Creative Disruption: The Emergence of Transformational Leaders and Educator

Activists During a "Teach-out"

by

Danielle Gordon

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2014 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Beth Blue Swadener, Chair
James Paul Gee
Jennifer Sandlin

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014

ABSTRACT

This study examined instructional and attitudinal changes influencing faculty members in a proprietary college after the parent company divorced itself from day-to-day leadership decisions during a "teach-out." A teach-out is the process of school closure, when the college stops enrolling new students, but teaches out currently enrolled students. It explores the strongest influences on faculty members during the teach-out process; how faculty members negotiate their work and how the changes appeared to impact students. Study findings revealed that the strongest influences were fellow faculty members. Several rose as leaders and essentially became educator activists starting a movement focused on what they believed to be an essential component of education and what had been missing previously, namely, creativity. They were supported in this endeavor by local leadership who served as "uplinks" and silently gave power to the movement. Students and the organization became beneficiaries of the renewed engagement of their instructors, which led to increased retention and placement rates.

This study sought to understand the marked shift in the organizational culture and climate that governed faculty work life through the framework of organizational discourse as well as from a social justice context of freedom from oppression. Through the use of phenomenology and qualitative methods, including autoethnography, this study found that the structure of the teach-out effectively created a space for transformational leaders to emerge and become educator activists. This initial study provides a promising model for faculty engagement that appears to have positive outcomes for individual faculty members, students and the organization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction and Context**

The call for an educated populous has been motivated by many factors throughout U.S. history: social, cultural, and economic. For many, those seemingly distinct factors are merely current rhetoric meant to disguise the use of education as a tool of the powerful to maintain social control over the powerless. As Perrucci and Wysong suggest, "In effect, if not by design, the American education system functions primarily to transmit advantage and disadvantage across generations" (2003:209). Education is a piece of the American Dream. Society is told that achieving an education is the way to achieve a better life. The myth of the American Dream is a powerful force in American life, and it is based on two distinct beliefs: First, that everyone can aspire to levels of success that exceed their starting points in life, because where a person starts life is an accident that can be remedied; and second, that there is equality of opportunity to reach one's goals, and that the game has a set of rules that are fair and capable of producing the desired success goals (Perrucci and Wysong, ibid: 212).

Career and technical education has always been a part of that complicated history. State and federal legislation has been enacted to subsidize this training since the 1800s. The Morrill Act of 1862, for example, provided land grants to states to provide agricultural and mechanical education. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 also subsidized public education of students on vocational tracks, but limited "traditional academics", so as not to interfere with the student's ability to find work. Under this Act, entering the workforce was the primary focus rather than "educating" as the dominant culture

traditionally understood it.  This legislation, also known as PL 64-347, focused on helping the economically disadvantaged or disabled enter the workforce.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944[1], commonly referred to as the GI Bill of Rights, was the first federal education subsidy at the post-secondary level to include proprietary vocational institutions.  In 1972 Title IV of The Higher Education Act[2] was also expanded to include proprietary post secondary institutions.  This expansion of funding paved the way for the explosion of proprietary schools to enter the market (Coleman & Vedder, 2008, p. 5).

The rise of, and the perceived problems with, proprietary postsecondary institutions, especially in the career and technical sector, has reignited the longstanding conversation over the role education plays in a community, or country's success. Lawmakers and citizens are wrestling with questions such as, what role does an educated populous play in a country's continued success?  How is success defined and for whom? To what degree should education be subsidized for the disadvantaged?  What outcomes should we look for to judge the success of subsidized education programs?  These discussions occurring on a national level have real implications for the frontline experiences of both students and teachers.

National accrediting agencies have historically regulated career and technical institutions, with regional accrediting agencies overseeing traditional colleges and universities.[3]  Career and technical schools have two primary goals: 1) to ensure the

---

[1] P.L. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284m

[2] PL. 92-318, 58 Stat. 235m.

[3] This is no longer the case. Many career and technical schools are applying for and  are being accepted by regional accrediting bodies; however, they are not the focus of this study.

student persists to graduation; and 2) to help the student enter the workforce.  To insure that subsidized institutions were achieving these goals, national accrediting agencies require detailed tracking and documentation of all students and graduates, with annual benchmarks that must be achieved or continued accreditation will be in jeopardy.  For example, in 2013 most national accrediting agencies require member institutions to achieve an overall retention and placement rate of 70%, with each program offering to also meet the 70% benchmark (see ACICS memo to the field, June, 2012). If the member institution fails to do so, they are given a probationary period in which to come into compliance.  If they are unable to do so, accreditation may be revoked.  Accreditation can be revoked for a single program or for an entire institution.

Retention and placement rates are monitored on an annual basis by the agency, but member institutions are also required to evaluate their institutions effectiveness annually in their Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP).  For example, the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) requires a review of five elements, with one optional element: student retention rates, student placement rates, level of graduate satisfaction, level of employer satisfaction, student learning outcomes, and graduation rates [when available].

Large publically traded education corporations must not only meet the needs of those regulatory bodies, but must do so while working for the interest of shareholders, which means increased revenue must be generated.  As the regulatory oversight has increased, so has the cost of doing business in this sector.  In order to sustain their business, many of these large corporations chose to reorganize.  This meant many school closures and layoffs across the sector.  The fall of 2012 saw the heaviest impact to date.

The mammoth in the industry, University of Phoenix closed 115 schools affecting 13,000

students in 30 states (Veiga, October, 16, 2012 Hoff Post College).  During this same

time period, Kaplan, owned by the Washington Post Company announced the closing of

nine schools and the consolidation of four others, and Career Education Corporation

announced the closing of 23 of its 90 schools in the United States.  The impact of this

major shift in the industry affected thousands of students, faculty and staff, but the

ramifications on these stakeholders was relatively unknown.

To better understand the impact, this study focused primarily on how faculty

members in one for-profit college negotiated their work during the process of the campus

closure, exploring the tensions of the goals of the company with the faculty members

own convictions in regards to their roles as educators. The research was conducted in the

context of a school closure or "teach-out."  The context of the school closure provided

insight into how faculty members negotiated their work under severe time constraints,

knowing their employment was soon coming to an end.  This sense of urgency served as

a magnifying glass, where leaders rose with conviction and purpose. As both insider and

outsider witness to these phenomena the experience is contextualized through the eyes of

the researcher.

### "Teaching-out"

"Teach-out" as it is commonly referred, is the process of a school closure.  The

institution no longer accepts new students, but commits to teach-out existing students.

The site where this study took place, Sun Valley Career College, began this process in the

fourth quarter of 2012.  A letter went to all current and previous students explaining what

this means for them.  The following is an excerpt from the letter to students on a leave of absence:

> I have some important news to share with you as a student currently on a leave of absence from [Sun Valley Career College].  While we're working to reach you via phone as well, I want to share this important development about our campus with you as early as possible.
>
> We announced today that the decision has been made to begin a gradual process of discontinuing operations — what's called a "teach-out."  This means that, effective [date removed] the campus will no longer enroll <u>new</u> students.  However, if you return shortly from your leave of absence, you may be able to complete your program of study at [Sun Valley] before the campus closes in [date removed].
>
> [Sun Valley] made this difficult decision by taking a number of factors into account, including enrollment levels at the campus, projected financial viability, and market demand.
>
> We are committed to delivering on our promise to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue success in their chosen careers.  Career services, academic support and financial aid will continue to be available throughout the teach-out and will be offered through a centralized service thereafter.

The faculty and staff were informed of this decision just minutes before the announcement was made to students.  Immediately upon announcement an entire department was closed and all of the staff in that department was let go; the remaining staff was given a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet to respond to student questions, but received no answers as to their own employment status.  They were told only that it was being reviewed and they would be informed as soon as possible.  As became clear to the staff, accrediting bodies have strict guidelines to protect students, but nothing is in place for faculty and staff under these circumstances.

<div align="center">

**Why is this a Justice issue?**

</div>

Work and labor issues are cornerstone topics in the field of justice studies (see Banerjee, 2008; Brunson, 2010; Carey, 2009; Marx & Engels, 1888; Schur, 2004; Shapiro, 1993; Taustadóttir, 2008).  The conditioning of the worker in a capitalistic

society as described in Braverman's (1974) seminal work, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, serves as a framework to describe the *alienated* nature of the faculty member's labor in a proprietary setting.  Braverman argues that *alienated labor* "must be understood first of all in accordance with the prime definition of the verb *to alienate*, that is, to transfer ownership to another" (Braverman, 1974/1998, p. 317).  The phenomena of the school closure created a space for faculty members to redefine their relationship to their labor and the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for performing that work in an educational setting.  It enabled many of them to take back ownership.

Education is a tool of social mobility; career and technical schools are often the vehicle of choice.  Being that teachers have the most direct impact on instruction and the earning benefits for many vocational students (National Assessment of Vocational Education [NAVE]; Bailey, Kienzl, & Marcotte, 2004), it is essential that we understand how faculty of those institutions understand the role and negotiate their work.

## Statement of the Problem

The organizational culture and climate of a proprietary (for-profit) educational institution, especially as part of a publically traded corporation, can often have goals seemingly in conflict with the higher purpose rhetoric of the role of education in society.  For example, on the corporate website of a publicly traded education company they describe themselves by saying, "we are a dynamic educational services company committed to quality, career-focused learning and led by passionate professionals who inspire individual worth and lifelong achievement."  Another states, "our value system is

founded in the belief that excellence in education is measured by practical outcomes that enhance the lives of our students, enabling them to make important contributions in their workplace and in their communities." Yet another states:

> The core values of our institution include: Academic quality – We provide academically rigorous programs and experiences for adult learners. Student success – We provide opportunities and supportive learning environments to enable adult learners to achieve their academic and professional goals. Educational access – We make post-secondary education available to a diverse population of qualified adult learners.

The values espoused on public facing documents are often in sharp contrast to the organizational culture and climate described by the faculty and staff of these institutions, where revenue metrics supersedes academic quality. The distinction between the rhetoric and reality is especially jarring on one internal report completed monthly. The report is entitled "Learning Matters: Our Academic Report Card." From the title one would assume that the report included data from campuses on learning outcomes; when in fact, nothing asked for in the report directly effects learning. The report tracks revenue cost, population, and job placements. Although job placements can be seen as an indirect measure of learning outcomes, the purpose for the tracking has more to do with popular programs being put on probation by accrediting bodies, which affects revenue, rather than being tracked to improved learning outcomes.

 In a September 2013 article in *Mother Jones*, a financial aid counselor at ITT Technical Institute described "feeling like a collection agent" threatening students for high payments because their federal loan options had been exhausted. She described feeling threatened herself saying, "my supervisors and my campus president were breathing down my neck, and I was threatened that I was going to be fired if I didn't do this" (Oureshi, Cross, & Desai, 2013).

The work life of faculty is derived in large part from the organizational culture of the college and, in the case of proprietary colleges, its parent company. The interesting phenomena that took place during this teach-out is that to a large extent the parent company divorced itself from the closing institution. This had the unanticipated effect of empowering the remaining faculty who are responsible to keep teaching until the school closed.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is an example of the marked shift in the organizational culture and climate that governs the faculty work life in a proprietary college when the parent company divorces itself from the day-to-day leadership. This shift can be understood through the framework of organizational behavior as well as from a social justice context of freedom from oppression, effectively creating transformational leaders and educator activists.

