

# Leadership, Identity and Intersectionality

Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley

## Introduction

Equity is the great promise of education – to have as much chance to thrive and succeed as anyone else, whatever the circumstances. For years, the approach that many nations took to equity was to narrow achievement gaps between privileged and disadvantaged groups. Increasingly, though, equity has become more about inclusion and identity. It's hard to succeed if you cannot see yourself acknowledged and included in your school.

Placing emphasis on a person's *identity* - defined as a “distinguishing character or personality as an individual” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020) - as opposed to traditional economic inequalities, has defined a new age of *identity politics* that has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, identity politics has recognized and elevated racial, ethnic, and gender groups that have been marginalized (Walters, 2018). It has drawn attention to many groups who suffer from stereotypes and social structural disadvantages, not only those who are disadvantaged economically (Taylor, 2017). Identity politics has also enriched and expanded the arts and cultural life (Jung, 2006). On the other hand, the ascendancy of identity politics as the prime response to oppression and marginalization has pushed social class inequality and associated economic disadvantage into the background and enabled it to persist and even expand as a result (Reed, 2020). Identity politics has also been criticized for fragmenting society into separate and sometimes incommensurable interest groups (Fukuyama, 2018).

Like many others, Canadians have become concerned about identity issues in educational policy, building on the nation's Constitution as an officially bilingual, multicultural society. In 2014, the province of Ontario's Ministry of Education (2014) produced a landmark policy report, *Achieving Excellence*. The report recognized that schools could play major roles in identity building and in the development of wellbeing. Significantly, it embraced inclusion of identities as a central principle for achieving equity.

After a “youth engagement process” that entailed “extensive youth dialogue” in “face-to-face” and “interactive workshops” throughout Ontario, along with an online survey, the government’s previous report (Youth Development Committee, 2012, pp. 12-13) had already affirmed that the “sense of self” is a “core concept” that “connects aspects of development and experience together.” That report had noted how “for some individuals of Aboriginal descent, the sense of self has a spiritual significance” (p. 17). Francophone youth, too, “may perceive their French heritage and language as a central component of their core self” (p. 17). Many students, it seemed, could benefit from foregrounding identity and inclusion in Ontario’s educational strategy.

Between 2014-18, we undertook collaborative research with 10 of Ontario’s 72 school districts to examine how the province’s new educational policies were being implemented in practice. We didn’t set out to study or analyze identity issues in the province or the district, but they became an emergent and very evident part of the policy agenda and of the data we collected from over interviews with over 200 educators in the districts. Through our data, we examined the benefits that accrued when identities that were once invisible or undesirable were brought, in a positive way, to the forefront of educational attention. We also discovered that identity issues were sometimes complex and conflicted with each other, and that these complexities and conflicts proved difficult for leaders to manage. Drawing on our research, this chapter examines the implications that modern identity issues raise for educational leaders as they seek to secure equity and inclusion for all their students.

### **Identity and Intersectionality**

Every so often, a term from the academic discourse of sociology enters everyday language. The concept of *intersectionality* belongs in this grouping. The concept was invented by African-American, feminist theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Crenshaw and her successors have defined intersectionality as involving multiple, interrelated and converging aspects of oppression, drawing upon the particular historical experience of African-American women as their point of

departure. We refer to this original interpretation as *critical intersectionality* and will discuss its implications shortly.

Since Crenshaw's pathbreaking research, there has been a wealth of scholarship on different facets of intersectionality. We add to that research here by exploring two additional ways of understanding intersections of identities. The first is *celebratory intersectionality*, where identities reinforce each other in a positive way to assert racial and gendered characteristics as assets. The second is *conflicted intersectionality*, where contradictory and sometimes morally questionable dimensions of intersectionality exist in the same space. This chapter reviews the leadership implications of these three forms of intersectionality—critical, celebratory, and conflicted--in a new framework to address the increasingly diverse, rapidly changing, and politically polarized world of today.

### **Critical Intersectionality**

In the 1980s, Crenshaw undertook a case study of a battered women's shelter in Los Angeles. She was concerned that all women who were victims of domestic violence were represented as experiencing the problem in exactly the same way that White female victims did. By focusing exclusively on gender, she charged, researchers were neglecting other sources of oppression - especially race and class.

In "Mapping the Margins," Crenshaw (1991) pointed out that a White middle-class woman who had been the victim of domestic violence was positioned differently in terms of how she could access resources and how people responded to her, compared to a poor Black woman who might not have English as her first language, and who might also be an undocumented immigrant. "The violence that many women experience," Crenshaw argued, "is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242).

