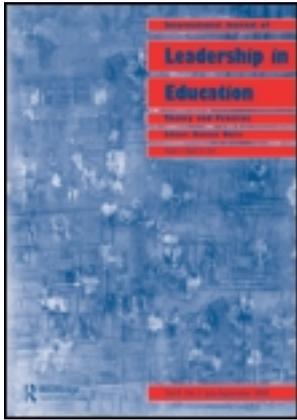


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‘Outsiders within’? Deconstructing the educational administration scholar

JANE WILKINSON and SCOTT EACOTT

In this paper, we weave the auto-ethnographic narratives of the two authors with Bourdieu’s key concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*, as we seek to bring to a level of explicitness the reflexive lens which has shaped our scholarly work. In particular, we examine the process of becoming educational administration academics who share a scholarly disposition towards critical approaches to theory and practice. Such a location positions our work as marginal at best in educational administration scholarship and research, for it is a field characterized primarily by an orientation towards problem-solving and scientific rationality. We explore how our positioning as ‘outsiders within’ the field, combined with our multiple positions in fields such as feminism, unionism, schools and academia, has shaped a disposition towards critical scholarship. We suggest that the resources, which a disposition towards the critical may engender, are urgently required forms of capital at a time when there may be a powerful political investment in ignoring or overlooking the moral, ethical and political life force of educational administration scholarship as a potentially fertile site of intellectual activity.

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Introduction

This article arose from a recognition that as scholars we share an intellectual history and disposition towards critically interrogating and theorizing educational administration practice, which has tended to locate our research on the margins of this field of scholarship. For example, we utilize a range of critical social science lenses, including feminism (in Jane's case), and Bourdieu's methodological 'thinking tools' (in both our cases), with which to examine practice in our field. This like-minded scholastic disposition occurred despite the fact that we are markedly dissimilar in a range of ways, including our gender, age, ethnicity and family of origin. Like the majority of educational administration academics, we share a history of prior service in Australian school administration, albeit in two state education systems with very different structures, traditions and histories of public education. Jane's administration occurred in Victoria, one of the first education systems in the world to fervently embrace the mantra and technologies of managerialism, primarily through the policy of self-managing schools. Scott's administration experience was in New South Wales, a highly centralized state bureaucracy which has only recently begun to adopt the principles of school self-management. Currently, our scholarship takes place in compulsory and post-compulsory education settings marked by three decades of radical restructuring, tightly coupled to market-based reforms and underpinned by managerialist regimes of efficiency and competition. The hallmarks of managerialist governance, such as steering at a distance and regimes of accountability (for example, the introduction of professional teaching/leadership standards; national numeracy and literacy tests and the *My School* website in which schools are ranked according to their performance) have radically reshaped Australian educational leaders' roles and professional identities (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Eacott, 2011; Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010).

One of the unique characteristics of our *geographical* setting is that Australia is a white settler nation, on the rim of South East Asia and the South Pacific. Yet, in terms of national identity, we are perched on the 'periphery of the Euro-American core of the "West"' (Ang, 1995, p. 69). This produces a distinctly ambivalent and ambiguous subject location towards Australian whiteness, as both core ('white') yet 'other' (peripheral to British 'post imperial' and US 'superpower' whiteness) (Ang, 1995). This positioning has contributed to some radical restructuring in education and the economy, due to Australia's need to respond to its specific location close to South East Asian and Asian markets, its considerable distance from economic blocs in Europe and North America and its English inheritance (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). As scholars, this ambiguous position potentially affords us a unique lens, located as we are at both 'margin' and 'centre' of the predominantly Anglo-American traditions of educational administration scholarship. *Intellectually*, this ambiguity and ambivalence may explain, to some degree, the strong contributions made by Australian scholars to mainstream educational administration (cf. Heldley Beare, Brian Caldwell,

Bill Walker) and critical scholarship (cf. Richard Bates, Jill Blackmore, Pat Thomson).

