

# Introduction

## Chapter 1 Steven Jay Gross and Joan Poliner Shapiro

We write this book in a time of danger, fear, vast hope, and opportunity. If you are reminded of Dickens' famed opening lines from *A Tale of Two Cities* ("It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . ."), that is understandable. Perhaps it is the fate of all generations to hold such reflections. Yet, standing in what is still the threshold of a new millennium, wondrous advancement seems more thoroughly juxtaposed with the advent of hideous disaster than ever. If it is the inevitable human reflection to hold these extremes out as the salient descriptors of one's times, we have no less a claim than previous generations. For the first time in history, we have the possibility of housing, feeding, and caring for all of humanity, yet we live in a world of vast inequity and want. Our technology creates mass communication unthinkable a generation ago, but this creativity is often perverted to the cause of hideous animosities, leading to brutality we too soon thought relegated to a dark past. Tumultuous conditions in security, economics, the environment, and our exposure to technology-driven change abound. In light of these turbulent forces, is it any wonder that our times are characterized by insecurity and fear for our children's future?

At such times our education policy apparatus responds in a consistent, albeit worrisome manner. For generations it has been our habit to focus on schools as the reason for our peril as well as the locus of our salvation. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the first orbiting satellite, thereby beating the U.S. in technology and igniting the space race. We may have questioned our scientific community, but the real outrage for this perceived failure (the U.S. did soon catch up to the Soviets) was directed at America's schools—specifically a supposed spirit of complacency that threatened our security. In 1983, the same arguments were employed in the *Nation at Risk*

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report, the Reagan administration's attack on public schools and the now infamous "rising tide of mediocrity" that they represented. While this trend is as unfounded as it is illogical, demands for urgent changes in P-20 education have become a national reflex. In our globalized economy, this reflex transcends borders and is now standard fare among policy makers in nearly every advanced economy.

Yet powerful concepts such as education reform are neither simple nor monolithic in their meaning. Attention must be paid to the details of projects traveling under such banners. In a recent article, one of us (Gross, 2014a) pointed to the positive image that reformers have in many cultures. In that same article, the complexity of reform itself was analyzed. Over the past century, progressives, essentialists, perennialists, and existentialists have all initiated their own brand of educational reform. In our time, in the wake of what Berliner and Biddle (1995) call the "manufactured crisis," education reform seems to be confined to a marriage of two allied traditions: essentialism and market forces. The former is in the guise of high-stakes tests, top-down standards, and harsh sanctions; and the latter emphasizes privatization, the end of teacher unions, and charter schools that are frequently owned by private corporations with fiduciary responsibilities to stockholders rather than communities. With a constant drum beat decrying the supposed mediocrity of public schools and their implied complicity in causing and sustaining the achievement gap, it is little wonder that the brand of reform has nearly monopolized public discourse.

Critics of this policy direction object to the notion that one size fits all (Ohanian, 1999), which they claim is currently the case with standards linked to high-stakes tests and the resulting narrowed curriculum (Ravitch, 2010). Many of the same dissenting educators and a growing number of the public question the premise that changes in schools alone can create a fairer society, or that refashioning schools into the factory-like settings they once were—where students become both raw material and unpaid workers—is a fitting way to respond to the democratic premise of public education. Focusing on the market forces facet of the current reform policies, researchers question the claims that charter schools yield better results than their public school counterparts—the picture being far too nuanced for such sweeping claims (Miron, Urschel, Mathis, & Tornquist, 2010; Ravitch, 2013).

Looking at the landscape of this brand of education reform from a higher altitude, one finds even more disturbing problems. Whereas knowledge is ever expanding, educators and the students in their charge find themselves pitted against one another as they compete for ever-higher test results. Education itself seems twisted from its original mission of expanding our experience in the world into a dreary

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pursuit of manufacturing quietly efficient workers at all levels. Recent critiques of this phenomenon at our most prestigious universities, such as Dereisewicz's *Excellent Sheep* (2014), illustrate this point.

