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DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Examining Issues of Race, Power, and Inequality

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The distributed perspective on school leadership and management has garnered substantial attention from scholars and educational practitioners over the past decade (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004).¹ Three recent edited volumes (Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009; Spillane & Diamond 2007), multiple books (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Coldren, 2011), and multiple English language journal special issues² have been published on distributed leadership in the past several years. In addition, major school reform and funding initiatives have used distributed leadership in various forms as a framework (Mayrowetz, 2008).

This perspective has emerged in the context of efforts to redefine power relationships in school organizations including the emergence of standards-based reforms, efforts to recouple the policy environment and instruction (Diamond, 2007; Hallett, 2010), and the increasing role of private and non-governmental providers within the education sector (Burch, 2009; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Likewise, rapid demographic shifts in the U.S. school population and differences in educational outcomes among racial, ethnic, class, and linguistic groups has led to a growing concern about achievement disparities among these groups. In the past decade, both the No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top competition have placed achievement gaps at the forefront of the education reform agenda.³ Therefore, the distributed perspective has become important at the same time that efforts to transform power relationships in educational organizations and inequality in educational outcomes are playing a central role in the education landscape.

Despite emerging in a period of contested power relationships in schools and growing concerns over educational inequality, scholars using the distributed perspective have been critiqued for not sufficiently attending to these issues in their work (Flessa 2009; Harris, 2009; Hartley 2009; Mayrowetz, 2008). For example, Flessa (2009) argues that work using the distributed leadership frame has mostly failed to engage work on educational micropolitics and thus underplayed the role of conflict in leadership practice and organizational change (also see Mayrowetz, 2008). Likewise, Hartley (2009) argues that in distributed leadership research “power is under-theorized, and

there is an implicitly functionalist tenor” (p. 147). Others argue that this perspective should emphasize the implications of distributed leadership for educational outcomes or at least its impact on school organizations (Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009).

Given the rapid diffusion of distributed leadership in research, policy, and practice circles, and the critiques that have been raised about its limited focus on issues of power and inequality, it is important to take stock of the work in the area to date, consider how it has addressed issues of power and inequality, and reflect on future directions for distributed leadership research that address these issues more directly. Therefore, in this chapter I first provide an overview of the conceptual foundations of the distributed perspective and selectively review the literature in this area. Second, I discuss how work using the distributed perspective as a conceptual model has discussed issues of race, power, and outcome inequality. I argue that this work has downplayed (but not ignored) these issues. Third, I suggest ways that researchers using this perspective can more effectively address issues of power and inequality and I propose directions for future research.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: A SELECTIVE REVIEW⁴

Dating the first known instance of any research concept is tricky. For example, at least one author attributes the first written instance of distributed leadership to the counsel to Moses in the book of Exodus “This is too heavy for though cannot bear it alone” (MacBeath, 2009, p. 41). Others date the use of the concept variously to the 1920s (Gronn, 2009; Harris, 2009) and the 1950s (Leithwood et al., 2009). However, contemporary use of the distributed perspective in educational research can arguably be dated to the beginning of this century as an outgrowth of the work of James Spillane and colleagues at Northwestern University (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond 2001, 2004) and Peter Gronn in Australia (2002, 2004).⁵ This work formed the conceptual basis for much of the current work on distributed leadership (Mayrowetz, 2008).⁶

In part, the distributed perspective developed in response to perceived limitations in previous leadership research. Much of that previous work focused on leadership positions (e.g. principals or CEOs), the people in those positions, their traits (Stogdill 1948, 1950; Yukl, 1981), and later their behaviors (Hemphill & Coons, 1950; Kunz & Hoy, 1976; Mouton & Blake, 1984; White & Lippitt, 1960; Likert, 1967). This work profoundly shaped much of the research on leadership and pushed it toward an emphasis on individual leaders. Moving beyond the focus on individual leaders at the top of the organizational hierarchy, other work showed that coalitions of other actors (March & Olsen, 1984) and people such as teachers and specialists also played leadership roles in schools (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Smylie & Denny, 1990).

Recognizing that people do not exist in a vacuum, subsequent work sought to understand the leadership *context* arguing that leadership is an organizational rather than an individual quality (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) and that leadership was *contingent*, to a certain extent, on context (Fielder, 1973). For example, scholars argued that how one most effectively leads an organization would depend on the nature of the leadership task and the maturity and expertise of the staff (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Here, context was seen as a backdrop for leadership that led individual leaders to engage in certain types of behavior (Spillane et al., 2004).

Finally, work using a cognitive perspective sought to understand how leaders and followers think about their work and how this shapes their behaviors (Spillane, Reiser,

& Reimer, 2002; Weick, 1979, 1995) while institutional theorists emphasized that these processes were situated in institutional sectors and were enabled and constrained by the logic of those contexts (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

This prior work considered individuals, context, and cognition. However, each approach had limitations with regard to the integration of these components. Work that focused on individuals in leadership positions (and work that emphasized leaders' cognition) often failed to take context into consideration and attended too little to the role of social interaction, thus providing an incomplete account of leadership. Work that sought to consider context, tended to treat it as a backdrop or container for leadership but did not to fully appreciate how context plays a constitutive role in leadership practice (Spillane et al., 2004).

The distributed perspective draws upon and extends previous leadership research. Since it originally appeared in the literature, it has been applied in at least four primary ways—as a conceptual lens, as shared or democratic leadership, as effective leadership, and normatively as type of leadership.⁷ I briefly discuss each of these uses below.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS A CONCEPTUAL LENS

While this perspective has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond 2007; Spillane et al., 2001, 2004), I highlight some of its key components here. Drawing on distributed cognition and activity theory, the distributed perspective integrates leaders, followers, and the situation as core elements of leadership practice. In doing so, the focus is on leadership activity as it occurs in particular contexts and this leadership activity is the unit of analysis (Spillane et al., 2004). Leadership itself is seen as an influence relationship and is tied to the core work of the organization (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). It emerges through *interactions* among leaders and followers in particular situations.