However, at the macro level of the educational administration field, our subject location as critical scholars provides a marked contrast with the hegemonic 'problem solving' orientation of scholarship in educational administration. As a point of departure, what we share is a particular intellectual puzzlement, one that disposes us to construe the world as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically or, to use Anderson's (2009) language, 'problem posers'. It is important to state here at the outset what this article is, and by virtue, what it is not. As a scholarly (reflexive) commentary, it is grounded in disquiet with the status quo. While it stands on its own as a contribution to knowledge, it also serves as part of a larger project with the overarching purpose of being transformative, that is, changing our ways of seeing and being in the world. Through the mobilization of auto-ethnography and Bourdieuan thinking tools, our goal is to interrogate the constitution of the critical disposition towards scholarship in educational administration.

As a means of engaging with this orientation, we describe our shared proclivity towards the critical as locating us as 'outsiders within' educational administration as a field of research and scholarship (Hill-Collins, 1998). Hill-Collins used this term to denote social locations or 'border spaces' inhabited by 'groups of unequal power', who are nonetheless afforded a 'unique angle of vision' because of their intimate knowledge of multiple social locations (2008, p. 6). We utilize the phrase to capture both the sense of transgression we have sometimes experienced as academics as we border cross within and between critical social science and educational administration paradigms and conceptual frameworks, and to capture, as well, the sense of freedom and creativity, which such a location affords us. Yet why label this border crossing as a form of transgression? One reason is that critical scholarship in educational administration research, (see, for example, Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008; Thomson, 2011) is frequently labelled as inaccessible and/or impossibly idealistic (Brooks, 2011; Jansen, 2008), despite its significant history in the field. Such dismissal raises larger questions about 'knowledge claims in relation to knowledge production and boundary setting' within the field, for example, in relation to which methodologies may be legitimately utilized in empirical studies of educational administration and the 'productive possibilities for research design', which may ensue (Gunter, 2009, p. 87). The insider and outsider knowledge (Hill-Collins, 1998, p. 6) that this location affords us is pivotal to understanding struggles for legitimacy in educational administration, a field in which relevance to (taken-for-granted) practice remains paramount (see Brooks, 2011).

Importantly, in locating ourselves as outsiders within the field, we are not indulging in a form of specious hagiography or scholastic martyrdom. Nor are we claiming a spurious equivalence between our privileged subject location as middle-class, white academics and other individuals/groups. Instead, we recognize that we have the agency as critical scholars

to choose to continue to work within educational administration research. Indeed, our claim that our work resides on the margins may be a form of *illusio*, that is, an ‘unthinking commitment to the logic, values and capital’ of educational administration as a research field (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 26).¹ Nor are we suggesting that the ‘outsider within’ subject location denotes a fixed, unitary category of scholarly identity in relation to our field. Rather, we have utilized this position as a means through which to reflexively interrogate both our practices and critical dispositions as scholars and, in so doing, raise broader questions about educational administration scholarship. Specifically, we ask: why have we chosen to undertake scholarship, which is positioned as peripheral in our field? What might such positioning signify about our practices as scholars and our ‘personal intellectual journeys’ (Gunter, 2009, p. 92)? What might the broader implications of our ‘struggles with identity and research orientation’ (Gunter, 2009, p. 92) suggest about educational administration scholarship as a field of knowledge production, in terms of practice and theory?

In engaging with this problematic, we draw on the work of French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, both working *with* and *on* his concepts. We have done so for they allow us to make connections between the embodied and performative nature of practice. In the spirit of reflexive scholarship, our specific focus is the constitution of a disposition towards critical educational administration scholarship. In order to examine the questions, we raise in the preceding paragraph, we draw upon auto-ethnography as a means of interrogating the constitution, both historical and social, of our practice as critical scholars. Both the similarities and dissimilarities of our tales are woven together using a range of Bourdieuan theoretical resources, including *habitus*, *field* and *capital*. We conclude with a discussion of how a combination of these critical forms of analysis may fruitfully extend knowledge production about the practice of educational administration scholarship as a field. First, however, we turn to a brief discussion of auto-ethnography and Bourdieu’s key concept of *habitus*, in order to locate and explicate our analysis.

