

## A New Biographical Studies for Educational Leadership: Challenges from a Postcolonial and Globalizing World

Eugenie A. Samier

*American University of Ras Al Khaimah, Ras al Khaimah, the United Arab Emirates*

Abstract	Article Info
<p><i>This paper examines the nature, role and development of biographical studies in educational administration and leadership, how it has changed under neo-liberalism and the challenges posed by postcolonial studies. It first examines the nature and value of conventional Western biographical studies for educational administration, including a number of problems and limitations that also affect biographical studies in other parts of the world. The second section examines a number of issues in the postcolonial literature that raise questions about Western research, including biographical practices that lead to 'orientalism' (Said), inequities and communicative domination (Habermas), the construction of the subaltern (Guha, Spivak), a critique of colonial social forms and cultural processes (Bourdieu), and research practices that disadvantage the non-Western research subject (Smith). The final section examines research implications of a more decolonized and inclusive biographical studies for educational administration.</i></p>	<p><b>Article History:</b></p> <p><i>Received</i> December, 7, 2016</p> <p><i>Accepted</i> December, 23, 2016</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Biography,</i> <i>Administration,</i> <i>Educational</i> <i>leadership,</i> <i>Post-colonialism,</i> <i>Globalization</i></p>

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## **Introduction**

Although biographical studies, especially full-scale biographies, are not common in educational administration, their importance is argued here to outweigh their proportional representation in the field. Biographical studies play a number of important roles in leadership and its study, from providing the primary source material from which leadership theories and models have been derived (especially in political and religious studies) as well as being empirical sources for testing theories and models, an argument made in public administration by Granatstein (1982) and Theakston (2000). They also provide more realistic accounts of how leadership is shaped and the context in which it performs (Bennis, 1989), as well as counter-examples from which we learn. They also provide role models and for those preparing for and assuming leadership positions and pedagogical purpose.

A number of authors in educational leadership have promoted the use of biographies and shorter biographical portraits, sketches or stories such as English (1995, 2006), Gunter (2001), Gronn (2005) and Ribbins (2003), primarily because they capture 'real-time' experience and events and provide access to personality and character. Gunter (2001) argues further that they open a window onto the meaning-making process, a critical element from the hermeneutic perspective, as it provides the process and rationale for decision-making and intentions that constitute leadership activities. Further, Shamir, Dfayan-Horesh and Adler (2005) identify four main themes in leadership development accounts in life stories that are relevant to this discussion: as a natural process; arising out of struggle and hardship; motivation through finding a cause to pursue; and as a learning process.

Biography is a medium similar to literature and film in contributing to our understanding of experiential dimensions of social phenomena in ways that other forms of academic writing have limitations in doing. This includes the more tacit aspects of social,



historical, and cultural contexts and structures: how ideals and values form and are engaged in, both internal dynamics and externalized through complex and subtle social action; organizational culture and politics; how people take up ideologies; the working out of moral dilemmas; the formation and expression of social roles; aspects of professionalism that deal with complex interpersonal relations; personality, character and identity formation; and organizational and leadership aesthetics (e.g., narrative style of speech). The biographical also opens a window into organizational level structures and forces as those constructed and maintained by individuals, from the effective, moral and constructive to the neurotic, toxic and destructive as Kets de Vries (2003), Lipman-Blumen (2005) and Kellerman (2004) have demonstrated.

However, the value of the biographical has been compromised in the last few decades where neoliberalism has had a strong influence in shaping social institutions through an economic imperative in the market model and quality assurance regimes that standardise and anonymise roles in education. These practices have been criticised for their use of machine metaphors and manufacturing and commodification concepts (e.g, Blacker, 2013; Canaan and Shumar, 2008; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). Such an intensified bureaucratization of individual life threatens the personal and the biographical, as Sennett (2006) has argued, through targets, commands and performance evaluations (p. 61) that to some extent were foreseen by Weber:

*Max Weber witnessed how in his time economic and civil society institutions mimicked the social structure of armies, in pursuit of social inclusion and obedience to authority. The secret of this militarized capitalism lay in time—time structured so that people formed a life narrative and social relations within the institution. The price individual paid for organized time could be freedom or individuality; the 'iron cage' was both prison and home (pp. 179-180).*

There are also other considerations in using biography that have emerged with critiques of internationalization and globalization and the development of postcolonial studies, and more recently in indigenous research methods. These critiques are not separate from

those of neoliberalism in many 'Western'<sup>i</sup> countries; they are the other side of neoliberalism through globalization as a dominating voice in other parts of the world increasingly seen as a form of neo-imperialism (e.g., Quist, 2001) for its disruptive influence through the global economy on the societies of developing countries (Harvey, 2003; Köse, Şenses & Yeldan, 2007), particularly American imperial expansionism (Dorrien, 2004), including globalized education (Satterthwaite & Atkinson, 2005). In this sense, the postcolonial critique is relevant not only to nations that emerged from colonization throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but continues to apply to developing nations in challenging the substantial foreign influence on society and culture and the developed world through its increasing multicultural composition.

Stewart-Harawira (2005) has investigated the marginalization of knowledge and experience that does not fit the hegemonic paradigm, a fate that not only indigenous peoples face, but many other parts of the world:

*Others highlight the appropriation of such indigenous knowledge as was deemed useful and the relegation to the realms of 'myth and magic' of indigenous cosmology. Indigenous educational historiographies provide readings of the sustained and deliberate attack on the collective nature of indigenous social and political structures in an attempt to absorb indigenous 'remnants' into the relations of production that sustain Western capitalism, thus facilitating European access to the lands and resources needed for the expansion of capital. These historiographies tell also of the ongoing resistance of indigenous peoples to the dismantling of their social structures and their ontological and epistemological foundations. (p. 16)*

Biographical studies need to allow for not only cultural difference but differing conceptions of social institutions, roles, responsibilities, and value systems including those of administration and leadership. Some of this work has begun with authors like Dimmock and Walker (2000, 2005) and a broad range of authors in many Asian, Middle Eastern, African and South American countries, however, this international part of the field is still in its early stages of development.



