Organizational Learning in Schools Pursuing Social Justice

Fostering Educational Entrepreneurship and Boundary Spanning

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Abstract

The field of socially just educational leadership is focused on promoting improvements in the teaching and learning environment as demonstrated by student learning gains, particularly for traditionally marginalized students. The field has identified priorities (i.e., school improvement, democratic community, and social justice) and steps to pursue these priorities (specific strategies school leaders can take and conditions they can foster). Building on this literature, this article examines organizational learning in school communities that claim to be pursuing these priorities. It argues that organizational learning is a lens for socially just educational leaders to link theory with practice and to shift their focus from the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individuals to the communities of practice within schools. It first describes a theoretical framework for examining organizational learning in schools, then analyzes two school settings illustrating organizational learning in educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning. It concludes with a discussion of the implications this has for the broader field of socially just educational leadership.

The field of socially just educational leadership is focused on promoting improvements in the teaching and learning environment as demonstrated by student learning gains, particularly for traditionally marginalized students. This

field emphasizes three primary concerns for school leaders in general and principals in particular: school improvement (the principal as the instructional leader), democratic community (the principal as a community builder), and social justice (the principal as a moral steward; Murphy, 2002). The field explicitly links theory and practice, as Theoharis (2007) demonstrates in defining this leadership:

> [Social justice school leaders] make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. Thus, inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and other students traditionally segregated in schools are also necessitated by this definition. (p. 223)

Conceptualizing social justice leadership, in form, blends the three dimensions of the tripartite model: the school leader's moral stewardship guides his or her focus on building school community and instructional leadership (Starratt, 2003). Theoharis (2007) proceeds to point toward practical strategies to enact this definition: raising student achievement, improving school structures, building staff capacity, and strengthening the school culture.

Empirical studies illuminate these practical strategies. For instance, school leaders drive the school toward structures supporting student achievement: strong professional communities, a student-centered learning climate, an aligned and demanding curriculum accompanied by student supports, and robust ties of the school to parents and the community (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). Conditions that promote school improvement include a common instructional vision, resources and a culture conducive to instructional improvement, individual and collective supports for teacher formation, and shared responsibility for student learning (Spillane & Louis, 2002). These conditions imply a collective, not an individual, approach to school improvement. For instance, having a common instructional vision or sharing responsibility for student learning implies that the school community, not just an individual school leader (such as the principal), shares responsible for social justice leadership.

In these ways the field of socially just educational leadership has identified priorities (i.e., school improvement, democratic community, and social justice) as well as steps to pursue these priorities (i.e., specific strategies school leaders can take and conditions they can foster). This article builds on this literature by examining organizational learning in school communities that claim to be pursuing these priorities.

Organizational learning provides a lens for socially just educational leaders to link theory with practice and to shift their focus from the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individuals to the communities of practice within schools. This article explores organizational learning within two school communities that are explicitly pursuing social justice by effectively serving traditionally marginalized

students. The guiding question is: How does organizational learning affect the pursuit of social justice in school communities? First, I describe a theoretical framework for examining organizational learning in schools. Next, I present the context and data from two school settings illustrating organizational learning in two areas: educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning. Finally, I discuss the implications of this to the broader field of socially just educational leadership.

Organizational Learning

School leaders promote organizational learning by placing a priority on learning across all members of the school community, fostering a culture of inquiry, and supporting tools and processes to disseminate knowledge (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Organizational learning emphasizes change at a system, rather than an individual, level (Cook & Yanow, 1993). Cook and Yanow describe organizational learning as learning done by the organization as a whole:

> [T]his phenomenon is neither conceptually nor empirically the same as either learning by individuals or individuals learning within organizations . . . [T]o understand organizational learning as learning by organizations, theorists and practitioners need to see organizations not primarily as cognitive entities but as cultural ones . . . Organizations, being human groups, are more readily understood as being like tribes than . . . individuals or brains. (pp. 374, 383)

This perspective fits school communities, in which cultural dimensions are highly influential (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Erickson, 2007; Pink & Noblit, 2005). A cultural perspective on organizational learning distinguishes how organizations act from how individuals act. Organizations do things that individuals cannot. An individual can play an instrument, but it takes a symphony to perform a concert.