This perspective involves two related aspects—the *leader plus* aspect (which acknowledges that leadership involves multiple actors) and the *practice* aspect (which views leadership as an interactive web of leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation including tools and organizational routines)⁸ (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The leader plus aspect focuses on *who leads* and is the component of distributed perspective that has received the most research and practice-based attention. Research using this perspective demonstrates that leadership does not reside solely with principals or other formally designated leaders in schools and that it involves multiple individuals including teachers, professional staff members, and subject area specialists, among others (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2009). How leadership is distributed depends on multiple components of the situation including the subject matter (Burch 2007; Burch & Spillane, 2003; Sherer 2007), school type (Portin, Schnieder, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003), school size (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003), and leadership function (Spillane, 2006). It is likely the focus on the leader plus aspect that has led some to overlook the practice aspect and assume that the distributed perspective is equal to shared or democratic leadership.

The practice aspect of leadership focuses on the interactions among leaders, followers, and the situation. Leaders are the constellation of people who seek to influence instructional practices in schools. Previous work using the practice aspect has detailed how these leaders work together to co-construct leadership practice (Spillane, Diamond,

& Jita, 2003; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005). For example, three types of distribution have been identified in previous work: collaborative distribution in which leaders work together to carry out a leadership routine in the same time and place, collective distribution in which leaders work interdependently but separately, and coordinated distribution in which leadership activities are performed in a particular sequence (Spillane, 2006). These types of distribution highlight cases in which leaders are pushing in the same direction, however, as Spillane (2008) points out, “A distributed perspective on leadership does not privilege situations in which leaders are pulling together over situations in which they are pulling in different or even opposing directions” (p. 68). In fact, several pieces building on this perspective have highlighted how conflicts emerge when leaders seek to influence others in their organizations (Hallett, 2007a,b, 2010; Spillane et al., 2002).

Empirical and theoretical work drawing on the distributed leadership as a conceptual lens has emphasized who leads curricular and administrative activities (Spillane et al., 2009), how leadership is distributed among multiple actors (Spillane), how leaders co-construct leadership (Spillane et al., 2003; Spillane et al., 2005; Spillane et al., 2010), and how leadership practice varies based on subject matter (Spillane & Burch, 2003; Sherer, 2007) and instructional dimension (Spillane, 2006; Diamond, 2007; Spillane & Burch 2006).⁹

Other work has examined interactions between leaders and followers emphasizing how followers construct leaders as influential (Spillane et al., 2003), how leaders connect to instruction (Coldren, 2007; Coldren & Spillane 2007), and how leaders and followers struggle over legitimacy within organizational routines (Hallett, 2010).

As the research on distributed leadership has proliferated in the field, it has also been used in ways that extend beyond the conceptual lens outlined above. Distributed leadership has been understood as shared or democratic leadership, linked to certain organizational outcomes, and discussed normatively as a desirable type of leadership. Next, I discuss these alternative uses of the term before returning to work that uses the perspective as a conceptual lens.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS SHARED OR DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Perhaps the most common usage of distributed leadership beyond the conceptual framework and descriptive orientated work is as shared or democratic leadership (Anderson, Moore, & Sun, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009; Mayrowetz, 2008; Storey, 2004). It is important, however, to distinguish between this work and the distributed perspective outlined by Spillane and colleagues. According to Timperley (2008), a

common misconception is that distributed leadership is the antithesis of hierarchical leadership and more akin to democratic or collaborative leadership. When considered as an analytical tool, rather than a leadership prescription, it can co-exist with and be used to explore both hierarchical and/or democratic forms of leadership. In both situations, leadership is distributed ... with possibilities for relationships of co-operation or conflict ... (p. 823)

From this perspective, distributed leadership is synonymous with shared leadership and, in some ways, is about equalizing power within organizations.¹⁰ Research

emphasizing distributed leadership as shared leadership focuses on leadership that involves multiple actors and is carried out by people in different roles (e.g., administrators and teacher leaders) within an organization. It is akin to the leader plus aspect of the distributed perspective but tends to treat the shared aspect of leadership as the whole of distributed leadership. Work in this area has examined patterns and types of shared leadership (Anderson et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009), how principals facilitate the development of distributed leadership, alternative structures for the principalship itself (Grubb & Flessa, 2009; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009), and the expanded roles for teachers as leaders (Mayrowetz, 2009). Other work has suggested that “distributed” and “individual” forms of leadership can co-exist in organizations in what is called “hybrid” leadership (Gronn, 2009).

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES

A second set of studies have attempted to link distributed leadership (most often defined as shared, democratic, or dispersed leadership) to certain outcomes. Some work suggests that shared leadership may be linked to positive organizational outcomes (Harris, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009; Robinson, 2008). For example, research suggests that including more actors in leadership draws on more organizational expertise, increases the satisfaction of organizational members, and helps build human capital within the organization (Mayrowetz, 2008). In an edited volume, Harris (2009) emphasizes the impact of distributed leadership on organizational processes and student outcomes. Timperley (2008, 2009), while embracing distributed leadership as a conceptual framework, argues that work using a distributed perspective should address pressing issues of student outcomes.

Other work raises questions about the impact of shared leadership on organizational outcomes (Maxy & Nguyen, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) with one analyst arguing that “distributing leadership ... may result in the distribution of incompetence” (Timperley, 2005, p. 417). The mixed results of studies on democratic forms of leadership led Leithwood et al. (2009) to argue that “It is reasonable to conclude at this point, then, that the positive consequences of more widely distributing leadership in schools cannot simply be assumed; their precise nature remains unpredictable and likely depends on circumstances and conditions that we do not yet understand very well” (p. 4).