The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature, scope and role of biographical studies, how they have changed under neoliberalism in Western states and the challenges posed by postcolonial and regional studies, particularly in contexts where neoliberalism's export-arm, globalization, has strong effects. The paper first examines the nature and value of conventional Western biographical studies for educational administration, including a number of problems and limitations that also affect biographical studies in other parts of the world. The second section examines a number of issues in the postcolonial literature that raise questions about Western research, including biographical practices that lead to 'orientalism' (Said), inequities and communicative domination (Habermas), the construction of the subaltern (Guha, Spivak), a critique of colonial social forms and cultural processes (Bourdieu), and research practices that disadvantage the non-Western research subject (Smith). The final section examines research implications of a more decolonized and inclusive biographical studies for educational administration

### **'Conventional' Biographical Studies**

The biographical covers a broad range of types and sources: autobiography, memoirs, travelogues, diaries, letters of a personal nature, official correspondence, speeches, lectures, scholarly and occasional writings, personal and professional documents, newspapers accounts, and obituaries (Creswell, 1998; English, 2006, 2008). It can also include literary writings, particularly by diplomatic staff or those in repressive regimes who can only present some material in fictional form, and can be supplemented with interviews, documents (reports, studies), personal journals, interviews with those who know or knew them, others' memoirs where they appear, observations and video footage. The research subject's physical world is also important, where architecture and artefacts help create a sense of place and culture. I have found it most useful to visit the sites where people spent their lives such as the city of Weimar where

many main buildings, including Goethe's house, have been preserved and re-reading Kant's work in Berlin where the not-so-abstract nature of his principles and arguments become palpably apparent in the discursive patterns and behaviors in the culture of the region.

While full-scale biographical studies are not commonly produced in educational administration and leadership, their value in many disciplines is broadly accepted since they encompass a number of factors that other forms of research have difficulty in accessing or conveying, particularly embeddedness in many possible levels of context, hermeneutic processes, personal reflection and subtleties and nuances of interpersonal interactions. They increase our knowledge and understanding of career paths of individuals who are often invisible in large-scale organizations, the struggles and challenges they face, and how senior administration is actually performed, in many cases departing from 'textbook' prescriptions. Biographies and memoirs serve as case studies of professional development and the acquisition of administrative and leadership attributes, capturing experiential learning that includes the intuitive and tacit, and the social and historical context within which the administrator is shaped in early life. They can also provide more realistic information about the complex and multi-layered realities of the workplace (Brandon, 2002; Danzig, 1997).

A significant feature of biography is the political context, which Dobel (2003) emphasizes for those operating in the most senior governmental levels at the interface of the administrative and political realms. The senior levels are also where the role of personality can be amplified throughout the organization, part of Kets de Vries and Miller's (1984) argument in *The Neurotic Organization* where a personality disorder at the top can have highly destructive effects on everyone else. The biographical also captures more authentically the genesis and complexity of individual character and personality (Kaplan 1990). Human existence, experienced through temporality, as Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988) argues, is made intelligible through narratives, in this case biographical, with their



interplay of contextuality, inner experience, and the social experience of organizational, community and societal life far more than leadership and administrative theories individually can capture.

Educational examples are McCrum's (1989) biography of Thomas Arnold, Headmaster at Rugby and Richardson's (2007) biography of William James. One common category is that of university presidents, each of which tends to focus on different aspects of their personal and professional lives. Another is Gardner's (2005) account of his upbringing as a Mormon with a focus on financial and funding activities at the University of California, whereas Kerr's (2001, 2003) memoirs focuses, contrastingly, on politics and ideas of the university. The biographical has been used to explore the experiences of marginalized groups like women and minorities, in part to identify the nature of the barriers they face and in part to explore what conditions and personal qualities have allowed many to succeed (e.g., Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Neumann & Peterson, 1997). Another is the professional biography under certain institutional conditions, an example of which is Kolodny's (1998) account of her deanship under neoliberalism.

More closely related to administrative and leadership roles, biography can examine the complexities of contextualised decision making and power, as well as the role character and personality play in organizational behavior, captured in autobiography, memoir, and correspondence complemented by the documentary and archival evidence typically examined in historical research, an argument advanced by Oates (1991) and English (1995). In this narrower sense of professional biography, evidence for the development of leadership attributes, career path trajectories and critical incidents in relation to institutional arrangements and biases (e.g., gender, race, social class), demonstrate the historical nature of leadership as a social phenomenon, provide cases from which generalisations, theories and models can be drawn and, in a more formational sense, provide role modelling (Edinger, 1964; Gronn & Ribbins, 1996; Ribbins, 2003; Sugrue, 2005; Theakston, 2000).

Biographies also present characters more realistically, with the weaknesses, failures and mistakes they need to overcome, and how senior administrative and leadership roles are both social and solitary (Fagan, Bromley & Welch, 1994). They also provide detailed information of their relationships with political masters, the influence they have over decision-making, alliances or networks, conflicts or resistances they encounter, and the internal culture and politics of organization. The path to leadership development is not as smooth as much of the social science material assumes, with many types of experiences and personal characteristics contributing in direct and indirect ways that serve as sources of self-conception and visions of organizational and/or societal change. Hoving's (1993) memoir of administering the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York illustrates the often complex and sometimes destructive forces encountered:

*Less than a year later, I was elected Rorimer's successor. Because of the harrowing experience the evening of his death [politics on the Met board contributing], I came back to the Met acutely aware of the deadly jungle it could be. I knew that beneath the calm surface of the institution, there was a battleground. I also knew that a director had to be more than a gifted connoisseur, a well-trained scholar, an aesthete, a patient diplomat, a deft fund-raiser, an executive, and a conciliator. To be effective - and to survive - the director had to be, in addition, part gunslinger, ward heeler, legal fixer, accomplice smuggler, anarchist, and today. (p. 15)*

One of the motivations Kets de Vries (2009) had in pursuing studies in organizational behavior was to counter-act the overly rational approach that emphasizes structures and systems at the expense of the individual person. His largely psychoanalytic approach was intended to 'have an extra level of magnification through which to look at organizational phenomena' in which 'understanding what drives people helps us understand personality problems better, realize what certain symptoms signify, make sense of interpersonal difficulties, and see through group phenomena and social defenses' as part of a wholistic approach (p. xxi). As Kets de Vries (2003) and Babiak and Hare (2006) have amply demonstrated,





pursuing a senior role successfully can be motivated by many neurotic or even pathological personality traits. And organizations are far more dynamic culturally and politically than rational-type models assume, as cross-cultural and political studies of organization have demonstrated (Fairholm, 2009; Furnham, 2010). While theories of leadership and administration try to bring regularity, explanation and coherence, if not predictability, to these roles, the biographical is able to capture and demonstrate that human lives are not consistent or completely coherent – they are also composed of variability, contradiction, and even self-destruction.

