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Images of Educational Leadership: How Principals Make Sense of Democracy and Social Justice in Two Distinct Policy Contexts

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Abstract

Purpose: This article investigates how school leaders make sense of social justice and democracy in their practice in two settings, a high-stakes testing and accountability context, the San Francisco Bay Area, California, and a low-stakes testing and accountability context, Norway. It demonstrates how leaders view relationships among education, democracy, and social justice, when located in a neoliberal democracy with a minimalist welfare state or in a social democracy with a robust welfare state. **Design and Evidence:** Through a comparative design, we analyze qualitative data from two international principal exchanges designed to capture outsiders' impressions of schools in each context. Participants included alumni from an American and a Norwegian university's principal preparation programs. Through preobservation and postobservation interviews and focus groups, we explore observations by practitioners, who acted as coconstructors in the research. **Findings and Implications:** The article presents three

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findings: (1) While principals in both systems conceptualized equity similarly, their conceptions of democracy were aligned with the type of democracy in which they were embedded; (2) Schools' norms, climate, structures, and leadership, as well as students' daily lives, reflected the values implicit in their respective political contexts; (3) Principals perceived elements of their macro- and micro-level settings to enable or constrain their ability to craft democratic, socially just schools. These findings help scholars move beyond discourse about the need for leaders to advocate for equity, to deeper understandings about conditions that shape democratic schools, such as values about collectivism, welfarism, and the common good—tenets of a socially just civic society.

Public schools reflect society's values. Their images mirror which principles and norms a society has chosen to cultivate in its citizenry, as well as deep-seated assumptions about the purposes of public schooling. Many members of the public trust that principals will enact the range of values in their communities. For example, if asked, most community members might assume that most principals can effectively carry out their democratic responsibilities, in addition to multiple other duties. Yet, the democratic roles that principals may play are historically and cultural contingent (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014). Moreover, as middle managers, principals mediate between values that prevail in local contexts and those that weigh on them from afar. For some principals, these contexts may delimit their sphere of influence in unexpected ways. For others, they may expand these boundaries.

This article takes up this broad issue by examining the values, goals, and practices of principals in two distinct political contexts: the San Francisco Bay Area, California, USA, and Norway. The aim is to investigate how school leaders make sense of social justice and democracy in their local practice. In what follows, we compare the ways in which principals make sense of the relationship between education and democracy in a liberal democracy with a medium level of welfare distribution, the San Francisco Bay Area, and in a social democracy with a high level of welfare distribution, Norway (GINI, 2018).

The following questions guided our research: (1) How do principals in each political setting define and understand democracy and social justice? (2)

How do principals in each political setting make sense of each other's norms, practices, and structures? (3) Which contextual conditions do principals perceive to enable or constrain their schools' potential to promote democracy and social justice?

Through a participatory design, we analyze data derived from two international principal exchanges, each designed to capture outsider school leaders' impressions of public schools in two distinct contexts. We frame our analysis of our principals' impressions with concepts from literature on democracy and education, social justice leadership, critical policy studies of education markets, and the new managerialism. We conclude with a discussion of the study's implications for research on public schools as civic institutions, democratic and social justice leadership, and educational policy. Our findings carry significance for the fields of educational politics and policy and the practice of school leadership.

Two Distinct Contexts

California's San Francisco Bay Area and Norway provide two instructive cases from which scholars and practitioners can develop nuanced understandings about the political, social, cultural, and economic conditions that shape and are shaped by public school systems. Although both states have each come to adopt market orientations and accountability policies in their public sectors, the two have enacted such logics in quite distinct ways.

In the United States, lawmakers have been cultivating New Public Management (NPM) policy structures since at least 1983, when President Reagan's Commission on Educational Excellence released its landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, which decried the failings of American public schools and insisted that government deregulate its system of public education by focusing more squarely on measuring outputs like businesses do in a market, in lieu of continuing purportedly more costly tax-supported investments in civil rights protections and other equity-oriented policies and programs. Since then, neoliberal and punitive federal regulations have increasingly applied to all states (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014), as the subsequent *No Child Left Behind Act*, the *Race to the Top Program*, and parts of the country's most recent *Every Student Succeeds Act*, have all centered on market logics.

By contrast, Norway has maintained a more robust welfare state by acting on its commitments to reducing social and political inequality through sustained investments in public education and a redistributive system of resource allocation based on need (Møller, 2009). Yet Norwegian society has not been insulated from global trends, either. Mounting immigration

and the concomitant challenges to educating an increasingly racially diverse population, as well as heightened global attention to international rankings on assessments like PISA, have coalesced to amplify Norwegian lawmakers' concerns about the most efficient means of maximizing school quality. Accountability and school leadership have become key issues in the public discourse, and pressures to transform school governance á la business models of management are mounting. In addition, the individual aspect of equity in public discourse has increasingly been restricted to discussions about student performance in national and international assessments (Lundahl, 2016). Today, some Norwegian principals' positionality is interwoven with some of the country's first forms prescriptive accountability, as school choice policies in its largest cities require principals to use externally defined quality indicators to market schools for enrollment, regardless of their personal opinions. These leaders are expected to paradoxically safeguard equity in their schools, but their work is implicated in the reproduction of inequalities.

American society has a much longer history of faith in the power of the market to organize society and equip individuals to uplift themselves by relying on principles of competition and performance measurement (Trujillo & Renée, 2015). Of course, the United States is not a politically or culturally monolithic country. Thus, while this study concentrates on the San Francisco Bay Area, opinions and attitudes about democracy, the welfare state, and the appropriateness of market principles and practices in public sectors vary widely. The data reported in this article cannot represent an overall "U.S." approach." With respect to the Bay Area, lawmakers have embraced a forceful interventionist system of high-stakes testing and accountability policies that has permeated most classrooms' walls. Policy pressures are especially acute in schools that serve high numbers of low-income families and racial or ethnic minorities. In such schools, low test scores can trigger a range of government-imposed sanctions, including laying off teachers and principals, converting the school to a charter school, transferring authority over the school to a private management company, and even closing the school (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). This market-oriented system of education is grounded in principles of competition, consumer choice, and accountability for test-based results.

The Norwegian policy structure is quite different. Although the government looks to standardized test results as a measure of effectiveness, heavy-handed punishments for low test performance are not imposed on schools and principals. The difference reflects the ideology of the Nordic education model, which frames education as crucial for cultural and political citizenship. Norwegian policymakers and educators are increasingly minding standardized test scores in their discourse about what counts as an effective

school, yet under the Bay Area model, accountability policies have effectively driven these scores to represent the sine qua non for judging school quality. Together, the two cases provide an ideal comparison from which scholars can better understand how principals negotiate their roles and mediate the political complexities of developing socially just, civic-minded schools in distinct policy environments.

Literature Review

Historically, public school advocates have assumed multiple purposes of education in democratic societies, including civic, moral, and economic functions. Yet over the past 40 years, it is the economic purpose of public schools that has come to triumph in the imaginations of public school activists (Labaree, 1997). Public and private influentials, families, and researchers are increasingly framing education as a commodity to be delivered, an economic exchange between a provider, the teacher, and a consumer, the student. Maximizing one's return on investment has become a central principle for both politicians and parents (Biesta, 2004). These shifts are global phenomena, as reflected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) increasingly prominent position in setting the agenda for educational policy and research by providing countries indicators for best practices and by constructing a global policy field of governance by comparing student outcomes across countries (Bieber & Martens, 2011; Møller, 2017). According to OECD's agenda, the key to improvement lies in the use of performance data and output control (Schleicher, 2014). Today, it is common to hear heads of state sound calls for tougher standards, strict accountability for better test performance, and demands for public schools to prove their excellence and efficiency as training grounds for the workplace (Lingard et al., 2013; Ozga et al., 2011).