The focus on outcomes is again a departure from the conceptual model which is agnostic about outcomes. Timperley (2008) sums up this stance: “Spillane deliberately removes from his definition the effectiveness question that forms the core of other approaches to leadership because the designed activities may or may not result in influence, and, even if they do, the influence may not be positive” (p. 822). As Spillane and Diamond (2007) write, “Leadership can influence people and organizations—indeed, entire societies—in directions that are not at all beneficial” (p. 4).

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS A DESIRED MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

Related to the emphasis on shared leadership, and work that presses for a focus on outcomes, is work that uses distributed leadership in a normative sense as a type of leadership. As Gronn (2009) writes, “A normativist is someone who is comfortable

inhabiting a realm of desirability. Nomativism boils down to commentators taking upon themselves the role of advocates for conceptually grounded leadership models, approaches or styles that they find attractive or optimal” (p. 17). From this perspective, distributed leadership is something leaders do that should be encouraged. They should “distribute” leadership in a particular way. This perspective is often (but not always) coupled with the idea of shared or democratic leadership (Firestone & Martinez, 2009).¹¹ Practitioners have often thought of distributed leadership as something that a school, district, or university department can implement. However, the distributed perspective is “a conceptual tool for thinking about and studying school leadership and management” (Spillane & Diamond, 2007, p. 7) rather than a model or type of leadership. It is a “conceptual tool to guide researchers and practitioners in doing their work, not a prescription for how to do it” (Timperley, 2008, p. 823). So, while many understand distributed leadership as a model or type of leadership and encourage others to adopt this approach, this stretches beyond the definitions laid out in the conceptual model.

The distributed perspective was originally developed as a conceptual tool for researchers and practitioners to help them better understand the practice of school leadership. With the rapid expansion of distributed leadership work in the field, the ways that the term has been used have proliferated as well. However, for the remainder of this chapter, I will focus my attention on the distributed perspective as a conceptual tool, how work using this perspective addresses power and outcomes in schools, and how power and outcomes can be more fully addressed in future research.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP, POWER, AND OUTCOME INEQUALITY

Distributed leadership has been critiqued by leadership scholars for at least two related reasons. First, some have critiqued the distributed perspective for not addressing issues of power and conflict within organizations. For example, Hartley (2009) argues that power is under-theorized in this work and that the work has an “implicitly functionalist tenor” (p. 147). Flessa (2009) raises important critiques of work on distributed leadership. In particular, he emphasizes the lack of direct engagement between the literatures on distributed leadership and work on educational micropolitics. He writes that “research into distributed leadership ... has been much more likely to avoid micropolitical analyses than to conduct them” (p. 332). Flessa goes on to write that this work “seems to consistently shy away from political questions” (p. 332).¹²

Second, scholars take issue with the distributed perspective because it tends to shy away from questions of the impact or effectiveness of leadership practices (Harris, 2009; Timperley, 2008). From a distributed perspective, leadership is about the intent to influence not whether or not influence actually happens. In a careful discussion of the distributed perspective as a conceptual framework, Timperley (2008) argues that there is a need to “identify how to distribute leadership in ways likely to benefit those students that current educational systems do not serve well (p. 832). Other scholars are also concerned with the effectiveness of distributed leadership for organizational outcomes (Harris 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009).

These critiques are particularly important in light of the contemporary educational context. Both the reorganization of authority relations in schools and issues of student outcomes are central to current school change efforts. A leadership perspective that does not directly address either of these issues would seem to have limited utility in this

context. I argue that, while these critiques are legitimate, a thorough reading of the body of research using the distributed perspective reveals that issues of power and authority are addressed in much of the empirical research that has been generated to date and, in fact, are embedded in the theoretical framework itself. However, I argue (along with these critics) that more work is needed to highlight issues of race, power, and authority within the distributed perspective. With regard to the questions about the impact and effectiveness of leadership, I argue that work that continues to build the theoretical perspective and emphasizes a more thorough understanding of leadership practice itself will be vital to ultimately answering effectiveness questions. I further argue that work on the impact of shared or democratic leadership has its place, but runs the risk of creating something of a black box in which we miss the opportunity to understand the dynamic and interactive process through which leadership practice occurs. In the next section, I discuss how power and authority have been discussed by researchers using the distributed perspective and then turn to the issue of effectiveness.

Distributed Leadership, Power, and School Organizations

Since its early development, work using a distributed perspective has grappled with issues of power, authority, and influence. The very definition of leadership from a distributed perspective makes a nod to the important role of *influence* relationships.

Leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices. (Spillane, 2006, pp. 11–12, emphasis in original)

One way that work using a distributed perspective has explored influence relationships is through a focus on organizational structure (Spillane et al., 2004). While work on distributed leadership finds theoretical roots in activity theory and distributed cognition, its notions of organizations has been influenced by work in sociology and education. Drawing on this broader range of perspectives provided researchers using the distributed perspective with important theoretical tools for examining power, authority, and influence within schools and in the practice of leadership.

One way that work using a distributed perspective has grappled with issues of authority and influence in organizations is through examining the impact of the policy environment on institutional processes of coupling between policy, administration, and instruction. Institutional theorists suggest that the administrative and classroom levels of school organizations are loosely coupled.¹³ From this perspective, the administrative and classroom levels are loosely connected to each other, and one cannot assume that influence easily flows from the top to the bottom of an organizational hierarchy. In fact, the stability of schools as organizational forms has traditionally been tied to the legitimacy they hold with external stakeholders rather than to measures of productivity and efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Work on distributed leadership has shown that teachers were in fact influenced by administrators and other instructional leaders (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond 2007; Coldren, 2007). Thus, while work drawing on an institutional perspective focused on loose-coupling between administrators and classrooms, more recent work drawing on the distributed

perspective emphasized the ways in which a tighter coupling seemed to exist around certain subjects and instructional dimensions (Diamond, 2007; Spillane & Burch, 2006), and how organizational routines were created by school leaders (sometimes in response to policy demands) to build tighter linkages between the administrative and classroom levels (Coldren, 2007; Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Halverson, 2007; Spillane et al., 2010). This work used the distributed perspective to suggest that the policy demands were reshaping authority relationships inside schools.