From a biographical perspective events and critical incidents revealing the ‘inner theatre’ that Kets de Vries frequently describes are those having a significant and personal impact on perspective, values, and interaction styles such as ‘rites of passage’ (e.g., greatest challenges, most frightening or disturbing managerial experiences), ‘rising from the ashes’ (e.g., confronting one’s darkest hours and failures, times one comes close to violating rules and norms, occasions when the ‘rug was pulled out’ from under one, and finding that fundamental truths one held turned out to be false), and the negative aspects of others’ social roles (e.g., learning from working with someone who couldn’t be tolerated or stab others in the back or manipulate them for advantage, and the most significant forms of interpersonal conflict).

Psychohistory has become a prominent field of study ever since Erickson’s *Young Man Luther* (1962) was published, a study with leadership implications. Burns’ seminal *Leadership* (1978) contains a strong psychohistory character to his extensive biographical treatment of major political leadership figures. This approach has value in understanding the development of personality and character, offering explanations of early developmental phases in establishing trust, autonomy, and initiative for a healthy personality as well as developmental problems that contribute to personality disorders creating toxic organizations. Healthy ego development contributes to nurturing, moral, and highly motivated individuals,

largely a product of interaction with societal and family milieu: 'Society is the nutritional medium in which the identity of a person gradually emerges. The substance of each society structures the content of that identity' (Ackerman, 1951, p. 3). Through this process, one acquires a sense of separateness that produces an individual will and autonomy allowing one to be confident, have a realistic sense of ambition combined with senses of competence and efficacy upon which social roles are constructed. White (1966) characterizes the healthy ego growth that directly applies to administrative roles and leadership as a stable ego identity that frees itself from prior personal relationships (e.g. seeing others as people rather than father figures), has deepened interests, humanized values, an expansion of caring, and the ability to maintain integrity against the tendency to despair.

The features that are significant in a life are numerous. Formative experience includes family origins, ethnicity, race, social class, religion and socio-cultural conditions like poverty, travel, cultural activities, and critical events in a family or group one has membership in. Also formational are education and school friendships where life-long networks can be established, and related formational political and occupational experiences, role models, and mentors who influence recruitment and promotion later in life are met. All of these contribute to a shaping of values and attitudes as well as ideologies that contribute to the development of professionalism, ethics, and worldview. For the historian Pipes (2003), 'anyone who immerses himself in the past quickly learns that history is shaped by many different forces, including accidents and personalities, each playing a decisive role at particular times and places but never universally' (p. 219). These include 'likes and dislikes as well as fears, anger, and hopes' which Pipes was able to observe in his advisory capacity to Reagan on Soviet affairs through Reagan's reactions to Haig: 'Haig's frenetic behavior, his assertiveness and arrogance, went against the grain of Reagan's easygoing, amiable nature' (p. 208). For Pipes, decision making is not always



... the result of careful weighing of data and all the pros and cons. The information which the bureaucratic machine spews out is too voluminous, complicated, and contradictory for statesmen to absorb. Decisions are therefore usually made ad hoc, on the basis of intellectual predispositions and the mood of the moment. This held true not only of the Reagan administration but of all that I have studied, including the governments of Russia under the *tsars* and communists. (p. 209)

Biographical research can also uncover the deep origins of those who lust for power. For Pipes (2003), power is 'the impulse that drives political ambition. Power provides psychic compensation: it impels a person who cannot rule himself to rule others' (p. 210). Quoting from the diaries of Eric Hoffer, Pipes (2003) demonstrates its compensatory character:

*The significant point is that people unfit for freedom - who cannot do much with it - are hungry for power. The desire for freedom is an attribute of a "have" type of self. It says: leave me alone and I shall grow, learn, and realize my capacities. The desire for power is basically an attribute of a "have-not" type of self. If Hitler had had the talents and temperament of a genuine artist, if Stalin had had the capacity to become a first-rate theoretician, if Napoleon had had the makings of a great poet or philosopher - they would hardly have developed the all-consuming lust for absolute power. Freedom gives us a chance to realize our human and individual uniqueness . . . those who lack the capacity to achieve much in an atmosphere of freedom will clamor for power. (pp. 210-211)*

Contextual factors influence professional practice, including personal networks, career path, and the type of influence administrators have on policy and its implementation. They also have a profound effect on more normative dimensions of authoritative practice: administrative ethics including moral dilemmas, the distinction officials must maintain between a public face and individual attitudes and opinions, and how truth is constrained by formal responsibilities and obligations (Batteson & Ball, 1995; Dobel, 2003; Doig & Hargrove, 1987; English, 1995; 2006; Gronn, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1990; Ralston, 1995). For example, Gronn's (1999) work on phases in career development (formation, accession, incumbency, and divestiture) is located historically in particular cultural, social, economic and political contexts that draw heavily on Kets de Vries's work.

Biography's value lies in establishing connections between the personal and larger social issues (Mills, 1959), in the ways in which people assume roles in institutions, particularly how marginalized and oppressed groups overcome prejudice and discrimination in reaching leadership positions in a way that provides a more accessible understanding for those not from these groups (Preskill, 1992). It humanizes history by showing how relatively impersonal political and social forces can be made more immediate and relevant (Nevins, 1962) by relating context to its effect on individuals and, in turn, how they contribute to the construction of societal structures and processes (Garraty, 1957). Popkewitz (1988) sees biographical sources like biographies and autobiographies as a necessary dimension of the complex relationships that exist among communities, institutions and social structures like universities that are effectively composed of individuals engaged not only in their personal histories but are embedded in the social and linguistic constructions that constitute institutions and which form other people's identities.

Smith (1989) describes two basic approaches to the writing of autobiography, which also apply to biographical writing:

*Roughly speaking, there are two ways, I suppose, of recording a professional career. One is to gather the facts gleaned from memorandums, files, diaries, letters, and published materials, and then write a documented account complete with names, dates, and recorded events. The other is to rely on memories and impression surrounding major happenings, the kind that burn deep, indelible impressions, and then write a memoir that moves from highlight to highlight, the peaks and valleys of a career, recapturing the vivid moments and emotions. The first, of course, has the greater value for historians, but the second has the redeeming hope of greater appeal for the general reader who wants mostly to know what it was like. (p. 14)*

Of course, the latter can also be of great value in pursuing existential and phenomenological or hermeneutic aims.

