“In this book Kay Fuller takes her readers on a richly nuanced and insightful reading of the continuities and strengths and transgressive potential of feminist scholarship. We are reminded of the historical and contemporary antecedents of feminism and challenged to think about how the field might further be deconstructed and decolonised. A compelling, authoritative and timely contribution.”

Tanya Fitzgerald, Professor of Higher Education, The University of Western Australia

“Without doubt the most comprehensive treatment of feminist perspectives on leadership in education globally, Kay Fuller’s new book is a vital resource for researchers and educators alike. She provides the field with re-theorized insights into thoughtful leadership for the 21st century.”

Margaret Grogan, Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy, Chapman University, USA

“Occasionally, a book with a critical analysis on feminist perspectives in the field of educational leadership, management and administration comes along reminding and reinvigorating us in the fight for gender equality. In this riveting monograph, Kay Fuller impeccably takes us through a holistic theoretical journey of feminist scholarship, tackling deep questions about change infused with social justice. The book is a contemporary feminist classic and a must-read for all those who believe in and care about gender equality in educational leadership.”

Pontso Moorosi, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Management, University of Warwick, UK

“Congratulations to Kay Fuller for a comprehensive, succinct and well-researched contribution. Feminist Perspectives on Contemporary Educational Leadership is a valuable addition to literature on feminism after a phase when there have been conversations about ‘death of feminism’. It provides an historical overview, while also exploring current nuances such as digital feminism, Queer theory and feminism, or Islam and feminism, and flags up certain future possibilities. A must-read!”

Saeeda Shah, Reader/Associate Professor in educational leadership (retired), University of Leicester, UK
“Kay Fuller’s *Feminist Perspectives on Contemporary Educational Leadership* makes a significant contribution at a critical moment for women across the globe. Her autobiographical approach to narrating the evolution of feminist perspectives and their contributions to education leadership over time is executed to powerful effect and demonstrates the potency of intersectional feminism. This theoretically rich work both challenges and guides, making it an informative and simulating read.”

Michelle Young, *Dean of the School of Education and a Professor of Education Leadership and Policy at Loyola Marymount University, USA*
This timely book explores how various feminist perspectives fruitfully explain women’s experience of educational leadership, drawing on a contemporary conceptualisation of fourth-wave feminism that is intersectional and inclusive.

The book asks which and whose feminist theory is used to explain gender and feminism in educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA): the scholar’s, the research participant’s or a combination of the two in the co-construction of knowledge from an intersectional feminist perspective. It conceptualises intersectional and inclusive feminist perspectives on educational leadership, theorising research through a Black British feminist perspective, a gender and Islamic perspective and a queer theory perspective, depending on the self-identification of participants. It explores digital feminism and men’s pro-feminism. The book identifies feminist leadership praxis as a focus for future research and explores how leaders can draw on funds of knowledge, identity cultural wealth and lead and educate diverse populations of students.

Highlighting the importance of intersectional feminist perspectives in ELMA, the book will appeal to scholars, researchers and postgraduate students in the fields of inclusive educational leadership and management, gender studies and feminism.

Kay Fuller is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Nottingham, UK. Her research focuses on women, gender and feminism in educational leadership.
This series draws on social and political theories from selected key thinkers and activists to develop critical thinking leadership tools. Each text uses the work of a particular theorist or theoretical approach, explains the theory, suggests what it might bring to the educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA) field, and then offers analysis and case studies to show how the tools might be used. Every book also offers a set of questions that might be used by individual leaders in their own practices and in areas of further research by ELMA scholars.

In elaborating the particular approaches, each of the books also suggests a professional and political agenda which addresses aspects of the tensions and problems created by neoliberal and neoconservative policy agendas and the ongoing need for educational systems to do better for many more of their students than they do at present.

Educational Leadership and Nancy Fraser
Jill Blackmore

Educational Leadership and Pierre Bourdieu
Pat Thomson

Educational leadership: Theorising Professional Practice in Neoliberal Times
*Edited by Stephen J. Courtney, Ruth McGinity and Helen Gunter*

Theorising Identity and Subjectivity in Educational Leadership Research
*Edited by Richard Niesche and Amanda Heffernan*

Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration through Actor–Network Theory
Paolo Landri

Feminist Perspectives on Contemporary Educational Leadership
Kay Fuller

For more information about this series, please visit www.routledge.com/Critical-Studies-in-Educational-Leadership-Management-and-Administration/book-series/ELMA.
Feminist Perspectives on Contemporary Educational Leadership

Kay Fuller
Dedicated to women who taught me
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The job of educational leaders has become much harder in the twenty-first century. The world has become a much more risky place in the last decade. As a profession, educators urgently need to think in new ways about our purposes and role in what promises to be a highly challenging future. We can now clearly see the warnings – about climate, species extinctions and food supply – playing out. Melting glaciers, raging fires, destructive floods and tornadoes feature regularly in the media, next to reports of the divisive cultural politics of populism and ever wider gaps between rich and poor countries and the rich and poor within nation-states. The life and death geopolitics of race, gender and sexuality are impossible to ignore. The Covid-19 pandemic was a powerful reminder of our global interconnectedness and vulnerability as well as the capacity of globally connected health scientists to develop life-saving interventions. These risks and urgencies have clear implications for policy and curriculum and thus the work that educational leaders might do.