The building of this framework comes through explicating the relationship of the school closure to the changes in the faculty work life. This is done using a phenomenological approach. That is, "the phenomenologist, or interpretivist (Ferguson, Ferguson, &Taylor, 1992), is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective and examining how the world is experienced." (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3). By explicating the experience of faculty members who are undergoing the teach-out individually, the ways in which this experience has changed the collective culture and sparked actions are also expounded.

"Phenomenological studies attend not only to the events being studied but also to their political, historical, and sociocultural contexts (e.g., Miller & Crabree, 1992, p. 25)"

(cited in Yin, 2011, p. 13). Both their individual and collective action is situated within a larger structure. The historical, political, and sociocultural context is primarily explicated from the autoennographic data that exists tangentially alongside the faculty narratives.

The phenomenon of the emergence of transformational leaders and educator activist is understood through the lens of Organizational Behavior (OB) research as well as the literature of educator activism. OB takes as its starting point that the engagement between people and the organizational structures in which they find themselves is transformative of both. As people engage the organizational structures, they are participating in the production of the structure for which they are situated within. These structures, while they may adapt can also limit the ways in which people may behave. This study is an example of how transformational leaders can serve both the needs of the employee and the organization simultaneously. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

## Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of a proprietary college closure on the work of the faculty. In 2012, University of Phoenix announced it was closing 115 brick and mortar locations. Career Education Corporation closed 23 campuses, Kaplan closed 9, and Corinthian closed 7, just to name a few. These closures have a major impact of the lives of the students they serve. However, there are also unintended consequences. This study is an example of how a space was created that allowed educator activists to emerge.

## Research Questions

This study seeks to understand the following question and sub-questions:

How do faculty members who teach courses containing artistic or design-oriented subject matter in a career college negotiate work while teaching-out?

       a. What are the strongest influences on faculty during the teach-out process?

       b. How do faculty negotiate their work and

       c. how does this process appear to impact students and the organization?

**Definitions**

*Uplink* – a person at the local campus level that has access to the corporate structure. They are often employees in supervisory roles that can access resources for faculty members. The term uplink was chosen to describe these individuals as a comparison to the signal needed to make contact with a satellite to receive service from many modern technologies.

*Teach-out* – the process of a campus closure, where a school no longer enrolls new students, but continues to teach existing students to degree completion within an agreed upon timeframe.

<div align="center">

**Organization of the Dissertation**

</div>

The teach-out of Sun Valley offered a unique opportunity to understand how faculty members negotiate their work under temporary conditions of employment. This study offers a model of organizational behavior that encourages the faculty member's relationship to their own labor as a productive tool for the organization.

Chapter One discussed the history of proprietary career education in the United States and its complicated role in the fulfillment of the American Dream. This chapter initiated the framework to discover how faculty members of these colleges relate to their work and their role in the organization. Chapter Two

discusses the empirical literature regarding organizational behavior (OB), the

relevant theories of leadership, educational activism and creativity. Chapter Three

examines the qualitative methodologies utilized in this study including

phenomenology and autoethnography. The central focus is the research design.

Chapters Four and Five respectively present the study findings and implications

for future research. This study sought to understand the marked shift in the

organizational culture and climate that governed the faculty work life through the

framework of organizational behavior as well as from a social justice context;

finding that the structure of the teach-out effectively created a space for

transformational leaders to emerge and become educator activists.  That activism

started a movement that appeared to serve virtually all involved.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Literature Review**

This study serves as a model of Organizational Behavior that focuses on leaders

who emerged from the faculty ranks and transformed an underperforming school

into a thriving environment. Therefore, the literature review is from the field of

Organizational Behavior, with a focus on culture, climate and leadership. The

faculty members discussed became educator activist that started a social

movement on the campus using creativity as their tool; therefore the findings

draw from those literatures as well. Although primarily discussed in Chapter

Three, the phenomenology literature also provides context and is therefore

discussed in this chapter.

**Organizational Behavior**

Organizational Behavior (OB) research "is the study of human agency in

organizations of all types. This means an interest in the behavior *of* organizations as well

as behavior *in* organizations" (Nicholson, 1995, p. 365). Nicholson argues that OB seeks

to explain and predict behavior at four levels of analysis:

> 1) the individual actor: owners, managers, and staff at all levels; 2) the group:
> Work Groups, teams, and other organizational subunits, and the relations between
> them; 3) interest groups: occupational, professional, and representative groups
> such as TRADE UNIONS; and 4) organizations: public institutions and private
> firms, voluntary and Not-For-Profit ORGANIZATIONS. (Nicholson, 1995, p.
> 365)

Although this study touches on interest groups (i.e. students) and organizations

(i.e. accrediting bodies), the primary focus is on the individual actor and the group.

Therefore, the literature used to frame the study in this regard will focus on the culture

and climate of the organization as well as the literature on leadership.

There is some debate on how to define organizational culture. For purposes of this study, organizational culture will refer to "'. . . the shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organization, and the means whereby they are shaped and expressed" (Kunda, 1992, p. 8) (cited in Alvesson, 2011, p. 14). Therefore, a company's culture describes the behaviors of its employees and how that behavior is shaped by the company's shared rules. According to Alvesson, culture is created when the group collectively makes "meaning" of those rules and agrees to the interpretation of language and symbols. In this sense, culture is not internal to the individual employee, but rather "somewhere between the heads of a group of people where symbols and meanings are publicly expressed" (Alvesson, 2011, p. 14). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes this symbolic aspect of culture in his book *The Interpretations of Cultures, 1973,* explaining culture as an ideational phenomenon: "culture is public because meaning is" (Geertz, 1973, p. 12).

The public nature of meaning requires businesses use language and symbols that will universally be understood and their meanings agreed upon. Problems emerge when there are multiple meanings to any word, phrase, or symbol. Culture may be public; however, there is an internal component, especially where multiple meanings may apply. Each individual "mind" will project their understanding onto the group.

Those shared rules and meanings become complicated when values collide. For education companies, especially publically traded corporations, the structures of corporate governance can appear in conflict with the historical socio cultural importance given to education. Educators are often seen as care workers, in that they are expected to be self-less and not motivated by money (England, Budig, & Folbre, 2002).

Corporations, however, are beholden to their shareholders. They are required to be motivated by money. "In the US and UK, the institutional and legal framework has always supported the principal that, in the absence of financial distress, executive discretion ought to be exercised in accordance with the interests of the company's shareholders" (Watson, 2009, p. 478). The assumption is that shareholders are the most at risk; therefore their interest must be protected. Others, such as employees, customers and students interests are served through regulations, contracts and behaviors. When a corporation's product is education, the organizational rules and shared values are difficult to articulate and the culture is difficult to manage. By its nature the values appear in competition. The corporation's stated mission is in line with society's values on education, front line employees are chosen for their alignment with those values; however, the corporation is legally obligated to make decision that make money for their shareholders. That value can appear out of alignment with the stated mission.

The assumptions that validate the corporate governance structure asserts that employees have power over corporate decision making through their behaviors (Watson, 2009, p. 478). However, when employees express unhappiness with the organizational culture the behavior is often seen as deviant. It would seem from the literature that when employees are acting in resistance to the shared rules it negatively affects the company's mission (Cyert & March, 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Robinson, 2008). Sandra Robison reviewed this literature in 2008 in a paper entitled, *Dysfunctional Workplace Behavior*. In this article she outlined behaviors that were deemed "workplace deviant" or "counterproductive." She discusses studies that have found individual personality traits that would predict deviance or counter-productivity like trait anger, (Chen & Spector,

1992; Fox & Spector, 1999; Lee & Allen, 2002) state hostility, (Judge, Fluegge, Hurst, & Livingston, 2009) positive effect, (Duffy, Ganster, & Shaw, 1998) locus of control, trait anxiety, (Fox & Spector, 1999) and responsibility and risk taking (Ashton, 1998). Furthermore, employees with low job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2009) were more likely to engage in deviant behaviors. The suggestion was to deselect employees with these traits (Robison, 2008, p. 144).

An organizational culture is different than an organizational climate. Lewin et al. (1939) refers to an *organizational climate* as "the nature of the relationship created between leaders and followers as a function of a leader's behavior" (cited in Schneider, et al., 2011, p. 30). This seems self evident. The workplace will feel good or bad, productive or inefficient, effective or ineffective based on ones relationship to their leader. The operative word in this context is "feels." The organizational climate is the tone the leader sets as well as the structural environment in which he/she lays out. Therefore, the employee responds with how they feel about their leader and their work (Judge et al., 2009). "Researchers have been steadily making the move to show how employee decisions and actions are inextricably linked to emotions at the personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels (Dehler & Welssch, 1994; Elfenbein, 2001; Hochschild, 1983)" (cited in Vacharkulksemsuk, Sekerka, & Fredrickson, 2011, p. 101). Vacharkulksemsuk, Sekerka, and Fredrickson (2011), argue that when you focus on the emotions of the worker, specifically their positive emotions, rather than seeing them as mere resources productivity increases. The increased productivity comes from interactive strength of cooperation. "To foster transformative cooperation, research in change management emphasizes that the atmosphere should be a positive

one"(Vacharkulksemsuk et al., 2011, p. 105).  Heifetz and Linsky (2002) offer some

tactics for survival and success.  One tactic they recommend is to create and nurture

communities and networks, which leaders can call on and work with so that they are not

going it alone.  Although, there is mixed evidence in the literature to the extent that the

emotions of leaders impact followers performance.  There is some evidence to support

that the positive emotions of transformational leaders do affect performance (Grandey,

2008, p. 246).

## Leadership

There are volumes of work produced in the study of leadership.  As a species we

seem enamored with the need to understand and control how individuals rise to positions

of power and authority.  Leaders become the main characters in social mythologies

designed to aggrandize the traits of the winners in the hopes that power will be

maintained for that group (Grint, 2011, p. 3).  Although those mythologies are rarely

overt in modern studies on leadership, the focus on controlling the behavior of others is

still there.  Modern leadership studies have somewhat come full circle.  Early studies did

focus on charismatic leaders that drew unwavering followers.  They focused on "the

potentially endless list of traits and superhuman charismatics" (Grint, 2011, p. 9).  The

response to this focus on charismatic leadership traits was a focus on rational responses to

situations, the contingency approach (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Jenkins, 1947; Stogdill,

1948, 1974; Fieldker, 1964; cited in Grint, 2011, p. 9). "Situation X requires leadership X

to ensure an appropriate – and thus rational – response" (Grint, 2011, p. 9).  Although the

rational nature of contingency theories of leadership remains, contemporary development

of transformational and inspirational leadership theories have reintegrated the search for established traits of the charismatic leader.

Leadership style "refers to a consistent pattern of attitudes and/or behavior displayed by a leader" (Bass, 1997, p. 290). OB literature on leadership styles breaks down leadership styles in many different ways. This study focuses on the attitudinal and behavioral leadership styles. These are typically described as either transactional or transformational (Burns, 1978). According to Burns both the leader and the follower had something to offer one another, but the nature of the exchange is what defined the leadership style.

> Transformational or charismatic leaders offered a transcendent purpose as their mission – one which addressed the higher-order needs of their followers . . . at the other end of the spectrum transactional leadership . . . was based on a relationship with followers which consists of mundane and instrumental exchanges. (Conger, 2011, pgs. 87-88)

The transactional leader is self-interested and the transformational leader becomes almost a moral agent eliciting acts of selflessness. The transactional leadership style is one that provides structure and systems. Due to the focus on structures and process transactional leadership often is associated with the culture of bureaucracy (Schriberg, Schriberg, & Lloyd, 2002).