A cultural perspective toward organizational learning emphasizes the embedded nature of knowledge, as Cook and Yanow (1993) explain: "The know-how . . . resides in the organization as a whole, not in individual members of the organization. . . . [W]hen a group acquires the know-how associated with its ability to carry out its collective activities, that constitutes organizational learning" (p. 378). They continue by defining organizational culture as the "values, beliefs, and feelings, together with the artifacts of their expression and transmission (such as myths, symbols, metaphors, rituals), that are created, inherited, shared, and transmitted within one group of people and that, in part, distinguish that group from others" (p. 379). Finally, they distinguish this cultural perspective from a cognitive one: "What is known is known . . . only by several individuals acting 'in congregate'. . . . The focus here is less on what goes on inside the heads of individuals and more on what goes on in the practices of the group" (pp. 384, 385).

This cultural perspective toward organizational learning is grounded in social learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This theory describes experiences

of meaning as inextricably bound up with our sense of identity (who we are and where we come from), community (where we see ourselves belonging), and practice (what we do). Much of what we learn occurs in communities of practice, within which we are mutually engaged in a common enterprise and with a shared repertoire of routines, language, symbols, and mores (Wenger, 1998, pp. 72–85). Communities of practice are pervasive, integral to our daily lives, and frequently informal in structure. We belong to some in peripheral manners and others more centrally. Wenger asserts these are central to learning because "the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice" (p. 6). Wenger holds that this social theory of learning has clear implications for organizations: "For *organizations*, it means that learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected communities of practice through which an organizations knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valuable as an organization" (p. 8).

Governance Structures Affecting Organizational Learning

Taking this cultural approach to organizational learning, my focus in this study is on governance structures, which influence organizational learning in general and communities of practice in particular. Governing bodies behave as institutional actors influencing systemic reform (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). As institutional actors, governing bodies (typically districts, but here independent school-governing boards) potentially play powerful roles in promoting systemic reform. Rorrer et al. describe four essential roles: ensuring instructional leadership, reorienting the organization, establishing policy coherence, and maintaining a mission focus. School governing boards are responsible for defining an organization's mission, establishing its policies and control mechanisms, allocating power, determining decision-making processes, and establishing organizational culture and structures that facilitate accomplishment of the organization's goals (McCormick, Barnett, Alavi, & Newcombe, 2006). In this case, the institutional actors are the independent school-governing boards and the organizations are schools. In this study, I find that the boards play important roles in facilitating organizational learning within school communities.

I focus on organizational learning in the areas of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning, two areas that seem to be closely linked to how school communities expand their support of traditionally marginalized students. Entrepreneurs tend to be highly motivated, oriented toward results and problem solving, hold themselves responsible for their actions and the outcomes, and tolerate ambiguity (Hassel, 2008; Kao, Kao, & Kao, 2002; Martin & Osberg, 2007). They see opportunities and act on them in novel, creative manners. Entrepreneurs working to create, design, and innovate in ways that are fundamentally oriented toward social goals (as opposed to simply promoting profit) are social entrepreneurs (Drayton, 2006; Martin & Osberg, 2007). Educational entrepreneurship refers to social entrepreneurship in schools (Hess, 2008). Educational

entrepreneurs are described as ambitious, resourceful, strategic, and results oriented, and are increasingly recognized as playing a leadership role in effective school improvement reforms (Fullan, 1997; Hess, 2008; Levine, 2006). Educational entrepreneurship is central to successfully balancing what Bryk (2008) characterizes as two dimensions of school reform that are in tension: "We are striving to make schools more ambitious in what they accomplish with students and simultaneously we have to make the processes more efficient to accomplish this" (p. 140). Bryk and Gomez (2008) assert that educational entrepreneurship can promote research and design that "transform[s] the ways we develop and support school professionals; the tools, materials, ideas, and evidence with which they work; and the instructional opportunities we afford students for learning" (p. 182).

