

Legacies of Leadership in Place

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I began teaching in higher education in 1972, having completed coursework in 1969 and my dissertation in 1971, two weeks before the birth of my first child. I was twenty-seven and had never been in a classroom in any leadership role. Since that time I've taught full time in three institutions and part time in several, with a second child, divorce, health challenges, and other personal tumult along the way.

Now sixty and entering year twenty-three at my current institution, I am in the legacy phase of my career, able to look back with perspective and look forward to retirement and shifting roles. I am thinking a lot about the ways my cohort has changed higher education. I believe that we entered a system that had been relatively stable and we brought about change in the focus and values of the enterprise. Not entirely successfully, of course, and we are leaving an institution that is struggling with challenges we decry.

My leadership during these thirty-odd years has paralleled that of many colleagues. We have been leaders-in-place, moving in and out of formal leadership roles in our institutions. We have also led from the classroom and the research project, introducing ways of thinking and doing that have transformed teaching and scholarship. Many of us have led from outside, particularly in our earlier years. We collaborated with colleagues on and off campus in efforts that formally or informally challenged the existing norms.

In this chapter I tell my own leadership story, softening some of the details for privacy. My focus is primarily the midsize private comprehensive college where I have worked for most of my years, and on my own discipline in the social sciences and my own teaching-oriented focus. Several colleagues' voices are integrated for additional perspective but I have not carried out a formal interview study.

As you share my reflections, you will see some of the ways my cohort has transformed higher education and the ways we lead within it. You will also glimpse some of the challenges we face as we transfer leadership to the next generation. As you move in and out of your own leadership roles, I hope you find my story helpful.

In 1972, we were part of a vibrant intellectual community. For many of us it seemed to be the natural outcome of the new ways we had been thinking in our undergraduate and graduate programs. Even though our own college coursework had probably not challenged political thinking, it had taught us to challenge, to use different lenses, to see the world in a more complex way than we had known. So with opposition to the war in Vietnam following the Civil Rights movement and leading to the Women's Movement, our sense of the established order was disturbed. We had an exciting new way to see and were passionate about sharing it.

We formed small groups with big titles. We were caucuses and associations and societies and we met and talked about issues of great concern to us. We worked hard, we were smart, and our discussions often became analyses. We planned strategies for improving the lives of our students, our communities, and our colleagues. We wrote essays and position papers and reports and articles. Some of those appeared in campus papers or local newsletters; others were published in journals that were outside our disciplinary organizations.

We almost certainly did not see our actions as leadership; in fact, we saw leadership as part of the problem. Many of our groups were organized in such a way as to reduce traditional leadership hierarchies and to share leadership behaviors. We were also far younger, and some of us were far more female, more black, or more gay, than the people we considered leaders.

Instead we saw ourselves as agents of social change, challenging leadership and its priorities. We challenged the leadership of the U.S. to end the war and we challenged the leadership of our institutions to value student learning and we challenged the leadership of our academic disciplines to expand their scope. Often we were angry about the problems we perceived and our challenges did not endear us to the leaders.

So we were leading in opposition to, and often outside, our institutions and our disciplinary organizations. We challenged our institutions to let us offer courses from a critical perspective, such as defining social problems as due to inequality rather than to deviant behavior. We wanted to analyze current issues, such as racial segregation, women's reproductive rights, and the war, as central in our courses. We also challenged our institutions to eliminate tenure quotas and to provide fair wages to staff. We tried to press our institutions to implement the affirmative action policies that some had adopted. Both the problem and the size of our organization seem impossible now, but in my first institution an extremely small "Women Faculty Caucus" successfully challenged the nepotism rule that prevented a married woman from tenure in her husband's department.

In this kind of activity we saw the administration as the enemy and we were sure they saw us the same way. We thought the campus leaders did not respect the principles that we held most deeply. Apart from any other factors, we dressed far differently than the suits and business dresses of the administration. I and some others went so far as to become pregnant, only to be told by my chair there was no departmental support of any kind and to be asked by my dean, seeing her on campus in my eighth month, why I was still there. No wonder many in my cohort saw, and may still see, institutional leadership as something to avoid!