Transactional leaders focus on the external. They provide rewards and punishments to encourage performance. As the name would imply, the relationship between leader and follower is more in alignment with an economic transaction (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2002). In contrast:

> The transformational leader motivates followers to work for transcendental goals for the good of the group, the organization, the community of society as a whole, for achievement and Self-Actualization, and for higher level needs of the collectivity rather than immediate personal self-interests. (Bass, 1995, p. 582)

Transformational leaders use emotions to set the organizational climate to fulfill the mission of the organization. "Transformational leaders move followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or country" (Bass, 1997, p. 133, citing in Judge et al., 2009, p. 346). This is especially important in an education corporation. These leaders can be used by the corporation to bridge the gap between perceived conflicting values. Getting people to act based on emotion and their perceived role in society. As Judge et al. warns this leadership style is not always positive. "For every Churchill there is a Hitler" (Judge et al., 2009, p. 347).

If organizations are to recreate the environment created at Sun Valley it is important to understand the traits and behaviors of transformational leaders. The Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI) developed by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990, p. 112), identifies six behaviors known to be associated with transformational leadership: identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, setting high performance expectations, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation.

The leaders that emerged at Sun Valley exhibited all of these behaviors; however, they went further. They also integrated the transactional leadership traits of external rewards. It was this integration on internal and external reward behaviors that set the groundwork from which educator activists emerged.

## Neoliberalism

The belief that competitive capitalism will produce economic freedom and therefore political freedom is the foundation of neoliberal ideals. Publicly traded corporations embody those ideals and the assumptions are deeply embedded in their

policies and practices. The primary assumption that informs practice is that employees

benefit greatly from their labor exchange and that the employee has the freedom to decide

to enter into the exchange. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, Milton Friedman describes

society in terms of a household corporation, "'a working model of a society organized

through voluntary exchange is a free private enterprise exchange economy . . .

In its simplest form, such a society consists of a number of independent

households . . . Since the household always has the alternative of producing

directly for itself, it need not enter into any exchange unless it benefits from it'

(p. 13).'" (cited in Hardin 2012:218). While Marx argues that workers are compelled to

sell their labor (Hardin 2012:219). Others critique this assumption of human capital

where employees are entrepreneurs unto themselves by explicating the commoditization

of the worker (Levin, 2003; Alford, 2002)

Education holds a unique role in supporting capitalist interests because post-

secondary institutions are seen as drivers of economic development. The workers in

those institutions therefore labor for both a personal and collective good.  In the case of

Sun Valley the faculty leadership appeared to come to the understanding that they had

lost control over their labor and were bound by the corporation. They appeared to come

find freedom through personal development and through the development of other.

### Educator Activists

"Activists are people who seek to create positive change" (activistrights.org).

This change may be focused in any realm; social, political, environmental, economic,

educational.  The agent may not even see or describe themselves as an activist; however

by taking direct action to promote positive change that affects others, they are in effect agents of change/activists.

When educators become activists their influence is magnified. Educator activism as a purposeful pursuit is epitomized by liberatory education as posited by Henry Giroux (1988), bell hooks (1995) and Paolo Freire (2000). Through critical pedagogy, liberatory education provides a method for helping students develop a critical consciousness (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mitchell, 2007). Liberatory education reframes the essence of education. Teacher and student are "co-learners" in the classroom. Both have power and both are able to learn from one another. This power can potentially be transformed into a tool for political change. "Through our curricular and pedagogical choices we can either reproduce or challenge hegemonic structures, choosing whether to invest in the student as an intellectual or think of them as a vessel to be filled" (Friere, 2002, p. 72). That basic condition of how the teacher "sees" the student is essential to educator activism. As an educator it is not essential to identify as an activist, but if ones "sees" their student as an equal, thinking human being their interaction can be transformative.

> It is also essential to see teachers as thinking beings.
> By viewing teachers as intellectuals, we can illuminate the important idea that all human activity involves some form of thinking. No activity, regardless of how routinized it might become, can be abstracted from the functioning of the mind in some capacity. (Giroux, 1988, p. 125)

When teachers are engaged and excited about the learning process it is contagious. For Giroux that positive engagement can transform teachers into cultural tools that offset the negative.

Much of the literature on educator activists focuses on the overtly political. For example, developing students to think critically about concepts like democracy and "good citizen" (Otoya-Knapp, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) or counteracting race, gender, or class-based oppression (Collins, 1990; Dixson, 2003; Guy-Sheftall, 1995 Henry, 1998; Irvine, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Omolade, 1987). Important areas of work, but this often requires the educator to identify as an activist and purposely set out to affect change. What was found at Sun Valley; however, was that regardless of whether or not the educator identified as an activist, their focus on both the teacher and student an intellectual beings effectively made them change agents. It is important that unintentional activism not be overlooked.

Much of the literature is also focused in the realm of early childhood education (Bomer & Bomer, 2001; Cowhey, 2006; Newman & Brookfield, 2006; Wade, 2007). Although much of the work can be applied to higher education, none is focused on career and vocational schools. This study fills that void. It is an important area to address because students on vocational tracks are often not seen as "academically inclined" or as thinking human beings; therefore, the curriculum focuses on learning how to operate things rather than developing internal skills like critical thinking that can be generalized to all situations.

bell hooks (2010) focuses on the importance of students learning to think critically. She argues against the current approach to education that rewards students as passive consumers of knowledge rather than creators of knowledge. This is especially problematic in vocational based career schools, even ones describing the curriculum as "art and design." Critical thinking and creativity go hand in hand. At Sun Valley all of

21

the creativity courses had been eliminated to make room for computer software training. Elliot Eisner (1972) argues that art education promotes the "development of creative thinking" (p. 8). Creative thinking is essential for innovation and innovation is essential for the society. For society to be transformed, educators must focus on teaching the creative process, in doing so they become educator activists.

Nicholas Hengen Fox in an article entitled *Teaching (is not) Activism* argues that "how" you teach may be more important than "what" you teach if one intends to spark action in students. Fox focuses on the teaching of literature, but the essence of his argument applies to any discipline. The faculty activists applied methods to intentionally spark action in students. They had no specific political intent behind their actions, but their focus on action was a key component to their success.

In her 2011 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Ruth Wilson Gilmore challenged her colleagues to "Organize. Infiltrate what already exists and innovate what doesn't" (Gilmore, 2011, p. 263). She reminded the crowd that schools are workplaces and to think critically about how they are able to do their work and to be mindful of the future they are creating for that work. Although not in that room, many faculty members at Sun Valley picked up the gauntlet and accepted that challenge.

Individual activism is important and can definitely effect change over time, but when individual acts become a catalyst for a social movement that change becomes rapid and is magnified exponentially. In Derek Sivers' (2010) Ted Talk entitled "How to Start a Movement" he argues that the first follower is essential to the success of the movement. "The first follower is what turns a lone nut into a leader" (1:03 minutes). He argues as

22

more people join the movement it is less risky.  As the movement takes off it becomes more risky to abstain from participation.  In large organizations with steep hierarchical structures some of the followers need to have access to levels above for the movement to take hold.  I refer to those followers as uplinks.

## Critical Thinking and Creativity

"We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world," was the call from President Obama in his State of the Union address (January 25, 2011).  The problem is how do we do that?  Much of the literature focuses on developing creativity and critical thinking skills in the hope that fostering those traits will create the condition from which innovation arises.  Cecile Nieuwenhuizen and Darelle Groenewald (2006) link the process of creativity to the activity of innovation to business success, thus providing a roadmap to answer President Obama's call.  They define creativity as the use of the imagination to form original ideas, and the activity of obtaining value from those ideas is innovation.  It is that focus on creativity to spark innovation that makes successful entrepreneurs (Nieuwenhuizen & Groenewald, 2006).

In "Critical Thinking About Critical Thinking," Robert Weissberg (2013) argues that "definitions of critical thinking abound, but all share certain traits, notably an ability to use reason to move beyond the acquisition of facts to uncover deep meaning" (p. 318).  Uncovering that meaning allows for better problem solving; therefore, in a practical sense critical thinking often become synonymous with problem solving.  When linked to creativity and innovation you increase the odds of a successful project.  If creativity is the process of imagining new ideas, and innovation is the ability to make tangible those

ideas, then critical thinking is solving the problems that arise in bringing those ideas to fruition.

Weissberg (2013) highlights the calls to educators to teach students to think critically. "Unfortunately, calls for students to 'think critically' almost always sidestep the prodigious problem of transforming a high-sounding idea into something that can be usefully interjected into lessons, let alone calibrated to show progress (or failure)" (Weissberg, 2013, p. 318). Unlike traditional education, career education has always focused on the tangible applications of the theoretical, to such an extent that those "high-minded" ideas are almost completely overlooked. By integrating the development of critical thinking skills into the curriculum of vocational education you can develop an incubator for innovation. In art and design education this is often accomplished through group projects designed to mimic the workplace environment. According to Nordstrom & Korpelainen (2011), group Work results in more profound learning, as collaboration with other students stimulates the processes of cognitive thinking, affecting the construction of knowledge.

## Summary

This study is important because it fills a gap in the literature by focusing on educator activism in a career college setting, specifically a career school with an art and design emphasis. This study primarily adds to the literature on transformational leadership and educator activism; however their focus on critical thinking and creativity also informs the literature on critical pedagogy.

The following chapter provides the means from which the faculty work life can be understood, the unique setting from which the faculty leaders emerged and how the experience is contextualized by the researcher.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Research Design and Methodology

This was an exploratory qualitative research study. Semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted to better understand how faculty members at a proprietary career college negotiate their work. Autoethnographic data was used to provide social and political context. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded for analysis. The impact on students is evaluated through the projects and activities of the faculty.

## Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the strongest influences on faculty during the teach-out process, how the faculty members negotiated their work and how that process appeared to impact students.

How do faculty members who teach courses containing artistic or design-oriented subject matter in a career college negotiate work while teaching-out?

a. What are the strongest influences on faculty during the teach-out process?

b. How do faculty negotiate their work and

c. how does this process appear to impact students?

## Participants

**Selection of the Participants**

The participants were chosen from a convenience sample of faculty members from a proprietary post secondary career college that is referred to as Sun Valley Career College. The demographics of the faculty are shown below in Table 1.