Boundary-spanning individuals, Tushman and Scanlan (1981) explain, are "internal communication stars (that is, they are frequently consulted on work related matters) . . . who have substantial communication with areas outside their unit" (p. 83). Boundary spanners play important linking roles within and among organizations (Keller & Holland, 1975) and are emerging as important players in systemic reform within and across schools (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Honig, 2006). Boundary spanners play important communicative roles within and across communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

In sum, this study considers how the governing boards, as institutional actors, promote organizational learning in the realms of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning, and how such organizational learning affects the pursuit of social justice in these schools. The emphasis is learning at the organization level, not the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual members. To consider this, let us turn to consider the specific contexts of these organizations.

Catholic Schools Promoting Social Justice

The school sites I examine in this study are urban Catholic elementary schools. Such school communities might seem unlikely sites in the field of socially just educational leadership. Since the mid-twentieth century, Catholic schools have significantly reduced access to traditionally marginalized students, running counter to the field of socially just educational leadership (Scanlan, 2008). Yet select schools in this sector, such as some urban elementary schools, that frequently enroll a majority of culturally and linguistically diverse students have created innovative structures of governance and financing that run counter to these trends (Hamilton, 2008; O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2009). To the degree that such Catholic schools in fact (and not just allegedly) increase their accessibility to traditionally marginalized students, they benefit the broader public interest by serving a population of students that reflect the natural proportions of the population. Two schools that have these innovative structures of governance and financing are the subject of this study.

Regarding governance, various types of governing boards have different levels of authority in Catholic schools (Haney, O'Brien, & Sheehan, 2009). Elementary school boards typically have quite restricted authority, serving primarily in an advisory capacity to the pastor (Convey & Haney, 1997). Regarding financing, parish elementary schools have traditionally been financed by a combination of subsidies from the parish communities to which they belonged and tuition payments from students who attended (Walch, 1996). By design, tuition and parish-subsidy driven funding mechanisms orient schools to serve communities with a moderate level of socioeconomic stability. These two dimensions—governing and financing structures—are closely linked. Specifically, Catholic elementary schools that have created alternate financing structures (and reduced or eliminated their dependence on tuition and parish subsidy) tend to have stronger board authority (Hamilton, 2008). This is the case with the two schools within this study: both have corporate boards that are jurisdictional and are primarily funded through donations and grants. School communities such as these are rich contexts in which to explore organizational learning because they are attempting to fundamentally redefine their structures.

Organizational Learning in Juan Diego and St. Malachy

I now turn to apply this theory of organizational learning to two school contexts: St. Malachy and Juan Diego (all names are pseudonyms). I conducted case studies of each of these two school communities separately. For this article, I draw upon data from these case studies that illustrate organizational learning in the areas of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning, two dimensions that emerged as particularly strong components in the pursuit of social justice within these communities.

For this article, I draw from observational, interview, and archival data. I spent between 20 to 25 hours of observation in each school community over the course of a school year and conducted between 15 to 18 interviews with personnel, including school administrators, board members, and faculty. All interviews were transcribed and coded using constant comparative methodology (Maxwell, 1998). To triangulate information, I also analyze archival documentation regarding accounts of the school history, demographic enrollment, student attendance and academic achievement data, school mission and vision statements, and strategic plans. This article analyzes organizational learning affecting the pursuit of social justice in Juan Diego and St. Malachy. (For further reports of these schools, see Scanlan, 2010; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009).

The Pursuit of Social Justice in Juan Diego and St. Malachy

St. Malachy and Juan Diego both espouse commitments to the three central priorities in the field of socially just educational leadership: school improvement, democratic community, and social justice. These priorities are entwined. The

schools pursue social justice through missions to be accessible, welcoming, and educationally effective for students of low socioeconomic status and students of color. For instance, Juan Diego's mission emphasizes being "community-based" and "financially accessible." St. Malachy's mission speaks of valuing and protecting the cultural diversity and uniqueness of each person in our communities, and its philosophy is to provide "quality, Catholic educational opportunities to any and all students who choose to partake—including students from diverse family, financial and cultural backgrounds." Both schools claim strong student learning outcomes (as reflected by strong standardized test scores, high student attendance and graduation rates, and low levels of discipline problems). They rely on these to attract financial support from the broader communities.

