TEACHING FROM THE EMERGING NOW

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To my mom and dad who always believed in my ability to write, teach, and lead. Thank you for your undying love and support.

To Dr Sharon Daloz Parks – for your mentorship, guidance, and leadership.
There are no words to express my gratitude for you and your life's work.
– Linnette R. L. Werner

To every student that allowed me to walk with them for a short time on their journey. Thank you for your work, your challenge, your trust and your connection. Thank you for your grace in allowing me to grow as fast as I could, even if it wasn't as fast as you wanted me to.

To my partner Susan and my children Gracey, Hank and Sam. You will always be my first circle. Almost all of the big lessons I learned from you.
– David Hellstrom

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIP	Case-in-point
CRLL	Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning
IE	Intentional Emergence
ILA	International Leadership Association
TASC	Temporary Authority Skills Challenge

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linnette R. L. Werner, PhD, spent many years as the Director of the Undergraduate Leadership Minor at the University of Minnesota. She started working with the Leadership Minor in 2001, when she was asked to join the teaching faculty of the newly created program. With a background in educational policy and administration, teaching, the arts, and leadership, Linnette worked with the minor to align its curriculum to the civic engagement mission of the University of Minnesota, increase its capacity, provide instructor mentoring, and begin research initiatives.

Starting with a total of 251 students per year in two sections of the introductory course and one section of each of the upper core courses, Linnette increased its capacity to serve over 1,800 undergraduates per year, making it the largest program of its kind in the world. In 2019, she left the University of Minnesota to serve as the Associate Dean at Hamline University and to create new academic leadership programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

David Hellstrom, MA, is a well-loved national leadership trainer and speaker, having been the keynote speaker at more than 350 colleges and universities in the last two decades on leadership and self-development. David's efforts have brought him an Omni Education Award, an appearance on the TODAY™ Show with Katie Couric, and many accolades. Both as a speaker and as a teacher of leadership, David's audiences and classes describe him as funny, curious, engaging, and truly passionate about what leadership means and how it can be taught.

David began teaching in the Leadership Minor at the University of Minnesota in 2002. In 2007, Linnette and David, under the care and mentorship of Dr Sharon Daloz Parks, began to adapt the work of Heifetz and his colleagues at Harvard to be equally effective with undergraduates and emerging-adults. Based on programmatic research and evaluation, the adaptation has been extremely successful.

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We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to all of our Leadership Minor instructors and colleagues (both at the University of Minnesota and Hamline University). Without this talented, courageous, authentic group of leader-teachers, we wouldn't have had the audacity to say, "this stuff works." The number of hours of collective creativity, adaptation and failed experiments (that eventually led to a proven, solid foundation) that went into this model were only possible because of these courageous people. It's truly miraculous that we get to work with them every day.

Finally, none of this would be possible without our students. We hope the importance of that statement connects with those who read this book. We are the teachers we are because our students are the students they are. Ubuntu: I am because we are. Thank you for being. Thank you for showing up and giving us your trust and allowing us to practice our craft. Thank you for making us better people and leaders in the process.

INTRODUCTION

Micro-aggressions, complex identities, polarized belief systems, pandemic interruptions – these are just a few of the things teachers and faculty are dealing with. The days of the sage on the stage or the stand and deliver model are over (even when we might temporarily need to record a few lectures while we implement socially-distanced teaching). And yet, how are teachers, facilitators and professors supposed to adapt to such a quickly evolving "classroom" and provide transformative content?

What if we could work with what *emerges* in the moment instead of seeing it as unplanned experiences and disruptions? It could significantly address the "theory to practice bridge" many leadership students face when they leave our classrooms/trainings/experiences. No matter how captivating a professor, facilitator, or teacher is, when people face stressful challenges in new contexts beyond the classroom, leadership theory is often forgotten. In fact, leadership teachers and facilitators struggle to model the integration of theory and practice even in their own leadership classrooms – being caught off guard when something happens that wasn't on the lesson plan for the day.

This book is about teaching in a brand-new way. Teaching from the emerging now, or Intentional Emergence, turns the space into a living leadership laboratory that helps students practice and refines their skills while supporting instructors in modeling effective leadership practices. In the way that scientists have laboratories, lawyers have mock trials, and teachers have student teaching, this model gives emerging leaders a way to hone their skills through purposeful and productively stressful situations.