*Table 1: Faculty Demographics*

| | Faculty | |
|---|---|---|
| | | % |
| **Total** | **76** | **100** |
| Status | | |
| Full-Time | 23 | 30 |
| Part-Time | 59 | 70 |
| Age | | |
| Under 25 | 0 | 0 |
| 25-34 | 12 | 16 |
| 35-44 | 23 | 30 |
| 45-Over | 41 | 54 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 51 | 67 |
| Female | 25 | 33 |
| Ethnic Background | | |
| White/Non Hispanic | 60 | 79 |
| Black/Non Hispanic | 6 | 8 |
| Hispanic | 4 | 5 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 2 | 3 |
| American Indian/Alaskan | 0 | 0 |
| Other/Non Disclosed | 4 | 5 |
| Highest Level of Education | | |
| Bachelor's Degree | 12 | 16 |
| Bachelor's Degree +Cert | 15 | 20 |
| Master's Degree | 45 | 59 |
| JD | 1 | 1 |
| PhD | 3 | 4 |

## Data Collection Procedure

The steps of the study were as follows:

1. Soliciting of a school site

2. Recording of autoethnographic data

3. Selection of faculty to participate in semi-structured interviews

4. Conduct semi-structured interviews (n=20)

5. Analysis of the data

6. Recording of findings

## Flowchart

Soliciting of a
School Site
December 2012

Identify Participants
December 2012-
November 2013

Analysis of the Data
July 2013-November
2013

Record
Autoethnographic
Data
December 2012-
Novemeber 2013

Conduct Semi-
structured
Interviews
June 2013

Recording of
Findings
December 2013-
February 2014

*Figure 1.* Flowchart

<div align="center">**Description of Each Step**</div>

**Soliciting a School Site**

As a member of the campus leadership team the site was chosen both for convenience and relevance, as the research question sprung from observations at the institution. The campus president gave approval for the project as did the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Arizona State University.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Participants were recruited at an in-service meeting of the faculty. Twenty of the forty-nine faculty members in attendance agreed to be interviewed. The interviews ranged from approximately 20 minutes to 1hour and 30 minutes in length. They were audio-recorded and transcribed. The interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions, found in Appendix C, and follow up questions as necessary. Follow up questions were primarily necessary to clarify statements.

**Autoethnographic Data**

Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe autoethnography as both process and product. The writer can insert personal experience to help describe and make sense of the social experience. The autoethnographic data in this study is used to provide social and political context. The narratives are derived from the authors experience as an administrator at Sun Valley Career College. "Autoethnography relates the research process to both the social world and the self . . ." (Coffey, 2002, p. 324). This position is situated between the faculty and the corporate structure. From this standpoint the administrator must implement policies imposed both by regulatory bodies as well as those designed to bolster the company's financial position, while meeting the needs of

faculty, staff and most importantly students.  When the author is referencing this data there will be a style change to first person for ease of reading (Yin, 2011, p. 238).

<div align="center">**Site Description**</div>

**Sun Valley Career College**

Sun Valley Career College is a nationally accredited institution offering associate and bachelor's degrees in the areas of art, design, and technology.  Degrees are offered in Gaming, Fashion, Film, Audio, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Information Technology.  A total of 95.70% of students attending receive Title IV funding.
 It is located in an urban setting.  There is a main campus that occupies approximately 70,000 square feet and a film and audio studio occupying approximately 25,000 square feet.  Sun Valley has 111 employees.  The demographics of the faculty can be found in Table 1 (page 30 ).  Sun Valley serves a student population of 725. The demographics of the student population are shown below in Table 2.

*Table 2: Student Demographics*

|  | Population | % |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 725 | 100 |
| Age | | |
| Under 25 | 427 | 59 |
| 25-34 | 227 | 31 |
| 35-44 | 53 | 7 |
| 45-Over | 18 | 3 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 530 | 73 |
| Female | 195 | 27 |
| Ethnic Background | | |
| White/Non Hispanic | 277 | 38 |
| Black/Non Hispanic | 74 | 10 |
| Hispanic | 93 | 13 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 10 | 1 |
| American | 40 | 6 |
| Indian/Alaskan | | |
| Other/Non Disclosed | 231 | 32 |
| Highest Level of Education | | |
| GED | 170 | 24 |
| High School Diploma | 537 | 74 |
| Post Secondary | 18 | 2 |

**Accreditation.** Sun Valley is a nationally accredited institution. It is currently accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). ACICS is one of only two national accrediting agencies to be recognized by both the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the US Department of Education.

## Ethical Consideration (Human Participants Protections)

Being a senior member of the campus leadership team creates an innate power differential that must be carefully addressed. For example, in this case, compliance with accreditation guidelines is a primary responsibility of senior leadership, which the faculty is aware of. Participants may have been concerned that their responses would lead to disciplinary action at work. To offset this differential it was made clear in the consent forms that participation is voluntary and that if they chose to participate their responses would be used for research purposes only. The recruitment form can be found in Appendix B.

Although participation was voluntary, it was important to explore further the power dynamics at play for those who did choose to participate. As a senior leader in the organization where this study was conducted it would be impossible to remove those power dynamics completely. This was not a dynamic that could be worked through. It was a dynamic that needed to be understood and lived with. Wanda Pillow (2003) describes this form of reflexivity as "uncomfortable reflexivity." This is "a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous." (Pillow 2003:188). This work was messy and the reflections of the researcher illustrate struggle

to represent others as they are, while understanding that how they present themselves to me is influenced by my authority over the structure in which they work.

## Methods Employed

The methods used to build the theoretical framework from which the themes were explicated were based around a phenomenological approach, qualitative semi-structured interviews and autoethnography. "The phenomenologist, or interpretivist (Ferguson, Ferguson, and Taylor, 1992), is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective and examining how the world is experienced" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3). This study examined not only how faculty members are experiencing the teach-out individually, but also how this experience has changed the collective culture and sparked action in a way that had not been seen prior.

Qualitative research uses the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). The researcher used journaling to capture experiences and feelings during the days following the announcement of the teach-out. My goal in journaling was to keep a record of my own ideas about the teach-out. It was only later I realized that my notes were useful data. The journal entries were analyzed and coded (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). From the coding, themes were identified. Additional auto ethnographic data in the form of memos and institutional artifacts such as emails and company documents were also examined to identify patterns and themes that gave structure to faculty work life.

In addition to the autoethnographic data, data from interviews was collected from faculty members at Sun Valley Career College. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The transcriptions were then

analyzed for recurring themes and coded. The semi-structured interviews allow for more

flexibility while retaining some consistency, which aids in analysis (Bartholomew,

Henderson, & Marcia, 2000). In this case the goal of the interviews was to enter the

psychological and social world of the respondent (Smith, 1995), so the already

established rapport was an asset.

**Bias**

The power differential described above can also lead to bias. In qualitative

research, intimacy with the participants is essential for building trust. Trust leads to

openness, which provides the researcher with a deeper understanding of their subject

matter. Without it, one is left with merely a superficial understanding that is not of much

value. When there is an existing relationship with a known power differential; however,

this intimacy can lead to bias. For example, as stated above, compliance with

accreditation guidelines and business metrics is a primary responsibility of senior leader.

There is potential for bias in this regard from both the participants and researcher.

Participants may assume the researcher is looking for specific answers or testing their

memory of policy. In contrast, the researcher may assume knowledge that is not present.

To minimize any potential bias in this area, the researcher triangulated source materials to

verify assumptions before making conclusions.

The faculty at Sun Valley Career College is primarily made up of white males

over 45 years of age. The only commonality between the researcher and most of the

participant pool is ethnicity; however, considering the context of the study, bias based on

age or gender was not expected or seen.

**Assumptions**

One must assume that the answers provided from participants were honest and can therefore be trusted to draw conclusions. It is important to note however that it was not the goal of this study to discover the truth but rather to discover the lived reality of the faculty members at Sun Valley Career College.

**Parameters**

The study was limited to an understanding of how faculty members negotiated their work at this site only. Conclusions cannot be generalized and impact on student success cannot be measured based on data collected. Rather the focus was to better understand the social organization of faculty members' practices.

<div align="center">

**Summary**

</div>

The research design and methodology utilized allowed the researcher to be both participant and observer. The methodology became particularly useful when the researcher uncovered through journal entries that she was in fact a follower and active participant serving as an uplink in the social movement started by the faculty leaders. Until the data were analyzed the researcher held the assumption that she was more of an active observer and passive participant to the movement.

The following chapter describes the themes that emerge from the interviews and autoethnographic experiences and observations.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**Findings**

The main instruments and methods used in the data collection were analyzed to discover patterns and factors that contributed to an understanding of how faculty members were negotiating their work during the teach-out process. Being both researcher and participant, my story is being told and interpreted as I tell and interpret the story of others. These multiple interpretations serve as a form of triangulation of data. "Triangulation is often thought of as a way of checking out insights gleaned from different informants or different source data" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 80). Analysis of these data oscillated between sources as themes emerged. This triangulation helped strengthen confidence as those themes took shape (Wolcott, 2009, p. 26).

**Organization of Data Analysis**

This chapter begins with a review of the research questions and introduction to the setting and the participants. Findings are organized into sections outlining the evolution and components of the social movement that occurred at Sun Valley Career College after they were put into teach-out by their parent company. Sections of the chapter outline the rise of the transformational leaders that sparked the movement, the goals of the movement, the engagement of followers, including uplinks and the impact on both students and the larger organization.

**The Start of a Movement**

Like the legend of Martin Luther nailing the 95 theses to the church door as an act of resistance to the selling of indulgences, Hunter's Letter of Intent taped to the outside of his office door sparked a revolution:

A Statement of Intent

In consideration of [Sun Valley Career College's] teach-out and eventual closing,

for as long as I am here, I declare these as my guiding principles and a statement

of my intent.

I intend to make the experience for all involved during Sun Valley's remaining time as an educational institution both viable and fun.

My attention will focus on our remaining students, their experience as well as their education.

Because that experience and education is largely dependent on our faculty, I will spend energy and effort to make sure that each faculty member is treated fairly until the very moment they are no longer needed by this institution.

We have been and continue to be an excellent school. If we can continue to do as we have always done, we will leave a vacuum not easily filled. It is my intention to help make students, alumni, staff, faculty, employers and community recognize this.

I believe that it is possible for the last student out the door on the day of our closing to have as much pride in their school as any student before them and will put my best effort toward that outcome. (posted, December 10, 2013; email, January 7, 2013)

Hunter posted that letter on his office door less than a week after it was

announced that Sun Valley was in teach-out. When asked about why he wrote and posted

this notice he said, "It was something I needed to do for myself." When pressed as to

why he then posted it, he shared his realization that others would look to him for

guidance and he wanted them to know where he stood. He wanted to ease their fears.

This act was both self-less and self-interested. It was that combination that seemed

genuine and really struck a chord with others. This powerful act was the catalyst for

much that followed.

As would be expected the announcement of the school closure was a constant

topic of conversation. Faculty, students and staff were in shock, disbelief, were in fear

and assigned meaning to everyone's actions. This was a moment when it was evident

that one's perception truly became one's reality. Hunter was the most outwardly aware

of this and took actions to shape perceptions. He was a graphic designer before

becoming an educator and he spoke often regarding the power of perception.

Journal Entry:

> [Hunter] was on fire in Ed Services today! He gave a sermon of sorts on how we have been given this wonderful opportunity to transition this school on our own terms. We had been living in constant fear of layoffs. Who would be next? The corporation was always changing some policy that needed to be implemented immediately. There were always sharp overcorrections in response to the quarterly earnings report that seldom produced good results. We were now free from that. As he said, "what could they do to us? Close the school?" Our greatest fear had already been realized. We all know the date of death. We don't have to be afraid. We can now make the most of our time. We can do what we know is right. It was like the climactic turning point in a movie, where the next scene will surely be a montage of how the main characters turn things around. There may have even been a, "can I get an Amen?" It was a simple truth being spoken that focused people with a sense of urgency that I can only imagine would be felt if you actually were dying. It hit each person a little differently. Some took it as an opportunity for revenge on the company. Others were looking to me to see where I stood. Like they were looking for permission to give their suggestions. (January 22, 2013)

It would be easy to give credit solely to Hunter because the eloquence of his

speeches truly inspired the senior leadership as well as his peers; however, there were

real structural differences that allowed for activist leaders to emerge as well. For all

intents and purposes we were divorced from the previous corporate structure. A

transitional education group was formed and we no longer had the pressure to meet

business metrics. They expected us to lose money. We were expected only to mitigate

the losses as best we could. We sent up reports, but the calls stopped. The loosened

oversight allowed for a more democratic system to be adopted by the campus. Faculty

and staff were now being asked what they thought. To their credit, many faculty leaders

capitalized on this opportunity to effect change.