In many parts of the world, education and public policy agendas are struggling to ensure that the next generation is equipped to tackle the global challenges that face us. Many nation-states have not only managed to dodge these challenging issues but also demonstrably failed to produce more equitable educational outcomes. Schools, colleges and universities have been pitted against each other, and public education systems have been redesigned to become sources of profit for a wide range of edu-businesses. Nevertheless, on the ground, school, college and university communities find ways to make a difference where, and as, they can.

This series is dedicated to research in educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA) which brings theory to pressing practical and professional problems. Authors in the series take a critical approach to the realpolitik of leading in education today. Our interest in critical ELMA scholarship means that our authors offer a range of resources less familiar in the field. We are interested in what social theory and traditions of scholarship from other disciplines might bring to ELMA. We are also keen to see more familiar ELMA approaches problematised and re-thought.

Our editorial team has recently changed and Amanda Heffernan has replaced one of the founding editors, Helen Gunter. Jill and Pat want to thank Helen for the many stimulating and productive conversations and contributions over the years. This change in editorial team gave us an opportunity to reflect on what we wanted to see for the series in the coming years.
While our focus is still on contributing to critical ELMA scholarship, we have more recently been commissioning books which use theoretical resources to focus on the realpolitik of leading in education today. It is not that the first tranche of books in the series ignored these questions – they took them very seriously. But we are convinced that the series emphasis on real-world problems needs to become even more prominent. This shift in focus has already begun and can be seen particularly in edited collections which are organised around key questions. These editorial collections are now being published alongside books focusing on particular theorists or theoretical approaches.

This subtle shift in emphasis is a testament to the word “critical” in the series title. The broad traditions of critical scholarship in education are always concerned with the ongoing production and reproduction of inequalities and injustices. Critical scholars begin with the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed and that, like the wider world, it is not neutral. Knowledge cultivation and mobilisation always work in particular interests. Critical scholarship in education is this always geared to practical theory which is made into practices in situ.

This book, by Kay Fuller, exemplifies the slightly changed emphasis of the series. Kay brings an impressive range of reading on feminism and feminist scholarship to empirical research on contemporary issues largely ignored in mainstream ELMA literatures. The book addresses current debates on the role of social media, queer theory, Black British feminism and Islamic feminisms and offers two new lines of ELMA enquiry: digital feminism and pro-feminist/profeminist masculinities. Her discussion of the ‘Trojan Horse’ affair, for example, shows how schools become caught up in contemporary populist politics which, in this case, utilised femonationism in order to mobilise Islamophobia. The linkage of ELMA, schooling and policy to ongoing questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, neurotypicality and able-ness has always been a concern in the series but here has a sharper intersectional focus. We hope that you find Kay’s book as stimulating and useful as we have.

Pat Thomson, Jill Blackmore, Amanda Heffernan
Acknowledgements

To the research participants: Thank you for trusting me with your narratives. I hope I have honoured your words in my thinking and writing.

To my co-researchers: Pontso Moorosi and Elizabeth Reilly; Dee Torrance, Rachel McNae, Carmel Roofe and Rowena Arshad; and Jill Berry. Thank you for your collaboration, leadership and dedication to scholarship for gender justice.

To readers and reviewers (unknown): Jill Berry, Catherine Lee, Kevin Richardson and John Holmwood. Thank you for providing helpful insights on earlier drafts of Chapters 5, 8 and 9. Thank you Jill for reading the whole book and providing insights and encouragement. Any errors that remain are my responsibility.

To colleagues at the University of Nottingham: Thank you for your support, encouragement and investment in this work.

To the series editors: Pat Thomson, Jill Blackmore, Amanda Heffernan and Helen Gunter. Thank you for having confidence in my work.