Biographical sources provide a necessary realistic counterpart to many administration and leadership theories that overgeneralize both the profile of the 'successful' leader and the organizational systems in which they operate, and can open a window onto covert



dimensions of organizations. To adequately cover the many forces and factors at play in shaping people and their administrative and leadership capacity, as well as the conditions under which they perform these roles, short profiles and portraits are not always adequate, particularly those that focus primarily on professional experience, such as Padilla's (2005) portraits of six university presidents, since the depth of understanding the attitudes and values of the individuals involved is not possible without comprehensive biographical work.

The value of biographical work for non-Western contexts lies in the general characteristics described above – but the particular institutional frameworks, the roles of power and authority, patterns of social interaction and values and attitudes vary considerably affecting what is understood as a senior administrative or leadership position and career.

### **Limitations of Biographical Studies**

There are a number of problems and limitations of conventional biographies that also apply to a more global and postcolonial view. These vary from practices of biographers, the nature of biography as a medium, limitations of sources, and disciplinary bias to the more recent challenges of neoliberalism and globalization. Biography also derives primarily from literature and history which bring their own technical vocabularies, techniques and methods. Depkat (2014) emphasizes the literary convention of biography which 'moves between fact and fiction, *curricula vitae* and literary narratives, the fact-based historical reconstruction and the imaginative construction of lived lives' (p. 40) and the selections made through motifs and elements deemed important in the relationship between biographer and subjects chosen to record and interpret. Stylistic characteristics of the biographer are also important in shaping the content and therefore the meaning of the narrative.

First, biographers themselves are limited by personality and character, their own values and beliefs, and personal histories that predispose them toward particular understandings and interpretations, and disciplinary perspectives and schools of thought in which they situate themselves that affect the selection, structuring and interpretation of life elements. In some cases bias can be more extreme, for example, those with a narcissistic disposition or other personality disorder, who are unable to effectively place themselves into another's life story effectively. Ethnocentricity or lack of comparative cultural experience can also constrain their perspectives and therefore selections of information and structuring of a life located in a past or present society with different standards of conduct. Eissler (1971) explains that in the case of Freud, who lived in the Victorian society of Vienna in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, biographers have used their contemporary social values to label him 'puritanical and Victorian' and as a consequence 'surrender to contemporary biases' (p. 83). A biographer's relationship with the subject can affect the type of biography written, for example, where the subject is idealized or demonized. Bias can also affect attitudes toward gender, religion, ethnicity, race or belief system. Roper (2001) raises interesting issues related to 'masculine biographical' influences on the development of management theory, like those of Urwick and Taylor, a biographical principle that could be extended to situations where the gender dispositions of scholars influences the nature of the theories and research they produce, the 'emotional *a priori* of theory production' (p. 182).

Secondly, biography as a medium is a construction, although these accounts are often taken to be true representations of lives. Usher (1998) distinguishes between the actual life of an individual and the 'life as told,' the latter being a narrative constructed through the 'cultural conventions' of the biographical, the nature of the audience and the influences from social context. All of these affect conceptualization of character, how the trajectory of a life is interpreted, selectivity and interpretation of material, and the



acceptance of causal relations. While biographical scholarship is mostly in the narrative form of stories, there is an important distinction made by Kets de Vries (2009) that needs to be maintained between 'narrative and historical truth': a person's narrative is subject to memory, the truth of which is shaped by the 'psychological impact that shapes personality', our 'sense of identity . . . very much the heir of the personal myth by which we live, a myth that connects the past with the present' (p. 19). The conventions of biography also vary from culture to culture. For example, the Islamic historiographical tradition, developed much earlier than in Europe during the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, placed a strong emphasis on role models or exemplars of Muslim virtues, either as stand-alone biographies of individuals or as prosopographies focused on examining individuals as members of a group. This virtue tradition, particularly prophetic biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, is a distinguishing feature of Islamic historiography that has been carried up to the present time (Robinson, 2003; also Khalidi, 2009), and which therefore culturally and religiously differs from much Western biographical work.

There are many problems with sources. Maddox (2006) identifies a number with 'first biographies written about famous figures': there are often many errors and omissions, partly due to new information coming to light; a change in social attitudes affecting the approach to the subject; cessation of the need for censorship after the deaths of the subject's and family, friends and colleagues (no longer a need to respect the feelings of those still alive); and later biographers who were not personal friends being too uncritical (pp. 282-283). There may also be problems with documents relied upon, including personal ones for which there are many motivations for excluding or exaggerating details and events as well as official documents affected by numerous considerations like privacy, security and the designs of internal politics that can cause omissions, fabrications, exaggerations and white-washing that compromise them as reliable sources of information.

Other levels on which the biographical is a construction are the disciplinary paradigms or theoretical phases in which it is located, in the case of history in 20<sup>th</sup> century consisting of three major movements (Depkat, 2014). Initially, historicism was practiced consisting of a *Weltanschauung* or conception of history centred on 'ideas, individuals and states' in a dynamic relationships, evident in the 'Great man' approach to leadership in which individuals were conceived as carriers of ideas that shaped historical reality, and the method of *verstehen*, a participant observer form of understanding that relies on empathy with the historical subject. This approach privileged those with power and authority and on an international level, imperialistic domination. This was followed in the mid-20th century by social history focussed on structural patterns and formations in society aimed at explaining inequality, social cohesion and social conflict, 'privileging the collective over the individual' for which individual biographies are 'manifestations of collective entities' (Depkat, 2014, p. 42). This form is evident in the many stories and portraits of educational administrators and leaders that are used to establish career patterns.

Evolving out of social history is cultural history aimed at understanding how identity is shaped and the role of the symbolic worlds of meaning-making which people create and inhabit spawning what is often called the 'new biographical method', life history, which itself has been heavily criticised. Although life history promised to allow one 'to see in the large and in detail the total interplay of mental processes and social relationships' which revealed 'the inner life of the person, his moral struggles, his successes and failures in securing control of his destiny' (Shaw, 1930, pp. xi, 4). It has been likened to the use of the microscope in biology, thereby acquiring the name of the 'natural history approach' or 'classical approach'. Even though providing opportunities for marginalized minorities and women in society to attain legitimacy as lives worth knowing and a site through which identity politics can be examined, life history assumed that an objective truth could be arrived at by





using documents, records of objective events, and statements from others to validate the subjective experience of an individual's story. This has been critiqued by Denzin (1989, 1992) for failing to recognise the other sources as social constructions and assuming that an 'objective' record of an individual life is possible. It has also been criticised by Bourdieu (1987) for perpetuating the 'biographical illusion' that a life is marked by objective events and unfolds over chronological time (also Lindgren, 2007), when in fact it is the result of applying the values and social mores and structures of the biographer that shape conceptions of social identity and roles.