Crenshaw pointed out that she was not proposing "some new totalizing theory of identity" (p. 1244). By providing "recognition of multiple dimensions of identity," she was showing how these dimensions overlap with one another to compound people's experiences of marginalization (p. 1299). These intersections,

she argued, are not random but are determined by larger social forces that position different groups in relations of domination and subordination. This means that “power has clustered around certain categories” like race, class, and gender, “and is exercised by others” (p. 1297). Those categories, in turn, “have meaning and consequences” for those on the receiving end of dominant ways of classifying and viewing people.

In her 1990 book on *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins advanced intersectionality as a theory of power. Her book won numerous awards and was updated in an even more impactful second edition a decade later, in which she described in greater detail how race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality, manifest themselves in a “transnational matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000, p. 250). For Collins, this matrix describes “how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized” (p. 21). Collin’s work represents an important advance on the concept of racial privilege because it is seen less as a solitary phenomenon in any particular nation and more as a part of broader, systemic pattern that can be found in virtually every culture around the world today. For this reason, Collins emphasized that even though the theory of intersectionality was “developed from the standpoint of US Black women, “its significance is much greater” and it should be viewed as “part of a wider struggle for human dignity and social justice” (p. 294).

This culturally and globally broad understanding of critical intersectionality elucidates the data in our study of equity and inclusion policies in Ontario. For example, refugees who came into Canada didn't just need help with learning English or French, or even compensation for missed years of schooling. They were typically also poor, were visible minorities, and had post-traumatic stress disorders or other special needs. Responding to refugees and other newcomers, therefore, was not just about asking individual teachers to find solutions, nor even about making strings of interventions in order to deal with newcomer issues. It was also about connecting up the supports across and among whole communities of educators for groups of children and adolescents who have multiple challenges, including adapting to their novel identities as “new Canadians.”

Within a school, the leadership lesson of critical intersectionality is not to focus on a singular aspect of students' marginalized identities, and not to oversimplify problems as being exclusively or predominantly ones of race, or poverty, or second language learning, or post-traumatic stress among the children of recently immigrated refugees, for example. Educational leaders do not operate in blind controlled research studies. They do not deal with one variable at a time. They have to look at the whole child who experiences problems in complex bundles of critical intersectionality, just as Crenshaw and Collins argued.

### **Celebratory Intersectionality**

Canada's iconic rap artist and all-round music star, Drake, is a Grammy Award winner and US Billboard chart-topper. He's known to all demographics, young and old, Black and White. Drake is a universally beloved Canadian who is proud of his roots and loyal to them.

What is Drake's identity? Most obviously, it appears, like the majority of rap stars, he's Black – though Drake typically self-identifies as being biracial. But Drake insists this isn't the only thing about him. As well as being Black, Drake is also Jewish. He's a basketball fan. And he's a passionate advocate for *The 416* – the area code of Toronto, his hometown (Mere, 2019).

This last aspect of Drake's identity might seem trivial, but by signalling its importance to all his fans, Drake is making an important statement. In the generation before Drake, Canadian musicians such as Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, or comedians like Steve Martin and Mike Myers felt they had to leave their country, to make it big. But Drake, like a generation of musicians following him, is asserting his identity as a Canadian. Talking up *The 416* is not quirky; it's a countercultural assertion of Canadian identity against American domination (Kelly, 2016). Drake understands this resistant narrative because he came from a humble, lower middle-class background where, as his song lyrics testify, he "started from the bottom. Now my whole team \*\*\*\*ing here" (Drake, 2013).

What might Drake look like if he were not a person, but a school? The people in the school would refuse to be defined by a single identity, especially a stigmatized one. In *Stigma*, Canadian sociologist, Erving Goffman (1963), described what

happens when people are treated and responded to in relation to a singular and stigmatized part of their identity. Despite all the assets an individual might have, others may react to them negatively, and even abusively, in terms of a single *master characteristic*, as Goffman called it. This can override and even negate all other aspects of a person's identity, as has been the experience of individuals who have many different dimensions to their personalities but still find themselves labeled as, elderly, homeless, "Native," an ex-prisoner, Asian, fat, black, deaf, Jewish, disabled, white trash, mentally ill, or gay, for example.

By contrast, if a school looked like Drake, students with learning disabilities would practice self-advocacy, not only with confidence, but also with flair. Newcomers would bring enriching elements to the school that benefit everyone. Festivals and faiths would be celebrated, including ones that are less fashionable or that are historically associated with nation-building or Christianity. Indeed, schools would find a way to celebrate all aspects of students' identities, individually and together.