Scholars of U.S. public education have documented how concerns over maximizing America's global competitiveness have edged out concerns over democratic preparation, civil rights, and social mobility (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Labaree, 1997). Elsewhere, researchers have captured similar dynamics, though these trends vary among nations and political systems (Derouet & Normand, 2016; Grimaldi et al., 2016). While analysts have documented the Nordic countries' commitments to human rights and egalitarian values, over the past 20 years, they have also observed how these countries have gradually adopted market-led reforms, albeit to varying degrees. Norway, for example, has remained more reluctant about deregulation and privatization (Wiborg, 2013). Where school leaders are able to advance values and practices that emphasize social justice, democracy, and economic security, or where they

limit their goals to demonstrating educational excellence and economic efficiency, reveals much about the challenges to preserving the full range of goals for public education amid an increasingly competitive, market-driven educational landscape.

In consideration of this range of goals, the past decade has given rise to a considerable spike in scholarship on social justice leadership—a decidedly moral goal for schools. Some studies investigate how principals promote social justice by enacting policies designed to equitably distribute instructional resources for marginalized groups (e.g., Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Wang, 2018). Stevenson (2007), for example, examined how school leaders sought to promote social justice agendas in five multiethnic schools in England. He found that more successful leaders possessed strong value commitments to social justice and effectively articulated those values to their schools. Yet he also found that market-oriented school choice policies undermined their efforts because they presented moral dilemmas between advancing equity and demonstrating performance in the local education market.

Relatedly, Ryan and Rottmann (2009) found that school leaders in England tried to develop democratic schools by establishing relationships with community members that enabled dialogue, displaying caring natures and vulnerability, and being visible and approachable. However, they also observed how competitive pressures from NPM policies often obstructed their attempts to foster democratic and inclusive practices, when principals relied on hierarchical, bureaucratic power in order to attract students in a competition-laden school choice system.

These studies corroborate arguments that school leaders function as political strategists (Boyd, 1974), who negotiate among competing interests and conflicting efforts by different groups—both within districts and their own schools—all intended to maintain power. While such literature on the democratic dimensions of school leadership is emerging, these studies are less common (see Anderson, 2009; Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Woods, 2005, for exceptions).

Bates (2013) maintains that studying educational administration requires researchers to examine relationships between knowledge and control in different contexts. A comparative transnational perspective, therefore, can move such analyses beyond discourse to consider how leaders' practices reflect macro-level political constraints or opportunities.

These critical analyses of the ways in which policies create power structures that shape school leaders' work (e.g., Gunter et al., 2016) have helped theorize the premises behind leadership for social justice and democracy. To date, this field offers few specifics about what happens when social

justice-oriented and democratic-minded principals attempt to advance both aims in their practice (cf. Ryan, 2016). Studies that consider how different national contexts shape social justice, democratic leaders' enactment of these notions are still needed.

Conceptual Framework

We anchored our study in two strands of Furman and Shields' (2005) framework for studying how leaders promote social justice and democratic community in schools. While their framework addressed more than these two conceptual strands, for the purposes of this study, we limit our use of only these two strands as they represent the portions of their framework that are most relevant to our research questions. Specifically, our framework reflects their position that social justice leadership cannot be understood without concomitant understandings about democratic leadership. For such leaders, theories of social justice and democracy are integrally connected; both provide necessary concepts for framing educational leadership studies amid rapid societal diversification.

With respect to democracy, Furman and Shields distinguish between thin and deep democracy, where the former is based on values of classical liberalism, such as individualism and self-interest, and the latter refers to Deweyan values like civic participation, inclusiveness of diverse populations, and solidarity, or a shared commitment to a common good. Therefore, we guided our data collection and analysis with two prominent and competing conceptions of democratic education: *thin democracy*, which we refer to as neoliberal (market-oriented) democracy and *deep democracy*, which we term social (welfare-oriented) democracy. These conceptions represent the extreme ends of continua of democracy. They are ideals. In reality, most contemporary contexts exhibit elements of both neoliberal and social democracy, but to different degrees.

The concept of deep democracy can be unpacked to include, in part, John Dewey's ideas about "lived democracy," or the premise that the best way to develop democratic skills, values, and readiness for citizenship, is to practice democracy in school through collective problem solving of communities' real challenges (Dewey, 1937; Møller, 2006). Today, scholars who examine education and democracy interrogate these civic dimensions of schools by analyzing elements like pedagogy, roles for student voice, classrooms' inclusive or segregated nature, attention to individual test achievement versus cooperative problem solving, school-wide norms and climate, and leadership practice—all potential indicators of schools' capacity to prepare students for democratic participation (Biesta, 2004; Labaree, 1997; Perlstein, 2000).

Thus, we also informed our study with these analytical concepts, which underlie the concept of deep democracy.

More recent research demonstrates that democratic education requires school actors to embrace a vision of a "democratic professional who can advocate for community empowerment and work for a common good" (Anderson & Cohen, 2018, p. 2). Deeply democratic-minded school leaders, therefore, acknowledge that "the price of democracy . . . [rightly] comes at the expense of efficiency" (Hill & Jochim, 2014, p. 20) when they choose to emphasize collective interests, as well as the authentic engagement of students or the broader community in decision making. We looked for evidence of leaders' enactment of these beliefs, as well.

In contrast to such deep, social democratic principles, we sought evidence of where schools' may have absorbed principles and practices that characterize neoliberal, or thin democracies, which have been widely cultivated by lawmakers, policymakers, and public leaders over the past four decades. Neoliberal policies promote competitive strategies that emphasize individual gain, self-interest, and greater capital accumulation (Harvey, 2007; Lipman, 2011). In these settings, citizens are seen as consumers with the freedom to actualize their preferences and individual liberty through participation in markets (Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 2001).

Critical policy studies of education markets "consider the links between developments in education and broader social policy" and consider how educational trends may be nested in larger theories about economics (Burch, 2009, p. 10). As Ball (2001) explains, NPM policies, which are manifestations of neoliberal ideologies, have "renormed" and "revalued" public education by shifting educators' values, practices, and goals to conceptualizing teachers, principals, and students as market actors, not as citizens. Oakes et al. (1998) remind us that such macro-level market-based policies interact with micro-level conditions in communities to create a "zone of mediation" that delimits how much educators promote particular changes or priorities. In market-oriented settings, therefore, social justice minded, democratic leaders may find that they become, paradoxically, "implicated advocates" (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014); they are expected to mediate discourses and policies that promote individualism, marketization, national governance, or competition, despite their commitments to collectivism, the common good, local communities' best interests, and cooperation. We looked for evidence of each of these concepts in our schools.