Telling tales: auto-ethnography as a tool for critical scholarship

At the commencement of *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, Bourdieu (2007 [2004]) notes: ‘This is not an autobiography’ (p. x). His injunction may seem like a peculiar and superfluous observation. However, Bourdieu is deliberately troubling the tendency for life history to become a form of self-indulgence, in which an essentialized and ‘wholly understandable self’ (Thomson, 2010, p. 5) is produced. We have deliberately adopted an auto-ethnographic approach for a number of reasons. First, there are few examples of scholarly auto-ethnography in education administration (for an exception see Tooms & English, 2010), despite the proliferation of such narratives for turnaround principals. While the latter does little to engage with matters relating to the social, cultural, historical and eco-

conomic conditions which enable such discourses in the first place, the former engages with the ‘intimacy, viscosity and particularity of ... (scholarly) ... practice’ in ways which may have been left behind in educational administration’s ongoing quest for legitimacy (Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education [RIPPLE], 2011).

Second, auto-ethnography provides the capacity to expose the politics behind the particularity of scholarly leadership practice, through asking hard questions around the politics of fit which lies beneath constructions of the norms of scholarly identity (Tooms & English, 2010). It provides opportunities to turn a critical gaze on the implicit means by which particular understandings of educational administration scholarship are constructed as legitimate, while others are marginalised as carrying less weight in the field. It thus forces us as scholars to ask questions about dualisms such as centre and margins. Whose interests do such constructions and privileging serve? How might our ongoing proclivity towards critical scholarship serve our own interests? In challenging the hegemony of the field and taken-for-granted capitals which position particular forms of scholarship as more legitimate than others, an auto-ethnography of educational administration scholars and scholarship potentially opens up the field to reflexive vigilance.

Finally, and most importantly, in mobilizing Bourdieuan social theory to our life narratives, our aim is to foreground the social production of our subsequent scholastic trajectories. Rather than our life histories coming about as a result of a linear path, they are a product of particular social and temporal conditions (Thomson, 2010). For example, an examination of past conditions such as our social class, gender and ethnicity can shed important light on the shaping of our scholastic trajectories. Such an approach may appear on the surface to be anathema to meritocratic ideals of democratic society and the agentic individual. This could not be further from the truth. We do not deny ourselves as active social agents who have clearly learnt to play the academic game well, taking advantage of the present social conditions through the numerous forms of capital afforded us through education. Instead, we are highlighting the crucial role reflexivity plays in the formation of the ‘knowing subject’ (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 23). Such reflexivity is a particularly important analytical tool for educational administration scholarship, an arena, which historically has been characterized by pragmatism and an essentially atheoretical tradition (Gunter & Ribbins, 2002). Our auto-ethnographic narratives seek to challenge this *doxa*, these central assumptions and values. In particular, we pay attention to Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, a concept with a long history—dating back to Aristotle—but importantly, one which Bourdieu himself mobilizes to reconcile the dualisms of agency–structure, objective–subjective and the micro–macro (Reay, 2004). We are mindful of the intrinsic link between *habitus*, *field* and *capital*, but due to space limitations, and our focus on the constitution of the critical scholar disposition, we pay primary attention to *habitus*. We now turn to auto-ethnographic accounts to interrogate the formation of our disposition towards the critical in our research and practice.

Attempting an anthropology of the self

Jane's story

In a manner similar to many other academics of working-class origin, education has played a key role in my quest for social legitimacy. Its roots are etched in my family *habitus*. Bourdieu (1977) developed the concept of *habitus* to demonstrate the ways in which the body is in the social world, and the social world is in the body. While the concept allows for individual agency, it also predisposes individuals towards certain ways of being, working at both the individual and collective levels and as a complex interplay between the past and present. For example, my mother was not offered the same educational opportunities as her male cousins and brother—gender discrimination which severely affected her life choices as a non-English-speaking background (NESB) immigrant to Australia. She became acutely aware that she had been the object and subject of othering (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) and this led to her efforts to equip my sisters and me with the forms of cultural capital open to her as a working-class woman. School reports were scrutinized and parent–teacher interviews were religiously attended. We were taken to the theatre to watch popular musicals, the museum and occasionally to the state art gallery. Although her tastes in art and theatre primarily centred on the popular aesthetic of the working class, they suggested to me the possibility of intellectual worlds and ways of being, at a remove from the economic necessity of the factory floor.