Someone who casts light on these issues of intersectionality is Professor Jonathan Jansen. Jansen is Distinguished Professor at Stellenbosch University, and former President of Orange University. After the end of apartheid, he also became the first ever Black Dean at the University of Pretoria, South Africa's most prestigious university. In *Knowledge in the Blood*, Jansen (2009) has described how he came under immense pressure to take down paintings of Boer trekkers that were hung in the Faculty Building. To the surprise of many of his colleagues, Jansen insisted that although many White perpetrators of apartheid had Boer ancestry, the paintings represented an important part of South African history and depicted how Boer immigrants had endured struggles of their own. The point was not to erase history, Jansen insisted. It was to add to it with new paintings that represented post-apartheid South Africa and the history of Black, Indian and "Coloured" South Africans too.

Celebratory intersectionality is not inconsistent with the analyses of Crenshaw and Hill. Positive intersectionality takes oppressed and marginalized cultures and identities and inverts them with slogans like "Gay Pride," "Black Lives

Matter,” and “Nasty Women.” These identities are claims about and assertions of recognition, dignity, worth and power.

For school leaders, the implications are to create schools where cultures are affirmed, diverse groups are acknowledged, and solidarity is shown for LGBTQ students by holding “pink shirt” days, for example. Collins (2000, p. 283) described an ethic of care that comprises “value placed on individual expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions, and the capacity of empathy” as key social justice principles. School leaders have opportunities to enact these values by making sure that students can bring their whole personalities to school, that their emotions are engaged, and that they care for one another.

### **Conflicted Intersectionality**

Asserting different identities isn’t always easy. When immigrants first arrive, they may have different views from the majority culture, about religion, or gender equity, or LGBTQ identity. This raises questions about not just accepting people’s identities as they are, but also about engaging with those identities in the human rights context of the host society. Identities, in these circumstances, can become conflicted and leaders can be called on to deal with difficult issues of conflicting human rights.

In the 2019 movie, *Blinded by the Light*, the protagonist, Javed, a teenage son of a strict and traditional Pakistani-Muslim family that has immigrated to England, experiences intense identity conflict. Based on a memoir by Sarfraz Manzoor - *Greetings from Bury Park: Race, Religion and Rock and Roll* - the movie depicts his conflicting experiences of race, immigration, and social class intersectionality in Margaret Thatcher’s Britain of the 1980s. It is a narrative about irony and complexity; not just tragedy. Manzoor, for example, describes himself as “an unemployed British Pakistani with shoulder-length dreadlocks, a silver nose ring and a strange fascination with Bruce Springsteen” (Manzoor, 2007, p. 1).

In the movie, Javed is out of place in both his school and his family. Then, through his relationship with a Sikh boy in the school, he becomes acquainted with working-class American rock music star Bruce Springsteen. As well as

understanding that rock music might feed his appetite for attracting girls, this hitherto traditional Muslim boy who, along with his family, experiences racist abuse from White youths in the community, finds in Springsteen's lyrics of White working-class life, an affinity that is grounded in their common struggle against isolation, inequality, and oppression.

Part of Javed's intersectionality is his adolescence. His culturally conservative parents don't understand his fascination with this "Jewish man" Springsteen – a delightful moment of intersectional irony in the movie script. They want him to study hard and to be successful. In addition, they want him to marry a Pakistani girl that they plan to select for him.

Springsteen's lyrics about working-class America throw a light on Javed's suffering – a light that also nearly blinds him. The music, the pleasure it brings, and the escape it offers from the prejudice-ridden misery he suffers is so intense that when Javed finally heads off to buy tickets to see Springsteen perform in person, he neglects his sister's wedding. His obsession with Springsteen is so extreme that he is oblivious to acts of racist violence against the wedding party - until it is almost too late.

At the last moment, however, Javed sees the light instead of being blinded by it. Rather than acting as a bystander to the violence, with better things to do, he finds a way to step into the fray as a son and a brother. Ultimately, Javed and his father also find a way to reconcile their different opinions about his dream to be writer. In the movie's concluding scene, when Javed receives a prestigious writing award at his school, his father, mother, and sister show up, at the back of the hall, just in time to hear him read his winning entry. But instead of presenting his prepared essay, Javed puts it aside, and articulates how its substance connects him to his family's aspirations and struggles. "I like your stories," Javed's father says to him at the end. "But," he adds, "don't forget our stories, too!"