Another way that work using a distributed perspective has addressed authority and influence is by drawing upon, critiquing, and extending bureaucratic models of school organization. The bureaucratic model suggests that authority flows top-down from positions in an organizational hierarchy. For example, standards-based educational reforms suggest that policy mandates can influence instructional practice by creating rewards and sanctions to which school teachers and administrators respond. From this perspective, external demands and those that come from administrators should flow through organizational levels and reach the classroom.

Work from the distributed perspective has simultaneously drawn on insights from this perspective and sought to modify and extend it. For example, from the outset, work on distributed leadership has viewed bureaucratic models as the dominant frame used by policy makers to understand leadership and school change (Spillane et al., 2002; Spillane et al., 2003). At the same time, this work has also viewed this frame as limited for understanding leadership practice in schools based on previous research on the faculty workplace showing the relative autonomy of teachers from administrative control (Bidwell, 2001; Lortie, 1975) and the relatively weak authority of principals with respect to teachers (Bidwell, 2001). Previous research also demonstrated that teachers' collegial interactions and their teacher-to-teacher problem-solving networks were central to how instructional leadership functioned (Bidwell, 2001; Bidwell & Yasumoto, 1999). This suggested that influences on teachers were distributed among multiple members of organizations and were often lateral rather than vertical relationships.

Understanding the nature of these influence relationships has been a central focus of the work on distributed leadership and an important issue that connects with issues of power and authority. At the root of Weberian understanding of organizations are issues of power, authority, and legitimacy (Weber, 1968). For Weber, authority depends to some extent on the belief in the legitimacy of a leaders' power by subordinates. As Weber (1968) writes, "every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance" (p. 212). The relational nature of leadership is also highlighted in theoretical work on the distributed perspective. As Spillane et al. (2004) write, borrowing from Barnard (1938), "Whether an order has authority or not lies with the person to whom it is addressed" (p. 163). Thus, some work in bureaucratic organizations has been about the relationship between people at different levels of the organizational hierarchy. Why is it that subordinates comply with the demands of those with more authority in the organization? What is the basis of legitimacy in the organization?

As mentioned, from the beginnings of the development of the distributed approach there was an emphasis on leadership as an *influence* relationship in which followers must agree to be led. This raised the question of why teachers heed the messages of others in organizations when they seek to change their instructional practices. Spillane et al. (2003) examined this by asking teachers why they turned to others for guidance around specific instructional practices. It seems that teachers were rarely influenced by

leaders because of their position alone. Instead, teachers were influenced by other leaders because of the forms of capital they believed these leaders possessed. In particular, these forms of capital included human capital (expertise), social capital (networks and access to information), financial capital (access to resources), and cultural capital (styles of interaction). This work suggested that influence within organizations was less tied to the positions of authority people held in organizations than to how others perceived them with regard to important valued characteristics. In fact, it turned out that teachers were more likely to heed the guidance of administrators who demonstrated the appropriate cultural capital through respecting teachers' professional knowledge (among other things) (Spillane et al., 2003).

Hallett (2007) provides an illustrative example of how leadership position alone does not necessarily imbue a positional leader with unlimited authority. At one K-8 school, a new principal (Ms. Kox) took over with a strong desire to respond to district accountability measures. She sought to dramatically shift the relationship between teachers and the administrators by closely monitoring instruction. While the previous administration had, in the words of one teacher, "hired good people who he let do their jobs," this contrasted with one teacher's characterization of Ms. Kox's who "likes to get her hands in and say, 'What's going on here? This is what we're going to do,' rather than just allow teachers to do it" (Hallett, 2007, p. 94). This led to significant conflict between the principal and teachers that took a substantial amount of time to overcome. Teachers did not respond to her press to change long-standing relationships, in part, because she violated taken-for-granted notions about relations between teachers and administrators in this school – in particular she did not demonstrate the appropriate style of interaction or cultural capital that was expected by teachers.

Later work more fully embraced Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power which positioned ideas about capital, influence, and legitimacy in a broader conception of institutional fields (Hallett, 2007b). For Bourdieu, fields are "*arenas of struggles for legitimation*" (Swartz, 1997, p. 123, emphasis in original) in which dominant and subordinate positions are determined by the "*types and amounts of capital*" (p. 123) that people possess. As Hallett (2007b) writes, "In essence, fields are institutions. They are slices of social space, each slice structured according to the forms of capital valued in that institutional arena" (152). Within these arenas, people have more or less authority based on their possession of valued forms of capital. In turn, hierarchy flows from this possession of capital.

Thus, while earlier work on distributed leadership used the language of capital, it did not fully articulate or embrace Bourdieu's conception of field. Spillane, Diamond, Walker, et al. (2002) introduced the concept of field into the work on distributed leadership arguing that it was a useful framework for understanding the relative valuing of subjects matter in the field. However, these earlier articles (Spillane, Diamond, Walker, et al., 2001; Spillane, et al., 2003) used field and capital in a less critical way and did not view schools primarily as arenas of struggle. For instance, this earlier work borrowed from Bourdieu the concept of cultural capital but used Coleman's (1988) more functionalist oriented approach to define and examine social capital (Dika & Singh, 2002; Spillane et al., 2003).

In sum, issues of authority and influence have been examined from a distributed perspective by grappling with core issues of school organization, the influence of the policy environment on authority relations in schools, and the interactive relationship between leaders and followers. Thus there is a healthy discourse about authority and

influence relationships within the literature on the distributed perspective. However, perhaps because much of this work is descriptive (detailing how leadership is distributed among leaders) and because other work equates distributed leadership with shared or democratic leadership, less attention has been paid to issues of authority, legitimacy, and power in the broader literature.¹⁴ Moreover, the discussion above suggests that scholars using the distributed perspective do not shy away from discussing issues of power, authority, legitimacy, and conflict but instead draw upon a broad array of perspectives from multiple disciplines to grapple with these issues.

