The Complexities of Authority in the Classroom shifts the questions of classroom climate away from classroom management and behaviour control toward a much more holistic and integral understanding of how human beings learn and how that learning is best facilitated. The term authority is reclaimed for teachers as something that is earned, modelled, embodied, and integral and that operates in the space created by the relationships between people. Education for too long has focused on the top-down transmission and assessment of content knowledge: this book is a refreshingly simple, yet profound re-balancing of this equation to an inside-out model that privileges authenticity, listening, relationships, engaging curricula and student self-leadership. Written by practitioners, this volume offers needed insights into how effective classrooms work and how the students in those classrooms can engage more meaningfully in their own learning narratives.”

Ruth Crick, Founder and Director, WILD Learning Sciences, Professor of Learning Analytics and Educational Leadership, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

“Authority is far too often framed as ‘discipline.’ This exciting and interesting book helps teachers and teacher educators take other perspectives. A range of high quality chapters give insight into theoretical and practical issues related to the core business of teaching, namely cultivating relational spaces in which pupils can learn to take their own responsibility. The authors unravel the complicated job of teachers of both authorizing themselves to teach and authorizing students to learn. This book will undoubtedly be of great value for teacher-training and for post-initial training. I recommend it to all teachers who are searching for new insights and practical tools for their everyday job.”

Bram de Muynck, Professor of Education at Driestar Christian University, Gouda, the Netherlands

“Badley and Patrick have curated a collection of stories, theories, and research notes that is both brilliant and authentic. The central ideas of being authorized to teach by self and others, and the consent to learn, are concepts that all educators confront yet too often fail to articulate and thoughtfully address with their practice. Teaching is done with, rather than done to. An exchange occurs between teacher and learner that transforms classrooms into places of learning. It is magical and yet it can be analyzed. The authors in this text contribute to that analysis adeptly and address a wide variety of aspects and contexts, such as substitute teaching, early career teaching, special needs teaching, cross-cultural teaching, and the list goes on. Addressing issues of true authorization and honest consent, every chapter hits the nails on the heads. As Badley notes, teaching requires guts, which in turn calls for courage and hope. The consent only learners can grant to their teachers constitutes the difference between trying and truly teaching. Every university
teacher preparation program owes this book to their students as part of a required text list. Teaching careers and student trajectories demand as much.”

**Jay Mathisen**, Superintendent, Jefferson County School District, Oregon, USA

“For many reasons, *The Complexities of Authority in Classroom* should find its way into the personal libraries of all teachers. This book is about relationships first, and it pushes managing the classroom far down the list. In that regard, I think the philosophy at the foundation of the book is spot-on.”

**Jim Parsons**, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Canada
This book argues that democratic classroom management is not a stand-alone issue but is deeply intertwined with classroom climate and requires a thoughtful, grounded understanding of classroom authority. Contributors explore the sources, nature, and extent of teacher authority, as they distinguish authority from authoritarianism, and describe how classroom authority is ultimately a shared endeavor between teachers and students. By drawing on a variety of contexts and perspectives, chapters in this volume contend with the complexities inherent in classroom authority through the lenses of gender, urban versus rural contexts, and within elementary and secondary classrooms.

Ken Badley, PhD, lives in Edmonton, Alberta, and teaches foundations of education at Tyndale University in Toronto, Ontario. He has taught in secondary, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs in Canada and the United States and has worked extensively with teachers in Kenya. He is the author of many books and articles related to curriculum, instruction, and the teaching vocation.

Margaretta Patrick, PhD, taught high school for 12 years before getting her PhD and then joining the Faculty of Education at The King’s University (Edmonton, Alberta). At the time of writing, she is in her 13th year of teaching at King’s. While Margaretta’s research focuses on how secondary social studies teachers in public schools teach about religion, teaching a course on classroom management for the past 10 years has generated its own research questions.
THE COMPLEXITIES OF AUTHORITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Fostering Democracy for Student Learning

Edited by
Ken Badley
Margaretta Patrick
Illustrations by Kristen Badley
We dedicate this book to all the In-Service Teachers who work every day to share authority with their students and to all the Pre-Service Teachers who plan to do so.
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Our first encounter was when Margaretta (Margie) read one of Ken’s early writings on teacher authority. A few years later, we met at a working conference where we discovered our mutual interest in helping teachers understand classroom authority. At some point about 2018, this mutual interest grew into discussions of writing a book proposal. We began to envision an edited book that would include voices from many kinds of classrooms, from veteran teachers, from induction teachers, and from teacher educators.