To my family: Mum, Lynn and Martin. Thank you for your support, inspiration and example.
Part I

Mapping feminist perspectives in educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA)
Introduction – A resurgence of interest

The twenty-first century has seen women's exposure to, and revelation of, the worst symptoms of patriarchy: sexual harassment, abuse and violence against women. Social media campaigns such as #MeToo (from 2017) and #TimesUp (from 2018) are responses from women worldwide to high-profile cases of misogyny and sex crime. Nor are ordinary workplaces free of sex discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault. For example, in the UK, over half of women have experienced workplace sexual harassment (TUC, 2016). Gender pay gap statistics, first reported in 2018, reveal that educational organisations are among the worst offenders (GOV.UK, 2018). Gender inequalities persist in education, employment and wider society in the UK and globally. In 2020, during the global Covid-19 pandemic and resurgence of Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd, further racial and gender injustices surfaced with respect to what it means to work and lead from home outside education (Antonacopoulou and Georgiadou, 2020) and inside with equity and diversity matters in mind (Gedro et al., 2020; Wargo, 2020; Watson, 2020). Women were impacted by the pandemic because they dominate essential services in health and social care, cleaning and cashiering (essential retail) work; they balanced clerical work from home with childcare and home schooling; and they lost jobs in catering. They have provided education on- and offline throughout school and university closures.

Feminist activists and scholars maintain a critical perspective in their commitment to social justice. Goals of empowerment and emancipation specifically focus on addressing multiple intersecting gender injustices, such as economic, cultural and representative injustices (see Blackmore, 2016). Some might be forgiven for being confused by descriptions of a resurgence of interest in the experiences and perceptions of women leading in education (Torrance et al., 2017) and a fourth wave of feminism (Chamberlain, 2017). Immersed in projects focused on gender in educational leadership, scholars swimming in the wider ocean of feminism have been engaged in an 'ongoing fight for equality' (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 7) for over 30 years. We persist regardless of the ebbs and flows of interest in our work.

This book aims to provide a discussion of feminist perspectives on contemporary educational leadership in and for the twenty-first century. It charts stories of feminist resistance to neoliberal education policy and its focus on competition and
compliance, efficiency and effectiveness and of systemic and structural inequalities. Wo/men’s voices speak clearly and loudly about their commitment to social justice and to achieving equity alongside excellence. They say what makes them angry and hopeful about social in/justice in education and society. So doing, they reveal an abundance of cultural and professional wealth brought to leadership in education. Theirs is a discourse of assets as opposed to professional deficit. This understanding of leadership work done in this context demonstrates that they have the critical thinking tools necessary for leading education in turbulent times.

The book begins with a chapter that notes a resurgence of interest in gender inequalities and injustices. There follows an account of four waves of feminism relating to multiple feminist theories of interest in educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA). I position myself as a white woman scholar and, following feminist scholars and a critically reflexive approach to research, provide accounts of my relationship with feminism. I describe the research projects that inform the book. Finally, I introduce each chapter that follows.

**Feminist theory and waves of feminism**

Feminist theory is predicated on the inclusion of women and their experiences in knowledge production. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequalities and injustices and support activism to challenge the status quo. It is emancipatory in intent. Feminist standpoint theory valorises ‘insider’ perspectives (see Harding, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Smith, 1979). Women’s individual standpoints uncover multilevel power relations in families, communities, organisations, institutions (including education) and society. It is concerned with the simultaneity of multilevel identity, institutional and social practices (Holvino, 2010). Standpoint must be

…wrestled out against the hegemonic dominant ideologies that structure the practices of daily life as well as dominant forms of belief, and […] thus hide the very possibility of the kind of understanding that thinking from women’s lives can generate.

(Harding, 1998, p. 185)

It is not automatically acquired by virtue of identifying as a feminist or woman. Even though Spivak (1993) posits that a scholar does not need to be the subject of knowledge production in order to produce it, there is a sense that epistemic privilege affords insiders insight and empathy (Narayan, 1988).

Feminists have long connected the personal with the political. An account of feminist theory is also an account of feminist identity politics and movements seeking to improve women’s and girls’ lives. As such, the feminist project is as important in the twenty-first century as it has ever been. Far from living in a ‘post’ feminist world where gender equality and gender justice have been achieved, feminist activism and scholarship remain indispensable to those concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion in creating a more socially just world, particularly in the context of global neoliberal education reform.
It is feminist theory’s association with feminist activism that results in a chronological perspective documenting each movement in terms of historical waves. The wave metaphor has been thoroughly explored and exploited by feminist scholars as ocean waves surging and receding, taking to the airwaves, women making waves, permanent waves (white women curling hair and Black women suppressing waves) and a new wave (David, 2016). Whilst the chronological organisation of feminist theories has been critiqued (Baxter, 2003; Kohli and Burbules, 2011), the feminist wave narrative persists. Each wave of feminism is characterised by contemporary debates and issues (Pillow, 2002) and therefore is sociohistorically and geopolitically context-specific. So how did these waves develop in their sociohistorical and geopolitical contexts? How do they connect with multiple feminist theories and perspectives? What is my relationship with them?