The market forces brand of school reform raises high the banner of treating students and their families as customers. Critics believe this stretches the business metaphor to the point that it obscures one salient reality: the move from citizen to customer is a descent into transactional relationships, devoid of rights and community connections. For instance, one has a right to attend public school, but one typically must apply to attend a charter school. People only have access to businesses to the extent that they have resources to purchase services from those entities. By contrast, citizens have rights to share the public sphere, be it at the park, the library, or the local public school. The reverse is true. We have responsibilities to public enterprises that transcend our personal use. Our taxes go to support the park, the library, and the school, whether or not we use them.

Looked at another way, public enterprises compel us to define “we” in a larger, more inclusive way. But customers owe very little to the businesses they frequent. In fact, the competitive marketplace sits upon the premise that customers make decisions based on self-interest, taking their custom where they will. There is such a thing as brand loyalty, of course, but it hardly seems sturdy enough a bond to hold a society together. In a postagrarian world, we all must be consumers to some degree. But the phrase “consumer society” falls far short of the mark when it comes to the qualities needed to sustain even a semblance of a democratic ethical culture for us and for our children.

Education reform is certainly needed, but it is a qualitatively different kind of reform, based on a distinct vision for leadership and categorically different values than the ones described above.<sup>1</sup> *The purpose of this book is to help reclaim school reform by advocating democratic ethical leadership in education.* We do not accept the notion that students and their families need to be passive consumers locked into a dreary contest for their future. We believe that our schools, from early childhood to graduate school, need to inspire truly democratic ethical participatory cultures. We do not say this lightly, nor have we come to this conclusion recently.

## BACKGROUND OF THE NEW DEEL

Even as neoliberals argued that rising test scores and market forces could diminish income inequalities and high rates of poverty, another narrative was emerging. Scholars in the field of educational administration called for more progressive, ethical, and democratic forms of renewal for schools in

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the U.S. and abroad (Aiken, 2002; Begley, 1999; Begley & Zaretsky, 2004; Boyd, 2000; Davis, 2003; Gross, 2004b; Reitzug & O'Hair, 2002; Sernak, 1998; Shapiro & Purpel, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2004; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002).

These writers were part of a long tradition linking social justice and democracy with education. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr made the same connection at Hull House (Addams, 2002), as did Hilda Worthington Smith at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry (Smith, 1929). At the height of the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the Civilian Conservation Corps for unemployed men, also based on much the same logic, while Eleanor Roosevelt made a valiant effort to offer the same kind of program for women (Cook, 1999; Gross, 2004a).

Those educational administration scholars questioning neoliberalism in the 21st century also drew inspiration from the democratic administration movement of the 1930s and 1940s in the U.S. The parallel between the two eras seemed apt; the U.S. faced harsh economic times in the Depression. At the turn of this century, the technology bubble had burst and our economic future seemed dimmed. The U.S. faced a threat to its democracy from Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Imperial Japan, and now faces an era of terror, war, and challenges to civil liberties in the post-9/11 world. Therefore, it is instructive to recall our field's reaction in school leadership programs in the 1930s and 1940s, which was to emphasize democratic power-sharing among administrators, teachers, and parents. The works of Harold Rugg and Alice Miel of Teachers College (Kliebard, 1987; Koopman, Miel, & Misner, 1943); George Counts (1932); and the career of Ella Flagg Young in developing teacher councils when she served as the first woman school superintendent of a major U.S. city (Webb & McCarthy, 1998), all undergirded this movement.