My upbringing in a household dominated by a breadwinning female head and absent father (my parents had divorced when I was five) played a critical role in the constitution of my critical disposition, or *habitus*. Female authority in the private realm was the norm (albeit absent in the public sphere). Moreover, I grew up with an implicit awareness that major inequities between men and women were deeply entwined with one's social location. For example, much sought-after overtime was routinely offered in my mother's factory to males as the assumed breadwinners, depriving our family of much needed extra cash. Dinner table conversations about the role of trade unions and political parties in making a difference to one's lives, be it for good or ill, did not spring from intellectually 'abstract position(s)'. Rather, my gender and class locations were experienced 'as an always lived social relation ... involv(ing) conflict, negotiation and tension' (Adkins, 2004, p. 11).

My decision to become a secondary teacher, the 'dominated faction of the middle classes' (Turner, 1991, p. 513), was the classic choice of bright working-class Australian girls in the 1960s and '70s, particularly when generous financial scholarships were offered for tertiary study. Importantly, the choice 'felt right'. Teaching in a working-class school in the public education system from which I had graduated, I felt myself as a 'fish in water', taking the education field around me for granted (Wacquant, 1989, p. 43). Coincidentally, my teaching career had commenced in the early 1980s at a time of great excitement and energy, when a politically left-leaning Labour government with a number of highly visi-

ble feminist politicians was elected to replace a long-reigning conservative government. As a young teacher, I was experiencing the last wave of the 'democratising effects of the period of protest' of the 1960s and '70s (Zipin & Brennan, 2003, p. 316).

A disposition towards activism (the roots of which had been formed in my early childhood) was fostered in this era. For the first time in my life, I was exposed to feminist activism and philosophies, through post-graduate studies and my work as an education consultant, implementing affirmative action policies to redress gender inequities in girls' education and women's teaching careers in my rural region. As a representative on the central council of a highly activist teachers' trade union, I witnessed feminists playing a prominent role in union business. It was the first time I had seen or worked with women who held formal senior leadership roles. Eventually, I gained a deputy principal role and commenced a degree majoring in women's studies, with a view to eventually undertaking doctoral research. None of these achievements came without a struggle, but I was learning how to play the game at a time when the logic of practice of the field of education partially coincided with my own *habitus*.

However, although my capital as a feminist and unionist carried some weight in parts of the union and education *fields*, the logic of practice of educational administration in which I worked, remained deeply imbued with (white) constructions of masculinist authority (Wilkinson, 2008). As a young female deputy principal, I did not fit with the largely middle-aged, male and white administrators of my deeply conservative rural region, although I got along with them on a superficial basis.

This crossing of the diverse arenas of feminism, trade unionism and educational administration could be acutely painful. I experienced a painful misalignment in values between the collectivist, social justice-orientated logic of practice in the former two *fields* and the more individualistic, autonomous and highly competitive *habitus* privileged amongst educational administrators. This is not to idealize the former *fields* which are just as capable of symbolic violence but to foreground a differing logic of practice which characterizes each of the *fields* (Wilkinson, 2009). Feminists have argued that the distances and multiple subjectivities, which arise from the 'field dissonance' I was experiencing as an administrator, unionist and feminist may provide a valuable set of resources for critique and reflexivity (McNay, 2000). That being said, however, such resources can come at a tremendous personal price. My felt dissonance as a 'boundary crosser' (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 29) became particularly acute, when a conservative government, full of managerialist zeal, was elected to power.