The consequences of these market tensions have been termed "the new managerialism" (Apple, 2007; Ball, 1994; Clarke et al., 2000). Managerialist principals focus more on performativity and surveillance by monitoring primarily surface-level appearances of externally imposed quality, rather than

prioritizing deeper, more authentic quality, like creativity or the cultivation of independence. Therefore, we considered whether our leaders embodied any of these characteristics.

With respect to the social justice portion of Furman and Shields' (2005) frame, we paid explicit attention to school leaders' beliefs about equity and trust. Equity is key to social justice and democracy because it hinges on structures that redistribute resources based on need, not on expectations of efficiency. Socially just democracies rest on the principle of mutual trust between adults and students. Such reciprocity is related to equitable, social justice-minded policies and practices because it helps foster student autonomy, rather than surveillance and policing. We integrated these concepts into our study, too.

Finally, while the term social justice holds multiple meanings, in line with Furman and Shields (2005), we ground our study in the assumption that social justice is not possible without deep democracy and vice versa. Both concepts constitute moral purposes of schooling, and the frame of deep democracy suggests a processual striving toward social justice in school. This conceptualization holds that social justice requires deliberate, redistributive interventions that challenge inequities stemming from one group's misuse of power over another (Furman & Shields, 2005, p. 123). It is also based on intrinsic values for all individuals and their communities, proactive acknowledgement of inequities related to power and privilege, and explicit attention to the pedagogical implications of social justice. We considered whether principals exhibited these commitments and understandings or, perhaps, opposite ones.

Together, all of these analytic concepts combined to provide a holistic framework for investigating the constituent components of principals' democratic and social justice leadership.

Design and Method

To answer our questions, we chose a two-phase participatory design. In Phase 1, our school principal participants accompanied the study's Principal Investigators (PIs) to observe schools as coresearchers. In phase 2, the PIs conducted focus groups and individual interviews with the principal participants. We organized two 4-day workshops for 11 school principals, five alumni selected from an American university's principal preparation program, and six selected from a Norwegian university's program. Each program focused explicitly on values and practices related to social justice, democracy, and human rights. The Co-PIs for this study were former professors and directors in the respective programs.

Table 1. Characteristics of Schools and Participants.

Context	School type	School size	Name/gender	Race/ethnicity
American				
Urban	Elementary	390	Luke (M)	Latino
Urban	Secondary	2,000	Jamey (M)	Latino
Urban	Elementary	290	Amber (F)	African American
Urban	Secondary	3,200	Theresa (F)	Caucasian
Urban	Elementary	450	Jessica (F)	Caucasian
Norwegian				
Urban	Secondary	900	Stephanie (F)	Caucasian
Urban	Secondary	850	Emily (F[a])	Caucasian
Urban	Elementary	300	Nancy (F)	Caucasian
Suburban	Elementary	300	Annie (F)	Caucasian
Rural	Elementary	80	René (F)	Caucasian
Urban	Elementary	260	Andrew (M[b])	Caucasian

[a]The assistant principal participated from this school. [b]The principal in this urban elementary school did not participate in the principal exchanges, focus groups, or interviews at UC Berkeley or at the University of Oslo. American principals visited this school in order to observe a socioeconomically diverse, multicultural Norwegian elementary school.

The workshops were intended to facilitate participants' reflections on their observations during school visits. The comparative research orientation provided a chance to achieve better understandings of their own educational systems by contrasting each ones respective system with the other, and by discussing impressions of similarities and differences. It also contributed to more substantial reflections regarding the relationship between educational leadership and the wider society when we interviewed the principals afterward.

To study leaders with relatively similarly experience levels, we selected administrators who had been working as school leaders for at least 3 years. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants.

One principal exchange took place at UC Berkeley in October, 2016, and one was conducted at the University of Oslo in April, 2017. Each exchange lasted 4 days. Prior to each exchange, we prepared participants by assigning scholarly readings that familiarized them with the educational policy contexts and political histories of each country. In each exchange, we followed the same research protocol. First, we conducted a preobservation focus group during which we answered basic clarifying questions about the school systems that the principals were visiting. Next, we prepared them to use a semistructured observation protocol to capture their reflections during the school visits.

After that, we facilitated visits to the respective host principals' schools, during which the research team and visiting principals conducted classroom observations, met with leaders and teachers and students, and observed campuses. Subsequently, we conducted three more focus groups: one for the visiting school leaders to share their initial impressions of the leadership dynamics and practices they observed, as well as their overall impressions of the schools' climate, facilities, teaching, student engagement, and other noteworthy features; and two in which mixed groups of both visiting and host principals discussed the visitors' observations and questions. Last, we interviewed all principals individually to further explore their impressions and observations.

Because few immigrant or minority children were enrolled in the participating Norwegian elementary schools, we also visited a multicultural elementary school in a large city to provide a slightly more representative example of how Norwegian schools look. Hence, some American principals' insights were based on this school are included in the findings.

In total, we conducted 6 recorded focus groups and 11 recorded individual principal interviews. Focus groups and interviews lasted an average of 1 hour each. These focus groups and interviews addressed, among other themes, their conceptualizations of social justice leadership (e.g., more equity-oriented notions or more performance-oriented ones), their characterizations of their current leadership values and priorities (e.g., civic goals for cultivating a democratic collective vs. economic goals for maximizing individual gains), their school's experiences with standardized testing (e.g., testing as a central priority or a more peripheral goal among others), and their attitudes toward their government's testing and accountability regimes.

All focus group and interview transcripts were transcribed. Transcripts were analyzed deductively, according to the theoretical concepts outlined in the framework, as well as inductively, according to themes that emerged during the analysis. In a first step, members of our research team independently analyzed the transcripts to code for emergent themes. We used Dedoose and NVivo software. During this stage, we identified instances in which the principals talked about how they made sense of each other's school contexts and practices, and how they talked about democracy, social justice, and other values in educational leadership. This step was more inductive in that we were looking for any relevant themes that could have emerged from their observations and impressions, not just those that were foregrounded in our framework. Second, we guided our next round of analysis primarily with codes derived directly from our framework, but also with inductively generated ones.

Because focus groups were based on observations in which both researchers and principals participated, they can be characterized as "contextual

interviews" (Hultman, 2005, p. 5). Contextual interviews are encounters between multiple observers with firsthand experiences, in which informants act as coconstructors in the research. They not only serve as "a collection of data," but as interpretations in which observers to some extent are engaged in reciprocal sense making. The text that the researchers ultimately produce functions as an interpretation of data and the situations being observed in terms of "double hermeneutics" (Hultman, 2005, p. 5).

Findings

As a reminder, we posed three main queries: (1) How do principals in each political setting define and understand democracy and social justice? (2) How do principals in each political setting make sense of each other's norms, practices, and structures? (3) Which contextual conditions do principals perceive to enable or constrain their schools' potential to promote democracy and social justice? In what follows, we present our findings, and then conclude with a discussion of their implications for research and practice.

Finding #1: Framing Democracy in Social or Neoliberal Terms

Equity is not equality. With respect to the first question, all principals from both contexts understood equity as a redistributive concept. For every participant, advancing equity meant that schools distribute resources differently based on academic, linguistic, social, emotional, and other needs. They agreed that students deserved different types and amounts of resources to facilitate educational opportunity fairly.