The governance and financing structures in the schools enable them to meet their missions. Juan Diego and St. Malachy were formed with the expressed intent to provide educational opportunities to students underserved by Catholic schools. Juan Diego was formed in the late 1990s through the efforts of community members dissatisfied with the lack of accessible Catholic school options for the growing population of Latino students in the area. In the early 1990s, St. Malachy was established as a consolidated school from five parish-based schools. These schools, which had traditional governance structures (weak boards with a pastor retaining primary authority) and financing models (based on a combination of tuition payments and parish subsidies), were experiencing declining enrollments and rising expenses. Their viability to maintain operation was in doubt, as they were ill-equipped to respond to the shifting demographics in their school communities (e.g., fewer Catholics, more families of lower socioeconomic status).

Establishing themselves as independent nonprofit corporations, both Juan Diego and St. Malachy are governed by boards of directors. As suggested earlier, this distinguishes these Catholic elementary schools from traditional governance structure that restrict the roles of boards to advisory and place final authority for decision making with the parish priest. Governance authority in both schools is distributed across diverse sectors of the general community. Representatives from the Catholic community (e.g., pastors from founding [St. Malachy] or local [Juan Diego] parishes, representatives from the central diocesan school office) sit alongside leaders from the local business community and educators from all levels (elementary, secondary, and higher education). The boards design and approve the budget, develop long-range planning for school viability, and hire and supervise the chief administrator of the school.

Neither school relies on parish subsidies and tuition support for financing. Instead, each has crafted a unique financing model heavily dependent upon development efforts and board support. Juan Diego draws only 14% of its funding from tuition and 86% from various fundraising efforts. At St. Malachy, less than 50% of the funding comes from tuition. In both schools, two in three students qualifies for free or reduced lunch and the vast majority of families receive tuition assistance.

Juan Diego and St. Malachy both serve students that are culturally and linguistically diverse. At the time of this study, 85% of the students in Juan Diego identified as Latino and over half came from homes in which Spanish was the primary language spoken. Juan Diego is not pluralistic religiously, as the vast majority of families (90%) in the school identify as Catholic. Juan Diego was created as a dual-immersion language model supporting both Spanish and English literacy across a linguistically heterogeneous student body. At St. Malachy more than one-third (36%) of the students are labeled as English language learners, primarily bilingual in Spanish. Roughly two-thirds of the students are African American or Hispanic, and another 10% are multiracial. Roughly one in six students is White. Religiously, an overwhelming majority (97%) of members of St. Malachy school community identify as Christian, but only a minority (47%) identify as Catholic.

In sum, both St. Malachy and Juan Diego are accessible to students traditionally marginalized by schools: culturally and linguistically diverse students and students of low socioeconomic status. In comparison to neighboring schools, the population of students in these schools was comparable to local public schools. In comparison to neighboring Catholic schools, St. Malachy and Juan Diego served significantly higher numbers of these students. In these ways, St. Malachy and Juan Diego reflect novel ways of being Catholic schools. These school communities engaged in learning how to educate significant numbers of students who are typically present in only moderate or minimal numbers in Catholic elementary schools. Their governance and financing structures seemed to promote particular types of organizational learning that enabled this pursuit: educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning, to which we now turn.

Organizational Learning in Educational Entrepreneurship: Juan Diego

As social entrepreneurs reduce societal inequities by creating new opportunities, educational entrepreneurs wrestle educational inequities by reducing inefficiencies, attaining new resources, and innovating. The inception and design of Juan Diego provide examples of a school community learning practices of educational entrepreneurship.

School Inception. Sister Rose, a founding board member, describes a "motley group of people" from a local Latino parish, a college, and public and private schools that began gathering in the mid-1990s to discuss the feasibility of starting a new school to respond to the failure of Catholic schools to adequately serve the Latino communities in the area. This design phase illustrates several features of the organizational culture of this school that were present in the inception. Founders focused on redressing a particular social inequity: poor educational opportunities for Latino students in this urban area. They expressed commitment to creating a school blending a particular religious and cultural identity:

as another board member reported, "It was more for the Hispanic culture. They were dropping away from the church a mile a minute. We thought Juan Diego would be close to 100% Catholic."