**Transformational Leaders Become Educational Activists**

Using Pdsakoff et al.'s (1990) TLI index it is clear that many faculty members had become educational activists and transformational leaders. According to Pdsakoff et al. transformational leaders must identify and articulate a vision, provide an appropriate model, foster the acceptance of group goals, set high performance expectations, provide individualized support and intellectual stimulation. It is clear in a review of all categories that many in this group took on the traits of a transformational leader; however they took it further into activism by setting an agenda specific to their cause. This agenda ultimately aided the organization, but that was not seemingly the intention of the movement's leadership.

**Identifying and Articulating a Vision**

Transformational leaders must identify and articulate a vision. According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this is "behavior on the part of the leader aimed at identifying new opportunities for his or her unit/division/company, and developing, articulating and inspiring others with his or her vision of the future (p.112)" Hunter's letter outlined his personal intentions, but in discussion with several other faculty members they solidified a vision for how to achieve those goals. They came to consensus that a focus on creativity and critical thinking was their legacy. They wanted to instill that in students and help faculty members regain it after years of working under what they described as "oppressive conditions."

The vision articulated by the movement's leaders focused on the meetings the needs of all stakeholders. For them igniting the creative process allowed each individual to better achieve their own goals. The focus on developing the individual to produce a

collective good was a primary focus. They focused on developing themselves as well as the students.

**Providing an Appropriate Model**

According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this "behavior on the part of the leader that sets an example for employees to follow that is consistent with the values the leader espouses (p.112)." These were the actions that the faculty needed to see. Leaders were emerging and becoming activists and models for how to provide meaningful learning experiences to students.

Journal Entry:

> It is clear that all I have to do is not stand in the way of this momentum. Andy seemed inspired by Hunter too. He reminded us all that teaching is a calling that gives us an opportunity to be about something greater than ourselves. That really struck a chord with everyone. It started a debate on what we were "called" to do for our students. There was some disagreement on our roles and what we could accomplish, but we all agreed that we needed to help the students become better problem solvers. Instructors teach the skills assigned to each class, but we weren't doing a good enough job helping students think creatively and solve problems, so they want to have a series of events that forces the students and staff out of their comfort zones and forces them out of their "funk" as Andy put it. (January 22, 2013)

These leaders consistently showed a value for student learning and an appreciation for the role of the faculty in that learning. They also expressed a need to support faculty in their own goals, so in turn they could support students. They modeled that through events and new initiatives to meet those needs.

**Fostering the Acceptance of Group Goals**

According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this "behavior on the part of the leader is aimed at promoting cooperation among employees and getting them to work together towards a common goal (p.112)."

A scheduled in-service training on February 15, 2013 provided the opportunity to engage all faculty members at once and outline the goals of the movement and create a plan of action.  Hunter, Andy, Lance and Bob planned the training and asked me to facilitate one session.  This was not a top down training.  This was a collaborative effort to get us all focused on the same goal of educating students.  The focus was on creativity and critical thinking, "How to Reengage Your Classroom."  Hunter, Andy, Lance, Bob and I took turns leading exercises and discussions.

There was a core group of faculty that took an active interest and participated in planning events; however, the anonymous feedback surveys showed that three faculty members were disillusioned with the activities and felt them futile.  The focus on the future angered them and they took it as disrespectful to those losing their jobs.

The response of the faculty leaders at this critical juncture helped solidify the success of the movement.  They were not discouraged by the negative remarks; rather they worked harder to help allay the fears that underlined their statements.  They quickly started a private LinkedIn group where faculty could offer and ask for assistance on freelance projects of their own or to ask for assistance to transition to another teaching position.  They asked that neither I nor the Campus President join the group, so that faculty and staff would feel "safe" to participate.

**High Performance Expectations**

According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this is "behavior that demonstrates the leader's expectations for excellence, quality and/or high performance on the part of the followers (p.112)."  The faculty leaders understood that continuing to provide high quality education was in the best interest of the faculty and well as the students.  Not

because they would be at risk of losing their jobs necessarily, but because they believe

that being creative and productive was essential to human nature. They took a very

Marxian approach even though no one ever used that specific terminology. The

importance of being a contributor was evident in many interactions with faculty over the

year; however one of the most striking occasions was at a faculty in-service training

session in July of 2013.

Journal:

> The in-service training was today. I'm trying to stay objective and just state the
> facts, but the faculty really impressed me today. Especially [two graphic design
> faculty members] because they won't be teaching next term. The meeting was to
> review and create action plans based on the End of Program Assessments. As I
> went from group to group I never heard anyone ask why we were doing it. They
> all had great suggestions for how to improve things for next term. They seemed
> to have a greater sense of urgency in some cases because it was the last time the
> class was being taught. . . . Margaret's action plan included a project that required
> the integration of another class. That instructor was somewhat apprehensive so
> we volunteered to create the lesson plans for both classes because she believed so
> strongly that the students would benefit from the experience. As the conversation
> continued the other instructor seemed to come onboard and was equally
> contributing; however, if it wasn't for Margaret's pushing I don't believe that
> would have happened. (July 19, 2013)

The importance of providing high quality education was so ingrained and

accepted at this point that even when faculty members would not be there to see the

ultimate outcome of a project they wanted to make sure it was set up to be successful.

### Providing Individualized Support

According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this is the "behavior on the part of the leader

that indicates that he/she respects the followers and is concerned about their personal

feelings and needs (p.112)."

The leaders of this movement were extremely sensitive to the needs of their

colleagues. They responded quickly to concerns and tried to address the root causes of

their fears, primarily upcoming job losses.  As stated above, the group leaders responded

quickly to those concerns after the first faculty in-service training of the year.  Below is

an except from an email received February 18, 2013 from Hunter requesting it be

forwarded to all faculty.  He had set up a private LinkedIn group to help faculty share

resources to aid them in their transition.  He called it "Pay It Forward" [Sun Valley].

> Pay It Forward [Sun Valley]
> Summary
> A collaborative space where you can share and get resources.
> Description
> Pay It Forward [Sun Valley] is a place where you can trade services or share
> resources for your new ventures.  It will also help you expand your networking
> circle.  You have a lot of co-workers that have skills and connections that you
> might not know about.  This group is only open to present and former [Sun
> Valley] faculty and staff.
> This is how it works:
> 1. Post what you have or do and are willing to share.
> 2. Post what you need that others might be able to provide.
> This group is not intended to be like "Kickstarter," it is intended to be a place for
> trading services and resources.

Approximately 10% of the faculty at the time joined the group.  By focusing on the needs

of the faculty and addressing their anxiety over the impending loss of employment and

offering solutions Hunter's group inspired others to do the same.  One faculty member,

who was losing his job at the end of that term, offered to give a presentation to help his

peers.  He holds a PhD in psychology and wanted to help both his peers and his students

create a plan to achieve their goals during this transition.

> Excerpts from an email:

> I will give a short presentation on Creative Tension and Personal Mastery in
> [location redacted] on March 31 from 4:30 to 5:30 for students and on April 1
> from 4:30 to 5:30 for faculty and staff only.  Creative tension is generated from
> the difference between what we want and what our current reality is.  Personal
> mastery is a way to harness that tension instead of allowing it to be an obstacle for
> our personal visions.  Coffee and cookies will be served. (February 23, 2013)

They later built upon this focus on job transitioning with the creation of what they called the Quantum Initiative or Qi. This initiative targeted both students and staff emphasized career success, with a primary focus on entrepreneurship. With the declining student population there was no shortage of empty room and equipment. They repurposed one of those spaces in the center of campus into the Qi Center. They organized weekly informational seminars on starting your own business as well as offering appointments with SCORE mentors on campus to work on business plans. Below is an excerpt from an email sent June 7, 2013 to all faculty in regards to a new initiative established to help faculty, staff, and student's transition into the job market. Focusing specifically on art and design field that are largely freelance and small business oriented.

> I hope you are all enjoying your well-deserved time off. I'm thrilled to announce that on Monday we will be launching the new Quantum Initiative (Qi). Qi was designed to respond to the world of work in today's global economy dominated by information, knowledge, and creativity. Design and technology fields are uniquely suited for success due to their omnipresent nature. Qi helps emerging professionals adapt to and engage with the quantum nature of today's marketplace. With the launch [of] this initiative we are also opening the Qi Center, which serves as the nucleus of the program. The focus for this term will be on entrepreneurship and we will have a brown bag lunch seminar series as well as career counselors from SCORE[4] on campus to help any student, alumni, faculty or staff member interested in starting their own business.
>
> Attached are FAQs on the initiative and the seminar schedule for the term. Please try to incorporate this into your classes and take advantage of it yourself.

This type of initiative is commonplace on University campuses, but it had never happened before on this campus. Career education is focused on developing the basic skills necessary for entry level employment. Class schedules are set at on accelerated pace that leave little room depth in instruction.

---

[4] SCORE is a nonprofit association of retired professionals that provide education and mentorship to help small businesses get started and grow.

**Intellectual Stimulation**

According to Pdsakoff et al. (1990), this is "behavior on the part of the leader that challenges followers to reexamine some of their assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed (p.112)." What became apparent during this year was that many of the faculty members no longer felt intellectually stimulated. Career schools allow for very little academic freedom. Most courses are very structured, some are essentially scripted. This was of great concern to one of the faculty activist, Andy. He said, "there is a liability to a very structured education. That liability is that it causes a format or formal way of thinking that sometimes you have to back off and set yourself free again." It was that sentiment that inspired Disruption Week.

 Journal Entry:

> DIS-RRRUUUPPP-TION, DIS-RRRUUUPPP-TION – Are you ready for DIS-RRRUUUPPP-TION? This was being sung by a spoken word poet at the top of her lungs as another followed behind banging on a box like a drum. They were here to do just that, disrupt, to force students and staff out of their comfort zone to feel free to create. They were invited here by "my activists" to challenge students and themselves to disrupt the status quo; to do something different; to stretch without fear. They believed that true creativity was not possible without it. In a design school creativity was essential for success. These faculty members felt that the students needed to focus on this, but as an observer it also seems that faculty members themselves needed to reconnect to the creativity within. (April 26, 2013)

The leaders organized individual and group activities that encouraged both students and staff to get out of their comfort zone, with the goal of increasing creativity and critical thinking. Over the weekend they rearranged the desks in many of the classrooms and put stations throughout the building with materials for creating. They provided paint, wood and other raw materials like tile, fabric and metal, along with clay, paper, glue, makers, etc. The group activities consisted of a Scavenger Picture Hunt, 74

1/2 Hour Film and Audio Challenges, Senior/ Alumni Mocktail Reception, TED Talks, and a graffiti contest. They set up a sound booth to record "Story Core" interviews (based on the National Public Radio archives of personal stories). Each day they encourage people to dress differently. On Tuesday students and staff were encouraged to dress unlike themselves. Wednesday they were encouraged to dress like an instructor. Both provided opportunities for self reflection that faculty were asked to explore further in classroom assignments. The week ended with a show by Black Poet Ventures on Miles Davis.