The following quotes were typical of all participants: "Equity means you think about what people need and you don't treat them the same. I think about it with the allocation of resources at school all the time" (Jessica, American urban elementary school). "Equity means being able to provide the same opportunities to each student so they can develop and learn. The same does not mean the same thing to everyone" (Emily, Norwegian urban secondary school).

Some principals described how equitable decisions purposefully resulted in unequal access to school resources, like counseling, because students and families have different social and cultural capital depending on social class, immigration status, and race or ethnicity. American principals repeatedly noted that wealthier, usually Caucasian, parents were more likely to advocate for their children.

One subtle distinction between the two groups emerged when one Norwegian principal emphasized that equity also implied that everyone

should be treated with respect: "I also associate respect and trust with equity because there must be a balance in how we respect each other and what kind of relationships we have with each other" (Nancy, Norwegian urban elementary school). The Norwegians also emphasized equity at the system level and linked it to a notion of democracy, or equal access to an educational system where fairness is understood as the system's ability to distribute civic and economic resources to meet the needs of all students in ways that strengthen the overall society. One principal put it like this:

> Equity means everyone has the same value. Yes, we have to make efforts to achieve the same goals because we shall live and work in the same society, but we have to differentiate [teaching and social care] and give [students] challenges that promote formation and the desire to learn . . . so they can take part as citizens in the future society. (René, Norwegian rural elementary school)

Aside from this subtle distinction, all principals' interpretations of equity were consistent with Furman and Shields' (2005) notions about the redistributive character of a deep, social democracy, not thin, neoliberal one that would have emphasized values for efficiency and standardization. For them, social justice leadership required being vocal and proactive in securing and reallocating school resources based on disparities in needs and access.

Individualistic versus collectivist democratic values. When asked explicitly about democracy, the two groups differed markedly. Americans tended to invoke neoliberal democratic principles akin to Furman and Shields' (2005) conceptualization of thin democracy. That is, they emphasized individual rights and liberties. Specifically, three American principals expressed concerns that the democratic purpose of schooling was being abandoned, just as Labaree (1997) has theorized. All Norwegians, in contrast, interpreted democracy in terms of collective interests. This principal captured almost all of his American colleagues' beliefs about democracy when he explained that, for him, democratic education protected individuals' rights to dissent and to advocate for their children's individual interests:

> Democracy means that parents are able to go to the office and meet with the principal or teacher or whoever and seek [help] for their concerns. Democracy is access to a remedy. (Luke, American urban elementary school)

By comparison, at least four Norwegians called attention to the importance of protecting the common good, as well as citizens enacting their collective responsibilities to one another—two fundamental principles of a social democracy that are indicative of Furman and Shields' (2005) deep

democracy. This participant crystalized most of her colleagues' thoughts when she reflected this way:

> Nowadays, there is a strong focus on individual rights; it is me, me, me and my rights, but we should focus on common duties. It should not be survival of the fittest, and we should not only listen to those with the strongest voice. (Annie, Norwegian suburban primary school)

Constructing national identities: Assimilation versus pluralism. Finally, our data revealed several indications of how national identities are constructed—a key factor in defining, upholding, and developing support for a democratic state. American leaders repeatedly problematized the Norwegians' frequently stated goals of creating a common identity and learning a common language. For the Americans, promoting social justice and democracy meant recognizing legacies of oppression, and the concomitant mistrust by marginalized communities, in public schools. One principal put it this way:

> [In Norway] there are so many people that are of the same culture and who grew up with the same norms and values. . . . But in the United States, in our urban areas, we have so many types of folks who bring different values and have had so many different experiences with education, some of it very negative. It's not that they don't value education, but their experiences have led them to have different views of how the system works, and a lot of times it lets them down and hasn't been valuable. There's mistrust. (Amber, American urban elementary school)

Four American elementary school principals interpreted their observations of an urban, Norwegian multicultural school's heavy emphasis on teaching newcomers the Norwegian language as evidence of an assimilationist mission to build a single, dominant identity among all students. For instance, one principal, Luke, reflected, "When we went to visit one of the schools in the big city and the newcomers were being taught Norwegian, it was related to a common identity." For this principal, Norwegian schools departed from Furman and Shields' (2005) notion of social justice leadership, which stresses values for all individuals and the communities from which they come.

In contrast, one U.S. principal distinguished between what he saw as the purpose of the Norwegians' identity-building with Americans' identity-building. For him, developing these identities served different functions related to independence in each context, as he stated here:

> [Norwegians] have this value of being somewhat independent but being part of a larger society. They stressed independence not for competition's sake, but

because there's an underlying message that we need you to be strong and independent because we all need you, and that is not something that's in the United States. [In the U.S.,] it's, "you need to be independent because we need to beat everyone else in this race." (Jamey, American urban secondary school)

From his perspective, developing independence served a clear goal for Norwegians—to strengthen the collective Norwegian society. For Americans, independence was intended to serve individuals' needs, to encourage students to be the singular best. His reflection represents a common theme that ran through the Americans' observations. Whereas the Norwegian schools seemed designed to fortify their social democracy through developing independent, yet interconnected citizens who shared a common identity, American Bay Area schools appeared characteristically neoliberal; they were designed to fortify individuals to compete with one another in order to secure their own "piece of the pie," economically and politically, as one principal, Jamey, put it.

Norwegian principals did not in the same way problematize building a national identity. All six seemed to take for granted that immigrants need to learn the Norwegian language in order to succeed in the Norwegian society. From their perspective, education served to give all students opportunities to participate as democratic citizens and be socially mobile. They seemed concerned more with possible opportunities for students' futures, and less with varied histories of oppression and positionalities. For American outsiders accustomed to the demographically diverse Bay Area, known for inclusiveness around difference, the focus on cultivating a singular identity seemed to subordinate students' different home cultures and promote assimilation.

Overall, these patterns suggest that American Bay Area school leaders, aside from their conceptions of equity and stance on assimilation, tended to see democracy in more thin, neoliberal terms: exercising individual rights and voices, and protecting individuals' freedom to advocate for their self-interest. Norwegian leaders, on the other hand, emphasized more collective beliefs and values that align with tenets of deep, social democracy, such as the notion that cultivating a shared national identity sustains democracy through solidarity and preparation for civic participation. Nonetheless, the two groups seemed to find common ground in their understandings about the redistributive dimensions of educational equity—a foundational aspect of social justice. This first finding, like Bates (2013) theorizes about the tie between school leaders' practice and their contexts, illuminates certain connections between the two countries' political contexts and principals' visions about the purposes of schooling and their responsibilities as leaders.

Finding #2: Different Contexts, Different Norms and Practices

While both sets of leaders noted that the schools' technical structures were fairly similar—they were led by principals and sometimes assistant principals, and student schedules looked relatively alike in both settings—several features appeared quite distinct. These included the roles of student voice; teachers' pedagogical orientations; school-wide norms, climate, and policies; inclusive or segregative practices for students; standardized testing; and leaders' roles and practices.