Founders were skeptical toward traditional approaches to governance and financing. They decided to incorporate with an independent board of directors to create a level of independence that other Catholic schools lacked. Sister Rose explained: "We wanted our own pay scale and we wanted our own calendar. . . . We wanted a longer school day, a longer school year, and to pay our teachers a decent salary." Several founders described it as not following a model, but essentially creating its own. Undertaking a feasibility study allowed the planning committee to systematically design a financing structure not driven by tuition to ensure accessibility to students from low socioeconomic status. The design depended on building a broad base of support within the community for this type of school, including deliberate outreach to businesses, community-based organizations, and a local university. In this way, the planning committee (which evolved into the governing board) was entrepreneurial by expanding the pool of resources. In these ways the inception of Juan Diego exhibited educational entrepreneurship.

Significantly, this entrepreneurial design in financing was not only present at the inception of the school, nor was it solely contained in the minds of select individuals on the board. Rather, this became infused into the culture of the school. For instance, the school president frequently described the importance of communicating to diverse community members the educational value that Juan Diego was providing, and of persuading them to financially support the school through donations. Students and teachers in the school were actively engaged in this messaging as well. Students participated by presenting materials at lunch meetings of potential donors, and teachers accommodated their frequent visits to classrooms to witness the teaching and learning environment. Cultivating a breadth of support from the community for the school was part of the organizational culture in Juan Diego, recognized as a responsibility shared by all the members of the school.

School Design. A second significant illustration of organizational learning in educational entrepreneurship is the school design. Juan Diego chose an innovative approach to bilingual education in a two-way immersion model. This model creates classrooms that are linguistically balanced between native English-speaking and native Spanish-speaking students to foster bilingualism for all. An extensive body of research supports the model. This design choice illustrates entrepreneurial thinking because it created an incentive to bring together students who are typically educated separately, recasting a problem—how to educate both native English-speaking and native Spanish-speaking students—into an opportunity to create new value: bilingualism.

This design feature illustrates organizational learning because bilingualism is infused throughout the school, not just supported by discrete individuals. For

instance, all teachers in Juan Diego are bilingual, and their curriculum requires that they communicate a scope and sequence across grade levels to support the students as they develop both their content knowledge and their language acquisition. At the time of this research, the teachers were engaged in extensive meetings refining this curriculum, which illustrates its dynamic and evolutionary nature. Another example of this infusion is that parents are encouraged to grow bilingually. Parent meetings, which previously had been separate for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families, are now facilitated (frequently by the principal) in both languages. As it became apparent that the structure of separate meetings inhibited cross-cultural relationships amongst families, the principal changed this structure.

In addition to the two-way immersion model, Juan Diego showed entrepreneurial thinking in other aspects of its school design. While strong academic expectations and bi-literacy are emphasized throughout the school and at all grade levels, supports for these expectations include small class sizes and longer periods of time devoted to reading during the academic day. All students also attend an extended period after the academic portion of their school day during which school staff members, along with representatives from community organizations, provide after-school programming in the arts. These structures allow teachers to more effectively address academic content, and students to access other integral components to their learning.

Juan Diego also created structures to support student learning beyond the school. For instance, caregiver engagement was recognized as an essential component to the success of students in the school. The principal, teachers, and staff all engaged in various efforts to facilitate meaningful engagement for these caregivers. For example, teachers described having a caregiver from each family come into the classrooms to present lessons to the students. These lessons ranged from stories about their professional lives (ranging from an attorney to a janitor) to life histories to skills and hobbies. The principal described small group meetings as well as one-on-one conversations with caregivers to support them in providing their children the structures at home to complete homework. A full-time graduate-support director was dedicated to spending time working with students and their families after leaving Juan Diego and moving into middle school and high school.

As these examples illustrate, the school design reflected multiple and overlapping supports for student learning that extended beyond the school. These design features illustrate educational entrepreneurship in that they addressed problems (i.e., low levels of caregiver engagement, lack of learning supports outside of school) through creative approaches and expanded resources. These illustrate organizational learning because they were embedded throughout the school community, not restricted to specific individuals (e.g., not just the purview of a home-school liaison).

Organizational Learning in Boundary Spanning: St. Malachy

A second dimension of organizational learning that affects the pursuit of social justice in schools is practices of boundary spanning. Within elementary schools, discrete communities of practice typically exist with strong internal communication links. For instance, teachers are often closely connected with colleagues at similar grade levels. Boundary spanning refers to communication that bridges these communities, such as teachers working together across grade levels (e.g., the second-grade teacher working with the sixth-grade teacher). In St. Malachy, the mission development and culturally responsive teaching show a school community learning practices of boundary spanning that affect its pursuit of social justice.