As the conversation evolved, the question of the book’s audience inevitably rose to the surface. Who most needs a book like this? The answer came easily: education students who need to understand what many veteran teachers have learned about the complexities of classroom authority. Both of us teach in education programs, and thus we know some of the questions education students have about what has traditionally been called classroom management. This book is meant to answer not only some of those questions but also the larger human questions that are present in every classroom and in the heart of every teacher: how do we communicate with each other, how do we live together well, and how do we care for each other in classroom spaces? The book also addresses some misperceptions about teacher authority, especially that it is not about power. In fact, teacher authority is undermined when implemented through power. Instead, it is about attitudes and dispositions and gaining student consent.

Both of us have extensive experience in K-12 classrooms, as do the contributors to this volume. They know the complexities of classroom authority. In different ways, all of them reflect on teacher authority, sometimes by engaging in the literature and often through the stories of their own practice. The combination of theory and practice here will be valuable to In-Service and Pre-Service Teachers alike because all teachers make decisions regarding the classroom ethos or climate.
they wish to establish in their classrooms, consider how they are going to gain classroom authority, determine the degree to which they are going to authorize their students, and explore the ways in which they will respond to and interact with the diversity of their classrooms and communities. Additionally, some may move to new settings or contexts, and they will undoubtedly learn from the authors in this book who recount their experiences of teaching in new and sometimes challenging settings. Readers will detect a consistent theme in the words of our contributors; in every situation in which they have found themselves they have learned, and they have taken with them new insights about who they are as teachers, about teacher authority, and about how authorizing students can happen in any context.

There is something in this book for every teacher. Classrooms are dynamic and vibrant places, and teachers both shape those places and are shaped by them. Within such dynamic and formative places, there are no prescriptions for becoming a successful teacher, for gaining teacher authority, or for authorizing students. There are no cookie-cutter approaches. Instead, we invite you to read the essays and stories offered by teachers. Sit with them for a while, and if you encounter an idea, practice, or disposition with which you resonate, feel free to adapt it into your own teaching practice. It is our fervent hope that all teachers, but especially those beginning their teaching journey, will benefit from the wisdom offered by the authors in this text.

Margaretta Patrick
Edmonton, Alberta
Ken Badley
Calgary, Alberta
October 2021
We begin by acknowledging the many colleagues who have contributed chapters to this volume. We were thrilled to receive their “yes” answers when we asked about their interest in being part of this project. All our contributors are busy educators who serve in a wide variety of contexts in two countries, Canada and the United States. Some became new parents during the writing of this book. Others changed cities. Some changed jobs or took on new responsibilities in the schools and universities where they work. All dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic during the months of writing.

Our contributors responded with grace to our many editorial requests and suggestions. They helped us think more deeply about our perspectives on teaching and classroom authority.

Because this book would never have come to fruition without these colleagues, it is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge their work.

Together, we are grateful as well for the encouragement and guidance of Matthew Friberg at Routledge and Jessica Cooke at Taylor & Francis. As we said about our contributors, this book would not have come into being without them. We also acknowledge the work of the editors, typesetters, and designers at Routledge who worked behind the scenes to bring our work to fruition.

Margie Patrick

I still remember my first day and first year of teaching, 25 years ago. Even though I poured my heart and soul into my preparations and stayed up late every night getting everything ready for the next day, I wasn’t a particularly good teacher. Did my students learn some content? I think so, but I didn’t really connect with them. I was too focused on content and too uptight about making a mistake to
connect on a personal level. I never welcomed a summer break as much as I did at the end of that first year.

The following fall I returned, not sure how my year would go. Unexpectedly, I was blessed with a wonderful group of students who oozed character, who engaged with their teachers, and who had fun together. I can still picture most of their names and faces in my mind. That group of students gave me the gift of joy, the joy of teaching, the joy of delighting in the hilarity of 17-year-olds, and the joy of discussing together the tough stuff of life. While I didn’t have the language at the time to describe what was happening, those students consented to have me teach them. Their consent provided me with the confidence to believe that I belonged in the classroom, that I was a teacher, and that I could engage with high school students. I authorized myself, which I could not, or did not, do in my first year. Year 2 was a completely different experience than year 1.