Practicing democracy. As Dewey taught, schools' democratic character cannot be judged solely by principals' and teachers' abstract values. It also depends on their cultivation of democratic skills, values, and preparation for citizenship (1937). All five American leaders shared that they were impressed with the ways in which Norwegian students appeared to engage in deeper forms of democracy when they regularly communicated classmates' concerns to school leaders through student councils. The following quote was typical of all U.S. leaders' reflections:

> The thing that I saw in many schools was democracy as a fundamental value in education. . . . We're a democracy too, but you wouldn't necessarily know that that's something we care about teaching our children. Part of the student council girl's presentation for us at the [urban upper secondary] school . . . was about democracy. I can't imagine our student leadership ever drawing the connection between what they were doing and democracy. (Theresa, American urban secondary school)

Despite all American principals' consistently positive impressions of the centrality of structures for practicing democracy, two Norwegian leaders reflected more critically on their country's treatment of democratic principles in schools. They interrogated the belief that every school fully utilized student council for students to participate in decisions that affect them. After observing American schools, Annie questioned, "Do we in Norway take democracy for granted in our school?" Her visit to U.S. schools made her more conscious about her responsibility as a principal. Another one emphasized the need for "showing, not telling." She framed it like this:

> Democracy should be lived in schools . . . For example, when students say they are not involved [in decision making] and demand a meeting, or if they complain about differences in the teachers' way of assessing their work, we have to listen carefully. However, they should also learn that democracy includes rules, procedures and structural mechanisms of accountability; they

have to attend to timing, such as when it is possible to negotiate and influence decision making. The same rules apply to the teachers. (Stephanie, Norwegian urban secondary school)

These critical reflections, rooted in Dewey's notions of "lived democracy," may suggest that some Norwegian student councils did not live up to their reputations, or they may suggest that their leaders held extremely high standards for what it means to practice democracy.

Pedagogical orientations: Performativity and surveillance or creativity and independence. American Bay Area leaders noted that Norwegian classrooms appeared fairly conventional and were teacher-centered, but they also frequently commented on Norwegian schools' use of outdoor space as a regular component of their curriculum and of students' days. One of these principals was struck by the lack of total surveillance of all students at all times on the playgrounds, as well as by the physical risk taking that teachers allowed students to engage in:

> Towards the back [of the elementary school] there was a fence because there was a cliff where students could fall off. I thought they put the fence there to make sure students don't fall, but then we saw students [climbing] on the [cliff] side of the fence just to play! (Jamey, American urban secondary school)

This same principal observed that when students at this school were climbing a steep rock several meters high, sliding down, forcefully hitting the ground, and then climbing back up to repeat the somewhat risky thrill, a nearby teacher chose not to stop them. Rather, she asked an onlooking student to place a small mat under the rock and let them continue without intervening.

In this case, a Norwegian school's use of the outdoors provided opportunities for students to connect to their natural environment with less regulation than is typical for American Bay Area schools. Less rigid regulation and monitoring, and more student autonomy, allowed students to develop more independence, feel trusted to make sound choices, and practice calculating physical risks. In this way, the school reflected fewer qualities of managerialism that Clarke et al. (2000) articulate and more qualities of social democratic leadership that (Møller, 2006) describes.

One Bay Area principal unpacked the performative tensions in U.S. schools when she criticized the disconnect between Bay Area classrooms' façade of cultural appreciation and respect for diversity with the reality of their persistent gaps in opportunities and outcomes for marginalized students:

> We talk a lot about cultural relevancy, cultural responsive teaching, cultural whatever gimmick it is this year. But I've never felt like we prepare students to be integrated into a society, a society that's always excluded them. (Theresa, American urban secondary school)

Still the Norwegians interpreted the surface features of the San Francisco Bay Area classrooms more positively. Four of the six noted how impressive U.S. schools' walls appeared, decorated with posters expressing support for the Black Lives Matter social movement, and other declarations of support for racial justice. For them, such displays, which contrasted with Norwegians' unadorned walls and hallways, seemed like authentic expressions of social justice values.

School-wide norms, climate, and policies. With respect to school climate, most American Bay Area principals commented on the orderliness of the Norwegian schools. One principal represented most of his colleagues when he commented as follows:

> Silence. The upper secondary school that we visited was a little bit noisier, but I think that there was [not a need] to act out because you don't need to act out to get what you deserve. It was like, I can be myself because I know that . . . I will get my needs met. (Luke, American urban elementary school)

For this Bay Area leader, the calm settings reflected more than students' responses to rules; they suggested that students felt like their schools would take care of their needs.

Relatedly, at least three Norwegian principals observed what they interpreted to be a high level of engagement with students by U.S. principals. Like Ryan and Rottmann (2009) found in their analysis of more successful democratic leaders, Bay Area leaders appeared visible, approachable, and genuinely caring, which they believed contributed to a warm atmosphere across the elementary schools. One participant echoed all of her colleagues when she said,

> [A] surprise was how "hands-on" the principals seemed to be in classroom practice. That was impressive. [. . .] The principals were not in their office during the school day; they were out in classrooms, in the school yard during their break, talking to students and teachers in an inclusive way. They demonstrated a unique interest in everyone. (Annie, Norwegian suburban primary school)

Despite perceptions of the U.S. administrators' and teachers' warm relationships with students, Norwegian leaders also noticed how, at the teacher level, a culture of individualism prevailed. This principal put it this way:

> It seemed like individualism and autonomy among teachers dominated the culture. We asked the teachers about how they shared expertise and planning and if they had a . . . platform to which they could publish curriculum ideas. Such platforms did not exist . . . (Rene, Norwegian rural primary school)

For this Norwegian, American Bay Area teachers did not appear to collaborate deeply or share professional knowledge with one another. Their work looked highly individualistic.

All five Americans viewed educators' and students' autonomy as key distinctions between the two contexts. They described a more punitive, stricter culture in their Bay Area schools, and were surprised that Norwegian students could congregate freely in hallways. Their own experiences with school discipline were characterized as deeply racialized and classed. That is, Americans noted that students of color or those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds were disproportionately punished, monitored and policed.

Finally, the U.S. leaders tended to interpret the Norwegian schools as less regulated than their own. Four of the five Americans commented that it appeared as though all of the Norwegian schools were less rigid in terms of what students were able to do, and how much independence they granted students. For example, one American stated that their teachers and administrators seemed to talk to students like they were adults and treat them with respect and courtesy—the reverse dynamic of what he experienced in the Bay Area. All Norwegians, on the other hand, did not anticipate the level of regulation that they observed in American secondary schools, particularly around security.

School-wide grouping: Inclusion, segregation, and tracking. Dynamics around school-wide inclusion, within-school segregation, and curricular tracking were less straightforward to sort out in both settings. Norwegian school personnel regularly stressed the importance of including all students in the school so that their families would not become isolated in the community, particularly refugee and immigrant families. This inclusion was also seen as a mechanism for creating a single, shared Norwegian identity among diverse groups, as discussed earlier. Yet test-based secondary school admissions policies seemed to obviate these efforts at the secondary level. For example, all five American principals recognized that, despite Norwegian principals' and students' claims that tracking did not exist in their compulsory school system (primary and lower secondary), clear evidence existed to the contrary in the upper secondary schools. This Bay Area leader explained it this way:

> I was really struck by the fact that [Norway] is an extremely tracked system in the upper secondary schools. Kids are testing to get into these different schools, so actually it's the ultimate tracking. . . . They talked about how there's one

school that anyone can go to and that's the bad school that you can get sent to if you're not doing well. (Theresa, American urban secondary school)

In this sense, Norwegians' rhetoric about support for school-wide inclusion seemed to conflict with its national NPM policies for secondary school enrollment, much like the principals observed by Stevenson (2007) and Ryan and Rottmann (2009). Like their American counterparts, secondary leaders in Norwegian schools functioned as "implicated advocates" for market-based school choice policies (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014), as was evident when these principals spoke of pressures to market their schools to recruit students in a choice system.