Life history biography can be seen as an ideological approach to the social world and the individual that has constraints when applied by foreigners (e.g., colonizers) imposing their view of the world on the indigenous (e.g., colonized), and would constitute, in Bourdieuan (1990) terms, a form of symbolic violence in which systems of meaning are imposed that create inequality. For Spivak (1987), it consists of epistemic violence and can produce the subaltern mind when adopted by the colonized. Denzin (1992) criticises life history as part of a surveillance society that located the 'otherness' of 'delinquents,' their common subject, creating them in the image of what sociology thought they should be, and grounded in a social realism that made the 'individual responsible for their own problems' rather than finding the problem in the social system itself. This approach, argues Lindgren (2007), underlies the recent use of 'biographical registers' for students that blames them for their lack of social integration. It orients the individual and makes 'him or her liable for institutions in a historical social situation when static personal definitions (such as status) or quasi-natural phases of a life-cycle are not sufficient for this purpose' which 'applies to both the individual and the institution and is utilised by both' (p. 115). For Lindgren, this development also expresses a form of Foucaultian (1991) governmentality where biographical registers achieve a secular form of confession allowing for governing an individual's 'performance and adjustment' (p. 478). Habermas (1971) observed the

confessional tone of modern rational society where an 'intense focus on biographies, personalities and the minutiae of the lives of the famous and not so famous' has contributed to a 'culture of the self' that extends into the workplace where an 'ethic of self-fulfilment' characterized by excesses of emotion that reach to the pathological and 'yet full of therapeutic potentials' are considered a norm (p. 91).

Generally, biographical writings in educational administration focus on functional aspects of professional lives making connections between life and practice in an organizational setting, valuing personal character and behavior against a set of effectiveness criteria. Some of these, described by Gronn and Ribbins (1996), are the development of leadership attributes, the ends to which school administrators have directed themselves and a comparative analysis of administrators from system and institutional perspectives. They tend to assume national or 'Western' conceptions of appropriate professional characteristics and careers, educational ends and system and institutional configurations, most of which are formal rather than informal attributes, such as Ribbins' (2003) ideal typical pathways of formation, accession, incumbency (with enchantment and disenchantment forms), and moving on (in either divestiture or reinvention forms). Biographers also impose conceptions, conscious and unconscious, of education, organization and administrative/leadership roles that are mostly informed by the system in which the biographer has lived and which the literature and research has taken for granted. They operate through a dyad of writer and reader who, according to Depkat (2014) form a 'pact' in which the biographer conveys information and meaning that the reader expects, validating the biography.

Gronn and Ribbins (1996), though, have raised cultural issues with biographical aspects of educational administration. They have noted 'an absence of any systematic understanding in the literature of how individuals get to be leaders, an ignorance of culturally diverse patterns of defining leadership and knowledge of the culturally different ways prospective leaders learn their leadership' (p. 465).



Gronn (1999) further argues that the field lacks a sufficiently broad comparative scope to determine what factors are important in the development of educational leadership, those ‘circumstances of leaders’ lives . . . in respect of the cultures and societies from which they emerge. Yet, from the perspective of globalisation and the better appreciation of different, deeply entrenched cultural approaches . . . the provision of such a scheme is timely’ (p. 32).

While Ribbins (2003) argues that the biographical cross-culturally can help us understand differences and commonalities and create bonds that form a sense of community, achieving this can be very difficult, particularly in relating to subjects who are in cultures that differ significantly from the biographers’ own, where religious and cultural values are not consistent with norms biographers have integrated into their own lives, where gender roles are different, social customs are unfamiliar and authority roles would violate professional principles in biographers’ societies. This can lead to ignoring or underplaying significant cultural, religious and social factors, like an acceptance of top-down authority or the extended family structure which affects an individual’s life including their professional choices, or in misinterpreting cultural customs and values. However, these complexities can only be dealt with in more comprehensive biographical work than in short professional or career sketches, stories or portraits.

There are a number of recognized problems in conducting comparative administration which apply here to researchers crossing cultural boundaries in writing biographies, summarized by Samier (2009). One is the ‘traveling’ problem where the same concepts are understood differently in other cultures, for example, how authority and leadership are understood. Secondly theoretical frameworks and paradigms vary across cultures that affect how identity and values are understood, for example secular assumptions in many Western countries and religious assumptions in others. Thirdly, political and economic frameworks vary in terms of citizen involvement, in governmental activity in the economy, where officials may be

appointed rather than elected, where personal trust determines appointments rather than qualifications, and where secondments from the private sector or the military to the governmental and educational sectors may be common. Fourthly, research methodologies vary – in some countries positivism dominates and defines what is considered research that is supported, funded and taught, shaping what is considered knowledge and the knowable, whereas others have strong hermeneutic or interpretive traditions or may even depend upon conceptions of revealed truth, and may consider some information private or confidential that would be public in other jurisdictions. Fifthly, types and amounts of information and data vary such as OECD sources oriented towards economic values that make comparisons difficult to make. Finally, researcher bias regarding the practices of other cultures plays a role.

Finally, neoliberalism and globalization have accentuated the limitations and problems of biographical study. In a number of ways, they have redefined the individual – shifting ontologically from a humanistic conception of individuals towards an organizational or institutional view predicated upon *homo economicus* and a standardisation of decision-making and action, which from a Foucaultian perspective reduces moral agency to rational choice and cost-benefit analysis that exclude all other values and social interests (Hamann, 2009), and in a higher education setting can exclude scholarly values and mores. This view is opposite to that of Weber, whose system of thought is grounded in an individual unit of analysis, from which, through social action, social structures are formed guided by substantive values (see Samier, 2001). Too much of our leadership, organizational and administrative study is conducted at impersonal levels where tradition, custom, norms and power arrangements (Popkewitz, 1988) are bled of the biographical variance from which they are composed.

Despite these complexities, limitations and problems, biographical studies provide opportunities for understanding how people are shaped by their societies and cultures, how social class and ethnicity



influence identity formation and conceptions of the administrative role and mentality, and how organizations are composed of the collective interactions of individuals and groups producing a broad range of dynamics from the cooperative through conformity and assimilation to competition and conflict. They provide windows into worlds that are unfamiliar, challenging our assumptions about education, administration and leadership.