We also led outside our disciplines. For some young faculty, the research and scholarly or artistic work we did was seen as unprofessional. We may have been pioneers in areas that eventually became central, but at the time we were rebels and our work was discredited. Research on topics relevant to the researcher was discounted as personal or biased. Few studies in sociology at that time, for instance, dealt with gender as a primary factor or sampled only women. Even fewer attempted an analysis from the point of view of the

research subjects. Some scholars persevered in the existing disciplinary conferences and journals, becoming the pioneers of new scholarship. Some founded alternative conferences and periodicals: the Union of Radical Political Economists, the Berkshire History conference, Sociologists for Women in Society, the Insurgent Sociologist, and the Health Policy Advisory Center, among many others.

For many young people in the 1970s, it was equally important to extend scholarship out of the academy entirely. We built national journals and newsletters that presented strong research and analysis to the public. At the time, this kind of writing did not count at all in reviews for tenure and promotion. Yet today it is clear that some of that work was very substantial and the analyses stand the test of time. Most well known in my field is the work of the Boston Women's Health Collective, whose first *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was a newsprint collection of pieces written by a group of women committed to presenting technical information with an analytic perspective to the public. Others included *Science for the People*, *the Second Wave*, *Dollars and Sense*, *HealthRight*, and additional titles that have faded from my memory. Some academically trained people left the institutions entirely and today do very different kinds of work; others have remained marginal to higher education.

As excited as we were about the new perspectives and new analyses we were absorbing, it was natural that we would bring them into our teaching. Teaching has absorbed most of my professional energy and leadership efforts, and my observations reflect that emphasis. We saw our teaching as a major element of our social change work. We wanted to engage students in the critical issues of the day, and to help them use the tools of our disciplines to do so. Here too, we made mistakes but now one can see that we were leading the move to a new kind of college teaching.

My colleagues and I were not alone as we tried to make sense of our jobs: in those days undergraduate institutions were growing very rapidly and new faculty were in great demand. We burst into higher education with the conviction that we would make a difference. Many of us had been deeply influenced by the civil rights movement of our adolescence and college years and yearned to embody the moral principles of our heroes. On our campuses the U.S. presence in Viet Nam was a contentious issue and many of us were deeply ambivalent about our roles as teachers and scholars. Few of our colleagues had served in Viet Nam because of student deferments, more of our students were engaged in activism. We knew that many of our older colleagues thought activism was unprofessional for faculty but to us it seemed natural to use our intellectual training to understand the events around us.

The women's movement was in its second wave. Most of us never had female professors as undergraduate or graduate students. Few of us who were women had female mentors, and the existing models of professional careers did not include family obligations: our models usually had wives. It was confusing even to understand our disciplines in light of the new feminism. I still recall the deep thrill when I heard a conference paper that used "she" instead of the generic "he," and my shame when a colleague pointed out the

unfortunate title of the text I used: Sociology: Man in Society. I had gone through a Ph.D. in sociology somehow believing that everything I learned did not really apply to me.

We were trying to figure out who we were, and what our job was, and it was even harder to understand who the students were. Many were dramatically unlike the students we had been just ten years earlier. More than half were older than I was, and I was regularly assumed to be a student or a secretary. They were also far worldlier than we were, having lived harder lives and made tougher choices than we had. Particularly at the public urban university where I first taught, students were activists about their education as well as about national politics. Many of them developed incisive critiques of the university, many demanded accountability, and they did not always treat us with the deference we anticipated. Our students used the analytic tools of our disciplines in innovative ways, but often they used a writing style and tone that did not meet our academic expectations. So should we grade the ideas or the writing? How should we separate the politics from the written work? How should we engage classroom discussion yet maintain order? How should we treat women and minority students, and how, if we were women or minority faculty, should we present ourselves?