Attention to standardized testing. All of the Norwegian principals noted that they did not perceive the American Bay Area principals to be strongly affected by test-based accountability policies. They were not afraid of losing their jobs due to low test performance, for example, which is one feature of U.S. accountability policies for low-performing schools. On the contrary, all Bay Area principals appeared to feel secure in their jobs. Some Norwegians wondered if California had different accountability practices compared with other U.S. states.

[Another] surprise was how little [American school leaders] talked about standardized testing. Instead, they focused on how to lift the students who struggled, and they talked about how to promote equity. I expected something else. Maybe it has to do with the principals' education. (Annie, Norwegian suburban primary school)

Her comment was based on her assigned scholarly readings that familiarized the Norwegians with the American policy context, which described the evolution of NPM policy structures, like high-stakes testing and accountability policies, in American schools. However, despite appearing to be in control of several aspects of their schools, American principals repeatedly lamented that constraints still existed on their schools' goals and practices due to district performance monitoring, heavy attention to test outcomes, and pressures to allocate time and other resources to test-based activities—the features of managerialist schools that Ball (1994) and Clarke et al. (2000) describe.

Leaders' roles and practices. With respect to the school leaders themselves, the two groups differed somewhat in their perceptions of one another's roles and practices. While the Bay Area leaders sensed more managerialist pressures (Apple, 2007) like top-down surveillance of their own performance, hierarchical supervision from district offices, and more prescribed responsibilities

due to test pressures, their Norwegian counterparts detected less of these constraints. Similarly, whereas their visitors interpreted Norwegian school leaders' roles to be characterized by more professional democratic relationships (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018) with supervisors and teachers, less direct monitoring, and autonomy based on mutual trust, Norwegians detected slightly more constraints on their independence as decision makers. Nonetheless, some clear differences emerged.

One of the most striking differences was around principals' authority over school budgets. All American leaders were surprised to learn how much discretion Norwegian leaders had to allocate their school budgets as they wished. Yet when confronted about their budgetary autonomy, two Norwegian leaders clarified that their decision making was still somewhat restricted by their municipalities, though not as much as the Bay Area leaders experienced.

Another notable difference was in principals' workload. Americans commented repeatedly how manageable Norwegian leaders' work hours seemed. Almost everyone noticed that Norwegians left work by 4:30. They seemed to spend less time fulfilling their duties. Some wondered if this was the norm because they had more resources, such as more time for collaboration and planning, that were necessary to accomplish their work in a more timely manner. When asked what stood out about the administration at these schools, Jessica, a Bay Area urban elementary school principal, stated emphatically, "You have these teams of people. You're not all alone like I am."

Another Norwegian connected Bay Area leaders' heavy workloads to their direct involvement in teachers' classroom decision making, a dynamic that they did not experience in Norway. She wondered if American principals had to be more directive with teachers because the U.S. bar for entering the teaching profession is much lower than in Norway. Nancy, a Norwegian urban primary school principal, even remarked, "I was so surprised to hear about how easy it was to become a teacher. You could even do it online and receive a certificate!" All of the Norwegians were surprised to learn how much time American principals and teachers spent working. Nancy represented all of her colleagues when she said, "The principals had very long days, starting at 7 am and going home at 7 pm!"

In sum, these principals' observations provide rich evidence for tracing national ideologies and values to daily schooling practices. Most prominently, American leaders observed comparably low levels of attention to standardized testing in the schools they visited. While Norwegian teachers and principals acknowledged that policymakers and politicians were increasingly focused on national and international test scores, the test results seemed to be of little consequence to their practice or their professional well-being. Student survey results, in which students evaluated their schools, played a

more prominent role in principals' discussions with municipal-level supervisors, but these data, too, were low-stakes. American principals noted the independence cultivated among students in Norway, where adults treated youth with more respect. Norwegians noted the high surveillance of American Bay Area students, such as the presence of school security officers, along with visual representations social justice among classroom spaces.

Finding #3: Drivers of Enabling and Constraining Conditions

Our last finding centered on principals' perceptions of the forces that acted on their ability to carry out their responsibilities and work toward more democratic, socially just schools. What emerged from our data were clear patterns in principals' opinions of their "zones of mediation," (Oakes et al., 1998), or the space in which they retained the power to make decisions that complied with national education and social policies *and* the economic, political, and social realities of their local communities.

Social and economic policies: Working conditions, welfare systems, and school finance systems. Disparities in educational policies, resources, and communities' social conditions were pronounced between the two groups. All five American leaders were fascinated by the implications of Norway's welfare state for schools' ability to meet students' basic needs. One principal represented the rest when she reflected:

> [The differences between our two contexts] is like night and day. Norway is a tiny country that provides health care for all people, guarantees housing to some degree through subsidies, and people have food. Kids are coming to school fed, healthy, from houses, and I think that is an incredible difference compared to the context that I work in, not to mention just the diversity of life experiences that kids have. They have diversity there, but because of our ethnic, national, racial, and socioeconomic [profile], we have an incredible range . . . it's just a really different kind of a job. (Theresa, American urban secondary school)

From her perspective, differences in governmental social and economic supports mediated the schools' responsibilities for addressing challenging demographic conditions. While Bay Area schools were embedded in more racially and socioeconomically diverse communities, their challenges were compounded by a lack of welfare systems for meeting students' basic needs. The consequence was that school leaders were forced to allocate more time and other resources to ensuring basic safety, order, and physical well-being.

Norwegians, on the other hand, were struck by how many resources Bay Area leaders had to secure to ensure safety and care for students' social, emotional, and physical needs. As one Norwegian principal recalled:

> We receive a lump sum of money each year from the municipality, but American schools are more dependent on sponsors and tax money. It seemed more unpredictable and random compared to our situation. (Nancy, Norwegian urban primary school)

Educational policies: NPM, accountability, and choice. Overall, U.S. leaders concluded that, when talking with Norwegian administrators about their work, their government's policies were not highly punitive toward educational leaders. Instead, they found that Norwegian principals were provided material or professional support if their school had low test scores; in other words, their system relied on more carrots than sticks to steer schools and their principals' practices. For Norwegians, fewer workplace constraints by accountability measures translated to more time for reflection and meaningful planning. However, these dynamics were not evenly distributed throughout the country. In large cities, some NPM policies had been implemented. Limited school choice policies and greater attention to test performance were common themes for secondary schools in urban areas, much like what has been observed in England and the United States (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Stevenson, 2007). Americans, accustomed to the complex dynamics of school choice policies from their own experiences, were astute observers of the implications of market-driven education in Norway. All five U.S. principals noted contradictions between Norway's political and economic systems and their recent moves to increase school choice, supervision, and performance-based accountability. This principal captured the tensions this way:

> We started hearing these words of recruitment week [in upper secondary schools] . . . I felt like that contradicts social democracy values, and I'm wondering how that's going to play out because it's competitive when you market against other schools, yet you're still trying to have everyone be somewhat unified. . . . You're trying to make an equitable system but you're creating competition within it, and that's not equitable when some don't have so many discipline issues. They can market themselves better . . . (Jamey, American urban secondary school)

Resources: Space, time, facilities, personnel, and finances. Other features that stood out most for both groups of leaders were the disparities in space and time (among other material resources) afforded to teachers. Whereas every Norwegian school contained dedicated spaces and ample time for teacher

collaboration outside of classrooms, Bay Area teachers were expected to work individually in their classrooms, and they were granted significantly less time to collaborate. This Norwegian leader represented her peers when she reflected on this difference:

> I was so surprised that each teacher had their own classroom, and the students were moving around. It is quite opposite of the practice in Norway. It seems like there was very little collaboration among teachers. (Annie, Norwegian suburban primary school)

Another Norwegian principal commented, "It must be lonely" for teachers in the United States, who worked within such isolated physical spaces.