Years later, when I was a newly minted PhD starting my first university position, I read an article by Ken on teacher authority, student consent, and teachers authorizing their students. His words resonated with me; they gave me the framework to explain my teaching experiences. I used that early article in my classroom management course to reassure Pre-Service Teachers that they didn’t have to be the Lone Ranger in their future classrooms. I assured them that if they took the time to dignify and care for their students and even authorize their students to be classroom leaders and to be the experts on the topics they loved, they did not have to fear classroom management.

Several years later, when Ken suggested writing a book to expand on his earlier ideas, I jumped at the opportunity. Throughout this project, I have been in awe of Ken’s editorial and writing gifts, the way in which he can create magic with words. On more than one occasion over the past year, I have said, “I am sending this to you so you can work your magic.” I have learned a lot from Ken and count him esteemed among my friends.

I have especially enjoyed reading the chapters by the contributing authors. At times I was moved to tears as I read their stories. Sometimes I had to stop reading and ponder an insight. At other times I nodded my head as I read, able to relate to a particular event or way of thinking. All the authors have my immense gratitude for sharing their wisdom, for being vulnerable, and for being great teachers.

As noted, this book came together during a pandemic year. Time was in short supply for our authors as well as for Ken and me. If it wasn’t for my husband Mike, I am not sure we would have eaten during these last few months, as the book demanded an increasing amount of time. I am grateful for his willingness to pick up all the pieces on the home front, for his encouragement, and his reminders that everyone needs sleep. Mike, I couldn’t have done this without you.

Ken Badley

As always, I am grateful to the members of Team Ken who encouraged me to keep going on this project. You know who you are. I am grateful as well to
Acknowledgments

Kristen Badley, who produced the powerful cover and the internal graphics for this book. I daily have gratitude for my wife, K. Jo-Ann Badley, whose influence runs through all my thinking about education and whose insights appear uncredited in this volume. Without her encouragement, I might be sitting in a coffee shop every morning pretending to solve world problems but actually just complaining about the government.

I acknowledge the role of my BEd students at both Tyndale University in Toronto and Mount Royal University in Calgary who, over the last several years, have inspired me to keep looking for new ways to share authority with them. Together, we have journeyed to discover what Parker Palmer calls the heart of teaching. Part of that journey has involved laughing with them at my pedagogical flops and then carrying on. But another part has been that they have taken the openings I have offered and produced academic papers, songs, spoken word performances, social initiatives, a book about flourishing during practicum, board games adapted to curriculum units, videos, and websites of resources for teachers. I shared classroom authority with them, and they shared their abundant talents with their classmates and with me. To complete their course requirements, they have done real work for a real audience in the real world. We are all richer for what they have brought. We have truly feasted together, both literally and metaphorically. For that, I will always remain grateful. Regardless of how much we enjoyed our shared work on campus, they have inevitably graduated and gone on to realize the dreams they had when they came to campus in the first place. They have continued to give me joy as I have watched them develop as competent and visionary professional educators who want to authorize their students.

Finally, I acknowledge the brilliance, patience, hard work, great writing, and organizational skills that my colleague Margie Patrick, of The King's University in Edmonton, has brought to this project. I first presented on classroom authority at a conference in Chicago in 1995. Because of her, 26 years later, this project is now done, not finished, but done.
CONTRIBUTORS

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**Natasha Steenhof Bakker** lives in Terrace, British Columbia, and completed her teaching degree at The King’s University in Edmonton. Although she is a trained high school teacher who taught grades 8–12 in her first years, Natasha is currently an elementary homeroom teacher. She has taught in both public and independent schools in a variety of urban centers and rural areas.

**Nicola Campbell** began her teaching career abroad after completing her Bachelor of Education at Mount Royal University in 2018. After her first year of teaching, Nicola returned to Calgary, Alberta, and taught in multiple K-6 classrooms before moving to a grade 3 generalist position at a local independent school. Now in her fourth year of teaching, Nicola is enjoying fostering student leaders in her school, and she continues to explore ways through which her
students can be active citizens in their community and take their learning beyond the classroom.

**Tiffany Chung** began her journey as an educator when she homeschooled her eldest son and daughter. She went on to become a presenter with Scientists in School. Shortly after finishing the Bachelor of Education program at Tyndale University, she began teaching at Peoples Christian Academy in Markham, Ontario. She currently teaches middle school Mathematics, Science, and Technology and has experience teaching in face-to-face, online, and hybrid learning environments.