Mission Development. As a consolidated school community, St. Malachy brought five previously separate school communities to learn to work together around a common mission. This entailed a particularly tricky type of organizational learning. Cultural and historical differences as well as geographical divides placed significant hurdles in the way of collaboration. A board comprised of individuals from each of five founding parish communities and members from the broader community formed, uniting around the mission as point of common ground.

At the most basic level, this mission was about institutional survival. Each of the separate schools, to varying degrees, was vulnerable to failure by remaining isolated, but together the schools had an opportunity to survive. The shift into a consolidated school run by an independent board required learning how to be a new type of school. While the original parish schools had missions to serve their individual church communities, the mission of St. Malachy, as one of the founding board members (and a pastor at one of the churches) described, was different: "I would say that probably the most significant change [by consolidating] . . . was the school becomes more a community school for children in the neighborhood—not necessarily for children who were members of the various parishes that founded the community." Thus, the boundary spanning in the mission development moved the school to look beyond dwindling populations in separate parishes and to the broader community in the area.

This boundary spanning reflected organizational learning in that the various members of the school community needed to embrace this new mission. The mission commits to cultural diversity, expressing value for the uniqueness of each person. This placed demands on all members, from students to teachers to administration to families. For instance, when the school formed, students and caregivers from different parishes needed to find ways to come together in a common building as one community. Rituals, such as having priests from each of the founding parishes lead worship services, helped create this unity. A new school name and, several years later, a new school building contributed to this as well.

Learning to span boundaries was perhaps most difficult for the adults from the founding parishes. Several teachers described the process of learning to work

together as ongoing and at times difficult. A quote from the current principal described this:

> In this school there's a lot of trauma is [our] short history. It was borne out of crisis—these five schools—five parishes were informed in March that the following September that they would be a new school. So there was no time to plan; there was no time to mourn; there was no time to prepare. All of a sudden it was kind of like, "Let's form this stepfamily with five different families and all get along and play nice." And you had five different philosophies and different curriculums and different cultures and everything.

The lack of continuity in the principal reflects this turmoil: before the current principal, the school had weathered three different leaders in four years. Initially the school was split between two campuses (one serving students in grades K–4, the other serving students in grades 5–8). This created an additional barrier to boundary spanning.

In short, a key way in which St. Malachy learned to effectively pursue social justice involved coming to share a common mission of its new structure. This involved children and, more important, adults learning to work across formerly isolated communities of practice.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Environment. A second, related example of how St. Malachy learned to pursue social justice through boundary spanning was its crafting of a culturally responsive teaching and learning environment. In recent years, the student body at St. Malachy had shifted in several manners, enrolling more traditionally marginalized students each year. The principal described this:

> We have gotten progressively poorer. Our free and reduced lunch rate when I came was under 50%. I think it was about 44%. Now it's 67%. The percentage of students of color has risen: we were about 65–70% when I came, and now we're 85%. The Latino population has exploded: it was under—it was about 20%. It's 34% now.

Creating a culturally responsive teaching and learning community emerged as a pressing priority in this shifting context. To respond to this priority, the principal and board members drew upon her extensive relationships with colleagues across school sectors (to other Catholic as well as public schools), local educational organizations, and institutes of higher education. These led to creating an extensive antiracism training on the faculty, directly and proactively confronting the reality of a primarily White teaching staff working with families and students who were mainly of color. This opportunity was afforded from the relationships established amongst board members and a local agency to provide the training.

Significantly, this professional development in antiracism was not isolated to select members of the faculty or even to just the faculty. Rather, the board, staff, administration, and faculty were all involved in components of the training. This illustrates the organizational dimension of the learning. In addition, the training explicitly built the capacity of the participants to engage across communities of practice. For instance, it helped White teachers who had extensive experiences (personal and professional) working with people of color to work more closely with their White colleagues who had limited experiences in this regard.