We had few models for teaching strategies other than lecture. Terms like pedagogy, strategies, objectives were not in our vocabularies; they applied to K-12 teaching and we definitely felt we were above that. Most of our departments did not require “student evaluations” in the sense of systematic responses from students. Our job was presenting our discipline to students; theirs was to understand and appreciate its intrinsic relevance and value.

We tried. We tried to include contemporary examples in our lectures. We tried to open our classrooms to discussion beyond our lecture. We tried to develop reading and writing assignments that made connections between our analysis and their world. We tried to think about the students as active participants. We tried to grade their work less punitively than our older colleagues appeared to.

We stumbled, of course. We couldn't always keep discussion from becoming arguments. We made some lame assignments that prompted rhetorical rather than analytic responses. We imagined that we were far more egalitarian than in fact we were, and we often didn't recognize the real power differences between us and our students.

But in the end we have indeed been leaders and our generation has indeed transformed college teaching. We were part of the shift that moved students into the picture of academic work, and even closer to the center. We were leaders in our departments as we tried to establish the systematic use of student evaluations in assessment of teaching. Some of us even campaigned for student participation in departmental discussions of curriculum and even of personnel issues.

We led by being what is now called scholarly teachers: we read *Radical Teacher* and the fledgling periodicals on teaching in our disciplines and in higher education. Some of us

led by organizing colleagues, and persisting until our institutions formed and supported Centers for Teaching.

Our cohort also nurtured the beginnings of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The early members of the Professional and Organizational Development Network (POD), for example, were passionate about improving teaching, evaluating the success of trials, and sharing the results with the wider public. They did not see themselves as national leaders, though many have become exactly that. They saw themselves as reducing their individual isolation and improving their work, and in so doing they brought about a new scholarship.

The same is true with disciplinary scholarship. After bitterly decrying the values and orientation of our disciplines, we have seen them incorporate much of what we stood for. We have taken our turns in leadership positions in disciplinary organizations. Many of us are highly distinguished scholars largely on our own terms: our disciplines have shifted to embrace many of our positions. Others have remained disaffected and have never reintegrated into the disciplinary scholarship that excited us so much in our youth.

As a cohort, then, we began leading from outside, often against, our institutions. We didn't trust our institutions because they really did not value the kinds of work we valued: teaching, flatter hierarchy, more participatory. Today we can see that in many ways we have succeeded. Institutions have changed dramatically since 1972 and many of our core values are institutionalized. In fact, many of us are now the official academic leaders. We are the ones who have repeatedly been leaders-in-place, moving into official leadership roles and back into the faculty. Many of us are seen as valued institutional citizens and some have become full time administrators.

It could appear that my effort is to glorify my generation or to claim that we have created an ideal higher education system. Of course, that is not my intent and there is a great deal that is very wrong in higher education. My goal is to help younger generations understand us better and to help my cohort realize some of the challenges that remain.

There were many challenge of leading in place in my cohort. Our younger colleagues who see us as the senior statesmen and women may not realize that at first, we had to lead against the administration. If we didn't, we were thought to be colluding in oppression and were not trusted by our own peers. This has led, for some of us, to deep confusion about the roles of leaders and the power and authority they may or may not have.

Sometimes it has been hard to take ourselves seriously as leaders and to realize that people looked up to us. Even if we understood that we might be able to bring about the changes we valued if we held official leadership positions, many of us have resisted those positions. It has often been difficult to use the authority we do have, as we have not fully integrated our early beliefs with the demands of formal leadership roles. Some of us have not been as effective leaders as we might have been and have made strategic errors in our leadership.

When I was tenured I became chairperson of my department in the mid-80's, and it was tough. Most of my colleagues were the same age; we had belonged to many leaderless groups in our formative years and we shared the assumption that power was bad and the chair should do just the necessary functions. Yet we were all teachers and had power in that realm: what we said in the classroom was what happened. As chairperson I couldn't just plan a syllabus and tell colleagues what to do as if they were students, but we were not a leaderless group with a common mission that I could facilitate. I didn't know how to be a leader from within a group when that group was embedded in a complex structure with specific responsibilities for the chair.