Central to the thinking of this group of 21st century scholars was the philosophy of Ella Flagg Young's colleague, John Dewey. In *The School and Society* (1900), Dewey railed against education that sought to mold children like so much raw material: I may have exaggerated somewhat in order to make plain the typical points of the old education: its passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method. It may be summed up by stating that the center of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself. (Dewey, 1900, p. 34)

But leaders of the emerging movement also looked at contemporary international leaders for inspiration. In *God Has a Dream*, Archbishop

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Desmond Tutu's (2005) description of *ubuntu* illustrates the potential of

democratic ethical educational leadership:

According to ubuntu, it is not a great good to be successful through being aggressively competitive and succeeding at the expense of others. In the end, our purpose is social and communal harmony and well-being. Ubuntu does not say, "I think, therefore I am." It says rather, "I am human because I belong. I participate. I share." Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good. Any- thing that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good.

(p. 27)

In 2004, we decided to take action and moved to organize other like- minded educational administration academics and field administrators. We agreed on the name "New DEEL," standing for Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership, and challenged ourselves with the daunting job of changing the direction of educational administration in the U.S. and abroad.

## EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Almost immediately, we shared our vision for a new movement in educational administration with faculty and department leaders from the Pennsylvania State University, the University of Vermont, Rowan University, the University of Oklahoma, the University Council of Educational Administration, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, as well as U.S. and Canadian practitioner leaders. The group agreed that democratic citizenship and ethical leadership were the top priorities for our educational system in any era, and especially in the new century where violence, economic dislocation, and environmental degradation were daily news events. To develop the New DEEL, two winter strategy sessions were held at Temple University, the first in 2005 and the second in 2006. These sessions resulted in refining the concept of the New DEEL, its implications for educational administration programs, and a mission statement that united the group. The New DEEL's mission statement focuses on these values:

The mission of the New DEEL is to create an action-oriented partnership, dedicated to inquiry into the nature and practice of democratic, ethical educational leadership through sustained processes of open dialogue, right to voice, community inclusion, and responsible participation toward the common good. We strive to create an environment to facilitate democratic ethical

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decision-making in educational theory and practice which acts in the best interest of all students. (Gross & Shapiro, 2005, p. 1)

Gross (2009) described the emerging values of the group in this way:

New DEEL members believe that the first job of the school is to help young people become effective citizens in a democracy. Learning how to earn a living is crucial, but it is a close second, in their opinion. Democratic citizenship in any era is a complex task, but it seems especially difficult in our era where international conflict and growing economic and social inequality are the rule. New DEEL members consider the either/or choice among school improvement, democracy and social justice . . . to be a false dilemma. They believe, instead, that there is no democracy without social justice, no social justice without democracy, and that these mutually inclusive concepts are indispensable ingredients to school improvement worthy of the name.

(p. 262)

The group's concept of educational leadership applies to teachers, students, parents, and community members just as much as to the person sitting at the principal's desk. Moreover, to respond to the challenges of our era, educational leaders needed to move beyond their buildings, and their school system's structure, to make alliances with community leaders in areas such as health care and commerce.

The New DEEL group quickly grew from a handful of academics, mostly in the U.S., to include educational administration faculty from over 30 universities and practitioner colleagues in Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Sweden, the UK, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Jamaica, as well as the U.S. The group dedicated itself to scholarship, curriculum development, and community-building through conferences. Significant progress in all three areas has been made over the past decade.<sup>2</sup>

All of this was inspiring, but soon people asked just what a New DEEL leader was going to look like, and what difference there was between this person and the typical educational administrator. The mission statement set a general direction aimed at reclaiming a more progressive, socially just, and responsive school system, but now specifics were required. In response, the New DEEL vision for educational leadership was developed (Gross, 2009).

### THE FIVE QUALITIES OF NEW DEEL

Table 1.1 contrasts the five qualities of the New DEEL vision for educational leadership with the corresponding qualities of more conventional leaders.