To date, work using a distributed perspective has drawn on multiple theoretical influences, however, an explicit focus on schools as arenas of power is rare. A more explicit focus on power in organizations could bring balance to this work and help it avoid what some have called an implicit functionalist orientation (Hartley, 2009). More specifically, by highlighting the symbolic nature of influence, detailing the workings of forms of capital in the establishment of instructional leaders' legitimacy, and drawing on Bourdieu's notion of field and symbolic power, this work has grappled with power in organizations. However, a deeper engagement with Bourdieu's work on fields of interaction, more work on the symbolic nature of influence relationships, and a possible cross-fertilization with work in organizational micropolitics (Flessa, 2009) could make power within organizations more prominent in this work and more useful in painting nuanced pictures of leadership practice. Moreover, thinking about the implications of race, class, and gender within such frameworks seems central to this work.

STRUCTURES BEYOND ORGANIZATIONS: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

The distributed perspective suggests that structure extends beyond organizational structure. Spillane et al. (2004) argue that "by 'structure' we mean not only organizational structures ... but also broader societal structures, including race, class, and gender ... and the manner in which these manifest themselves in the interactions among leaders and followers in the execution of leadership tasks" (p. 21). The suggestion here is that race, class, and gender play a role in structuring social interactions and that, because interactions are central to understanding leadership practice from a distributed perspective, we need to account for how these broader structures matter.

The idea that broader structures of race, class, and gender shape leadership practice and interactions inside schools has been taken up by some work using the distributed frame (Loder, 2005; Loder & Spillane, 2006).¹⁵ However, it has more generally been conceptualized as part of the organizational contexts and has not been carefully used to theorize about interactions related to instructional leadership. For example, some work suggests that the meaning associated with students' race and class backgrounds is a constituting element of leadership practice and, based on the composition of the student population, can structure leadership tasks in particular ways (Diamond, 2007). For example, Diamond (2007) shows how leaders in one school establish organizational routines designed to raise teachers' expectations for low-income Black students in response to their belief that teachers' expectations for these students are often too low. Other work suggests a link between the racial composition of schools and teachers' sense of responsibility for student learning (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004) and their instructional practice (Diamond, 2007).

However, distributed leadership work has rarely addressed how race, class, and gender are core elements in social interactions. While there has been substantial work using a distributed perspective on interactions between leaders and followers and among leaders, the ways that status shapes these interactions has rarely been addressed. For example, in the work discussed above on influence relationships between instructional leaders and classroom teachers the role of race and ethnicity is rarely addressed and when it is, its role in driving social interaction is not discussed or is downplayed (Hallett, 2007). Likewise, work that has sought to theorize about the co-construction of leadership practice and discussed multiple types of distribution has not theorized about the role of race, class and gender. Within the work on the practice aspect of leadership, interactions have been somewhat stripped of a focus on race and gender differences and their potential impact on these interactions. This is in part because theories about how macro-structures of race and gender impact micro-level interactions have not been fully engaged by scholars in this area.

This is where emerging work on race, gender, and leadership could help inform work on distributed leadership. The demographics of educational institutions in the U.S. alone make race, class, and gender a salient part of contemporary school contexts. Currently about 83% of public school teachers in the United States are White females (Aud et al., 2010) and 88% of school principals are White males (Evans, 2007). They teach students who are increasingly Latino/a and Asian. Between 1988 and 2008 the White student population decreased from 68% to 55% while the percentage of Latino/a student rose from 11% to 22%. Moreover, the racial composition of an increasing number of schools is majority or completely students of color (Orfield & Lee, 2007).

There is a body of research on race, gender, and leadership that can inform this discussion (Evans, 2007; Loder, 2005; Reed & Evans, 2007; Tillman, 2004). This work has examined how leaders' identity is connected to how they make sense of and enact their roles (Loder, 2005; Reed & Evans, 2007; Tillman, 2004), understand race and demographic change in their schools (Evans, 2007), and respond to racial conflicts that emerge (Henze, et al. 2000). Other research shows that many school leaders are reluctant to openly discuss race (Evans, 2007; Lewis, 2003; Pollock, 2004). Such reluctance to talk about race or the inclination to adopt a color-blind stance on issues of race can contribute to maintaining racial inequality in schools (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2003; Collins, 2009).

Building on cognitive perspectives on leadership practice, one important issue is how teachers and leaders conceptualize race, come to those understandings through social interaction, and act upon those notions in practice. Sociological work highlighting dominant narratives on race (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2003) and racial conceptualization (Morning, 2009) should help inform future work using a distributed leadership frame. In addition, the gender mismatch between administrators and teachers is an under-examined micro-level dynamic in distributed leadership work to date.