### **Biography in Developing and Postcolonial Worlds**

There are a number of issues related to biographical study beyond the 'Western' tradition from philosophical considerations of ontology and epistemology, through the politics of suppression and the silencing of voices and legitimacy of place, to deep personal and community issues of identity, internal legitimacy and sustainability. And these issues vary depending on which part of the world and which culture one is re/presenting in scholarship.

The subject of biographical work tends to be predicated upon an Enlightenment conception of the person which emphasizes 'authenticity, autonomy, self-realization and transcendence' (Whitlock, 2015, p. 3) which are not universally shared, and that other forms of biographical writings that many groups have available to them are of 'lesser value', including 'slave narratives, women's journals and diaries, letters, memoirs, and travel narratives' (p. 3). Huddart (2008) refers to the tradition as a 'canon' which carries institutional authority that excludes forms other than the 'modern subject' (p. 2). One of the aims of postcolonial theory is to 'displac[e] universalized subjectivities associated with Western thought ... to emphasize how one universalization of subjectivity has always excluded other modes of subjectivity' (Huddart, 2008, p. 4). Ahmed (2004) raises a related issue of the approach to emotion in the biographical – where an individualist conception presents them as individual psychological states and an alternative approach would

see them as part of social and cultural relations embedded in a more collectivist reality.

There are many authors in educational administration who have raised issues with the dominance of the 'Western' (predominantly US or UK) model in the field. Dimmock and Walker (e.g., 2000, 2005) have been the most prolific and consistent in pursuing a broader conception, but others also have played a role like Shah (2010) who advocates using culture and related belief systems as a category of analysis since educational leadership 'concepts, theories and practice evolve in context' (2010, p. 28). However, the recent cross-cultural management literature in some cases goes much further in demonstrating how fundamental conceptions of the individual, gender, values, social roles and authority differ. One limitation in educational administration is the still influential use of Hofstede's work, even though it has been demonstrated to be inaccurate and over-generalizing, superseded by many authors who have taken a less ethnocentric view of culture such as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2004) and the GLOBE studies (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2007), and authors who are now contributing to this literature demonstrating that non-Western countries operate through different cultural values and institutional configurations and arrangements (e.g., Branine, 2011; Chanlat, Davel & Dupuis, 2013; Jack & Westwood, 2010). Additionally, globalization has brought a commodification of indigenous culture as well as the homogenization of worldviews and constructions of reality and knowledge that have produced an 'epistemic violence' of conceptual imperialism (Stewart-Harawira, 2005, p. 23).

A key issue for postcolonial subjects of biographies is the imposition of colonial conceptions which requires for Memmi (2003) that they 'must cease defining [themselves] through the categories of colonizers' (p. 196). He takes a broad and deep view of the effects of colonization: 'We have seen that colonization materially kills the colonized. It must be added that it kills him spiritually. Colonization distorts relationships, destroys or petrifies institutions, and corrupts



men, both colonizers and colonized' (p. 195). This transformation is also addressed by Thiong'o (1986) in his discussion of the colonized mind and Spivak (1987) through the subjugated adopting the character of subalternity. For Bhabha (1994), also, decolonization requires a re-formation of the subject: 'we must not merely change the *narratives* of our histories, but transform our sense of what it means to live' (p. 256) in addition to a postcolonial critique of historical conditions. These require an interruption of Western discourses and substitution of new narratives informed by cultural traditions.

Stewart-Harawira (2005) also points to a conceptual limitation that derives from historical assumptions about the evolution of modernity from Western political thought forming ideas about the world order that is silent about competing perspectives, for example, Maalouf's (1984) *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* and the large contributions other parts of the world made to European development, such as the Islamic world in all scholarly and technological fields (Tolan, Veinstein & Laurens, 2013). One major hurdle to overcome is the 'binary' of West versus the rest that dominates knowledge and ontological conceptions (Dabashi, 2013). Interestingly, a number of postcolonial thinkers base their arguments on Gadamer (1975), who recognised that our conceptions and languages come from our lived experience and represent worldviews which in the context of globalization carries an inherent power relation (see Dabashi, 2013; Smith, 1999). The very language in which biographical studies is carried out needs to be re-examined and in many cases either replaced or redefined, such as the use of 'individual' which in many parts of the world has a more socially-embedded conception, referred to in cross-cultural studies as 'collectivist' (Trompenaars & Hampden, 2004).

Decolonizing the research subject requires the development of a new language that is able to represent non-Western experiences. For example, Whitlock (2015) argues that a new vocabulary needs to be created to describe 'border anxieties' in the threat of large numbers of

refugee populations and also for the refugee experience itself. In large scale nation disasters, the educational system and its personnel themselves are refugees. This is one example only of deep structural and societal disruption that rarely plays a role in considerations of educational administration. Decolonizing autobiography also requires 'autocritography,' which Whitlock defines as a 'critique generated by autobiographical experience' (p. 175) providing as an example Said's account in his autobiography *Out of Place* (1999) the 'shattering collective experience of dispossession,' divided families, surveillance at border points, and threats to personal security. In this kind of context, the necessary elasticity of terminology is required – 'border crossing' in most Western contexts is a relatively benign term, taken in a very different way than it is for refugees, threatened or dispossessed peoples. Metaphysical concepts themselves are implicated in decolonizing – where space and time take on differential experiential qualities and symbolic values. At issue here is not just aiming for a more accurate portrayal, but the ability for those who have been silenced 'to establish narrative authority over one's own circumstances and future, and an ability to claim an audience' (Malkki, 1996, p. 393).

Underlying decolonization is Said's (1993) notion of contrapuntal reading, a 'post-imperial intellectual attitude' (p. 18), which is able to appreciate different or opposing perspectives and experiences of 'intertwined and overlapping histories' one finds in accounts by imperialists or colonizers and those colonized, bringing into question documentary sources constructed by the colonizer. This requires being able to hold discrepant views at the same time, taking 'account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded' (pp. 66-67). This can be seen in Smith's (1999) oppositions of a dominant (and colonizing) image of indigenous peoples and the way that indigenous peoples themselves represent their lives in counterpoint, which provide more authentic information on the complexities and dilemmas of being indigenous,





often not named or voiced in part because they are 'taken for granted or hidden by a community' (p. 151). An interesting part of Smith's argument, which relates to issues of women in leadership, is that colonizing powers have contributed to the suppression of women by separating indigenous communities from their spiritual belief systems and the social structures based on them which had provided women many roles and opportunities for empowerment and participation.