**Table 1.1** New DEEL Vision for Leaders (Gross, 2009)

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### *New DEEL Vision for Educational Leaders*

1. **Guided by inner sense of Responsibility to students, faculty, staff, families, the community and social development on a world scale.**
2. **Leads from an expansive community- building perspective. A democratic actor who understands when and how to *shield* the school from turbulence and when and how to *use* turbulence to facilitate change.**
3. **Integrates the concepts of democracy, social justice and school reform through scholarship, dialogue and action.**
4. **Operates from a deep understanding of ethical decision- making in the context of a dynamic, inclusive, democratic vision.**
5. **Sees one's career as a calling and has a well-developed sense of mission toward democratic social improvement that cuts across political, national, class, gender, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries.**

### *Behavior of Conventional School Leaders*

1. Driven by an exterior pressure of accountability to those above in the organizational/political hierarchy.
2. Bound by the system and the physical building. A small part of a monolithic, more corporate structure.
3. Separates democracy and social justice from guiding vision and accepts school improvement (a subset of school reform) as the dominant perspective.
4. Operates largely from perspective of the ethic of justice wherein obedience to authority and current regulations is largely unquestioned despite one's own misgivings.
5. Sees one's career in terms of specific job titles with an aim to move to ever greater positions of perceived power within the current system's structure.

In each of the five areas, the New DEEL leader is someone who sets off in a different, more challenging, and, hopefully, more rewarding direction.

The first vision statement challenges the notion of accountability squarely. Rather than being held to a system's accountability standards, we believe that educators need to be animated by an internal sense of responsibility to students, families, and the wider community. New DEEL leaders cannot focus solely on gaining better scores on standardized tests. Nor can they believe that making adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a route to a more just society. We consider responsibility to be a more authentic, more demanding, yet more satisfying approach to leadership.

Vision statement 2 encourages leaders to act in democratic ways to help develop young people. This means understanding how turbulence works

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(Gross, 1998, 2004b, 2014b; Shapiro & Gross, 2013) and finding ways to protect those they work with from its excesses. In contrast, the traditional leader is a small part of a hierarchy that places constant demands and expects compliance. Members of the New DEEL feel strongly that the former models democracy, while the latter exhibits authoritarian behaviors that undermine the school's attempt to educate for democratic life.

Vision statement 3 speaks to the need for a coherent perspective that connects, rather than atomizes, the values of democracy, social justice, and school reform while encouraging dialogue and high-quality scholarship. We consider the three to be mutually reinforcing and inclusive.

A major element of New DEEL scholarship comes in vision statement 4—that is, the work of learning and practicing ethical decision-making from a multidimensional paradigm. New DEEL leaders understand that the ethic of justice, encompassing laws, rights, rules, and even guidelines, is important because it tells us what statutes and laws have to say on a given matter. But there are other ethics to consider in making important decisions. For example, there is also the ethic of critique that asks: Who made the law and in whose best interest? The ethic of care does not take notice of the law at all. Instead it asks: Who may benefit or be hurt by my decision? What are the likely long-term effects upon different people? Finally, the ethic of the profession takes into account professional ethics from different appropriate organizations as well as one's own code of ethics, both personal and professional. Above all, it asks: What is in the best interests of the student? Stopping with the ethic of justice will not suffice (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 1994).

Finally, vision statement 5 deepens the discussion of being an educator from merely holding a job to a lifelong calling. Members of the New DEEL believe that this is essential, because only that kind of commitment will energize leaders sufficiently to transform our current system. Equally, seeing education as a *calling* honors the energy and sacrifice that these individuals have made.

We caution readers that Table 1.1 should not be read as a rigid dichotomy between good and evil. The New DEEL Vision Statement for Educational Leadership is a living conceptual construct. By that we mean that it needs to be amended and allowed to evolve with changing circumstances and deeper reflection. For instance, certain groups were not mentioned in earlier versions, including higher education faculty and staff members. Perhaps even more significantly, we now believe that there are problems with having the vision statement divided in two parts and leaving it at that. People are not either/or; they are mainly somewhere in between. This came up during a discussion in Joan's ethics class and caused us both to think a lot. Partly in response, Steve fashioned a large part of an education reform class to work with students to expand the ground in between the