**Pre-first-wave feminism**

Women’s resistance to sex inequalities dates back further than most scholars acknowledge. Khadijah al-Kubra, the first Muslim woman (567–619 CE), was a leading businesswoman when early Islam advocated for equality between women and men in a patriarchal society (Ullah et al., 2015). Christine de Pizan (c. 1405/1999) wrote *The Book of the City of Ladies* (Willard, 1984), which begins with a critique of the prevailing misogynist writing by men. Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1792/2004) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* argues for women’s right to education. Oral histories of Indigenous and African-American women date back further (Pillow, 2002). Filomina Chioma Steady declared that African women were the first feminists; they had ‘an actual experience of oppression, a lack of the socially prescribed means of ensuring one’s wellbeing, and a true lack of access to resources for survival’ (Steady, 1981, p. 36 cited in Decker and Baderoone, 2018, p. 219). Feminism was a response to oppression.

**First-wave feminism**

First-wave feminism is associated with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was concerned with women’s suffrage, property ownership, divorce, employment rights and access to education (Kohli and Burbules, 2011). It is associated with liberal feminism in its focus on individualist and meritocratic goals of equality and inclusion. It achieved women’s suffrage in New Zealand in 1893, Australia by 1902 and several European countries before 1918. Suffrage was granted to women in the UK partially in 1918 and fully in 1928. It was granted in the US in 1920. Accounts of first-wave feminism have been whitewashed by excluding Indian, African-American and Indigenous women, such as Catherine and Sophia Duleep Singh in the UK (Visram, 2002), Sojourner Truth in the US (Davis, 1981; Brah and Phoenix, 2004), E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) in Canada (Frostell and Moynaugh, 2014), Emily Stephens in Australia (Grimshaw and Nelson, 2001) and Māori women in New Zealand (Crawford, 2018). Black British feminists have long challenged the white Eurocentric and Western tradition of imperial feminism (Amos and Parmar, 1984/1997; see Devereux, 1999 for an account of the relationship between feminism and colonialism).
The re-narration of my story as a critical autoethnography in direct response to research that informs this book led me to recognise the place of white privilege in an account of social mobility (Blackmore, 2016; Caine et al., 2018; Fuller, 2020). An exploration of family history led me to think about my relationship with first-wave feminism. I am forced to acknowledge the juxtaposition of socioeconomic precarity and stability among my foremothers. Alongside the illiteracy of both maternal great-grandmothers, there was privilege in women’s ownership of property in the early twentieth century. One of my maternal great-grandmothers, having been widowed in a railway accident circa 1900, both was illiterate and owned her own home. Compensation was awarded as my deaf railway engineer great-grandfather stepped out of the way of one oncoming train into the path of another, driven by his best friend. My paternal grandmother bought the family home in 1913 because her husband was at sea fishing for long periods. Her continued ownership was insurance against fishing business failure, but the story was told to me as my grandmother’s refusal to sign it over to him when he returned from sea. He was subsequently bankrupted. Both sides of my family avoided homelessness in families raised largely by women who turned their homes into businesses by letting rooms to make or supplement a living. The expectation of a woman’s home ownership was instilled before I was born.

Women’s suffrage was awarded in 1918 to women property-owners who were more than 30 years old. I have not discovered whether my foremothers’ properties were sufficiently valuable to enfranchise them. There is no evidence of engagement with the Suffragette movement. Unlike Suffolk suffragettes, they did not boycott the 1911 census (BBC, 2011). However, there is photographic evidence of a Suffragette ‘Great Campaign for Lowestoft’ (my home town) that coincided with pro-suffrage motions proposed at the National Union of Teachers conference held there in 1914 and of Emmeline Pankhurst’s intention to speak at a public meeting in Lowestoft in April 1914 (Gupta, 2014) and replacement by Annie Kenney owing to illness (Garrett and Thomas, 2019). Women teachers (the National Union of Women Teachers) campaigned for suffrage in Lowestoft in 1914 (Garrett and Thomas, 2019; UCL, 2011). The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies office, shop and tea room was situated in the heart of Lowestoft, opposite the railway station next to a prominent department store. My foremothers must have been aware of the women’s suffrage movement.

Second-wave feminism

Second-wave feminism is linked with the 1960s and ’70s. Betty Friedan’s (1963) *The Feminine Mystique* is credited with beginning second-wave feminism or is seen as its consequence (Banks, 1981). It captured the zeitgeist for educated, unhappy and unfulfilled women as housewives and mothers in the US.

This wave of feminism is associated with two main strands: liberal and radical. The focus on women’s equality with men led liberal feminists to seek sex discrimination legislation in employment and education. Women were the same as men, or their biological differences were irrelevant (Scott, 1988). They sought to join men in the workplace – to “lean in” (i.e. bite the bullet, do the job, stand tall) (Azmanova, 2016, p. 750).

Women were also different. Scott (1988) draws on poststructuralism to argue for equality and differences. But second-wave feminism was marked by a split between these