There are a number of levels on which a rethinking of the biographical has to be made. The first is the conception of self and individual, which varies culturally depending on belief system and how embedded a person is in family, community structures and religion and what is considered to be within one's personal sphere. As Friedlmeier, Chakkarath and Schwarz (2005) demonstrate, cultural psychology can bring culturally more authentic psychologies to bear on questions of human development like action orientation, attachment theory, motivation, intergenerational relations, acculturation and value and identity changes that come with modernization.

A second level are interpersonal relations and roles whose structures and interactions are shaped by conventions of culture as well as systems of networks, the structures of caste systems and social classes, gender segregation, multicultural configurations in society, and hierarchies based on ethnicity, race and other factors that can vary significantly from country to country. These do not always create negative effects, for example, gender segregation in delivery of services can benefit women professionally where women demand services from women doctors, lawyers, teachers, professors, etc. which creates educational, employment and advancement opportunities (Samier, 2015). Shah (2010) identifies one example of gender role segregation in Pakistan where women school principals may have power and authority over some aspects of what a Westerner might regard as part of the role's responsibilities, but decisions about purchases and other disbursements of resources in

practice are decided by accountants because financial matters are considered part of the male domain. In some countries, like those in the Arabian Gulf, the percentage of expatriate population heavily affects role construction, at times privileging the foreigner's knowledge over that of locals. The role of family and tribe in individuals' lives can be significant, for example, where honor codes are strong imperatives requiring that individuals maintain the honor of family and community in their professional lives which may be applied in different degrees by gender, with sometimes males defining the code and women having to carry it out (see Shah, 2010). This embeddedness can also be seen in those who through their leadership roles treat their staff as family (Shah, 2010; Al Naqbi, 2016).

A third level consists of the configuration of social institutions that vary nationally and are more or less differentiated (see Smith 2005). Traditional societies are less differentiated with family overlapping into education, political and economic institutions, military and civilian sectors overlapping, where the government plays a strong role in the economy, and where religion, law and government are closely intertwined. In countries with pervasive intelligence networks, the security services can heavily interpenetrate all other sectors as in Soviet style systems, or where education and economy are increasingly aligned in capitalist systems under neoliberalism. These change the conceptions and boundaries of what is considered biographical introducing multiple dimensions to administrative and leadership roles.

Biographical study is also subject to the economic and political conditions in which the subject and their community are located. This includes degrees of societal stability, security risks, war (which is not that uncommon), agricultural collapse, countries torn by internal strife and those invaded by external forces, as well as countries undergoing significant transitions like those in Central and Eastern Europe. Developing countries also face the tensions and contradictions of modernization, and some are young undergoing



nation building at the same time as emerging from colonization. Administrative and leadership roles in education under these conditions carry citizenship responsibilities engaging them in political aims.

Memmi's (2003) argument for overcoming colonization is described as a 'complete liberation, to self-recovery' requiring a process that is not without discomfort, but which biographical work would be part of: first, identifying the oppression of being colonized; secondly, acknowledging the deficiencies of the group; thirdly, freeing oneself from the conditions of this struggle; and finally, no longer using the categories of the colonizer to define oneself (pp. 195-196). This may mean replacing central concepts that drive Western biographical studies: individualism, social institution differentiation, motivational assumptions about going up the hierarchical ladder as a measure of success and value, that individual merit provides opportunities, and describing success as individually earned.

### **Research Implications**

Research methods itself has come under criticism for embedded assumptions and bias in dealing with diversity. For someone like Smith (2005), research has been 'so deeply embedded in colonization that it has been regarded as a tool only of colonization and not as a potential tool for self-determination and development' placing indigenous communities 'under the gaze of Western science and colonialism' (p. 87). This raises the critique of research methods from epistemological and technical issues to that of power and how research reproduces specific forms of social relations. Smith attributes largely to Said (1978) a postcolonial critique of research as a 'corporate institution' that is embedded with colonizing values in the organization, conduct and dissemination of knowledge.

Part of the globalized export of knowledge is research methods which in many parts of the world have been the use of methods and instruments by their very nature which are biased towards Western

ideas and values, such as secularization. In the field of cultural psychology, which is foundational to administrative and leadership biography, the criticism has been a domination of positivistic research in the Middle East for example which favors the abstraction of lived lives into theories and models that derive from the societies in the West (Lonner, 2005). Jack and Westwood's *International and Cross-Cultural Management Studies: A Postcolonial Reading* (2010) claims that management studies has suffered from a superficial analysis of culture since it has been too strongly driven by research methodologies that themselves inherently carry a colonizing parochialism. The purpose of their book is to re-contextualize and re-politicize management studies guided by a broader ethical framework in way that more authentically present views and practices of other parts of the world, their lived experiences and lead to their legitimation. Authors like Rigney (1999) take a similar critical perspective regarding the purpose and value of research for colonized people's in its potential for resistance and creating political integrity, and for Smith (2005) 'a struggle for development, for rebuilding leadership and governance structures, for strengthening social and cultural institutions' and for 'revitalizing language and culture' (p. 89).

Stewart-Harawira (2005) regards as one distinguishing feature between Western and indigenous worlds is a different approach to knowledge: where the Western is dominated by scientific practices that exclude some data while retaining others in contrast to indigenous practices that are wholistic in nature, seeing all knowledge as relevant and interconnected, and recognizing a metaphysical dimension. Of importance in the administration and leadership field is the centrality of the principle of reciprocity in some indigenous systems of thought, like the Maori, where one aims at balance in social and political life reflecting the metaphysical notion of balance between layers of existence consisting of being and non-being (p. 40). Another contrast is the generally linear nature of Western knowledge represented in empirical data and materiality



while Maori knowledge systems are circular or spiral consisting largely of the experiential and intuitive. While the case against Western knowledge is overstated by excluding many qualitative and interpretive traditions, there is a strong tendency towards positivism in management studies that conflicts with other views.

What is recommended, which has relevance for biographical studies in non-Western contexts, is developing research approaches and methods that 'privilege indigenous knowledges, voices, experiences, reflections, and analyses of their social, material, and spiritual conditions' (Smith, 2005, p. 87). An example of non-Western research methods that is more appropriate in Muslim contexts is 'halaqah,' a research method that is a narrative inquiry grounded in Islamic principles following a participative and dialogic process that is ethnographic in character which Ahmed (2014) has used in educational research with teachers and school administrators.