**Rebecca Clarke** attended Mount Royal University and obtained her teaching degree with the graduating class of 2020. Since then, she has moved to Seattle, Washington, where she serves as a teacher in elementary education. Her greatest passions in teaching are celebrating diversity and building a strong classroom community where her students know that their voices are valued and that each of them plays an important role within their community. She believes that learning can happen only when strong relationships are formed, both between student to student and teacher to student.

**Angela Farrington-Thompson** began her journey toward teaching by becoming a volunteer in the grade 8 classroom at the elementary school her six children attended. The adventure led to her first college diploma in writing and publishing, a certificate in teaching effectiveness, a degree in history and global studies, and finally, to the Bachelor of Education program at Tyndale University. Balancing family and studies, she went from volunteer to lunchroom supervisor, to educational assistant, and finally to a teacher specializing in history and language. In the fall of 2021, she began a new journey as a grade 4 teacher at Westminster Classical Christian Academy. She sees teaching as not only a gift and a privilege, but also a calling—the call to serve her students, be refined by them, and to be taught by them.

**Jacqueline Filipek, PhD**, is Assistant Professor at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta. She teaches courses in literacy, language arts curriculum, and technologies in education. Her research interests include digital and transliteracies in elementary contexts as well as how place contributes to learning. She received her PhD in language and literacy from the University of Alberta.

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California, as well as Chair of the Education Department. She embraces the challenge of equipping students to serve in public and independent schools. Michelle is also the co-editor of *Joyful Resilience as Educational Practice: Turning Challenges Into Opportunities* (Routledge, 2022) with Ken Badley.

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**Ron McIntyre** was a teacher for over 30 years in Edmonton Public Schools. During that time, he coached rugby and football at the secondary and university levels
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Shae Nimmo graduated in 2018 from the Bachelor of Education program at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta. Shae acted professionally before entering teaching and has studied with acting coach Stanford Meisner, whose method helps workshop participants focus on listening as a way of being present. Shae now teaches elementary school with the Calgary Board of Education.

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**Malini Sivasubramaniam, PhD,** studied at the University of Toronto, Canada, with a specialization in Comparative, International, and Development Education. Her dissertation examined household decision-making in low-fee private schools in Kenya. For seven years, she taught a course on Diversity and Equity issues in Education to teacher candidates at Tyndale University, Canada, and has co-taught and supervised teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Malini has published various reports and articles on equity issues in education and has co-edited a book on *Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives.* She is currently an independent research consultant. Her research interests include diversity, social justice and equity issues in education, school choice and equity for marginalized communities, and non-state, philanthropic, and faith-based actors in education.

**Maegahn Smith** completed her teaching degree at Mount Royal University in Calgary. She has experience teaching in K-12 classrooms, both in person and online. She is currently teaching high school music in Cochrane, AB, fulfilling a lifelong dream of getting to hold the conductor’s baton. Her primary focus over the last few years has been on developing applicable strategies for forming student–teacher relationships that teachers can easily implement in any classroom setting and sharing them with other teachers whenever possible.

**Mason Steinke** began teaching in Calgary, Alberta, since he received his BEd degree from Mount Royal University in 2018. He has taught in a wide range of positions, including grades 5–9 Health and Physical Education, a grade 5 generalist, and, currently, as a K–6 Music teacher. He has been with the Calgary Board
of Education for the duration of his professional career. Mason has committed to memory “The Man” monologue from the movie, *The School of Rock*.

**Wendy Stienstra, PhD**, has taught at The King’s University for the past 14 years. Her area of expertise and research is mathematics education. While she began her more than 30 years career as a high school mathematics teacher, her experience also includes teaching in upper elementary and junior high settings. She has worked with Pre-Service Teachers in a variety of settings for over 20 years. These range from courses in mathematics content and methods, and curriculum planning, to facilitation of student teaching practice.