As a consequence of the election, a series of market-based reforms of the public sector ensued in which managerialist practices and ideologies played a critical role in the 'renorming' of the education field (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 2). Previously common sense assumptions of the public sphere as an important political space for social justice and equity in education were swept aside. My belief in the *game* was shot. Social justice became yesterday's discourse and economic efficiencies, clients and markets were the new game in town (Smyth, 2011). Most importantly, I was puzzled and struck by what appeared to be the uncritical, unreflexive

acquiescence of the majority of administrators in my region to the new regime. The dissonance between my 'subjective expectations' of social activism in education and the 'objective structures' of the 'renormed' education field grew (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). I eventually shifted interstate, began a family and pursued doctoral studies. My aim was to move into the academic field where I hoped a differing logic of practice would prevail, one which stressed 'dispositions to be reflexively critical and ethical agents' (Zipin & Brennan, 2003, p. 360). A crucial impetus for my doctoral scholarship was an attempt to make sense of the contradictions I experienced between my role as an educational administrator and my 'lived practices, social relations' and 'ethical disposition' as a feminist educator and trade unionist (Zipin & Brennan, 2003, p. 352). For a brief decade, the two roles had not seemed utterly incompatible, but the rise of neoliberalism had put paid to that illusion. Hence, a prevalent thread, which underpins my educational administration scholarship is: why is this incompatibility the case and must it ever be thus?

A player with inherent mistrust

Scott's story

Unlike Jane, I feel that there is no confusion in the fact that I am seen by others as a conservative, a player in the managerialist regime that is the enterprise university and the competitive market that is global higher education. That being said, there is something about my engagement with the educational administrative discourse, both scholarship and practice, that suggests otherwise, there is something that brings me into contact with the critical, to engage with its discourses, and importantly, to contribute. A paradox of sorts, where I both embody the entrepreneurial academic, that which is sought after in the enterprise university, yet contribute to a discourse that is marginalised in my chosen area. Following Bourdieu, this creates a *double bind*, where my performance as a scholar is measured by my productivity, and I am rewarded for that, yet my scholarship itself critiques the performativity and economic focus of educational administration. In the context of this paper, it is the formation of this disposition, or *habitus*, which makes this situation possible that is of interest.

To this very day, my family is a stereotypical nuclear unit. My father is a carpenter by trade and my mother a data entry clerk. Born in the late 1970s, me in 1977 and my sister in 1979, my father ran a successful building company during my early childhood, with my mother staying at home and looking after my sister and me. At the time, we had two cars, a boat and numerous other luxuries that such a lifestyle could provide. That was until 1984, when through a variety of incidents the company went bust and my family, and more specifically, my parents, lost everything. As a family we moved into an old run-down cottage on my grandparent's property, my father had to go back to working 'on the tools' and my mother to work (resulting in a two-hour commute both morning and night). Our family car was not the highest quality, and arguably more sig-

nificant for me, I had to move schools. What I witnessed playing out was the double edge of the game. Our family's position in the *field*, and society writ large, was significantly altered. Our symbolic and social *capital* was lost. Therefore, as a young child, I experienced both the highs and the lows of a capitalist society. Following Bourdieu, our family and individual *habitus* had fallen out of alignment with our new *field* location, resulting in a moment of crisis.

While this crisis for my family was difficult, we overcame it. My father re-established himself in the decade that followed and by the mid-1990s to late 1990s was again in a position of managing a development company (this time retirement villages, incidentally in Wagga Wagga where Jane is based). This story is consistent with the aspirational culture of Australian working- and middle-class society, that is, work hard and you will get what you want. The high was, however, but a short-term window. During the global economic turmoil of the last decade, the owners of the development company had stretched their means too far and my father was once again out of work. The game had again shown its ugly side. For the second time in the past 25 years, my father was forced to go back on the tools—far more difficult when almost 60—and my mother to casual-/part-time office work.