This movie represents the hope that exists within and beyond intersectionality. It is not a politics of irreconcilable identities that are male and female, gay and straight, or Black and White. Nor is it only a coalition of some identities against others, in pursuit of opportunity and advantage. Writing in the

*Guardian* newspaper, Manzoor (2019) shared how “I could not have predicted that Jewish women in Jerusalem, White teenage boys in Omaha, Nebraska, and older White women in Australia would all contact me and thank me for telling me their story.” *Blinded by the Light* describes a struggle towards establishing a shared humanity that leaves identities intact, and also brings them together in combinations that let adolescents like Manzoor pursue their own hopes and dreams in whatever way they freely choose but in ways that also respect their origins as well as their aspirations.

Since identities are always evolving, there is never any such thing as a fixed and flawless identity. As Andy writes in his memoir about growing up among the White working class in Northern England, his town abandoned its traditional Labour Party allegiances in the 1980s and voted for the authoritarian populist, Margaret Thatcher (Hargreaves, 2020b). It later became one of the most pro-Brexit towns in the UK. In many Western countries, members of White working-class communities that have a long history of internal solidarity and industriousness, and that, in some ways, have been left behind economically, and left out culturally, can also become xenophobic and racist. Hence, many people are hesitant to acknowledge this group’s current legitimate grievances.

Flaws and shortcomings are not unique to White working-class identity, though. For example, Crenshaw pointed out that there has been a tendency to suppress the findings of studies showing that the highest rates of reported domestic violence against women occur within lesbian relationships (e.g. Rolle et al., 2018), because of the concern that this will reinforce negative stereotypes of the LGBTQ community. Several faith-based communities, especially more orthodox or evangelical ones, marginalize gender-based minorities. Trans activists have engaged in heated public disputes with some feminists of a mainly older generation about what defines a woman (BBC, 2020; Greenhalgh, 2020). People who identify as bisexual say that they often find themselves between two worlds, accepted neither by the LGBTQ or the heterosexual community (Erickson-Schrott & Mitchell, 2009). More White women in the US voted for the populist and explicitly racist and misogynist Donald Trump in two elections, than voted against him (Lenz, 2020).

These are examples of what we call *conflicting human rights* that are based on conflicting identities. One of the biggest educational controversies in England, in recent years, has been between an openly gay headteacher, and a predominantly Muslim parents' group in Birmingham, who found inclusion of LGBTQ sexuality and lifestyles within curriculum materials offensive to their own religious beliefs and family values (Ferguson, 2019). Likewise, in our Ontario research, some Franco-Ontarian educators that view themselves as part of a minoritized culture, have found it difficult, in turn, to include French-speaking students from North Africa, Haiti, and the Middle East, without perceived risks to their own imperiled identity. These kinds of dilemmas indicate that we should perhaps accept the open-minded spirit of Canadian singer-songwriter Alanis Morissette's (1995) lyrics that we "haven't got it all figured out just yet."

### **Conflicted Intersectionalities in Practice**

Discussions about intersectionality have not assigned much attention to what we call its *conflicted* aspects. Yet evidence of conflicted intersectionalities is everywhere—including in our research in Ontario schools. We present three instances here.

We begin with Catholic schools – a substantial part of the Ontario public system – and LGBTQ identities. The Catholic Church doesn't officially recognize gay marriage. As publicly funded schools, however, Ontario's Catholic schools are required to comply with government policy, including policy related to inclusion and sexual orientation. How have school and system leaders reconciled the policies of their government with their faith?

One area of difficulty concerned *Gay-Straight Alliances* and whether other terms, such as *Diversity Clubs*, could be used in schools instead. This euphemistic evasion can perpetuate the continued stigmatization of LGBTQ youth. However, after a delayed start, we found, some Catholic schools became more self-critical about their role in suppressing LGBTQ identities. Even so, after we had published our report, we still came under (unsuccessful) pressure from some Catholic system leaders to retract statements in the online version indicating that they were behind

their non-Catholic public sector counterparts in being fully inclusive of LGBTQ identities.

A second area in which conflicting identities appeared in our data was in relation to the intersection between Franco-Ontarian identity and the identities of newcomers. The francophone district in our study had to deal with a shift from a traditionally homogenous Franco-Ontarian culture to a more international one that included growing numbers of immigrant families. This was a major transformation for a group that had struggled to maintain its own distinctive cultural and linguistic heritage. By 2016, one superintendent informed us, “in some of the schools, 90% of the school are immigrant students. One school has 78 nationalities.”