**Kristen Tjostheim** started her career by teaching for seven years in a remote Alberta K-12 school. During that time, she taught a variety of subjects in multi-grade classrooms and classrooms where students participated via video conferencing. She further served her school community as an assistant principal for five years, during which time she collaborated with other school leaders and teachers to implement classroom strategies for student success.
1
INTRODUCTION

Margaretta Patrick and Ken Badley

We begin this book and this chapter not with a definition but with an important question. Why should students follow their teacher’s lead or do what their teacher asks or tells them to do? We call this question important because successful schools and classrooms depend on students’ recognition of their teachers’ authority. Teachers without legitimate authority end up with chaotic classrooms or classrooms full of sullen and resistant students. In such classrooms, if learning does take place, it may be along negative and cynical lines. Students may say, “I’ve learned that I hate school,” or “I’ve learned that my teacher doesn’t care about me,” or “I’ve learned that my teacher is stupid.” On the other hand, classrooms where rich learning happens and students flourish are led by teachers who have and who share what, throughout this book, we call classroom authority. We will nuance that phrase throughout the book but, for now, please accept our assertion that the classrooms most teachers and students want to work in have this feature: the teachers in those classrooms have earned the right to teach, in part by sharing the authority others have entrusted to them. In short, educators need to understand classroom authority.

Among the wide variety of kinds of authority, what comes to mind when teachers or students think about authority? Sociologists and political scientists have identified traditional authority, a kind of deference because of age or long experience (a grandparent), and legal authority where through appointment or election someone has been assigned oversight (a president). Add moral authority where someone has gained the goodwill of others (Oprah), raw power (an earthmoving machine), the authority of expertise (your mechanic or doctor), and contractual authority (the teacher hired by a school board). This partial list of types of authority may help explain why classroom authority warrants
examination. What kind or what combination of kinds of authority do classroom teachers have or need?

Almost everyone intuitively grasps the importance of teachers’ authority, but many people miss its complexity. Even the way we worded the question in the first paragraph reveals some of that complexity: *why should students follow their teacher’s lead or do what their teacher asks or tells them to do?* The first part of the question clearly asks about what most observers call *authority*, while the second connects more with what many call *power*. The differences between the words *asks* and *tells* in the second part of the question denote different degrees of power. What do classroom teachers need: authority, or power, or both? If they need authority—and all the contributors to this book believe they do—what kind of authority do they need and how do they earn it? In short, classroom authority is complex.

### Four Misunderstandings About Classroom Authority

Both beginning and veteran teachers can misunderstand classroom authority or misidentify its sources. For example, some confuse or conflate the two concepts we just distinguished: authority and power. They think that the teacher’s request or wish will become the students’ command. Recognizably, to a degree, most teachers can coerce most students to complete certain assignments and to behave in specified ways. Centuries ago, in *Leviathan* (1651 [2017]), Thomas Hobbes labeled this kind of coercive power as *command*, where a person can expect obedience without having to supply reasons. Hobbes distinguished the power to command from what he called *counsel*, where leaders must supply reasons why those whom they serve should follow their leadership. Teachers who mistake their authority for power will not see students engage in learning the way they do with teachers who recognize the need for what Hobbes called counsel. Educator Kenneth Benne (1943) observed nearly a century ago that understanding authority as power not only does not help but actually undermines the teacher’s genuine authority. He wrote as follows:

> The stupidity that often inheres in the use of coercive sanctions, by established bearers of authority, in and out of the schoolroom, is not that their use establishes and preserves authority. It is rather that they prevent the establishment of an organic moral order adequate and congenial to the stabilization and guidance of the social process underway—an order morally accepted in some measure as rightful by all participants in the process. In other words, they are to be condemned as defeating rather than serving the development of an adequate authority.

(p. 149)

Benne has gone beyond the distinction we called for in the previous paragraph. Note his use of the phrase *organic moral order*. In his view and that of other observers
(Metz, 1978), power actively sabotages the organic moral order required for learning. On these accounts, power is imimical to legitimate authority.

A second misunderstanding, one that beginning teachers make more frequently than veteran teachers, is to try to become friends with students. Teachers who follow this path think that chumminess will lead students to like them and then willingly join them in the learning journey they have planned. In fact, this mistake has in it a seed of logic: the teacher’s instructional program can only benefit if students are on the teacher’s side, so to speak, a conclusion in accord with the views of all the contributors to this book. Still, we label this a confusion because, as generations of teachers have learned, students want to learn in a classroom led by a professional not by a “big friend or cheer leader” (Bantock, 1966, p. 22).