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New DEEL values and what are called conventional leadership behaviors. We do not support the idea that the middle ground is comprised of stages, nor do we believe that it is a smooth, linear path. People can and do move toward the New DEEL vision, but all of us sometimes drift back when conditions change. While this is not a neat process, it is a rich one that we explore in this book and will likely continue to explore in the years ahead.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book flows directly from our mission and the scholarship our New DEEL community has done over the past decade (Branson & Gross, 2014; Normore, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Starratt, 2004; Storey, 2011; Woods, 2011). We drafted the title, *Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership: Reclaiming School Reform*, carefully because we wanted it to reflect the spirit of our efforts with strength and clarity. We believe that democratic ethical educational leadership is not only possible, but that it is needed if we are to redirect the very concept of school reform toward more humane and authentic priorities.

The structure of the book is also deeply imbedded in our values, because it is organized into five parts, each dedicated to one of the five New DEEL visions for leadership described in Table 1.1. The introduction to each part itself posed the challenge of detailing what that statement meant in practice so that the stories that followed would cohere. It is one thing to ask that leaders should be guided by an inner sense of responsibility to students, families, the community, and social development on a world scale (vision statement 1), for instance, but it is quite another to describe the implications and provide meaningful context for such an idea.

For each of the five New DEEL vision statements, we have solicited chapters from a wonderfully diverse group of educators. Each of these chapters depicts the experience of someone who embodies the qualities of that vision statement and is, therefore, an exemplar. The use of exemplars is also part of our practice, first started in the “Profiles of Democratic Ethical Leadership” course described earlier in this chapter. We believe in this approach because we see a need to tie critical concepts to the lives of real people. Without such a connection, principles such as the New DEEL vision may be seen as lofty but unreachable. We also believe that the careful use of exemplars makes it clear that we are speaking of real characters, imperfect yet striving to lead under challenging circumstances. In this way, we hope to help readers more easily identify with the exemplars rather than hold them in awe. Put simply, our book is built upon exemplars that we hope inspire readers to become exemplars themselves. In each case, we have asked contributors to describe the story of their character as she/he

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faced a critical incident, because we wanted to learn from that turbulent circumstance in our pursuit to connect theory to practice.

At the end of each account, we have posed questions that connect key ideas to practice. We have used our work in Multiple Ethical Paradigms and Turbulence Theory (Gross, 2014b; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011) to frame many of the questions, because the exemplars are dealing with ethical decision-making in the context of critical incidents.

In Part I, we explore the idea of leading through an inner sense of responsibility rather than being driven by external pressures of mere accountability. It is our belief that taking responsibility for students, families, and social development on a broad scale requires greater commitment than only agreeing to follow the orders of a given hierarchy. We also contend that this type of responsibility-driven leadership is more relevant to the needs of today's students. The exemplars described in this part show that such an approach to leadership is possible.

Part II further defines the actions of the responsible leader by highlighting educators who build community through democratic activities. These leaders understand how to work with the turbulence surrounding them. At times, this means shielding their organizations from severe or extreme turbulence. At other times, this leads to the careful elevation of turbulence in order to promote needed change. Readers will discover cases in this part where the leader's boundaries are as wide as the world. This is in marked contrast to the conventional leader who too often finds him/her- self trapped into being a functionary in a corporate structure.

But what kind of vision do these leaders pursue? In Part III, we seek to answer this question by illustrating examples of leaders who combine democracy, social justice, and school reform. While this perspective may seem a matter of common sense, we believe that the dominant approach separates these crucial concepts by its near obsession with a narrow kind of school reform typified by high-stakes testing and market forces strategies. Conventional policy leaders may pay lip service to democracy and social justice, but only as distant possible by-products. The democratic ethical leader combines these ideals through judicious use of scholarship, dialogue, and action. Exemplars in this part demonstrate how this is accomplished and sustained.