At the beginning of the week many students and some faculty members expressed discomfort with the disruption. The faculty leaders were prepared for this and responded to each person's concerns. They spoke at length as to their reasoning and made clear alignments to each program outcomes. By taking seriously each person's concerns and redirecting that energy to align with the group's goals the leaders helped the movement gain momentum.

### The Politics of Creativity: The Goal of the Movement

Creativity is a word often thrown around in an art and design school. The meaning is assumed, but rarely discussed. This project provided the opportunity to delve deeper into the intention behind the jargon. Everyone interviewed had very specific views on creativity and its role in education. All of the educator activists held the belief that being able to think critically and be creative was essential to being educated and essential to career success. They also held the specific view that "true" creativity has a purpose. It sparks an action or creates a change. Hunter said, "to be truly creative, is something that actually, I do not want to say changes the culture, but at least affects

something." Owen said, "I find that, as far as art and creativity goes, is we have to have it in society to move forward and advance. . . . Creativity is what drives things."

In response to the question, do you consider yourself a creative? Owen stated, "I would definitely consider myself a creative. If I was not, I should not be teaching!" All but 1 respondent considered themselves creative.

Not all faculty members felt creativity was necessary or even wanted in a Career School. Although feeling he himself was a creative one respondent, Jack, felt there was no place in a career school for creativity. Saying, "this is ironic because I use that as a lecture point because there is no creativity. You want to do creativity be a fine artist because creativity in my opinion is a misunderstood word. . . . [This] is commercial art, it is art for commerce to make money. I think people see creativity as a fluttery sort, not based in reality. . . . I tell my students that you are problem solving."

This was an important distinction for Jack and it affected his participation in the movement. When critical thinking language was used for activities, he would participate and involve his students. He would do so only if there was a lot of structure to the activities. This put him in conflict with the leaders of the movement because they believed strongly in a less restrictive environment and felt creativity was key. This caused Jack to come and go from the movement depending on the event.

Conflicting worldviews at times plagued the movement, but for the most part the core activists had similar views. They were pushing for an unrestricted view of creativity as long as that creativity sparked action. They were very political without intending to be.

This group of educator activists never directly focused on anything political; however, much of the imagery they relied on was political in nature. Below is the poster they created to advertise Disruption Week. They used an image of Uncle Sam pointing calling the observer a conformist. Their stated intention was to push students out of their comfort zone and make them "think outside the box"; however, it also seems clear that whether consciously intended or not they hope to start a revolution.



*Figure 2.* Disruption Week Promotional Poster.

The visual image they created to promote the week says so much about what they want to disrupt. Choosing "Uncle Sam" symbolizes more than just the government. It's capitalism in its entirety. They spoke often of the struggles of the worker. These faculty members were artists and designers not sociologists. They did not cite political theorists or other activists explicitly in their conversations, but they channeled their words unconsciously. This was evident to me in their choice of image. The choice to make "You're a Conformist" a statement rather than a question was also fascinating. They left no room for discussion. They were making a statement.

Images and topics used by students were also political in nature meant to spark thinking and discussion. One faculty member that joined the movement tasked students with the creation of a 3D exhibit that was provocative and that instigated interaction. In his observation students were afraid to "take up space" and that hindered their creativity. Although his stated focus was to foster creativity. Encouraging them to take over and claim their space in the school was an overt political action.

The image below of the homeless person was from that project. The topic of homelessness is political in nature, but I asked the student if he meant to make a political statement. He said, he had no intent behind it other than evoking a response saying, "I loved being able to use my creativity to evoke a response from other students. Watching their reactions has been a lot of fun."



*Figure 3.* Student Art Instillation

This exhibition started a chain reaction of creativity that Career Services used to engage students in another event. As they were looking at a space to promote Career Services week they were standing in sight of two pieces. "That's when the light bulb went off," one said, "we looked in front of us and said, almost in unison, 'That is a really big blank white wall!'" They have planned a three-dimensional, hanging display with vines and brick and graffiti titled "climb" to draw student's attention to the career event.

Using graffiti is another political statement. It was intriguing that so much political activism was happening completely inadvertently.

By December 2013 the movement had firmly taken hold and the political nature was only getting stronger. This is the only time when the group consciously realized their goals were in sync with an external cause, the Maker's Movement. At the 2013 SXSWedu Conference & Festival Dale Dougherty, the founder of Make Magazine said, "making is the magic that can transform us from passive consumers into active producers. In education, making is the magic that can turn students bored by traditional academics into active, engaged learners." What intrigued the group at Sun Valley was the focus on both creativity and action. What differentiated the two movements was the outcome. The Maker's that attend Maker's Faires do so as enthusiasts. Although the leaders of the Sun Valley movement did not want to put parameters around creativity they did believe it should have a commercially viable outcome. It is in that basic assumption that they aligned more with their corporate organization values.

**The Engagement of Followers**

It is self evident that there can be no leaders without followers, therefore, how leaders engage their followers can determine their success. The leaders at Sun Valley took Ghandi's democratic approach.

> Let no one say that he is a follower of Ghandi. It is enough that I should be my own follower. I know what an inadequate follower I am of myself, for I cannot live up to the convictions I stand for. You are not followers but fellow students, fellow pilgrims, fellow seekers, fellow workers." (Ghandi cited in Bligh, 2011, p. 425)

The leaders of the movement at Sun Valley held faculty leadership positions, but were not part of the senior leadership of the school. Being a member of the faculty gave them

access to the group informally and also sheltered them from the corporate stigma of the senior leadership. They used their connections to ascertain the group needs, to align those needs to their goals and to create a group identity. The group worked as a collective with different people taking on leadership roles depending on the projects. Some initiative meant initially for students were more successful with faculty and vice versa. The group assessed each project and built on its strengths for the next initiative.

In the 2010 book by Chip and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, they argue the value of making an emotional case to followers, especially when the leader can't make a more analytical case. They use Paul Butler, a young conservationist hired by the St. Lucia's forestry department to save the endangered St. Lucia Parrot to illustrate their point. He had no authority to change the law to increase penalties, there was no clear economic argument to save the birds, so the authors argue Butler set out to convince the islanders that "they were the kind of people who protected their own" (p. 151). The leaders of the Sun Valley movement did much of the same thing. They formed identity around bringing back creativity and action. Much like Butler, they made a moralist argument. They gave sermons on doing the right thing by the students. This emotional connection to the group made it hard not to be a follower. Good teachers and good people do what is right by others. I never heard them explicitly state that if you don't participate you are "bad," but the implication was obviously there. What seemed to mitigate negative pushback was that the leaders listened to the followers needs; they gave support and focused resources to solve followers' problems. This appeared to followers to be happening primarily due to their collective energy because the leaders were tactical about bringing in senior leadership.

The senior leadership served the movement as uplinks. These are followers of the movement, but hold positions that directly link up to higher chains in the organizational structure. I came to understand my role this way. The uplink serves an important role. They obviously lend support through resource allocation and initiative approval, but they also give the movement legitimacy. The faculty leaders would have had a great struggle to get things approved without uplink support. They simply did not have the authority in the corporate structure to take action. The support of the uplink was essential, but in this case it was also important for us to understand that we should not be a visible part of the movement. The anger and resentment that fueled many of the faculty members would have sparked negative resistance rather than positive action. Many of the faculty seemed to feel as though the activities were sticking it to the company by utilizing resources and going "off script" with the curriculum. In reality everything was compliant and relatively cost effective, but the movement was better served keeping that mystique.

**Impact on Students and the Organization**

Not surprisingly, in a study evaluating the impact faculty engagement has on student learning, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) found:

> That students report higher levels of engagement and learning at institutions where faculty members use active and collaborative learning techniques, engage students in experiences, emphasize higher-order cognitive activities in the classroom, interact with students, challenge students academically, and value enriching educational experiences. (p. 153)

Throughout the first year of the Sun Valley teach-out faculty engagement rose. More activities happened in that time span than happened in the previous three years combined. I witnessed the planning and participation of large collaborative school-wide events and observed innovative approaches in individual classrooms. Although I cannot quantify the

"mood" on campus, an email I received July 10, 2013 with the subject line "How Dare

You" exemplifies the many comments made to me over the year.  The subject line was

meant to mirror an email this same student sent the previous year because they were

upset with what they saw as a lack of concern for the students by faculty and

administration.

Email received July 10, 2013:

How dare you listen to our complaints as students and better things here at [Sun
Valley]!  How dare you put resources such as SCORE in our path so that we can
have the upper hand in the business world.  And then you feed us, well that's just
great!!
            All joking aside, and yes the above is a joke, THANK YOU for putting
together the QI room.  Today's speakers reiterated what many of our instructors
have said over and over and I'm excited to still be a part of a school that provides
resources like SCORE.

That renewed enthusiasm was instrumental in retaining students.  At the end of

2013 Sun Valley's retention rate was 12.9% above budget.  From the student perspective

there was still value in attending the school.  From a corporate perspective the revenue

generated from each student is essential for ongoing operations.  Sun Valley fared better

than was projected while similar schools with ongoing operations fared worse.

In 2013 Sun Valley also increased job placements, with a year over year increase of 14.6

percentage points.  Placement rates are an extremely important metric in a career school.

Many proprietary schools came under fire from their accrediting bodies in 2012 for lacks

in this area.  To see an increase this large is significant for both students and the

organization whose product is judged heavy by this metric.

**Summary**

It was found that the strongest influences were fellow faculty members.  Several

rose as leaders and essentially became educator activists starting a movement focused on

what they believe to be the essential component of education and what had been missing

previously; creativity and action.  They were supported in this endeavor by local

leadership who served as uplinks and silently gave power to the movement.  Students and

the organization became beneficiaries of the renewed engagement of their instructors,

which lead to increased retention and placement rates.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Discussion and Conclusions

On July 12, 2013 the Department of Education announced their revised proposal and entered into negotiated rulemaking discussions regarding the second round of Gainful Employment regulations. This was a sure sign that the federal government was going to continue to put the pressure on proprietary career colleges. The industry has been hard hit over the last few years with federal investigations into enrollment practices and inquiries into validity of placement information and the student loan default rates of their graduates. For the most part, the industry has responded by closing schools, restructuring and rebranding their corporate identities and centralizing their processes in the hopes of better controlling the outcome metrics and mitigating risks. This study offers evidence that, rather than centralizing their systems, organizations may be better served putting decision-making authority at the campus level empowering faculty to exercise their academic freedom and engage students in new and innovative ways. As evident in this research, engagement may lead to better outcome metrics than had been seen when corporate involvement was stronger. These findings are relevant to the literatures on organizational behavior, leadership and activism.

This study sought to understand the marked shift in the organizational culture and climate that governed the faculty work life through the framework of organizational behavior as well as from a social justice context; finding that the structure of the teach-out effectively created a space for transformational leaders to emerge and become educator activists. That activism started a movement that appeared to serve virtually all involved.

Much of the literature on organizational behavior constructs employees' behavior as deviant when they express unhappiness with the organizational culture. When employees' act in resistance to shared rules it is assumed it will negatively affects the company's mission. On the surface that research seems reasonable. It appears as common sense that angry, hostile, employees who hate their company, are anxious about their jobs, feel like they have no control and also engage in risk taking behavior would be counterproductive. Therefore, to be more effective, organizations should find out who these people are and fire them. However, the findings at Sun Valley are contradictory. Many faculty and staff members were angry, some openly hostile toward the company. They stated a negative view of the company's goals, expressed anxiety and a feeling like they had no control over their work life. They also exhibited risk taking behavior. Therefore, according to the research one would expect deviant or counterproductive behavior. Seemingly the opposite was found. Many employees were extremely productive in meeting the company's mission. Revenue goals were met or exceeded and their behaviors were in line with the company's stated mission if not the organizational culture.

