in their schools. Both written narratives in the form of journals and opportunities for dialogue with other students are important curricular elements.

Such developmental frameworks encourage women (and men) to engage in reframing advocacy for children into the

language of leadership. As we discussed earlier, graduate pedagogy must create opportunities for transformation of one's worldview. Brooks (2000) defines transformational learning as "learning that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learners' sense of themselves, their worldviews, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future" (p. 140). Brooks (2000) asserts that transformational learning for women often involves narrative processes in which women share stories in a safe context that allows them to claim their own voices. If conceptions of leadership include advocacy for the historically under-served, the field of leadership will be stronger and more compassionate.

2. Support multiple opportunities to rehearse leadership: articulating beliefs, practicing collaboration, and speaking out on behalf of one's self and others.

Structuring dialogue into the curriculum reflects its power in the workplace. One teacher, for example, described the healing power of dialogue with her fellow teachers:

> Honesty and healing happen quite simply, thanks to the alchemical powers of the human soul. When I, with 30 years of teaching experience, speak openly about the fact that I still approach each new class with trepidation, younger faculty tell me that this makes their own fears seem more natural—and thus easier to transcend—and a rich dialogue about the teacher's selfhood often ensues.

Structured, purposeful dialogue creates opportunities for emerging leaders to rehearse in a safe setting. As cohort members tested their newly developed knowledge within their workplace, they gained confidence in their own thinking. This mid-career teacher could see her confidence growing when she observed: "I find myself willing to take on more risk and uncertainty in areas beyond our specific inquiry project." Faculty can create a variety of opportunities for their adult students to make meaning of their lived experiences through dialogue.

3. Integrate informational and transformational pedagogy.

As we indicated at the outset of the article, graduate education involves both informational and transformational learning. Many programs offer only informational learning, however, providing new material without attention to context and position, culture, and life experience. Both developmental theories would suggest that students also need opportunities to use that information to reflect on their experience and construct knowledge that synthesizes new information with their personal and professional experiences. The elements of transformational pedagogy described here offer educational leadership faculty ways to restructure coursework and program design and heighten the potential for women of color to move into positional leadership. Many of the elements listed by Baxter Magolda (1998) as most supportive of self-authorship were listed in the examples of adult instructional strategies valued by participants. These included respect for individual thinking, deliberate use of processes and structures for exploration of multiple perspectives and opportunities to construct one's own perspective.

Teacher leaders demonstrated "informational learning," that is, greater knowledge about teacher leadership actions, how schools are governed, local

and national reform efforts, and a clearer understanding of what social and cultural constructs limit student achievement. These teachers took action at their school sites: they designed curricular, programmatic, and assessment structures in their schools to directly address the lowest achieving student populations. Teacher leaders moved into more public efforts to advocate for students while they engaged in "transformational learning" such as reflection, small group processes, interpretations of different theories and philosophies, and decision-making about practice based on evidence. Participants reported the influence of external forces on their identity as well as the need to balance external forces and experiences with internal identity. Teacher leaders link their own experiences as learners with their passion for the changes they seek for their students and colleagues. Elements found to be most supportive of transformational learning were consistent with several of Drago-Severson's (2004) recommendations for learning-oriented school leadership: teaming with colleagues, providing opportunities for leadership and engaging in collegial inquiry.

Finally, there are important individual lessons that we, as authors and professors, have learned about our own pedagogical practice. Our experiences working with women as leaders and in master's degree programs ground our understanding of the power of reflection (see Stevens and Cooper, 2009) and have led us to important insights. First, it is important to be very explicit with learners about how powerful their own transformations can be. Having observed transformational processes in our adult learners over the course of their graduate education, we now clearly understand the potential bound up in the practices we describe. Making these possibilities clear to learners is extremely important, for they are traveling a path that is not clearly marked. For them, the destination is fuzzy at best. Second, learners need to clearly understand the multiple dimensions of knowledge construction they undertake as they negotiate their graduate education. Often we engage learners in activities that are supported by powerful theories of transformational learning, but don't make these understandings clear to our learners. We don't say, "You are now engaged in knowledge construction," and then explicate exactly what we are asking them to do. Making these practices much more transparent will help learners connect theory to practice and to understand why they are being asked to reflect in particular ways. Third, much growth and development depends not only on understanding the purpose of particular pedagogical practices, but on believing that one is a leader. These women need to claim their power as leaders, owning that role within their organizations. Naming our students as leaders helps them to see themselves in new ways that foster transformational learning, our ultimate goal.

Conclusion

A transformational curriculum addresses the call to improve higher education's charge to fully support adult development and the development of school leaders who have the maturity to lead amid complex social, economic, political and cultural contexts. "Self-authorship" is a critical element in leadership development. When teacher leaders know their own minds and have confidence in both their tacit and formal knowledge, they can be effective decision-makers and full participants in

organizations that are truly democratic. Graduate education must frame experiences and support so participants can recognize and reconcile multiple perspectives, find ways to balance internal and external forces that influence their thinking, and clarify their beliefs about how they do lead. Their public stance will then reflect a richer and deeper sense of self as leaders who have overcome "pathologies of silence" (Shields, 2004).

Educational leadership is a field that cries out for qualified candidates. A leadership pedagogy that is transformative and nurtures self-authorship is particularly supportive of women of color. They are least likely to see themselves reflected in positional leadership and need to recognize their work as leadership. Deliberate and systematic construction of knowledge allows women to see themselves as leaders who can take action on their own behalf and for their clients. Positional leaders, both women and men, can also deepen their practice by making different assumptions about what leadership is and who can lead. It is essential that women of color are not only recognized as qualified leaders, but that the multiple perspectives of leadership they bring to the profession help transform the way schools are led.

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