Recent work suggests that race is a core element of micro-level social interactions. Work by social psychologists, for example, suggests that implicit racial biases rooted in broader stereotypes may be connected to daily interactions in schools. This work shows that subconscious racial prejudice, which is an outgrowth of broader stereotypes, has implications for interracial interactions. In contrast to explicit racial biases that are measured in surveys of racial attitudes, recent experimental work emphasizes the importance of implicit racial biases. Such biases "can be activated without conscious awareness and ... influence judgments and actions" (Quillian, 2006, p. 314). In a

review of contemporary approaches to the study of racial discrimination, Quillian writes that

A central idea in implicit prejudice research is that associations toward racial group members, viewed as a set of stereotypes beliefs associated with a racial category, exist in the mind and influence future judgments and action. These associations are activated automatically by the presence or even the mention of the target group, even when the subject is not aware of the prime that activates these associations.... Psychologists suggest that these associations influence judgments, perceptions, and actions toward the target group, even among subjects who consciously disavow stereotypical beliefs. (p. 315)

While explicit racial prejudice has declined substantially over the last several decades (Bobo & Charles, 2009), the pervasiveness of implicit biases is quite striking. Somewhere between 80% and 85% of Whites hold implicit negative beliefs about African Americans (Greenwald et al. 1998, Dasgupta, 2004, cited in Quillian, 2006), while other work shows that Whites also hold negative impressions of Latino/as (Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002, cited in Quillian, 2006) and Asians (Son Hing et al., 2002, cited in Quillian, 2006). Research shows that “implicit biases are more strongly linked to subtle behaviors that are difficult to control, such as nonverbal behavior in interaction, whereas explicit biases are more strongly linked to verbal statements” (Quillian, 2006, p. 319). Other work conducted in the Netherlands suggests that such bias among teachers depressed the performance of Turkish students in comparison to Dutch-origin students (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010).

In ways similar to implicit bias, work on expectations state theory shows how social interactions are tied to status beliefs about social groups (Ridgeway & Correll, 2006). Members of social groups held in greater esteem are given more opportunities to participate in social interactions and their contributions are given more value. The links among expectations, status of participants, and social interaction represent fruitful lines of inquiry from a distributed perspective.

Related to this work, work on racial microaggressions (growing out of the critical race theory tradition) highlights how negative cross race interactions impact Asians, Blacks, Latino/as, and Native Americans. Daniel Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) define racial microaggressions as “subtle insults (verbal, non verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically and unconsciously” (p. 60). Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder argue that the microaggressions extend to “environmental slights and indignities” in addition to interpersonal slights (p. 329). Work on racial microaggressions could provide an additional useful framework for understanding interpersonal dynamics in leadership practice. Therefore, work on implicit bias, expectations state theory, and critical race theory all of which links macro-level prejudice to micro-level interactions, could provide a basis for a deeper probing of the role of race, class, and gender in leadership practice.

Distributed Leadership and Educational Outcomes

Outcomes are at the center of current education discussion. In an era in which standards-based reform and high-stakes accountability are central features, these outcomes are most often defined in terms of test scores. Moreover, as the school population has grown

increasingly diverse, attention has focused on outcomes disparities among race and class subgroups. Therefore, it is not surprising that the issue of the link between distributed leadership and educational outcomes has emerged. Orientations toward this question are tied to the various uses of distributed leadership in the literature. Those who see distributed leadership as type of leadership (usually as shared or democratic leadership), or take a normative stance, often seek to analyze the impact of distributed leadership on organizational functioning and ultimately on educational outcomes (Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009). While some argue that more widely dispersed leadership has positive impacts on organizational functioning and student achievement, reviews of this work are clear that the jury is still out on its impact. One challenge with this work is that while there is general agreement among these scholars that distributed leadership is equivalent to some form of shared, democratic, or dispersed leadership, what that actually means in practice and how these constructs are operationalized varies from study to study. Moreover, most of the work on impact relies on surveys rather than careful examinations of leadership practice. Given this definitional diversity and the distance from actual practice, there is a risk that a new black box of leadership practice could be created in which the virtues of shared leadership are promoted but how that leadership is practiced is unclear.¹⁶

Work that considers the distributed perspective as a conceptual tool for understanding leadership practice seeks to approach questions of outcomes carefully. In describing this approach, Spillane and Diamond (2007) argue that “our work was motivated by a desire to develop a conceptual or analytical tool that researchers and practitioners could use to frame their probing of school leadership and management and to examine the implications of their work for classroom instruction and its improvement” (p. 148). While the idea of instructional improvement motivated the development of the perspective, Spillane and Diamond contend that “a distributed perspective on leadership offers no simple panacea; it puts the onus on users to diagnose and design school practice well in order to enable improvement” (p. 148). This work then seeks to impact outcomes primarily through providing researchers and leaders with a conceptual tool to inform their work. Its success in practice is tied to how well it is used by those who use it.¹⁷ These authors argue that the conceptual lens has the potential to do three things over time. First, this work can frame continued theory building that can help refine the conceptual tool and thus inform leadership research and practice. Second, this work can help develop design principles that inform practice. Finally, this work can help researchers and practitioners understand connections between leadership and management practice than can inform their work.

Both of these perspectives can be frustrating to researchers and practitioners who seek changes to the urgent challenges of education in the contemporary context. On the one hand, research on the impact of distributed leadership as a type of leadership is inconclusive. At the same time, the work on leadership as a conceptual frame does not seem to link directly to outcomes at all. While we face urgent challenges with regard to student outcomes, the research on school leadership has often failed to connect to those outcomes. In reflecting on recent reviews the leadership research in education, Robinson (2009) argues that “Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from [these studies] is that there is a radical disconnection between research on educational leadership and the core purposes of schooling—the education of children” (p. 219). I argue that the distributed perspective can be used to frame research that helps us understand leadership practice more completely. Likewise, we need work that details

specific organizational routines and leadership practices that impact teaching and learning, specifies the content of those influences, and examines their potential impact.¹⁸ Again, the distributed perspective provides important conceptual tools for such analysis. However, research on the instructional practices that matter could be useful in focusing this research (Robinson, 2009). It could also go a long way in articulating the links between leadership, instruction, and educational equity (Firestone & Rheil, 2005).

Below I summarize the discussion in the chapter and consider some directions for future research that I believe have the potential to move the field forward and help us build a more powerful set of findings that can inform leadership practice in schools.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have selectively examined work on the distributed perspective paying particular attention to the ways that issues of race, power, and inequality have been examined. I identified multiple uses of distributed leadership and discussed the theoretical foundations of the conceptual model. Focusing on the work that sees the distributed perspective as a conceptual tool, I argued that while issues of authority and influence have been addressed in this work, more attention needs to be paid to these issues. In particular, focusing on school organizations as potential arenas of conflict and contestation over leadership and legitimacy, drawing more fully on Bourdieu's work on fields of interaction and symbolic power, and drawing more fully on work from other conflict oriented perspectives like educational micropolitics and critical race theory could lead to important new insights.