Traditional Franco-Ontarian culture was “declining, older, more rural but undergoing increasing urbanization” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 16). Internationally, however, the French language today is situated in a dynamic global community of “at least 30 countries” and approximately 355 million speakers that could contribute to a cosmopolitan future” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 37). While Franco-Ontarian schools were experiencing students bringing “greater cultural diversity” with them, these new students were not necessarily strengthening Franco-Ontarian culture because “many of them speak a form of French that is different from the French spoken in Ontario” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 26). The students used different idioms and sometimes a patois that wasn’t recognizable to traditional Franco-Ontarian students and their parents.

In 2014, public hearings revealed a concern that “integrating newcomers without many roots in the community (more specifically without any roots in the local Franco-Ontarian community) may dilute feelings of belonging to the community” (Barber, 2014, p. 16). The challenge for these communities was to preserve traditional Franco-Ontarian heritage, while at the same time welcoming a growing number of immigrants and refugees. Although schools are meeting this challenge in many ways, underlying issues persist, and the problem of engaging with conflicted intersectional identities endures.

A third area in which conflicted identities was evident was in the education of “Old Order” traditional Mennonite students. In the nineteenth century, over

60,000 of these religiously devout newcomers arrived and settled in southern and western Canada. The Mennonites spoke a dialect called “Plattdeutsch,” a reference to their flatland area of origin in the borderlands that straddle Germany and Holland. Most of the newcomers were involved in small-scale agriculture. The pursuit of freedom of religion, exemption from military service, and the right to have their own schools, have seen Mennonites over centuries travel to Russia, then western Canadian provinces, followed by Latin America, and most recently to Ontario.

Around 1955, Mennonites began to establish themselves along the northern shores of Lake Erie due to agricultural employment opportunities. Many families would spend their summers working in Canada and send remittances to support their communities in Mexico. However, over time, a variety of factors, including climate, economics, and crime have made the pursuit of land ownership in Mexico difficult.

Today, the population of one of the 10 school districts involved in our research is made up of approximately 7% Old Order Mennonites. This version of Mennonite culture is educationally distinctive. Formal education in public schools is not a priority for parents. Many children have minimal English or literacy skills upon entering kindergarten. Some of their parents delay their entry to school until first grade. Many of the parents are illiterate themselves and cannot read to their children at home.

Then there are interruptions to schooling as well. During the winter, parents go to Mexico to work in the fields, and they pull their children out of Ontario’s schools for months at that time. They are, in other words, *transnational*. This leaves gaps in students’ learning, and contributes to their lack of success in school. Despite the issues with attendance, a legalistic policy that enforced attendance would not be effective. It would simply drive students and parents away from formal education opportunities and lead them to migrate to one of their other communities in Mexico or the US.

Old Order Mennonites are part of an immigrant group who are Canadian citizens, have been in Canada since WWII, and yet have not integrated into the

mainstream culture. Nor do they want to. The culture has strong family values that support respectful behavior and a calm environment. The value of learning for girls focuses on tasks in the home. Most girls at the end of Grade 8 leave school to work in the home, or in the greenhouses in order to “bring the money home to mom and dad because they have eight mouths to feed and the parents need help.” By the time some of the girls are in their early 30s, they may have six or seven children of their own.

Not all Old Order Mennonite children embrace their parents’ culture. Some of the boys go to high school, and a few go on to college. Like Javed in *Blinded by the Light*, these boys are “pushing back from their parents and saying ‘I don’t want to be a part of this culture.’” In the meantime, teachers of these students are struggling to meet their literacy needs and to help them catch up to their peers.

How do educators respect the traditional faith and strong family values of this culture that, at the same time, is unapologetic about its patriarchal values? How should we respond when members of a religious community restrict educational opportunities of both boys and girls by taking children out of Ontario’s schools for several months each year? What are the moral issues involved when parents are not providing support for their children’s literacy, and want their young people to enter family life and agricultural work long before the official age for high school completion?

Educational leaders can’t legally force parents in this community to send their children to school beyond a certain age (as the parents would simply migrate to another part of their community in North or Central America). Instead, they have experimented with finding ways to promote “a generational change in attitudes to education by building trust and relationships with families.” For example, the schools decided to purchase and offer produce from the local community in their school lunch programs. One principal described how part of his job was just to hang around the community and talk to people, carry their shopping home for them, and build relationships that might facilitate a generational change in educational attitudes.

The tensions between Old Mennonite and secular Ontarian cultures are real and cannot be wished away. Likewise, the struggles that are ongoing with regard to LGBTQ identities and the Catholic Church, and historical Franco-Ontarian versus newcomer francophone cultures reflect genuine differences in values and lifestyles. These are difficult, and perhaps impossible to fully reconcile in schools and societies today.