Another dimension of the boundary spanning to create a culturally responsive teaching and learning environment involved responding to the increasing levels of linguistic diversity in St. Malachy. This involved hiring a bilingual secretary, a bilingual resource-support person, and several bilingual teachers in recent years. Many teachers described the importance of these supports to their work with the students and the families. As one (bilingual) teacher put it, the growing capacity of the school to accommodate Spanish-speaking families is an integral element to families choosing St. Malachy: "There is a support network for parents who don't speak the language. The information going home will be translated, and they can call the office and there's a Spanish-speaking person in the office. I think those sorts of things make a big difference." Becoming a welcoming school for Spanish-speaking students and families was a process in which the school as a whole—not just select individuals—were engaged.

A third example of the boundary spanning to create a culturally responsive teaching and learning environment is reflected in how St. Malachy tried to embrace its religiously pluralistic student body. Whereas some of the schools that consolidated to form St. Malachy had predominantly Catholic student bodies, others of these schools were predominantly non-Catholic. As St. Malachy became more established as its own school it grew increasingly pluralistic in this regard. As the principal described, "We have identified over 40 different congregations present in our school- Christian congregations. We also have a few Buddhists and a few Hindus—and a few other things that we're not sure what they are." Maintaining its identity as a Catholic school within this context has required learning to reach across these religious communities of practice. An example of these efforts is a special day of recognition that the school holds each year during which they invite religious leaders from all the faith communities to which St. Malachy students belong to come to school. "The children host them and give them a tour of the school," the principal explained. This serves as one example of the efforts to build relationships across denominational boundaries within the school community.

Organizational Learning in the Field of Socially Just Educational Leadership

At the outset of this article, I argued that the field of socially just educational leadership is concerned with pursuits of school improvement, democratic community,

and social justice. I proposed organizational learning, viewed as a sociocultural process, as a valuable lens through which to view these pursuits. I then presented evidence drawn from case studies of two schools to illustrate organizational learning in the areas of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning. In both St. Malachy and Juan Diego, the governance structures—namely, jurisdictional boards—play significant roles shaping the organizational culture that supported educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning.

Governance structures determine how decision-making authority is organized. Because these school communities were functionally run as nonprofit corporations, the boards distributed decision-making authority in ways that are uncommon in Catholic elementary schools. Directly responsible for the fiscal stability of their respective schools, these boards had strong incentives to create viable funding structures. Yet because they were fundamentally committed to the schools' missions to primarily serve traditionally marginalized students, the boards needed to align these funding structures in the schools' missions.

Educational entrepreneurship, as illustrated in the inception and design of Juan Diego, created this alignment. The school attracted a broad-based pool of supporters from the community willing to financially contribute to the school to allow it to pursue its mission. The mission of the school directly reflected the priorities of school improvement, democratic community, and social justice. In fact, these three priorities were integral for the niche that the school served: creating an educationally effective, bilingual school community prioritizing service to Latino students.

Educational entrepreneurship can signify applying the principles of social entrepreneurship to school settings, creating new opportunities to add value and solve educational problems. Educational entrepreneurship, however, frequently does *not* entail organizational learning. Examples of educational entrepreneurship often occur at the individual level. For example, Marla, a middle-school science teacher, might see her students as lacking in science skills and disengaged from the broader community in which the school is situated. Marla could respond by creating a project that teaches about watersheds. She might win a community grant focused on reducing storm water run-off to fund this project. Her students might then engage in stenciling sewer drains to alert the public that the contents flow into local streams and lakes and create signage for a local park describing the history of the watershed. A local university's biology department could then collaborate with Marla to create the lessons and present the material. As a result, Marla's students would emerge with a robust knowledge about specific science concepts and a deepened sense of engagement in their local community. This illustrates educational entrepreneurship as practices that occur in schools with some degree of regularity. What makes these practices *entrepreneurial* is that they address problems through innovative thinking and an influx of new resources. Here, the problem of low science skills and knowledge and a lack of engagement in the community were addressed by seeking new resources (e.g.,

grant funds, a local partnership) with innovative project design (e.g., stenciling the sewer drains, creating signage for the park).