In addition to cohort, and gender of course, there are other elements that can contribute to challenges in leadership. For me personally, coming from a very small rural Midwestern area also affected my leadership. I assumed that everyone knew who I was and that I didn't have to do anything particular to have an identity. In my community in the 1950s one knew people by their identity and relationships, not primarily their roles. In a city one is known initially as their role. So it was harder for me personally to understand the role expectations of a professor. Combine that with a changing set of role expectations in the 1970s and leadership becomes even more confusing. Like others, I had the confidence, perhaps false, that one's leadership is appreciated as part of one's identity. I probably did not recognize how very challenging some of my community-building activities were.

This particular experience may also be true for faculty who are from working-class backgrounds or members of ethnic groups. Others have observed that as people enter the middle class the unwritten rules are very real, but hard to understand. In academia, I believe that people from small towns have somewhat similar experiences. With the sense of not knowing the rules comes a kind of blundering into leadership without internal guidelines about the character of different leadership roles. So we may not be very strategic about leadership in the academy.

Those personal characteristics may be part of the reason that much of my leadership has been largely outside the more formal institutional structure. I worked with student affairs professionals to organize important student groups and campaigns. Though the work has indeed changed the institution, I did not see it as leadership. Leadership had committee names or titles. For me, my activities provided a direction for my passion and a way to feel less isolated and more connected in the institution.

On every campus there are many faculty members of my cohort who still see the world as us and them, and who reflexively resist the administration on nearly every issue. I think this is understandable; many of us have very deep scars. Many of us have not moved from our first jobs, since colleges were growing so fast when we were starting out. If someone has worked an entire career in the same institution, it can be hard to let go of the past.

Now I think many of us find it hard to let go, either of our aloof and superior position outside or of our bloody struggles within. It can be hard to accept new faculty members

who don't see things as we do. They don't see the need to be so separate and don't see why we are sometimes so negative about our institutions or so divorced from our disciplines.

But of course our new faculty members do not see the world as we do. They have known nothing except the higher education that we created. We did move student learning into the center, undergraduate teaching into valued jobs, and higher education into the communities. And now we hire faculty who as undergraduates were taught by us, sometimes literally. We are hiring faculty who want to teach undergraduates, who understand the richness and variety of fluid disciplines, who assume that teaching, scholarship, and service can be authentic parts of a satisfying life.

In my excellent comprehensive college peopled by many age-peers I see problems with our legacy. We were passionate 30 years ago and we remain dedicated to our work, but we've helped create some difficult situations. Here are some imaginary departments. Readers can help to think about the ways leaders in place can move these departments forward.

The Department of Protection Studies has senior faculty who are very aware of the differences in power and security between us and the newer faculty. And we are so concerned to protect those newer faculty members that we don't treat them as authentic colleagues. We project onto them our anxiety about the current standards for tenure, and may guide them to such narrow definitions of excellence that we don't let them develop their own professional identities.

Leaders need to know the facts and not rely on the gossip about retention decisions. From outside the department, we need to convince our colleagues that interdisciplinary teaching, pedagogical variety, or engagement in campus initiatives is not so dangerous. To the contrary, engaging in those activities may be central to the mission and strategic plan of the institution. Visible support from institutional leaders at the same or higher positions as the senior faculty can help both the newer faculty contextualize their work and the senior faculty appreciate it. If the institution is changing to include a wider definition of our work, then leaders in place must not subvert that transition by an inconsistent stance on criteria.

The Department of Second-class Studies was built by faculty members who were convinced they really belonged at a more prestigious institution and have carried some level of resentment for 30 years. Newer faculty see this in a tendency to disparage students and not really notice how much stronger the students have become. We are often seen as extremely harsh critics of newer faculty members, who sometimes wonder if we are repeating what was done to us in the old days.

This department calls for strong leadership both inside and outside to support our excellent new faculty members. Although some in higher education see newer faculty members as lacking the energy for leadership, the picture on campuses like mine may be different. People make deliberate choices to work at our institutions, and teaching-

oriented positions are much more highly valued than they were when we began our careers. The institution must devise strategies to nurture the leadership within the newer cohort and create a culture of engagement.