Teaching from the emerging now explores how we combine structure with freedom, planning with letting go, and intention with emergence to create inclusive, dynamic classrooms – whether we are teaching Leadership, Social Justice, or other applied subjects. The Intentional Emergence approach to teaching and learning takes the fear out of being surprised, provides concrete ways to both support and challenge students, and reimagines the classroom as a living leadership laboratory. Beyond bridging theory to practice, by rethinking the classroom from a place to impart knowledge to a shared space of

co-creation, faculty, teachers, and trainers are better able to meet the increasingly diverse needs of learners for differentiation, connection, and Inclusion.

Intentional Emergence comes from a decade of research that started with asking the question, *How can we better prepare students for real world leadership challenges while at the same time build inclusive classrooms that are able to respond to today's complex learner needs?* What we found is students want teachers and facilitators who can both plan and let go of the plan, challenge and support at the same time, and identify emergent curriculum that matches the world they see outside the classroom. Intentional Emergence has been proven to help students feel more engaged with the learning community and ultimately more prepared to face future leadership challenges. It is our belief, and one we share with you, that this type of engagement not only helps our students become better learners and leaders, but ultimately helps the world that they will all too soon be shaping in new, critical and exciting ways.

The last thing we want to offer to you as an introduction to this book is that Intentional Emergence was started by teachers like you – teachers who were looking for a different way of doing things; teachers who felt the hunger in their students who wanted education to be more connected to their own identities and lived experiences; teachers who themselves wanted their teaching to be more: more authentic, more passionate, more communal, more relevant to the world we are living in and as importantly, the world we are trying to create.

Perhaps you are also a teacher (or someone who cares about one) who is looking for something a little more as well. We hope this book is a good place to start.

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INTENTIONAL EMERGENCE AS A WAY OF TEACHING

It's the third week of class and the students have been getting to know each other. By now, the instructor expects the students to know and use each other's names. But today, the instructor calls on someone and uses the wrong name. A different student corrects the instructor. This is further complicated because the instructor is white, but has called on a student of color by the name of another student of color in the class. The instructor freezes, their mind racing, "What do I do now?"

In a different room on campus and about halfway through the year and the instructor has been thinking about how well this semester has been going and how engaged the current class is. The instructor has been talking about strength theory and has reminded the class that each person is unique and brings their own strengths and styles into the space; knowing those things about each other will help in their group projects and other collaboration work. One student remarks "It isn't just our strengths and skills that define us, but our stories as well." This comment gets some energy in the class and soon people are talking about how their own experiences, their own identities, perhaps even their own traumas are as much part of what they bring to the world as their achievements. The instructor agrees. Another student responds "Maybe every class one or two students could just talk for a minute or so about the things in their life that they believe most define them." That is followed up by someone who comments,

> *I don't think I could really tell you much about myself in a minute. Some of you know that I am an assault survivor and to know me is to know that story. Maybe we could all take the time to really authentically tell our own stories to each other.*

The instructor sees many nods and hears murmurs of support, but also sees one student who has the look of sheer terror on their face. Someone asks the instructor "Can we do that?" The instructor can only think "What do I do now?"

In a digital space on campus later that year, an instructor who teaches a once-a-week summer class is watching the class chat blow up over the murder of another unarmed person of color by a police officer. Several students have been voicing strong opinions about what they are seeing. Some students are texting the class about participating in the protests and inviting classmates to join. One student remarks about how they have so many thoughts and feelings regarding what is occurring and they can't wait to come to class later in the week to talk about it as a group. That message is followed by another student who types "I don't think our academic class is the best place for personal agendas." The response to that is "this is why another unarmed person of color is dead." Soon after another student sends the message that "everyone should calm down and wait for the instructor to respond." The instructor reads that message and thinks to themself "what do I do now?"

It isn't surprising that each of these stories ends with the question "what do I do now?" Teachers know that every year, every term, every class brings its own set of complicated, challenging and potentially transformational moments and questions. On top of that, old ways of being in a classroom together are changing at a rate that many people find disorienting. But what if you could teach in a way that welcomed the unknown, that thrived when differences were front and center? What if the classroom (whether a physical space or a virtual one) could be a living laboratory for the concepts of leadership itself? What if you could learn to work with whatever emerged in the moment to connect it to the deeper purpose of the lesson and the class?