The significant feature I point to in Juan Diego is how the *school community*, and not just an individual within the community, learned practices of educational entrepreneurship. The creation of the school and, more so, the design of the school reflect how practices of innovation permeate this school. From the two-way immersion design to the structures supporting a focus on academics during the school day to extending the learning beyond the school day, individuals throughout the school exhibited practices that resulted in expanding the resources to the school and seeing potential problems as opportunities for growth. Thus, to return to Cook and Yarrow's (1993) description, the organizational knowledge around educational entrepreneurship seemed to focus "less on what goes on inside the heads of individuals and more on what goes on in the practices of the group" (p. 385).

Learning practices of boundary spanning, as exhibited by the mission development and the cultivation of a culturally responsive teaching and learning environment within St. Malachy, was also a central dimension to the pursuit of social justice. Returning to the three priorities in the field of socially just educational leadership (i.e., school improvement, democratic community, and social justice) practices of boundary spanning are integral to each. In St. Malachy, people from different communities of practices needed to come together to create a mission focused on creating an effective educational community for traditionally marginalized students. Individuals needed to create new alliances in order to cultivate a teaching and learning environment responsive to an increasingly pluralistic student body across dimensions of race, language, and religion.

The boards, as institutional actors, supported and modeled the boundary spanning within St. Malachy. This support of the board was most direct to the principal, but also indirectly to the teachers and staff. The school principal played key bridging roles connecting the directors at the board level with the faculty and staff, communicating needs and expectations in both directions. In practical manners, such as organizing teachers to work across grade levels in student study teams or bringing community volunteers in to support academic enrichment, the principal modeled and scaffolded boundary-spanning structures. As with the educational entrepreneurship, the practices of boundary spanning in the areas of mission development and a culturally responsive school environment were not the purview of select individuals, but rather imbued into the organizational culture.

Although organizational learning in the areas of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning empowered the school communities of St. Malachy and Juan Diego in their pursuits of social justice, an important caveat to also consider is that these pursuits were far from straightforward, clean affairs. The extraordinary demands on each of these schools to maintain solvency allowed them to ignore significant dimensions of social justice education. Most glaringly,

they had underdeveloped (St. Malachy) or nonexistent (Juan Diego) models of special education service delivery. These tools were not being actively employed to correct this deficiency, pointing to limitations in their conceptualizations of social justice education. Thus, while key tools, educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning were not panaceas.

Implications and Conclusions

This analysis of organizational learning in practices of educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning in two Catholic elementary schools has implications for both scholarship and practice in the field of socially just educational leadership. Regarding scholarship, more research examining these and other dimensions of organizational learning is a pressing need. Such research needs to be grounded in explicit theoretical frameworks that move beyond articulating priorities of socially just educational leadership and identifying strategies and conditions that reflect this leadership. Theories of organizational learning hold promise for directing this scholarship to move more deeply into the specific dimensions of promoting change within the complicated organizations that schools are.

In addition, this research suggests that scholarship in the field of socially just educational leadership can be enriched by a nonparochial approach to school sectors. In the increasingly complicated universe of elementary and secondary schooling, "traditional public schools" share stage with a wide array of school options. Within the public sector students can often select schools beyond their neighborhood via open enrollment, school-wide magnet, and charter school options. And as St. Malachy and Juan Diego illustrate, within the private sector students are increasingly finding options that require minimal financial investment by way of tuition. Within this context, the field of socially just educational leadership might benefit from examining practices across school sectors. Legitimate concerns regarding the privatization of public schooling can have the unintended consequence of delimiting research in this field to a narrow range of schools.

Regarding practice, this research suggests that school communities that aspire to weave together their pursuits of school improvement, democratic community, and social justice will benefit from analyzing the structures that affect how their organizations learn. This research suggests such analysis should be grounded in a cultural perspective toward organizational learning. This perspective holds communities of practice as central to promoting growth and change for both individuals and organizations (Wenger, 1998), and distinguishing organizational from individual learning emphasizes that by working together in groups (communities of practice) individuals create shared meanings (Cook & Yanow, 1993). This research further implies that structures that promote organizational learning of practices in educational entrepreneurship and boundary spanning may contribute to these pursuits.

In conclusion, organizational learning can directly scaffold the pursuit of social justice in school communities. We will build the capacity of school communities to be more ambitious and efficient in promoting excellence and equity for traditionally marginalized students by considering how to promote and target organizational learning within them.

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