Genre has to be rethought as well, since indigenous biographical studies include not only oral history, auto-ethnography and testimonials, but also the forms that other genres take, like autobiography which can be more relationally oriented towards the community an individual is a member of and can be carried in inter-generational oral story-telling networks in a dialogic form, but all aim at capturing life experiences (Haag, 2008). For Smith (1999) testimonial narrative not only placing experience and identity into its proper cultural context but serves a political role recording self-determination and decolonization requiring a rewriting of history:

*Giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. (p. 28)*

Oral history is carried through ballads, tales and other literary forms in many cultures. In research with those who were participants in historical events, oral history provides a means of capturing their view of history and its process through the stories they are able to tell (Gall, Gall & Borg 1999, p. 396). As Palys (1997) argues, oral history is a way of balancing the historical record so that not only the lives and

experiences of the powerful and authoritative create the historical record but is used capture information from women, minorities, the poor, people lower down on the organizational hierarchy.

Since voice is critically important in such studies, biographical research has to be more hermeneutically and phenomenological sensitive, requiring that it be not only open-ended but highly unstructured. It also has to be in-depth in order to capture what is culturally and socially authentic in its own setting requiring 'different forms of thick description in order to capture their different ethical orientations' (Huddart, 2008, p. 2). Said's (1975) concept of 'contrapuntal reading' provides guidance in capturing a diversity of voices and their expressions of experience, interests and identities (Bilgin, 2016). A fruitful approach is the newer 'transculturalism' theory that examines how some people transcend their original cultures to adjust and adapt to new ones which provides the understanding and sensitivity to other cultures being studied (Éigeartaigh & Berg, 2010). One of the most effective forms of research is Gadamerian hermeneutics which stresses the consciousness of the research subject, which Stewart-Harawira (2005) has used in her own research to achieve 'a consciousness of the way that my own historical understandings and traditions, combined with particular sets of belief systems and values, shape both my interactions with the world and with others, and my interpretations' (p. 20). Hermeneutics provides an opportunity through its recognition of 'streams of tradition' for her to use 'kaupapa' Maori theory and methodology and place the needs of the Maori community central in research.

### **Conclusion**

There are two main arguments made in this paper. The first is that biographical studies not only needs to more frequently be written to capture the many dimensions and factors of educational administration and leadership as they are performed and experienced



at a level of complexity and wholism that other forms of research do not capture. Biographies also have to be much more in depth and extensive, covering the interplay of experiential levels including identity formation, values, interpersonal styles and relationships, group and organizational effects, the influences across the educational sector and external factors that can have significant and profound effects such as a neoliberal political economy environment, national stability, modernization effects, and multicultural and cross-cultural factors. This type of research also requires a more developed research approach and methodology that more explicitly identify the approaches adopted by the author, the selection and reliability of documentary evidence, and extend beyond professional experience to individual and societal factors that shape the practice of the biographical subject. One area that is greatly underdeveloped, particularly in light of more recent toxic leadership and maladministration scholarship, is a psychological interpretation of how personality and character affect administrative practices and styles of leadership which varies cross-culturally.

Secondly, in a globalizing and internationalizing world it behoves us in the administrative field to appreciate the history, conditions and individuals who serve in other systems, not only for academic reasons, but for practical purposes in recognizing the diversity in education systems. Postcolonial and decolonizing critiques have raised many issues with the voluntary importation or involuntary inclusion into an educational world of those nations outside the "West" that have different values and requirements of their educational systems to preserve and more appropriately develop their culture, societal arrangements, and national goals. What is required is a reconstruction of the nature, purpose and form of biographical studies for educational leadership that reflects the perspectives, values and needs of other countries. Their stories provide access to the everyday, to interpersonal relations, to the way people think and how they perceive and understand their world. They also provide the living substance of values, how they are

constructed, understood and lived (or violated as is sometimes the case), and how these shape educational administrative roles and identities, decision-making, and practices in an organizational context.

There is also a social justice imperative in recognizing and serving the integrity and sovereignty of other nations. The Preamble of the UN Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to belief, a central part of culture, and the responsibility of teaching and education to promote the rights and freedoms contained in the articles. Article 26 includes the right of parents to choose the kind of education their children should receive, and Article 27 the right to participate in the cultural life of the community (UN, 1948). More specifically on the right to protect and preserve one's cultural traditions is the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) that examines many aspects of this right including Article 5 which references the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that includes the entitlement 'to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity'. The Declaration on Cultural Diversity has an action plan that implicates education through appropriate curriculum and pedagogy throughout, but has two objectives that are more direct: Number 7 which states "Promoting through education an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and improving to this end both curriculum design and teacher education" and Number 8, "Incorporating, where appropriate, traditional pedagogies into the education process with a view to preserving and making full use of culturally appropriate methods of communication and transmission of knowledge" (2002, p. 6). Arguably, on these bases one not only has the right but the obligation to question globalized education that is imported more or less unadapted into foreign countries through curriculum, pedagogy and its administration and leadership. Part of research ethics also is based on a 'humanistic obligation' to respect individual rights by minimizing any adverse effects of the research conducted (Palys, 1997, p. 92), which is argued here to include the





cultural integrity of other countries. One of these obligations is to place the biographical subject authentically within their social, cultural, political, and historical settings.

The implications of cultural domination in the biography are that it shapes what a good administrator and leader are, what values are important and what conceptions of society are pursued.

*Being is one thing; becoming aware of it is a point of arrival by an awakened consciousness and this involves a journey.*

(N. Thiong'o, *In the Name of the Mother: Reflections on Writers and Empire*, p. 18)

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<sup>i</sup>'Western' is in quotation marks because most of the influence and effects in education come from the US and the UK, with some from Australia and Canada in terms of globalized education. In most cases, when the literature refers to 'Western' it is American or British authors and programs that are considered. To some extent one could also apply the critique of 'Western' to the lack of representation of many Continental European traditions and systems. This same overgeneralization applies to other parts of the world, for example, 'Arab' used as a term for a set of cultural practices applied to the Middle East which consists of very different histories, cultural traditions, political systems and economic conditions, a diversity that applies even in a small geographical area like the Arabian Gulf. The same applies to Islamic or Muslim states – where differences in Islamic practices are considerable influenced by culture and political systems.

#### **About the author**

Eugenie A. Samier is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE. She is author of seven books in the field on ethics, aesthetics, politics, emotions, trust and betrayal and ideologies with Routledge and has contributed to a number of journals and books internationally. Can be contacted at [eugenie.samier@gmail.com](mailto:eugenie.samier@gmail.com)