It's not only possible, it might be one of the best things we can do for education and for our students right now.

INTENTIONAL & EMERGENT TEACHING

There are different kinds of things that emerge – some we can predict might happen because we have faced them in the past and others that are surprises such as the examples given above. Either way, what we know for sure is that (a) there are things we want students to walk away with and (b) there will be things that seem to get in the way of achieving these outcomes. Until now, many of us have looked at these things as diametrically opposed. But what if we could see them in a different light – more like a Venn diagram and less

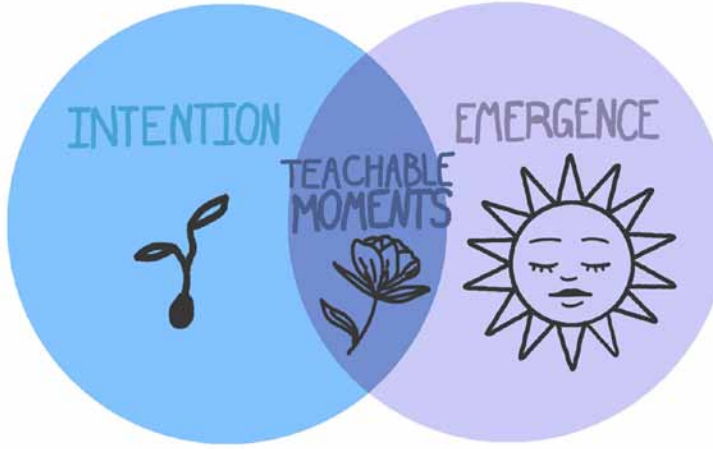

Fig. 1. The Intersection of Intention and Emergence.

like a spectrum, where our intention for the class has some overlap with what emerges spontaneously? (Fig. 1)

WHY INTENTIONAL EMERGENCE?

The context of the classroom is already emergent, meaning it is dynamic and continuously unfolding as the class progresses. As students and instructors ask questions, process concepts, and practice leadership, the environment of the classroom is constantly changing. This is not unlike other contexts outside of the classroom. In any given organization, personal actions (e.g., words used in a meeting, a new person being hired, or a new policy) can dramatically alter the environment and culture of the organization. The challenge is to recognize these changes as they occur and to respond in an intentional and effective manner.

Let's revisit the first example, an instructor calling a student by the wrong name. The instructor has the opportunity, with their intentions for the day in mind, to respond to the emergent context of the classroom rather than to continue with the plan they had to begin with. The emergent context has provided a more authentic lived-experience for the class to use as a bridge for theory to practice than the instructor most likely developed on their own. The instructor may ask

> *What is the phenomenon at play here? Why do our brains not see differences at this point in the semester? Do all of us not see the difference? Just some of us? Why is this important to what we are learning?*

What would occur if nothing happens in regards to this example – if the "wrong name" moment was just allowed to pass and class went on? There could be loss, a missed opportunity to teach, a lack of surfacing a potentially deeper marginalization. What often happens is that the instructor gets paralyzed by the emerging moment – especially if it is controversial. Then the moment passes because we choose to look away from what is happening right in front of us.

As a reader, you might be asking why a teacher would risk making students feel awkward, defensive, or invite (rather than resolve) any sort of conflict. Because the dynamics of marginalization and oppression, the operations of conflict and power, the intersections of individual and community visions are happening all the time in our workplaces, organizations, governments, and communities, whether we call them out or not. Working with them is leadership. Working with emergent events within the classroom prepares us for the world we will ask our students to soon lead.

At its core, this approach to teaching relies on balancing the needs of clearly identified intentions and working with what emerges to best teach to the outcomes of the course.