The Department of Fiefdom Studies had strong individual faculty members with clear curricular and research agendas. It was natural 30 years ago to organize based on the models around us in graduate schools. Now the newer faculty members are bewildered by the competitiveness and possessiveness of the senior faculty. They see the departmental tasks and resources as something to be shared and see us as obstructing their attempts to simply get on with the business at hand.

Similar to the Department of Second-class Studies, this department calls for leaders in place who move forward despite the reluctance of senior members. Leaders from the newer cohorts could quietly move around the fiefdoms, working collaboratively to set the tone and organizational structure for the future. Institutional leaders could establish the model of a “legacy project,” funding or other incentives to support the feudal lords to intentionally plan the inheritance of the fiefdoms.

The Department of Us-and-Them Studies is populated by proud progressives and they have hired newer faculty members who also have a critical perspective. The newer faculty members, however, do not seem to challenge the administration enough. They think, probably correctly, that the administration appreciates their work, but we remain skeptical and suspect that the newer faculty members are being used for the (perhaps evil) purposes of the administration.

For a variety of reasons, our newer faculty members do not show the fire for reform that characterized my generation. Reform remains necessary, though its focus will be different, and as senior leaders we need to be vigilant that the institution does not punish innovation or reform. The tricky part will be that the direction of reform may seem to us to be not radical enough, or radical in the wrong way. In other situations, we may see the newer faculty’s challenges as trivial and contradictory to the well-being of the institution. We need to protect the institutional mechanisms for analysis and change that we struggled to implement. We also need to prod the newer faculty members to go beyond us in how they imagine the institutions they inherit.

The Department of Collegiality Studies was characterized for decades by bitter divisions among the long-term faculty members. Now that several have retired, we fervently want peace and unanimity. So we seem to attack newer faculty who question or challenge us. To the newer faculty members, it seems that we are recreating divisions in the name of collegiality. They are finding their voice and it appears that we are trying to silence them.

Institutional leaders must maintain structures through which faculty members can make a difference, even if the difference is not what the senior faculty members might suggest. The newer cohorts of faculty are more diverse than we were, even though we differed

dramatically from our predecessors. Senior colleagues can connect with their peers to discuss ways to help the newer faculty find their own voice across campus.

The Department of Flexibility Studies built a successful program that employed many faculty members on part time and short-term contracts. Those in my cohort don't understand the objections to these flexible jobs, even though they may have worked for us decades ago. Newer faculty members see them as ways that permanently marginal careers are created and maintained.

Leaders from my generation take for granted that faculty members are invested in their institutions. We were deeply committed, even if committed to battle. We need now to use our institutional influence to maintain a core faculty of full time professors to whom the institution is committed. Otherwise, who will do the major work of the institution, in curriculum and in reviewing faculty and in the other areas where seeing the big picture is crucial?

The Department of Baby-Card Studies includes a set of bewildered young faculty members who don't understand why their activist senior colleagues seem to obstruct their efforts to create a balanced life. We note that we had to deal with heavy work and young children, and we say they should not "play the baby card." But we forget that the purpose of our struggles was to improve the lives of the next generation, and we forget that these young faculty members are figuratively our children, taught by us to value a balanced life.

Senior leaders need to figure out how to support institutional engagement among newer faculty members even while family is a priority. Some seem to say "what I do doesn't matter; so I just do my job" This can represent two unanticipated effects of our leadership. We have brought the person into the workplace, so it is natural that faculty would want a full and balanced life. But we have also permitted institutions to move to structural arrangements that do not support faculty as full people, so it is natural that they would see their loyalties as not primarily to the institution. The newer faculty members have answers to these challenges; we need to hear them and use our influence to implement them.

The new generations of leaders in place will not have the same challenges that we faced and they probably don't understand them. They will have their own challenges, though, and the institutions will grow from vibrant leaders in place.

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