A world that has been inclining, politically, towards authoritarian populism, also faces difficult questions concerning working class identity. How do we recognize the historic strengths of working-class identity in terms of the dignity of labour, union solidarity, hard work, aspiration, emotional directness, and community spirit, without also appearing to support White privilege, racism, and other forms of prejudice that exist among some members of that class? How do we find a way to engage with these challenges rather than falsely equating all working-class identity with poverty, claiming we are all middle class now, or running away from the problem altogether (Hargreaves, 2020a)?

In all these circumstances, addressing intersectionality must be about much more than recognizing different cultures and traditions or addressing the manifest oppressions of particular groups. It must also be about forthright acknowledgement of the tensions within and between different kinds of identity. Educational leaders can play vital roles in addressing how these tensions might be addressed in order to achieve some greater cause, such as universal human rights principles that transcend them.

### **Leading through Identity and Intersectionality**

For decades, women had to fight not only their governments but also their male-dominated working-class trades unions for the right to equal pay. This issue is now recognized in international labour law. Gay marriage that was once prohibited everywhere is now a right in many countries, even in the overwhelmingly Catholic Republic of Ireland. Many intersectional tensions can eventually be overcome, and wherever possible, they should be. That is the premise of international campaigns

like the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and the Millennial Development Goals before them.

Michael Ignatieff, a Canadian journalist, almost became his country's Prime Minister. He grew up and has worked in the former Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Britain, the US, and Canada. "Expatriation," Ignatieff argues, "is not exile; it is merely the belonging of those who choose their home rather than inherit it" (Ignatieff, 1995). Given his cosmopolitan background, Ignatieff wanted to understand what was happening to nationalism at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1993, he wrote a book called *Blood and Belonging* that explores ethnic, civic, and nationalist intersectionality on a global scale (Ignatieff, 1995).

How is it, Ignatieff asked, that in the former Yugoslavia, Serbs, Croats and Bosnians who once lived amicably side-by-side, came to see each other as enemies? What were the possibilities and, as history would prove, the pitfalls of ethnic Ukrainians and Russians coexisting in the same contested territories? What did it mean for the nation-within-a-nation of Quebec to assert its rights for independence from Canada? What about the desires of the Indigenous Cree community, in turn, to assert its own traditional land rights, not just against the Canadian nation-state, but also against the majority Quebecois in their province?

In the end, Ignatieff argues against identity, belonging and nationalism based on blood, ethnic purity or affinity, and opposition. Instead, he proposes what he calls "civic nationalism," which "believes in the necessity of nations and in the duty of citizens to defend the capacity of nations to provide the security and the rights we all need in order to live cosmopolitan lives" (p?). Although Ignatieff almost certainly downplays the importance of distinct identities and cultural traditions that are associated with nations and ethnicities a bit too much, the value of his perspective is that it points to how intersectionality is and can be a complicated state of cooperation and negotiation. Not having it all figured out just yet is not just a transitional phase, perhaps, but also a permanent way of being.

For Ignatieff, ethnic nationalism based on essentialist forms of inherited identity can lead to warring identities, sometimes on the same territory. By contrast, Ignatieff's concept of "civic identities" brings ethnicities and other forms of identity

– inherited and otherwise – together. This aspiration is to move towards common principles that enhance and protect human dignity, while at the same time allowing cultures and peoples to chart out their own independent paths to peace and prosperity. We have to be able to experience empathy, advocacy and solidarity across identities, and not just within them.

What does all this mean for school leadership?

First, in a world that is rife with conflicting intersectionalities, it is important to discuss them openly, and not sweep them under the carpet. Collins (2000, p. 264) describes this as “being centered in one’s own experience while being empathetic to the partners in the dialogue.” Learning how to participate in conversations like these should be an explicit part of teachers’ and leaders’ professional development. Making sure that school staffs are genuinely diverse and that there is an open appreciation for the power of dissident perspectives is a necessary first step.

Second, coaches and mediators should be used to bring groups and communities together, find common ground among them, and have conversational protocols that emphasize mindful listening before judging to enhance empathy (Shirley & MacDonald, 2017). We need to accept that it is not always going to be possible to establish common ground and that we must find ways to live and work together that accommodate dissonant perspectives. It will be an especially powerful lesson for our students when we show them that faculty can collaborate with one another, even when they disagree on certain issues.