Every American principal was surprised to observe how much time and space Norwegians had for collaboration. One principal recalled all of her peers' sentiments here:

> Another thing that struck me was how much time [Norwegian] teachers have to collaborate. They had those wonderful teacher rooms, offices! If we had that at our schools, it would make such a difference, and then having those built-in blocks of time for them to come together. Wow. (Theresa, American urban secondary school)

For American Bay Area leaders, the time to plan and the space for educators to collaborate among one another were interpreted as part of a deeper value: the respect for teacher professionalism and expertise, not managerialist values for teachers' efficiency and easily measurable effectiveness. From their perspective, these conditions seemed to make teaching more sustainable and create a culture where students felt more relaxed and secure, and teachers felt supported and empowered.

Americans were also surprised that, by and large, most Norwegian schools did not finance school lunch for students from low-income backgrounds. When asked about this condition, teachers and principals replied that all students brought their own lunch, and on the rare occasion that someone did not bring one, the school would provide food for that child. The U.S. principals wondered if this dynamic reflected the country's strong welfare system, which ensured that most families' basic needs would be met through government subsidies for unemployment, fully paid parental leave, and other public supports, or if it reflected a lack of awareness of some students' economically disadvantaged home lives.

Community contexts: Safety, order, and urbanicity. Norwegian leaders were surprised to witness Bay Area schools' challenges regarding safety and order,

the built-in supports to meet low-income students' basic needs, and the charitable roles for volunteers to fill personnel gaps in schools. One Norwegian rural primary school principal summarized the rest of them when she remarked, "The focus on security was so shocking. It is extremely different compared to the Norwegian society. Another surprise was the focus on free lunch . . . " For the Norwegians, the social conditions surrounding U.S. schools were reflected in the structures and supports for compensating for social and economic inequalities.

Americans, on the other hand, observed how safe and orderly Norwegian schools seemed, not just in rural settings, but even in a low-income, culturally heterogeneous urban neighborhood. In one rural elementary school, for example, where students acted out a *Little Red Riding Hood* play, three U.S. principals were astounded to learn that the children used a real shotgun (with the safety feature on), borrowed from a student's family, as a prop. No child appeared to play with the gun, or mishandle it, and no child or adult appeared uncomfortable—or even mindful of—the weapon. Their behaviors, according to the Americans, suggested a deep sense of safety and security, as well as dramatically different cultural norms, unlike anything they were accustomed to in the United States. One American school leader reacted to this experience:

> *The Little Red Riding Hood* play would never happen in the United States! But I don't know if that would happen in [an urban Norwegian school], either, because students with trauma who have seen some of stuff, if a gun showed up in their classroom it would trigger them in really dramatic ways. (Jessica, American urban elementary school)

Indeed, Norwegian leaders were taken aback by the level of community violence and trauma that U.S. students experienced outside of school. This Norwegian shared her reaction to the socioeconomic challenges that students and schools regularly face in U.S. urban spaces:

> I think it must be a rougher society to grow up and live in. One of the principals told me that she had several students who during the last few months had experienced shooting drama in close family. They have students enrolled in their schools with huge trauma in addition to all of the challenges we are used to at home. (Nancy, Norwegian urban primary school)

Here, we see Bay Area and Norwegian principals beginning to interrogate the influence of their respective political economies and the extent to which their agency as school leaders is constrained by structural conditions outside of their control. The Norwegian welfare state, from the perspectives of Bay

Area Americans, provided critical resources that fostered a more collective atmosphere among teacher and that stabilized school settings in ways that Bay Area schools were not. However, their urban schools were nonetheless susceptible to some accountability pressures under NPM policies. The Norwegian school leaders immediately picked up on the socioeconomic contextual challenges that weighed on Bay Area schools. Despite not detecting strict accountability pressures for these American principals as much as they had expected, Norwegians still walked away from the sample of American schools with an appreciation for the elaborate nature of the challenges facing their school leaders.

Discussion and Conclusion

Patterns in our data revealed three main findings. First, while principals in both systems conceptualized social justice rather similarly, their understandings about democracy were aligned with the type of democracy in which they were embedded. Second, schools' norms, climate, structures, and leadership, as well as students' daily lives, reflected the values implicit in their respective political contexts. Third, principals perceived elements of their macro- and micro-level settings to enable or constrain their ability to craft democratic, socially just schools.

Framing Democracy in Social and Neoliberal Terms

All principals demonstrated shared thinking in their definition of equity as a redistributive concept based on different needs. Such needs could derive from students' unequal levels of school readiness due to income inequality, trauma, lack of quality health care, or unequal access academic supports at home. Yet similarities in their understandings about social justice and democracy largely ended there. The two groups' thinking about democracy differed markedly based on whether their school was located in a social or neoliberal democratic setting. Norway's welfare state was reflected in its principals' understandings about the purposes of public education, and their shared goals for creating democratic citizens. These patterns reveal how clearly the American Bay Area's neoliberal political system played out in principals' imaginations. For them, democracy tended to represent individual liberties and values, not collective ones. Accordingly, this study provides an empirical contribution to Furman and Shields' (2005) theorization of the distinction between thin and deep democracy. In particular, it contributes to the research on public schools as civic institutions by depicting how different national political contexts shape social justice, democratic

leaders' enactment of democratic ideas (cf. Brown, 2015; Carpenter & Brewer, 2014; Shenk, 2015).

Different Political Contexts, Different Norms and Practices

Consistent with Bates (2013) theorization, the patterns in this study also evidence how different political contexts were related with significantly different school norms, students' daily lives, and schools' climate, as well as the structure, organization, and leadership orientation for schools in each setting. Here, we observe how schools nested within a strong welfare system emphasized practices and routines that strengthened their school's collaboration, that facilitated greater opportunities to connect students to their community, and that relied on greater mutual trust among principals, teachers, and students—a key factor in upholding a social democratic state. Likewise, we see how American schools, surrounded by more market-oriented political systems and structures, tended to mirror them inside of their schools. Students were more heavily controlled, teachers and principals were more closely monitored, and practices were designed to efficiently monitor and increase test-based performance.