Another misunderstanding relates to what for many decades was called classroom management. Some mistakenly believe that the teacher’s authority relates only to classroom management and to the appropriate responses to specific misbehaviors and discrete discipline problems. On this account, classroom management becomes a stand-alone question, one focused more on control of the learning environment and less on learning itself. This misunderstanding is grounded in at least two errors. First, the goal of understanding our authority as teachers is not primarily to address aberrant behavior (even if we must do so periodically) but is to create an ethos in which students succeed in learning. We are mistaken if we think that our authority relates only to controlling behaviors. Second, the teacher’s authority has more to do with the teaching–learning relationship than it does with classroom management. As Patrick traces in Chapter 2, the classroom management conversation has shifted dramatically in the last century and even in the last few decades and now reflects much more the need to create a classroom climate that encourages cooperation and learning. Although having that climate in place does not mean that some students at some points will not have bad days or bad moments, we still distinguish classroom climate from classroom management. Our use of the term classroom climate expands the notion of classroom management beyond relationships and coaching for pro-social behavior, as important as they are, to include instructional planning, mastering and employing a wide repertoire of instructional methods appropriate to contents and students’ ages and abilities, promoting and assessing student learning, developing record-keeping and paper-flow systems, interacting with students in a friendly yet professional way throughout each workday, and so on. In other words, classroom climate has to do with our whole program; it goes far beyond simply maintaining order or dealing with misbehaviors and episodes.

Fourth, and finally, some mistake the three basic necessary conditions—expertise, teaching certificate, and employment contract—for sufficient conditions to run a classroom program. Obviously, teachers do gain some authority when they meet these three basic conditions; in fact, thousands of beginning teachers go to their first jobs every school year possessing only those three things. At that time, beginning teachers have less expertise than they will have five years
later; regarding pedagogical expertise, they will likely enter the profession at the level of *competent beginner*. Both beginning and veteran teachers also gain some room to move from traditional assumptions about classroom roles. But teachers—beginning teachers especially—can make the mistake of relying too heavily on traditional expectations and assumptions about the teacher’s right to control the electronics in the room, or to determine seating plans, to stand or sit when and where they see fit, and to carry out a hundred other ordinary classroom functions.

These confusions are not the only mistakes educators make related to authority, but they point to the truth that both experienced and beginning teachers need a more nuanced understanding of classroom authority. We share with all the contributors to this book the view that teachers can understand their own authority in ways that will help them sustain an inviting classroom program from year to year if they can avoid the confusions we have touched on here and understand the varieties of soil from which legitimate classroom authority grows.

To conclude this section, we have identified two things that classroom authority is not. It is not the power to make students do whatever we want. Granted, some learning may occur in authoritarian classrooms where most students grant their teachers only a kind of grudging compliance, but that learning will be characterized only rarely by either joy or flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982, 1990, 2002; Steeg-Thornhill & Badley, 2021). Second, teacher authority or classroom authority is not classroom management. In our most utopian picture of a classroom, the learning ethos is so positive and powerful that the teacher never needs to make a classroom management intervention. We know that few such classrooms exist in the real world. Nevertheless, we have argued here that the classroom ethos encompasses something much larger and more substantial than classroom management and that in classrooms grounded on the kind of consent we describe here, students desire to learn and they engage more fully in their teacher’s program.

**Structure of the Book**

Ken Badley starts this chapter with a question: why should students follow their teacher’s lead or do what their teacher asks or tells them to do? His responses to teacher authority and student consent are the themes of this book. All the authors unpack in some fashion the nature of those two terms and what they look like in a classroom. They start by understanding teacher authority holistically, as establishing a classroom ethos in which student learning and flourishing occur. They agree that teacher authority goes beyond the formal qualifications, such as a degree and a contract, which, to use Ken’s later words, only bring the teacher to the classroom but do not ensure that they are successful in it. Success happens when teachers authorize themselves to teach and students consent to learn with the teacher and within the learning community established in the classroom.
Students cannot be coerced into learning, and teachers cannot use power to force students to learn. Instead, a relationship is cultivated in which both teachers and students authorize each other and learn from each other. How this occurs is highly complex, thus requiring a book to tease out its multifaceted angles and surfaces. Some authors will examine the research while others pose a theory. Still others tell stories; in fact, many tell stories, their stories from the classroom as they learned how to authorize themselves and their students, even those challenging students. The stories are from the heart, and they are sometimes heartrending in their honesty, but they always open the heart to new ways of caring for every student in one’s class.