THE FIRST PART OF THE MODEL: INTENTIONAL

Becoming Conscious of the Invisible Fields that Shape Behavior

Intention is becoming an increasingly important conversation across traditional sciences as well as in leadership education. In quantum physics, intention is akin to the observer-effect and is the interaction between the researcher's will and the particle's behavior as can be seen in the famous "Double Slit" experiments (Buks, Schuster, Heiblum, Mahalu, & Umansky, 1998). In biology, intention (as we are using it) is similar to "field theory," the theory that unseen influences, or fields, affect behavior. We relate to the idea of intention the way that Margaret Wheatley (2006) approaches the idea of invisible fields that shape behavior. In her book, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, Wheatley states that invisible influences such as having a clearly defined vision for an organization changes the direction of the organization. She goes on to caution,

> *We have believed that the clearer the image of the destination, the more force the future would exert on the present, pulling us to that desired state. It's a very strong Newtonian image, much like the old view of gravity. But what if we changed the science and looked at vision as a field? (p. 55)*

Wheatley offers some powerful ideas about how we teach. First, it's time to move from a "my will over yours" method of teaching into a collaborative method where the instructor sets a course, but isn't the destination in itself. Intention helps us to let go of thinking of the final destination so that we are able to nurture and support moments of transformation not only at the individual level, but at the system level as well. In other words, our intention affects what emerges, and what emerges allows us to bridge the gap between what is and what could be.

Wheatly also surfaces the need for authenticity when trying to work with invisible influences. She says,

> *This field metaphor would help us understand that we need congruency in the air, visionary messages matched by visionary behaviors. [...]We would become an organization of integrity, where our words would be seen and not just heard. (p. 56)*

We use the word authenticity within our programs to get to the deeper idea that we are here to be models of effective leadership, to be authentically ourselves (our best selves) in the face of ambiguity. Some case-in-point (CIP) approaches disagree with this idea – that there is a separation between self and role that condones inauthentic behavior, if that inauthentic behavior is what is called for. For example, we have seen a CIP instructor enter a room of strangers who thought they were attending a lecture, turn away from the audience, face the wall and refuse to speak. When people became uncomfortable and conflict arose around what was happening, the CIP instructor asked high-heat questions (such as "why do you feel a need for me to run this class?") until the CIP session was over and the debrief took place. Even after the debrief, many people left the room confused about the inauthentic behavior and even more confused about how CIP could be used effectively in their own contexts.

We have too many examples in our world where this interpretation of separation of role and self has led to inhumane action and too few where it has led to transformational growth to support its use within our own program. We believe that when Ron Heifetz (the originator of CIP) speaks of separation between role and self, he is not condoning detachment, but instead asking us to consider that when people attack us, they often don't know us, only our roles, and are therefore attacking our roles, not us as people. An intentional and emergent approach to teaching doesn't condone inauthentic behavior – it asks us to be more authentic, more in touch with our humanity as we see the innocence in others who are suffering and lashing out.

How Intention Shows Up in the Classroom

If we accept the premise that invisible forces affect behavior, then how can we use this understanding to teach more effectively? This question led us to a collision of both the simplest and most profound thoughts about teaching. If we were going to look at how intention shows up in the classroom, we first needed to spend some time re-imagining what the classroom is *intended* to be and stop relying on unconscious systems that started the current classroom model in the first place.

This was our simple thought: What does the classroom represent? Heifetz likens the classroom itself to a "container[1]" which was a helpful first place to begin (Heifetz, 1998; Heifetz & Linsky 2002, Parks, 2005). But what is inside that container? The obvious answer is students. But the less obvious answer is whatever truly is *in* that classroom:

- the norms for how education is supposed to work;
- the expectations of what knowledge is (or achievement, or for that matter, leadership);
- the unconscious archetypes and roles of teacher and student (or authority and power);
- student and teacher identities with their accompanying power imbalances; and
- the hunger that signing up for a course on leadership in the first place represents, etc.

And, when we looked even more deeply, to our utter sadness, we found something else inside the classroom. We found unexamined resignation, that students had already given up on the possibility that what would take place here would be meaningful and relevant to their lives, let alone transformational to who they were as human spirits.

David has often made the comment that education is the only billion-dollar industry in the world where the customer has to adapt and conform to the company providing the service. Why do students talk about that "one teacher" they had in grade school or that "one class they took in high school" with such fondness? Not just because they were wonderful experiences, but also because they were the rare experiences. The reason these "one class experiences" stand out is because many of the other ones do not – the others were, for the most part, transactional experiences involving the (temporary) transfer of information. What if students *want* meaningful, vibrant, transformational learning and are willing to engage in that learning even if it is different and