Likewise, while some work has focused on the role of race, class, and gender as constituting elements of leadership practice, work that links these broader structures to daily interactions in schools could provide critical new insights. To date, work on distributed leadership has not fully engaged with contemporary race and gender studies. I have argued that work on implicit bias, expectations state theory, and critical race theory has the potential to enhance our understanding of the role of social status within leadership practice and particularly around interactions within organizational routines. For example, work could examine whether or not the assessment of forms of capital by followers is intertwined with leaders' race and gender, how racial composition is a constituting element of organizational routines, and how racial mismatches across leaders and followers constitute those interactions.

With regard to educational outcomes, I have argued that work on outcomes (mostly viewing distributed leadership as shared or democratic leadership) is inconclusive and could add to the 'black box' of school leadership practice, the opening up of which was one of the original motivations for the development of the distributed perspective (Spillane et al., 2001). Work that emphasizes that the distributed perspective is a conceptual framework and not a type of leadership has shied away from focusing on impact but there are ways that this work can inform practice and ultimately shape practice in ways that lead to impacts on educational outcomes.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the previous discussion, what direction should future work on distributed leadership take? Research on the distributed perspective has drawn from a large variety

of methods. While relatively small, a growing base of empirical studies is emerging. Some of the research has been conducted using methodologies that are typical in leadership studies such as ethnographic methods, interviews, structured observations, case studies, and traditional surveys (Spillane et al., 2007; Spillane & Zuberi, 2009). However, research using the distributed perspective has also drawn on a broader array of methods including experience sampling methodologies, daily practice logs (Spillane & Zuberi, 2009), social network surveys (Spillane, Healy, & Kim, 2010), and video analysis of organizational routines (Hallett, 2009). Moreover, the implications of using different approaches has been discussed in several publications (Pitts & Spillane, 2009; Spillane et al., 2008; Spillane & Zuberi, 2009). Rather than rehashing issues that have been discussed elsewhere, I will discuss research approaches that might be promising in addressing issues of race, power, and inequality in particular.

One promising line of research uses social network analysis to help understand the structure of relationships from a distributed perspective (Pitts & Spillane, 2009; Spillane, Healy & Kim, 2010) and in teachers' professional interactions (Penuel, Riel, Krase, & Frank, 2009). Social network analysis allows researchers to examine the overall structure of relationships through surveys in which organizational members report their interactions with colleagues. Data from these surveys can then be used to examine social ties throughout an organization. Research using other methods, such as interviews with teachers, can capture the social interactions of a subset of organizational members (Penuel et al., 2009) but not (generally) the broader set of interactions that can be captured using network analysis.

This approach opens up a powerful set of possibilities for understanding leadership from a distributed perspective. For example, Penuel and colleagues (2009) identify several ways that social network analysis can be useful understanding teachers' professional interactions. Such analyses can unearth formal and *informal* networks that are more difficult to capture using interview and observational methods. Such work can help researchers and practitioners understand the role that interactions in hallways, parking lots, and after formal meetings play in influencing teachers. This approach can also help capture the types of information that flows through networks and how this varies by the school subject, for example. Using these methods, researchers and practitioners can also identify people who are central actors in social networks or those who serve as bridges between subgroups (Penuel et al., 2009).

Additionally, network analysis could be used to identify patterns of homophily, or the tendency for people with similar social status or values to associate with each other (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954) inside schools. Given the earlier discussion about the potential role of race, class, and gender in social interaction, network analysis could highlight the broader structure of such patterns in schools. This work could be used to help researchers develop more robust understandings of the generation and diffusion of ideas in practice communities and the role of social status (race, class, and gender) in how those communities are constituted. When combined with qualitative methods, this work can provide powerful insights into the structure and content of interactions within networks (Penuel et al., 2009).¹⁹

A second promising approach to understanding leadership from a distributed perspective is the close examination of leadership practice through carefully studying organizational routines drawing on direct observation (and perhaps videotape evidence) (Burch 2007; Hallett, 2009; Halverson, 2007; Sherer 2007; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

While these approaches have been utilized in the past, I believe that emphasizing larger scale studies runs the risk of missing key, on the ground, organizational dynamics that matter. Much of the work on distributed leadership has focused on the leader plus aspect and emphasized the social distribution of leadership. While there has been work on the practice aspect, not as much work has carefully unpacked organizational routines in terms of their structure as well as their content. One promising line of work has sought to get inside the functioning of teams from a distributed perspective (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007; Sherer 2007). For example, Scribner et al. (2007) used discourse analysis and video evidence to demonstrate how the purpose for which a team was established and the extent to which a team is autonomous shapes the discourse patterns among participants. Other work has examined organizational routines longitudinally to understand how they are transformed over time (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2010). I argue the examinations of organizational routines that attend to the role of authority and status asymmetries among participants have the potential to help us develop more nuanced images of leadership practice. Likewise, work on organizational routines that focuses on the content as well as the process of interaction can highlight the social construction of meaning through interactions in school organizations. For example, how are racial meaning and race-based expectations formed through day-to-day interactions inside organizational routines? More work closely examining routines would complement the work on the configuration of leadership which focuses on who leads.