Badley insists that teacher authority is related to classroom management but cannot be reduced to classroom management. The connection is apparent in many chapters, as authors discuss their challenges, experiences, and successes with teacher authority within the context of classroom management. Thus, the second chapter of the introduction provides an overview of the field of classroom management.

It is Margaretta Patrick’s contention that the development of the field over time is three Rindlisbacher dimensional. On one surface, we find the story of a movement away from corporal punishment toward a recognition that students need to learn social–emotional skills and practices, as well as academic content and skills. On another surface are the underlying principles, the social ideas, and visions that undergird the various approaches to classroom management, implying that classroom management is never merely a set of tools or strategies. Rather, all classroom management approaches contain specific views of students, highlighting their capacity for doing good, their ability to commit harm, or perhaps a combination of both. They also advance specific purposes of education, such as the development of democratic citizenship or the creation of consumers for a society deeply influenced by neoliberal economics. On the third surface are the critical theorists who raise questions about the power and coercion they see involved in managing students. They question the degree to which rules and expectations of behavior are White, middle-class values being enforced through power.

The rest of the chapters are organized into four themes. Part 1 begins with the teacher and how teachers authorize themselves to teach. Classrooms are complicated micro-communities and unpacking the nature of teacher authority within them takes intentional effort. Authors in this section probe the need for teacher authority, how we define teacher authority, and how teacher authority can be learned. They explore the need for teachers to authorize themselves, to believe that they belong in the classroom, and then enter the classroom community as one who forms and is formed by it, as one who self-authorizes and is authorized by students. Teachers are present to their students and in the process learn about student needs and how they can meet those needs. Contrary to popular culture, where leaders are consistently portrayed as individuals with
Margaretta Patrick and Ken Badley

single-minded intentions to right the ship, to re-set the course, teacher leaders who self-authorize and seek the consent of their students share their authority.

As easy as these words are to write and read, they are difficult to enact. The dispositions and attitudes needed to create democratic and trusting communities of learning are forged in fire, in the failures, disappointments, and general tough stuff of what can happen in a classroom. In the early years of teaching, some, perhaps many teachers employ the mantra “fake it till you make it.” At times they are sleep deprived and are only one step ahead of their students. They sometimes forget that students do not know that their teachers are barely holding on and feeling out of their depth, nor do students need to know. But no matter how physically tired beginning teachers might be and how tired they are from the effort of faking it, they need to show up every day, even if the previous day was difficult. They need to develop understandings of teacher authority which come only with practice. But there is always hope because the story in the final chapter of this section describes a turnaround that occurred when a teacher shifted their attitude toward some students and the class in general. Change is possible. In fact, the overarching theme of this book is that change is always possible, which teachers and students are always able to put a better foot forward tomorrow.

While Part 1 focuses on the teacher component of the classroom relationship, Part 2 examines the student element of the relationship. Students are not passive actors in a classroom; rather, they consciously or unconsciously authorize or deauthorize their teachers to teach. To employ an over-used term, the relationship is iterative. Teachers and students respond to each other’s initiatives, attitudes, words, gestures, and authorizing. If students believe that they have a place in the classroom, if the space has meaning because of what happens in it, if students are given real choice and control over some aspects of their education, and if students have dignity, they are more likely to authorize their teacher, to acknowledge their teacher’s right and ability to teach and their own ability to participate in and even direct their own learning. This section suggests important and authentic ways in which teachers can authorize students, from pedagogical and assessment strategies to treating students with dignity, to planning for differentiation and grouping. As teachers authorize students, classroom space becomes a place of significance and rich learning.

When teachers authorize their students to be active participants in their learning and when students have some power and control over what happens to them in the classroom, they flourish. As psychiatrist and educator Rudolf Dreikurs (1974) insisted, authorizing students in this way does not imply chaos, a lack of structure, or a lack of consequences for student choices. But neither does it mean that students sit quietly in rows, all doing the same thing. Equally important, authors in this section insist that shared authority with students does not diminish teacher authority. Rather, it expands the space for teaching and learning.
Space and place are important for all students, but especially so for students and teachers in diverse classrooms, the topic for Part 3. The research literature for most western countries shows that while classrooms have increasingly diverse student populations, the teaching profession remains largely White, resulting in what some have termed a cultural mismatch between the teacher and their students. Research on the type of teachers who teach well in multicultural contexts began in earnest in the early 1970s and continues to develop to this day. Nevertheless, significant inequities continue in school systems, which perpetuate the privileging of White, western European cultural and social values. The resulting discrimination can be obvious or subtle, and many teachers are not aware of the discrimination that exists in their assumptions of what is “good” and “bad” behavior, of how teaching materials depict and essentialize groups of people, usually in a negative manner, and how their language codes disempower some students.