The organizational climate at the local level at Sun Valley superseded the problems of the organizational culture of the corporation, allowing the local institution to better fulfill its mission. This was achieved through the emergence of transformational leaders from the faculty ranks. Contrary to much of the literature on transformational leaders, these leaders did not solely focus on selflessness. There was an overt focus on self-interest. This combination of focusing on things greater than oneself (ones role in the education and social mobility of others) and on being a beneficiary of your own labor;

created an activist movement of sorts that fulfilled both the employees personal mission and the corporation's mission simultaneously.

The faculty leaders at Sun Valley were successful because they focused on the educational mission of the institution. That mission was to prepare students to be successful in their field of study. Success in this case is defined as obtaining work. This focus on labor was a shared connection between students and faculty, and was the basis for their activism. Their activism was political, but often appeared to be unintentionally so. Much of the literature on educator activists focuses on the overtly political. This requires the educator to identify as an activist and purposely set out to affect change. What was found at Sun Valley; however, was that regardless of whether or not the educator identified as an activist, their focus on both the teacher and student an intellectual beings effectively made them change agents. When ask specifically if he intended to make a political statement through his actions Hunter responded, *"I see myself as a person that gets involved in issues and acts on them rather than just sympathizing with them, but I don't see myself as an activist."* It is important that unintentional activism not be overlooked.

The faculty leaders as Sun Valley, whether intentionally or not, also attacked the neoliberal ideal that participation in capitalism through the entrepreneurial exchange of labor produces freedom. The foundation of their movement focused on seeking freedom through the expression of creativity and critical thinking. It appeared as if they felt the labor exchange agreement they had previously with the corporation had systematically robbed them of themselves. They spoke often of the belief that one could not be successful and self determined if one was not able to think freely, without imposed

parameters and develop the skills to execute those thoughts. They believe that the work life in the corporation and the required curriculum for the students was devoid of development in these areas and set out to rectify that.

To do this the faculty leadership embraced both the individual and collective simultaneously. They definitely embraced western individualism; however, they concurrently recognized each individual's reliance on one another.

This final chapter reviews these findings in more detail, discusses the implications of those findings and provides the reflections of the researcher.

**What are the strongest influences on faculty during the teach-out process?**

Based on interviews and observations, the strongest influences on the faculty appeared to be the leaders that emerged to meet the needs of the faculty members at large. These leaders helped ease fears and directed action towards the faculty member's personal development and the development of their students.

This was a marked shift in organizational culture. Prior to the "teach-out" they were not organized in this way. Although there were always leaders among the faculty ranks, they limited their school-wide interactions to specific causes and events. The "teach-out" provided a space for these leaders to rise with conviction and purpose and lead not only the people closest to them, but to also to align with other like minded leaders to strength the impact of their actions. Their influence was felt in all areas of the institution from the administration to the student body and seemingly all were beneficiaries of their actions.

Prior to the "teach-out" the faculty felt the corporation exhibited too much influence over there work life. All 20 respondents discussed that to varying degrees.

After the campus went into "teach-out" the faculty described feeling less influenced by the corporate structure. Much of this influence was a matter of perception from the faculty perspective because they had little if any direct contact with corporate representative at any time. The change appeared to be internal to the faculty member. Many expressed feeling "relieved" that they no longer had to worry about layoffs. They now knew their end dates and could plan for the future. The stress of the unknown prior to the teach-out was described by many faculty members as being "debilitating" to their work.

## How do faculty members negotiate their work?

The way in which faculty members negotiated their work changed during the "teach-out". Many expressed a feeling of freedom from the perceived restraints of the corporate structure. They described taking back their "academic freedom" and placing a greater emphasis on creativity and critical thinking in assignments. Many expressed frustration that the corporation had removed the creativity courses from the curriculum despite their objections and they saw the teach-out as their opportunity to rectify that misstep. Those who participated in the movement held the strong belief that engaging one another and the students and thinking beings was the key to success. They rejected the previous emphasis on skill building. They encouraged their students to occupy their school and engage their minds. They took action on those beliefs and became change agents and political activists. They took seriously the promise of the neoliberal ideal of freedom through the exchange of labor; however they rejected the previous terms of that agreement. They put forth new terms. These terms included personal development and a regaining of the creativity they felt they lost through the previous arrangement.

59

**How does this process appear to impact students and the organization?**

Education, especially in a career school setting, is seen a driver of economic development. One could argue that all institutions of higher learning in a capitalistic society embrace the neoliberal spirit; however, publically traded educational organizations embody those ideals. This impacts everything and everyone in those institutions. The students are seen as customers and explicitly addressed as such. The curriculum is a commodity, and faculty members are human capital resources. When the faculty leaders at Sun Valley put forth a new model of freedom this greatly impacted both students and the organization. A business metric review would evaluate the new model as a success. Student retention increased, which is a revenue increase and placement rates increased, which is an accreditation requirement to ensure that the institution can continue to sell their product. Students chose to continue their education at Sun Valley despite the closing and other available options close by. Many expressed gratitude to the faculty for their commitment to them and were more actively engaged than they were prior to the "teach-out."

**Implications**

This initial study provides a promising model for faculty engagement that appears to have positive outcomes for individual faculty members, students and the organization. Further study is needed to see if the results can be replicated in institutions that are continuing to enroll students.  It is also important to study transformational leaders in traditional educational settings to see if the same impact can be seen.

The transfer of the study to other educational institutions, however, is complicated by the lack of agreed upon outcomes. The question of what education is meant to do has

yet to be answered outside of the vocational sector. In career colleges everyone agrees that work in the field of study is the goal, with field of study being narrowly defined. Conflict arises from the for-profit nature and corporate structure of many of these institutions, but at the local level it may be easier to focus activism on a given mission because there is little if any disagreement on what the ultimate outcome should be. To truly understand both the role of transformational leaders and educator activists in higher education more research must be done. The simplicity of these findings makes putting them into practice relatively easy even before the boarder theoretical questions are answered.

There is also a practical danger in these findings. The transformational leaders at Sun Valley were charismatic and effectively understood the emotional state of others. In this case the faculty leaders appeared to truly have others best interest in mind. They listened to needs of their colleagues and students and set out to serve those needs. Their goal was not to control what others thought, but rather to enter into negotiations with them and find common ground. Faculty members in a corporation are vulnerable. There are often no union protections and there is a risk of corporate leadership exploiting these emotional states to serve only the organizations ends.

As an agent of the corporation with large financial incentives it may be easy to coopt this type of activism and repackage it, creating an "Astroturf" rather than grass roots movement. This is why the role of the uplink is so important. The person with the direct connection to the corporate structure has to make daily decisions to protect the movement while maintaining the membership status as corporate insider that provides them the power to protect. This took a both a physical and emotional toll on each uplink

61

observed. Further research in the area of embodies leadership is needed to unpack these observations further.

## Researcher Reflections

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." John Muir (1869)

When I began this project I saw myself as more of an outsider observing and recording how others were negotiating their work during a time of rapid change. Although I was renegotiating my own work, I believed that to be separate and detached from the faculty and staff. What I found throughout the project was that not only was our work interconnected, but our persons were interconnected as well. Once the group realized and appreciated the interconnectedness our work was more productive. This wasn't a simple acknowledgement of the value of others and their work, but a true understanding of our interdependence. What I learned as a leader was to give others power. I was a stronger leader when I allowed others to lead. This was a scary thing to do in the beginning because if others weren't able to perform that would have a direct impact on my professional reputation and finances. I had to take a leap of faith. This was made easier by Hunter's actions. He took the first step and I followed his lead.

It is important to note that power could not be totally shared and that there was always the perception that I maintained some authority. This work was messy. I struggled to represent others as they are, while understanding that how they presented themselves to me was influenced by my authority over them. I was always conscious of this fact and worked with the faculty leaders to negotiate a more democratic structure. Over time it felt like people embraced this shared power. To get to that point however it was important for

me to become comfortable with the uncomfortable reality that I could not create a fully democratic system within a hierarchical organization. This fact was driven home at one point when I was asked by the faculty leadership not to join a LinkedIn group because they were concerned that my presence would limit the faculty collaboration. What I realized during this time was that it appeared that an environment was created where faculty felt they could be open an honest about their needs rather than an environment that was completely equal.

I learned to ask directly about what other's needs were. I found it was often easy to meet the needs of employees when we discussed what they were openly and honestly. This was difficult for both of us at first because we were afraid. I was afraid I would disappoint and they were afraid that they would be judged for not being selfless educators. When I stopped making assumptions as to what others needed and simply asked them I was surprised by the results. We found commonality and partnership through these discussions and that helped to strengthen the team.

What I learned as a researcher through this was the importance of being present in the moment and recording my observations and feelings in real time, but to be careful not to draw conclusion in real time. This was a highly emotional time. Recording those emotions was essential because it was a driver in the change; however, to maintain objectivity I didn't review the notes until the project was completed. Remembering the emotions without feeling the emotions allowed me to detach and find the themes that emerged.

What I learned as an educator and activist was that purposely negotiating your needs and making sure they are aligned with your values is essential in any setting.

Understanding the basic assumptions of the environment in which you find yourself

makes it more likely that you can adequately negotiate those needs. In this case being part

of a publicly traded education corporation these are many explicit states and assumed

ideals that are contradictory and simultaneous informing policies and practices. To serve

all stakeholder needs is difficult, but Sun Valley found a way for a short time to meet the

needs of the business, to serve employees needs and strive to make them feel valued and

productive and to support students in achieving their goals with easy tweaks in

organizational structure. The mindset was the hardest to change, but once that changes

the structure easily follows.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a major finding that can, ideally, be easily adopted by higher

education organizations is to simply trust faculty members.  The move of proprietary

education companies towards the "class in a box" one size fits all education negatively

impacts faculty engagement.  Such "teacher proof" approaches do not benefit either

faculty or students. The associated lack of engagement has a negative impact on the

business, as well as on the students' educational experiences.  The findings of this study

provide evidence that when faculty members are allowed the freedom to engage they may

well do so and with positive results for all involved.

At Sun Valley the behaviors of the agents *within* the organization caused a shift in

the behaviors *of* the organization. The organizational climate at the local level at Sun

Valley superseded the problems of the organizational culture of the corporation, allowing

the local institution to better fulfill its mission. Policies and procedures were adjusted to

support the movement, which had a positive impact on outcome metrics. Those processes

could be easily scaled up to great benefit to the corporation.

# References

Alvesson, M. (2011). Organizational culture: Meaning, discourse, and identity. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderson, & M. F. Peterson (Eds.), *The handbook of organizational culture and climate, 2nd edition (pgs. 11-28).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Act of July 2, 1862 (Morrill Act), [Electronic Record] Public Law 37-108, which established land grant colleges, 07/02/1862; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives. Retrieved on April 12, 2013 from URL http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=33.

An act to provide Federal Government aid for the readjustment in civilian life of returning World War II veterans, June 22, 1944; [Electronic Record] Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives. Retrieved on April 12, 2013 from URL http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=76

Ashton, M.C. (1998). Personality and job performance: The importance of narrow traits. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 19 289-303.