Despite the Norwegian principals' observations that the American Bay Area principals appeared less focused on standardized testing and student test results, particularly in light of their scholarly pre-readings about American NPM policies, Bay Area principals nonetheless embodied the qualities of Carpenter and Brewer's (2014) implicated advocates more than the Norwegian principals did. That said, as noted previously, Norwegian leaders of secondary schools were also functioning, in part, as implicated advocates who had to mediate macro-level, market-oriented policies with local commitments to equity and democracy. Norwegians' perceptions of Bay Area leaders' inattention to testing pressures may be explained by the sample of U.S. school leaders. The five principals and their schools were not representative of all schools in California or the United States. Three of the five schools were in a district that is under significantly less pressure to raise scores due to the demographic make-up (e.g., higher socioeconomic status) of its families. Furthermore, at the time of data collection, all California and United States schools were experiencing a shift from more punitive federal accountability systems and their associated tests (the No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top Program) to a less punitive one (the Every Student Succeeds Act) and new standardized tests. At that time, most American schools were still waiting to learn how much attention the state would give to the new test, and the testing season was still a long way off (visits occurred in early fall, whereas schools administer the tests

and test preparation in the spring). Yet from the American Bay Area principals' perspectives, hierarchical relationships with their district office, heavy monitoring of their performance, and demands to demonstrate greater test-based effectiveness were still pronounced. For them, the market logic of the new managerialism (Clarke et al., 2000) nonetheless characterized expectations of their leadership. Civic priorities, in the American Bay Area context, were secondary considerations.

Contextual Drivers of Enabling and Constraining Conditions

The last finding illustrates how social justice-oriented, democratic leaders, like all leaders, ultimately work within a zone of mediation, a space which requires them to test the limits of what the local public is willing to tolerate, as well as the degree to which macro-level institutional forces restrict their work (Oakes et al., 1998). Principals in both settings perceived different elements of their own macro- and micro-level political contexts as enabling or constraining their potential to craft more democratic, socially just schools. Forceful, top–down policies in the U.S. Bay Area and, to some extent, in big cities in Norway, were seen as shaping principals' practices and goals; competitive policies bred competitive behaviors that resulted in winners and losers. In contrast, more collectivist regulations were perceived to do the opposite; they encouraged cooperation within schools and stimulated mutual trust. Yet these policies also interacted with on-the-ground socioeconomic and cultural realities. Schools that served high-poverty communities in the Bay Area, lacking a strong welfare system, were left vulnerable to focusing largely on the basic needs of their students, rather than allocating more resources toward instruction and civic preparation. These findings corroborate earlier studies that show how NPM policies often obstruct principals' attempts to foster democratic, inclusive practices (Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Stevenson, 2007). Where these safety nets were in place, we saw examples of Norwegian schools that were safer and more orderly, and that were primed to prepare students for success in school and in society.

Such patterns add nuance to the literature on democratic and social justice leadership because they help advance the current discourse about what it looks like when school leaders in different settings try to advocate for equity—a key condition for democratic schools. Specifically, they show which societal and material conditions can foster or hamper democratic commitments in public schools, such as values about collectivism, inclusion, and goals for the common good—all requisite values for a socially just democratic society, as Furman and Shields (2005) theorize. For scholars of democratic education, these data reveal how conducive political conditions can

enable school leaders to embrace more expansive conceptions of the purposes of public schools. In this small sample, the principals who were embedded in high-stakes, underresourced contexts tended toward more individualistic norms and behaviors in line with economic goals for schools, like Labaree (1997) and Biesta (2004) would predict. Their counterparts, on the other hand, appeared to embrace more collectivist goals and practices more closely tied to the civic purposes of schools.

An Empirical Application of Furman and Shields' Frames for Social Justice and Democratic Leadership

This overall study contributes to the empirical literature on democratic leadership and the empirical research on social justice leadership by bringing the concepts of democracy and social justice together, as Furman and Shields (2005) proposed for scholarship on educational leadership. Much of the contemporary literature on educational leadership usually explores either questions of social justice or, much less commonly, democracy. Yet, as Furman and Shields maintain, democratic schools require explicit interventions for social justice. By blending both frames into a single framework for analyzing school leaders' commitments and practices, this article bridges the scholarship on democratic education with the work on social justice by empirically demonstrating how the two frames are integrally linked.

Broadening the Scope Educational Leadership Studies: Considering National Political Contexts

This study also carries implications for the educational leadership literature because it shows how their mediation of national identities can relate to the different political systems in which their schools are embedded. For scholars and even policymakers who aim to understand which conditions might foster stronger democracies and democratic citizens, this transnational comparison shows how two starkly different political contexts and educational policy structures shape schools' capacity to cultivate democratic communities. In this way, this study moves beyond many educational leadership studies that look narrowly within a single political system by providing a comparative perspective to illuminate the enabling and constraining conditions that exist in different political contexts.

   Additionally, these findings advance the educational policy literature by helping scholars interrogate the ways in which school leaders may assume different purposes of schooling when they are held to account to different educational mandates. Whereas the field has already theorized that schools

serve an economic function by preparing students for the workplace, or a sociopolitical function by indoctrinating shared national identities among heterogeneous populations, or a moral function by instilling certain ethical values and norms, the practical realities of these abstract notions are seldom captured in the empirical work on schools, and even more rarely in empirical studies of school principals. This analysis demonstrates how and why school principals negotiate these multiple purposes of education, and how their negotiations are linked, at least in part, to their national contexts (cf. Derouet & Normand, 2016; Grimaldi et al., 2016). In a political system where schools are seen as inextricably tied to the democratic state, as appeared to be the case for our Norwegian principals, considerations about the types of learning experiences that students need to prepare them for democratic participation was much more pronounced. These considerations may be related to a robust welfare state that is based on values for the collective, the public, and the common good. American Bay Area principals, on the other hand, found themselves in a system that primarily views schools as preparatory spaces for the economy. For these school leaders, considerations about how best to train students for workforce competitiveness and individual success seemed to drive, at least in our small, exploratory study, leaders' decisions about the types of learning that their school prioritized. Together, the two groups' reflections help unpack the ways in which some schools instill in students values for the public and being a member of a larger collective, and others inculcate values for the private, or for the individual and his or her self-interest.

Methodologically, this study also contributes to the comparative literature on educational leadership because it utilized a two-step participatory design in both national contexts. By comparing principals' observations and interpretations of both Norwegian and American Bay Area schools, the data provided richer understandings of each educational system, from practitioners' perspectives, which were grounded and more substantial, evidence-based reflections about the relationship between educational leadership and the normative concepts of social justice and democracy in schools.

Naturally, this study is not designed to generalize to all schools in either country, or to confirm that school principals experience their leadership in different ways as a direct cause of specific policies or political structures. Rather, the goal of this study was to begin to construct contextualized portraits of schools and their leaders by looking not just at what principals say they do or how their schools look, but that situates their schools in the broader political environments that often go unaccounted for in studies of educational leadership. Its contribution stems from the explicit framing of schools and their leaders as mediating political strategists (Boyd, 1974)

because it helps show how principals, whether they are prepared for the task or not, may enact their roles in ways that are largely defined not just by their local contextual conditions, but their macro-level political contexts. Of course, this exploratory study is limited in part by the different contextual conditions in each setting. Variation in population size, demographic makeup, and economic conditions in each region limit our ability to draw certain comparisons between the two groups of educational leaders and their schools. Future research, therefore, can build on this study by including larger, more representative samples of principals and schools, and by including more voices than those of principals. Such studies can also include a discussion of globalization and changes in the political economy that have challenged the idea of public education within and across states in ways that are changing the very understanding of what it means to be educated and to lead in public education.

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