Racial and cultural differences are not the only issue of diversity investigated in Part 3. Gender issues abound throughout educational institutions, including assumptions that teacher authority is linked to gender, i.e., male teachers are perceived as more able to command authority and gender speech patterns in classrooms. The scenarios discussed in these chapters reveal the serious problems that arise in classrooms and for students when the conceptions (see Badley’s Chapter 5) of teacher authority and student consent are either not acknowledged or not taken seriously.

Democratic and shared conceptions of teacher authority are taken seriously by the authors in Part 4. These authors are all teachers who discuss teacher authority from their unique places and special situations. By telling their own stories, they highlight what teacher authority looks like throughout a teacher’s career, from the days in practicum placements to reflections from a perspective of retirement.

When Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) enter a Mentor Teachers’ (MTs) classroom, they share authority with the MT. The space has been created and imbued with meaning by someone else. PSTs enter as a learner and a mentee. In most cases, they will continue the expectations and routines that in part shape the meaning of the space, but they inevitably introduce their own dispositions and practices, further developing that meaning. These beginning teachers do what every teacher must do: find ways to authorize themselves and to gain the consent of their students.

When teachers begin their first position, or change schools, they enter the school space as a place with established norms and understandings and then set about injecting their own meaning into their specific classroom space and eventually the larger school. For those moving from an urban to a rural location, or to a remote context, or to another country to teach, the challenges of creating place are even larger. Clearly, teachers never stop learning and good teachers do not wish to stop learning.
Chapter Synopsis

Part 1: Gaining Classroom Authority

This section of the book explores the nature of teacher authorization and emphasizes the importance of teachers authorizing themselves to teach. In Chapter 3, Ken Badley and Michelle C. Hughes focus on how teachers authorize themselves in the day-to-day activities in the classroom. In essence, teachers must show up and teach. If this sounds easy, it isn’t. To show up and teach, teachers need to rely on their internal resources, develop resiliency, get out of bed every morning, and return to the classroom. There is nothing easy about returning after a bad day or facing a difficult day, but a significant component of self-authorization is courage, of digging deep and finding, in the words of the authors, “the inner strength to power through, to keep going, to persevere.” Teachers around the world demonstrated courage when they pivoted to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, they faced unexpected and unknown circumstances and had to devise new ways of teaching, but they did it. Courage sustained them.

Badley continues the conversation about authorization in Chapter 4, “Good to Go,” in which he examines consent, a concept political philosopher John Locke introduced over three centuries ago. Locke distinguished consent—or legitimacy—from raw power, and Chapter 4 uses that distinction to explore the reasons students do or do not engage with their teachers. Teachers who want to teach effectively know that they need to earn the consent of their students. Gaining students’ consent to teach requires that the teacher be good, in both the moral and professional senses of that word. Because education students take multiple courses focused on professional competence or goodness, this chapter focuses on the other, moral, sense of being good. In most cases, students engage most fully with consent to be taught by—teachers who show care, respect, fairness, hospitality, and humility. Chapter 4 mentions the need for teachers to listen and to have presence, topics dealt with in more detail in the two following chapters.

One component of teacher self-authorization that most educators agree is important is teacher presence, but there is no common understanding of what it is. Badley takes this on in Chapter 5, asking three questions: 1) Is having presence necessary to establish oneself as a teacher with authority, as a teacher worthy of being in charge of a classroom? 2) Is teacher presence definable or is it some kind of X-factor, some mysterious quality that cannot be defined but that people recognize when they see it? 3) Can teacher presence be learned? After establishing the importance of presence, Badley criticizes some of the portrayals of presence offered by Hollywood in “reel” teacher movies: the enigmatic teacher, the charismatic teacher, the dead boring teacher, and the scary teacher. He prefers those cinematic portrayals of the warmly attentive teachers and teachers who represent tough love. Presence can be learned, insists Badley (but not so much from Hollywood), and he suggests that presence can be expressed and realized in effort.