Bailey, T., Kienzl, G., & Marcotte, D. E. (2004). *The Return to a Sub-Baccalaureate Education: The Effects of Schooling, Credentials and Program of Study on Economic Outcomes.* Washington, DC. Paper prepared for the National Assessment of Vocational Education, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved May 26, 2013 from URL. http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/ return-to-sub-baccalaureate-education.html.

Bannerjee, P. (2008). Flexible hiring, immigration, and Indian IT worksers' experiences of contract work in the United States. Pp. 97-11 in Marjorie L. DeVault (Ed,). People at Work: Life, Power, and Social Inclusion in the New Economy. New York: New York University Press.

Bartholomew, K., Henderson, A. J. Z., & Marcia, J. E. (2000). Coded semistructured interviews in social psychological research. In H. T. Reis & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook o f research methods in social and personality psychology* (pp. 286-312). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bass, B. M. (1995). In the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management: Dictionary of Organization Behavior (Vol. VI. Pgs. 290-291). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Bass, B. M. (1997). In the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management: Dictionary of Organization Behavior (Vol. VI. Pgs. 582-583). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Bligh, M. C. (2011). "Followership and follower-centered approaches" in Bryman, A., Collinson, D., Grint, K., Jackson, B., & Uhl-Bien, M.'s (Eds.). The SAGE Handbook of Leadership pgs. 425-436. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Bomer, R., & Bomer, K. (2001). *For a better world: Reading and writing for social action*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Braverman, H. (1998). *Labor and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. New York: Monthly Review Press. (Original work published in 1974).

Brunson, J. L. (2010). Visually experiencing a phone call: The calculated consumer labor deaf people perform to gain access through video relay service. Disability Studies Quarterly, vol. 30., no. 2.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper.
Carey, A. C. (2009). On the margins of citizenship: Intellectual disability and civil rights in twentieth-century America. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Chen, P. Y., & Spector, P. E. (1992). Relationships of work stressors with aggression, withdrawal, theft and substance use: Anexploratory study. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 65, 177–184.

Coffey, A. (2002). "Ethnography and self: Reflections and representations" in Tim May (Eds.), *Qualitative research in action*. (pp. 313-331). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coleman, J., & Vedder, R. (2008). For-profit education in the united states: A primer. *A policy paper from the Center for College Affordability and Productivity*.

Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Conger, J. (2011). "Charismatic leadership" in Bryman, A., Collinson D., Grint, K., Jackson, B., & Uhl-Bien, M.'s (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Leadership pgs. 86-102. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cowhey, M. (2006). *Black ants and Buddhists: Thinking critically and teaching differently in the primary grades*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Cyert, R. M. & March, J. G. (1964). "A behavioral theory of the firm," The American Economic Review, 54:144-148.

Dixson, A. (2003). "Lets do this!": Black teachers' politics and pedagogy. *Urban Education, 38*, 217-235.

Dougherty, D. (2013). The Magic of Making: Engaging Students as Makers. Retrieved at
http://www.sxswedu.com/news/magic-making-engaging-students-makers

Duffy, M.K., Ganster, D.C., & Shaw, J.D. 1998. Positive affectivity and negative
outcomes: The role of tenure and job satisfaction. Journal of Applied Psychology,
83, 950-959.

Eisner, E. (1972). *Educating artistic vision*. New York, NY: Macmillan Company.

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity:
researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of
Qualitative Research, 2nd ed*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). Writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press.

England, P., Budig, M., & Folbre, N. (2002). Wages of virtue: The relative pay of care
work. *Social Problems*. Vol. 49, No. 4, pgs. 455-473. University of California
Press on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: The Continuum International
Publishing Group, Inc.

Fox, N. H. (2012). Teaching (is not) activism in Radical Teacher, Number 94 Fall 2012
pgs 14-23. University of Illinois Press.

Fox, S., & Spector, P. E. (1999). A model of work frustration-aggression. Journal of
Organizational Behavior, 20, 915–931.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gilmore, R. W. (2011). What is to be done? 2011 Presidential Address at The American
Studies Association annual meeting reprinted in American Quarterly pgs. 245-
265.

Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. (2007). Youth activism in the urban community:
Learning critical civic praxis within community organizations. *International
Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20(6),* 693-710.

Giroux, H. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning.*
Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Grandey, A. A. (2008). "Emotions at work: A review and research agenda" in J. Barling,
& C. L. Cooper (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior. V1:
235-261. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Grint, K. (2011). "A history of leadership" in Bryman, A., Collinson, D., Grint, K., Jackson, B., & Uhl-Bien, M.'s (Ed.), The SAGE Handbook of Leadership pgs. 3-28. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Guy-Sheftall, B. (Ed.). (1993) *Words of fire: An anthology of African American feminist thought.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Hardin, C. (2014) Finding the 'Neo' in Neoliberalism, Cultural Studies, 28:2, 199-221, DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2012.748815

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2010). Switch: How to change things when change is hard. Broadway Book, New York.

Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Henry, A. (1998) Black feminist pedagogy: Critiques and contributions. In W. Watkins & J. Anderson (Eds.), *Black protest thought and education* (pp. 362-366). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Irvine, J. J. (1989). Beyond role models: An examination of cultural influences on the pedagogical perspectives of Black teachers. *Peabody Journal of Education, 66*(4), 51-63.

Judge, T. A., Fluegge W., Hurst, C., & Livingston, B. (2009). "Leadership" in J. Barling and C. L. Cooper (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior. V1: 334-352. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Katz, D. & Kahn, R. L.(1978). *The Social psychology of organizations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal. 32*, 465-491.

Lee, K., & Allen, N. J. (2002). Organizational citizenship behavior and workplace deviance: The role of affect and cognitions. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87(1), 131-142.

Omolade, B. (1987). A Black feminist pedagogy. *Women's Studies Quarterly 15*(3), 32-39.

Otoya-Knapp, K. (2004). When central city high school students speak: Doing critical inquiry for democracy. *Urban Education, 39*, 149-171.

Oureshi, Y., Cross, S., & Desai, L. (2013). SCREW U. *Mother Jones*, *38*(5), 10-13.

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *Qualitative Studies in Education* VOL.16, No.2, 175-196.

Podsakoff, P. M., Mackenzie, S. B., Moorman, R. H., & Fetter, R. (1990). *Transformational leaders behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors.* The Leadership Quarterly, 1(2), 107-142.

Marx, K. & Frederich, E. (1888). Communist Manifesto.

Merriam, S. B., & Simpson, E. L. (1995). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults (2$^{nd}$ ed.).* Malabar, Florida: Kreiger Publishing Company.

Mitchell, T. (2007). Critical service-learning as social justice education: A case study of the citizen scholars program. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 40(2),* 101-112.

Nieuwenhuizen, C., & Groenewald, D. (2006). Level of creativity and risk among successful entrepreneurs. *Southern African Business Review*, 10(1), 70---90.

Newman, M., & Brookfield, S. D. (2006). *Teaching defiance: Stories and strategies for activist educators. A book written in wartime.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nicholson, N. (1995). In the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management: Dictionary of Organization Behavior (Vol. VI. Pgs. 365-366) Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Nordstrom, K., & Korpelainen, P. (2011). Creativity and inspiration for problem solving in engineering education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(4), 439-450.

Northouse, P. G. (2004). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Perrucci, R. & Wysong, E. (2003). The new class society: Goodbye american dream? (2$^{nd}$ ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Lanham, Maryland.

Robinson, S. L. (2008). "Dysfunctional workplace behavior" in J. Barling and C. L. Cooper (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior. V1: 141-159. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

S. 659--92nd Congress: An Act to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Vocational Education Act of .... (1972). In www.GovTrack.us. Retrieved May 27, 2013, from http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/92/s659.

Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2011). Organizational climate research: Achievements and the road ahead. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderson, & M. F. Peterson (Eds.), *The handbook of organizational culture and climate, 2nd edn (pgs. 29-48).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schriberg, A., Schriberg, D. L., & Lloyd, C. (2002). Practicing leadership: Principles and applications (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Schur, L. (2004). Is there still a "double handicap"? Economic, social, and political disparities experienced by women with disabilities. In B.G. Smith & B. Hutchinson (Eds). Gendering disability. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Shapiro, J. P. (1993). No pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement. Times Book: New York.

Sivers, D. (2010). How to start a movement. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement.html

Smith, J. A. (1995). Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Harre, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 9-26). London: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Traustadóttir, R. (2008). "Work, disability, and social inclusion: The promise and problematics of EU disability policy." Pp. 74-93, in Marjorie L. DeVault (Ed.), People at Work: Life, Power, and Social Inclusion in the New Economy. New York: New York University Press.

Umbach, P. D., & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education*. Vol. 46, No. 2, pgs. 153-184.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service, *National Assessment of Vocational Education: Final Report to Congress: Executive Summary,* Washington, D.C., 2004. Retrieved May 26, 2013 from URL http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/nave/naveexesum.pdf.

Vacharkulksemsuk, T., Sekerka, L. E., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2011). Establishing a positive emotional climate to create 21st-centruy organizational change, In N.M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderson, & M. F. Peterson (Eds.), *The handbook of organizational culture and climate, 2nd ed (pgs. 101-118).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Veiga, A. (2012). University of Phoenix Closing 115 Locations, Affecting 13,000 Students. Hoff Post College http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/16/university-of-phoenix-closing-schools_n_1972360.html.

Wade, R. C. (2007). Service-learning for social justice in the elementary classroom: Can we get there from here? *Equity and Excellence in Education, 40*(2), 156-165.

Watson, R. (2009). "Corporate governance" in S. R Clegg & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior. V2: 478-495. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Weissberg, R. (2013). Critically thinking about critical thinking. *Springer Science+Business Media New York 2013- online.* July.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). Educating the "Good" Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals. *Political Science & Politics. 38* (2). April.

Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research 3rd ed*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage.

Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY. The Guilford Press.

Yukl, G. (1999). *Leadership in organizations* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Beth Blue Swadener in the Justice Studies PhD program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to understand how creative faculty members in a career college interpret, accommodate and enact assessment criteria as required by accrediting bodies in private education.

I am recruiting individuals to participate in one-on-one interview. The interview will take approximately 1 hour of your time. It will consist of 10 open-ended questions. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (480) XXX-4212.

APPENDIX B

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. I am interested in documenting how creative faculty members in a career school interpret, accommodate and enact assessment criteria as required by accrediting bodies in private education.

1. Tell me about your academic background? Where did you go to school? What did you major in?
2. Please share a bit about your experiences teaching at XX.
3. Talk to me about ways you view creativity.
4. Describe how you assess creativity.
5. Describe the course/courses you teach.
6. Explain a bit about the projects you assign.
7. Talk to me about the school's accreditation.
8. How do you feel the regulations affect you?
9. What types of assessments do you use? Why?
10. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C

PSEUDONYMS

| Pseudonym | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Lance | Instructor |
| Chris | Instructor |
| James | Ld. Instructor |
| Jack | Instructor |
| Hunter | Program Chair |
| Kevin | Ld. Instructor |
| Sherry | Instructor |
| Andy | Program Chair |
| Tom | Instructor |
| Doug | Instructor |
| Sam | Instructor |
| Margaret | Instructor |
| Bill | Ld. Instructor |
| Phil | Instructor |
| Mary | Instructor |
| Mike | Instructor |
| Darlene | Instructor |
| Zeb | Instructor |
| Owen | Instructor |
| Barbara | Instructor |
| Bob | Support Staff |