Third, we can teach our students about the intersectionalities of identities, and the risks and benefits that accrue from them. We can do this by studying the ways that polyglot populations have thrived in many historical epochs on the one hand and also by frankly exposing students to the histories of genocide and of other forms of oppression such as the tragedy and cruelty of forcibly removing indigenous students from their families and placing them in residential schools, on the other. Historical and contemporary conflicts over political and ethnic identity such as the Israel-Palestinian crisis can also be included in our curricula, as can breakthroughs such as the Good Friday agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland in 1998, and the Truth and Reconciliation process in post-apartheid South Africa.

Fourth, we should recognize that much of what passes as newcomer, immigrant, or refugee identity is actually transnational identity where, especially in an internet-accessible world, people feel they belong all their lives to their cultures of origin *and* to their current countries of residence and (sometimes second) citizenship. As Allison Skerrett (2015) argues in *Teaching Transnational Youth*, school leaders and teachers must enable students to experience and express all parts of their identities, and to move beyond assimilation as an educational goal. When children move back and forth between their two countries with parents and grandparents on extended visits, efforts must be made to connect with teachers and leaders in the schools of the other countries that transnational students attend.

Fifth, democracy is in peril and authoritarian populism is setting off the White working class against other racial and ethnic groups. It is important to understand and argue that the working class is now part of diversity, and that it must not be allowed to become an exception to or opponent of it. Working class identity can be a uniting force, not a divisive one. One thing we learned about our essential workers during the coronavirus pandemic is how diverse they are. They include migrant farm labourers, immigrant meat packers, and care home workers. So educational leaders must ensure that schools teach about the importance of working class identity alongside other identities – through elevating the status of vocational education, through educating young people about global labour conditions, through teaching about wealth inequality and not just financial literacy, and through engaging with the local and national histories of working class communities and social movements.

Sixth, ethical protocols should be developed in schools to assist us when competing identities and human rights come into conflict with one another. Our data show that the right to religious freedom versus the right to gender equity and inclusion of gender-based identities is a sensitive point in Ontario's schools, as it is elsewhere. These differences can be negotiated within clear guidelines for constructive dialogue.

When Andy served as president of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) between 2017-2019, he found that some

members perceived the organization as being too old and White. So, he was delighted when the Board decided to hold its 2020 Congress in Morocco, a predominantly Muslim, African country. However, at the Annual General Meeting, one outraged member asked “Why is ICSEI holding Congresses in countries where homosexuality is illegal?” The upcoming Congress, he and the Board realized, presented a situation of conflicting human rights. In being inclusive of race, faith, and the global South, the organization was also risking the exclusion and safety of gender-identity minorities.

ICSEI responded by developing and publishing an ethics policy on how to approach these issues. It secured assurances about intellectual freedom and basic safety for all members within the Morocco Congress. The speaker platform included presentations on LGBTQ issues in schools. Ethics policies like those that ICSEI created can and should inform educational leaders about what to do when dilemmas like competing human rights must be dealt with, so that clear criteria are available to everyone.

Last, we must accept the existence of imperfect leadership, in ourselves and in others. Perfectionism leads us in a dangerous direction towards possessing and projecting overconfidence and false certainties, often at the expense of excluding and oppressing vulnerable and marginalized groups. In *Imperfect Leadership*, Steve Munby (2019) writes about how he had to protect the UK national leadership institution he led, under a Conservative Government that had lost interest in it. One of the greatest flaws of leadership, Munby argues, is believing that you are or have to be the perfect leader: never weak, always right, free from self-doubt, and impervious to failure. Ethical leadership, Munby says, means being clear about your values and hanging on to them, rather than doing the expedient thing just to get performance numbers up or to keep political opponents and critics at bay.

Educational leaders in today’s world cannot eradicate disagreement amongst groups. This will often be beyond the capability of any school or organization. What we can do, however, is to create spaces in which the expression of diverse perspectives can be aired and shared. There is an enormous intermediate ground between intolerance on the one hand and limitless relativism on the other. It is our

responsibility to protect and expand that intermediate space in which we can work together to improve the education of all of our students and build common cause among them, while encouraging them to explore and strengthen their respective identities in their unique and distinctive ways.

## **Conclusion**

Identity is integral to learning and wellbeing. We will accomplish little of value unless we know who we are, individually and collectively. The same goes for our students. How do we acknowledge young people's diverse and intersecting identities, and help them form over time? Do students of different identities see themselves represented in the curriculum and the design of the school? How do their different identities interact with one another in communities, so they are mutually acknowledged and respected? When and how should we question some identities even as we celebrate them, during public holidays, for example, or among some faith-based communities that do not value all kinds of inclusion or equity? These are key questions that all educational leaders are encountering today, and with which we must engage, in order to advance the learning and wellbeing of all our students.