Part IV centers on critical decision-making as the exemplars struggle with ethical dilemmas. We contend that the ability to consider multiple ethical perspectives is central to effective leadership, because leaders at all levels are confronted with complex problems that do not admit to any simple response. Of course, the ethic of justice is important, but we believe that effective leaders need to go deeper than merely asking what the law says. Conventional leaders too often stop there, leading to decisions that

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too often fail the test of fairness. The exemplars that we highlight in this part understand that the ethic of justice must exist along with the ethics of care, critique, and the profession. These men and women demonstrate an ability to reflect upon each of these ethical paradigms in order to resolve the dilemmas confronting them. They accept the complexity of ethical decision-making and know how to share their thinking with others in their setting.

Part V includes exemplars that sum up the results of democratic ethical leadership as we understand it. Rather than settling on a narrow job title, we believe that our profession now demands leaders who see their work as *a calling*. The women and men whose cases are described in this part believe *a calling* is far from being an antiquated phrase; they see today's educational leadership as a critical facet of social improvement that recognizes no boundaries. These people are on a transcendent, uniting mission that is a deep element in their character.

The conclusion focuses on learning and teaching, so that those who want to work with aspiring New DEEL leaders can create innovative curriculum using diverse pedagogical approaches. This part deals with shared values, theories, and praxis. It provides guidance to instructors for the development of New DEEL courses. It offers approaches that will make New DEEL learning experiential, fostering student engagement. We also encourage instructors to go to our website, by googling New DEEL, to find examples of innovative curriculum and of scholarship.

For Parts I through V, we solicited chapters from a broad cross-section of internationally respected scholars, believing that there were indeed exemplars of each of the five areas of our New DEEL vision. Our hopes were high, but the results trumped them. We are deeply grateful to each of the authors. Their exemplar cases brought our theoretical constructs out of the realm of thought and into the world of real life, with all of its complexity.

Our aspirations for this book are as high as the principles that inspire us. It is our hope that readers will challenge themselves to reflect on their own practice and use these exemplars as inspiration. Given the pressures of today's policy environment, many readers may find themselves stuck in the position of conventional leadership. Our hope is that the cases in this text, combined with the questions we pose for each, will help these colleagues find intermediate steps that lead to a richer professional life and a greater sense of integrity.

We may be in an era of disturbing paradoxes combining the best and worst of times. Rather than being immobilized by these contending forces, we see a path of vision and community building. It is our highest hope that educators around the world will decide to take such a course, and that our book will make a contribution to that effort.

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### NOTES

1. Alfred North Whitehead observed, “Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge” (Whitehead, 1929, p. 4). The spirit of that quote seems an attractive alternative to the pursuit of becoming an ever more dependent customer, since it recasts reform into an organic process.
2. For a detailed account of the development of the New DEEL, please consult S.J. Gross and J.P. Shapiro (2014), Ethical responses to educational policies. In C. M. Branson and S. J. Gross (Eds.), *Handbook on ethical educational leadership* (pp. 352–369). New York: Routledge.

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New DEEL Vision for Leadership	Behavior of Conventional School Leaders
<b>Guided by inner sense of Responsibility to students, faculty, staff, families, the community and social development on a world scale.</b>	Driven by an exterior pressure of accountability to those above in the organizational/political hierarchy.
<b>Leads from an expansive community- building perspective. A democratic actor who understands when and how to shield the school from turbulence and when and how to use turbulence to facilitate change.</b>	Bound by the system and the physical building. A small part of a monolithic structure.
<b>Integrates the concepts of democracy, social justice and school reform through scholarship, dialogue and action.</b>	Separates democracy and social justice from guiding vision and accepts school improvement (a subset of school reform) as the dominant perspective.
<b>Operates from a deep understanding of ethical decision- making in the context of a dynamic, inclusive, democratic vision.</b>	Operates largely from perspective of the ethic of justice wherein obedience to current regulations is largely unquestioned despite one's own misgivings.
<b>Sees one's career as a calling and has a well-developed sense of mission toward democratic social improvement that cuts across political, national, class, gender, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries.</b>	Sees one's career in terms of specific job titles with an aim to move to ever higher levels of perceived power within the current system's structure.