To date, the work on distributed leadership has not focused on the impact of distributed leadership on instructional practice. A third potential direction for research would link leadership practice directly to instruction by examining how teachers are influenced in particular ways by leadership practice. This could be done using various methods. As discussed above, one way to get at the outcomes of leadership is to understand the link between leadership practice and classroom practice. Developing a richer understanding of this connection could enhance our knowledge about the impact of leadership practice. Some previous work points in this direction. For example, research on when teachers turn to others for guidance in their work has highlighted the conditions under which teachers are influenced by their colleagues (Spillane et al., 2003). Other work has examined how the policy environment interacts with instructional practice and pushes it in certain directions that are associated with distinct educational outcomes (Diamond, 2007). Research could build on this work by examining how teachers make specific changes in their classrooms and the role of their teaching colleagues, administrators, or artifacts (e.g., text books or standards) in their construction of those changes. As Robinson (2009) suggests, focusing on instructional changes associated with better students' outcomes would enhance the relevance of such work for addressing issues of student outcomes. Such research could benefit from close observations of instructional practice and interviews with teachers about how they made changes in their approaches. Work using social network analysis might also be used to help capture the structure of influences that lead to particular changes in instructional practice.

Work framed by the distributed leadership perspective has made important contributions to our understanding of leadership practice. While issues of race, power, and inequality have been addressed in this work, a deeper engagement with these issues would help enhance the usefulness and impact of this perspective. It is my hope that this chapter begins to move us in that direction.

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter I discuss research I participated in with James Spillane and other colleagues at Northwestern. Therefore, the critiques I raise about the distributed perspective are critiques, in many cases, of my own work. I seek to take this reflective stance in order to help advance the field as well as my own work.
2. Journals that have published special issues of distributed leadership include *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Journal of Educational Administration*, and *Leadership and Policy in Schools*.
3. While the issue has been framed as an achievement gap, this framing places the onus of student outcomes on the students themselves. Other work suggests that this framing should emphasize gaps in educational opportunity (Diamond, forthcoming, 2006; DeShano da Silva, Huguley, Kakli, & Rao, 2007, & Milner, 2010).
4. Sections of this review borrow from Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2004.
5. Spillane and colleagues and Gronn developed their work separately at approximately the same time while drawing on similar intellectual roots. This review and chapter highlight the work developed by Spillane and colleagues because it has influenced work on distributed leadership more powerfully in the United States than has Gronn's work and is based on a larger empirical base.
6. While the work of Spillane and colleagues and Gronn form the conceptual foundations for the distributed perspective, much of the work on distributed leadership has drawn selectively on this perspective or defined distributed leadership in a different way. I will discuss these usages of the term later in the chapter.
7. Mayrowetz (2008) argued for a similar set of uses of distributed leadership.
8. Organizational routines are the standard set of practices through which organizations function. In schools, they include formal practices like grade level meetings, professional development meetings, and standardized testing cycles. They also include less formal activities like teacher lunch breaks or a school's beginning of the day ritual.
9. Instruction dimension refers to the various components of instructional practice including the content that is covered, classroom management, pedagogy, etc.
10. Some have suggested that this democratic form of leadership is not really about equalizing power relations at all and is instead a tool for more effectively imposing top-down mandates within school organizations (Hatcher 2010).
11. Robinson (2009) argues that there are two types of normative arguments for distributed leadership. One is that such leadership leads to better organizational outcomes. The other is that distributed leadership is more democratic and less managerial and hierarchical.
12. Other work, focused on more normative uses of distributed leadership as shared leadership, argues that rather than empowering teachers, such models lead teachers to buy into government reform agendas and not to be empowered (Hatcher, 2010).
13. Recent institutional work has focused on transformations in the education sector that have led to tighter coupling between the classroom and the policy environment. For a discussion of recoupling see Meyer and Rowan 2006, Hallett, 2010, Espeland, 1998; Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Parise, and Sherer, 2010.
14. In addition, the distributed perspective has been critiqued specifically for not addressing micropolitics and thus conflict more generally (Flessa, 2009). A theoretical piece outlining the perspective directly addresses micropolitics but argues that the distributed perspective extends rather than ignores this work.

Research in educational micro-politics suggests that, while leaders often draw on their positional authority to support the beliefs and actions they advocate, followers can influence leaders by drawing on personal characteristics, access to information, or special knowledge or expertise.... Finally, followers may influence leadership strategies by finding subtle ways to resist administrative controls through "creative insubordination." (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 19)

The authors, however, argue that a distributed perspective extends these arguments. "From a distributed perspective, followers are an essential constituting element of leadership activity. Rather than a variable outside of leadership activity that influences what leaders do, followers are best understood as a composing element of leadership activity" (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 19, emphasis in original).

15. Recent distributed leadership work examines diversity in the composition of leadership teams (Spillane & Healy, 2010). There is also work that examines how beliefs about race shape school leaders' responses to demographic change (Evans, 2007).
16. Still, there is important work to be done in this regard. As Leithwood et al. (2009) argue, the lack of conceptual clarity around what they refer to as distributed leadership has made efforts to understand impact in some ways premature until very recently, however, the expansion of this work in recent years and the

press for work that pushes toward more impact oriented examinations has laid the groundwork for more studies of impact.

17. Spillane and Coldren (2011) have written a book for use by practitioners that is designed to assist them in the diagnosis and design of leadership practice from a distributed perspective. Spillane has also recently received a research grant designed to examine the impact of a specific organizational routine (the learning walk) on organizational outcomes. Both of these projects signal an effort to impact practice and connect that impact to educational outcomes.
18. However, whether these routines are considered distributed, shared, democratic, or something else seems less important than the extent to which we understand them well.
19. Social network analysis is often associated with social capital theory as discussed by Coleman (1990; Lin, 2001). While I suggested the utility of using Bourdieu's conception of field, which contains a different use of social capital based on the total volume of capital in one's social network and emphasizes mechanisms of exclusion, I believe that social network theory remains useful as a tool for understanding the structure of relationships within organizations. Moreover, some recent work examines the volume of capital in social networks in ways that suggests Bourdieu's more conflict oriented frame might be a useful in studying networks in organizations (Penuel, Frank, & Krause, 2010; though these authors do not draw explicitly from Bourdieu).

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