In this chapter, we have proposed a framework of three forms of intersectionality—critical, celebratory, and conflicted-- for school leaders to use, to help students to navigate their intersecting identities. Many of the hesitations that some people have about identity politics have to do with the concern that they can be divisive. But we can embrace many identities, engage with one another civilly about any potentially problematic aspects, and also help all young people feel they are part of something greater than themselves - without losing sight of who they are as unique individuals from distinctive communities. This is the task before us as we engage with all three forms of intersectionality and use them to guide positive and inclusive educational leadership today.

## References

- Barber, K. (2014). *Ontario francophone immigrant profile: Immigration trends and labor outcomes*. Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement. Retrieved from [https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/rcis/documents/RCIS\\_MCI\\_PC\\_Fellowship\\_Report\\_Barber\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/rcis/documents/RCIS_MCI_PC_Fellowship_Report_Barber_2014.pdf)
- BBC. (2020). Oxford University professor condemns exclusion from event. March 4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-51737206>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989, Article 8. Available at: <https://chicounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Drake (2013). "Started from the Bottom," from the album, *Nothing Was the Same*, written by Graham, A., Shebib, N & Coleman, M. produced by Zombie, M. & Shebib, M. Aspire Record Label.
- Erickson-Schrott, L., & Mitchell, J. (2009) Queering queer theory, or why bisexuality matters. *Journal of Bisexuality* 9(3-4), pp. 297-315.
- Ferguson, D. (2019). "We can't give in": The Birmingham school on the frontline of anti-LGBT protests. *The Guardian*. May 26. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/26/birmingham-anderton-park-primary-muslim-protests-lgbt-teaching-rights>
- Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Greenhalgh, H. (2020). J.K. Rowling sparks outrage for including cross-dressing serial killer in new book. CBC News. September 15. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/rowling-book-outrage-1.5724915>
- Hargreaves, A. (2020a). "Class matters: Socio-economic inequality and education" *Education Canada*. October. <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/class-matters/>

Hargreaves, A. (2020b). *Moving: A memoir of education and social mobility*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Ignatieff, M. (1995). *Blood and belonging: Journeys into the new nationalism*. New York: NY. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Jansen, J.D. (2009). *Knowledge in the blood: Confronting race and the apartheid past*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jung, C. (2006). Why liberals should value “identity politics.” *Daedalus* 135 (4), pp. 32-39.

Kelly, C. (2016). King of Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, February 12.  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/basketball/drake-nba-all-star-game-toronto-raptors-2016/article28746939/>

Lenz, L. (2020). White women vote Republican. Get used to it Democrats. *Washington Post*. November 27.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/27/white-women-vote-republican-get-used-it-democrats/>

Manzoor, S. (2007). *Greetings from Bury Park: Race, religion, and rock and roll*. . New York: Vintage Departures.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020) <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>

Manzoor, S. (2019). I thought Britain was becoming more tolerant. I was wrong. *The Guardian*. July 6. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jul/06/sarfraz-manzoor-xenophobia-has-not-only-returned-it-has-become-normalised->

Morissette, A. (1995). “Hand in my pocket”, from the album, *Jagged Little Pill*, written by Morissette, A. & Ballard, G., Maverick Records.

Mere, J. (2019). Drake’s identity is going to be different for everyone: But he will always be a bi-racial, Jewish, Canadian, hip-hop artist. *The Cord*, December 11.  
<https://thecord.ca/drakes-identity-is-going-to-be-different-for-everyone-but-he-will-always-be-a-biracial-jewish-canadian-hip-hop-artist-an-analysis-of-drakes-identity-in-hyfr/>

Munby, S. (2019). *Imperfect leadership. A book for leaders who know they don’t know it all*. London: Crown House.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Ontario's aménagement linguistique policy for French-language education*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/linsguistique/linguistique.pdf>.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/great.html>

Reed, T.F. (2020). *Toward freedom: The case against race reductionism*. New York, NY: Verso.

Rolle, L, Giardina, A., M., Gerino, E, and Brustia, P (2018). When Intimate Partner Violence Meets Same Sex Couples: A Review of Same Sex Intimate Partner Violence, *Frontiers of Psychology*, 9 (1506), August 21 doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506)

Shirley, D., & MacDonald, E. (2017). *The mindful teacher*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Skerrett, A. (2015) *Teaching transnational youth: Literacy and education in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Taylor, K-Y. (2017). *How we get free: Black feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket.

Walters, S.D. (2018). In defense of identity politics. *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43(2), pp. 473-488.

Youth Development Committee, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2012). *Stepping stones: A resource on youth development*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services.