What is it about this experience that shapes a critical scholarly stance? My experience, and especially the somewhat seductive nature of the managerialist work ethic, makes it little wonder that I found myself in a school leadership and now an academic position requiring considerable administrative load. I typify the stereotype of educational administration, being white and male (although I would argue that I do not yet tick the third box of middle aged), and coming from a social position of privilege (although I should note that I am the first to attend university on my father's side of the family). However, it is my experience that also significantly shapes my critical stance in scholarship. The witnessing, not once, but twice, of the game taking away what my parents had built up has given me an inherent mistrust of the game. This mistrust, which enables a reflexivity of my own role in playing, and by virtue of doing so extending the game, is built upon a constant struggle: the pursuit, if not craving, of rationality, yet the acceptance of the social world as not rational. The choice of Bourdieu as a theoretical lens may not seem obvious here. My choice of the critical can be interpreted as a direct reaction—and rational choice—to what I have witnessed. However, it is my embodying of the hegemony of managerialism while embracing the scholarly periphery that is of interest. It is here where I argue that the durability of my *habitus*, as with Jane's, warrants attention.

Of course, working with critical scholarship in a field, which primarily orientates towards the pragmatic, can be somewhat self-serving. It serves as an act of distinction, making one (or a group) stand out from the crowd. In the contemporary academic environment, one that encourages and rewards originality, this distinction is important and part of building a research profile. The critique of rationality and the assumed linearity of time, both features of mainstream educational administrative research, is not only reflective of the critical perspective which I have adopted, but also

my professional, and more importantly, personal trajectory. That is, the practice of scholarship is not defined by the attribution of authorship to a journal article, monograph, grant application or lecture, but rather is the product of a series of experiences given meaning through their relationship to both time and space. The underlying assumption of scholarly practice is, therefore, reflective of my inner workings as the author and my place in both time and space. This is what makes the analysis of our dispositions both interesting and professionally challenging, for we take a risk as educational administration scholars in writing in an auto-ethnographic mode, as such practices are rare in our field. Yet this is precisely our point, namely, as scholars we need to take risks with our own practices.

On (mis)‘fit’ in the field

Far from appealing to martyrdom, or staking a claim to rock star status among the academy, in this article we seek to interrogate the notion of individual choice when applied to the development of a critical disposition towards educational administration scholarship. Indeed, our position on the periphery of educational administration, reflective of the (re)productive nature of the field itself, suggests the need for engagement around the notion of misalignment by choice. Our intervention in this theoretical space is an articulation of the desire to maintain intellectual autonomy and the choice to not conform. For Bourdieu, this is a challenging proposition. He outlines a ‘theory of crisis’ where the *habitus* falls out of alignment with the *field* in which it operates, creating a situation in which belief in the game (*illusio*) is temporarily suspended and the orthodoxy of practice, or *doxic* assumptions, is raised to the level of discourse, where they can be contested. However, Bourdieu tends to view these moments as an exception to the rule and even his own theory. As Crossley (2003) suggested, despite Bourdieu’s attention to struggle within society (*fields*), through his focus on (re)production, he tends to have a somewhat consensual view of the world.

Herein lies an overarching question; that is, how can the divide between sociology and management scholarship be bridged? As a discipline, sociology uses the collective, society/ies writ large, as its unit of analysis. In contrast, management—for which we contend educational administration most closely aligns—focuses on the individual, be that a person, a school or whatever. This distinction is significant, particularly in the context of our argument around the choice to conduct work located at the margins of our field. The strength of Bourdieu here is that he provides theoretical resources necessary to deconstruct, reconceptualise and then reintegrate an object of analysis within a model of reality (Eacott, 2013). This is only made possible through the interplay, not singling out, of his thinking tools such as *habitus*, *capital* and *field*.

The work around the *habitus* of critical educational administration scholars only works, both theoretically and empirically, through a sophisticated construction of the *field* and an interrogation of the *capital* at play

within that *field*. Therefore, there is a need to engage around changes within the social, and also the unique location of players within those and around those changes. For example, the professional identity crisis, which Jane, and many other female administrators experienced in the 1990s (see Blackmore & Sachs, 2007), arose from the misalignment between her *habitus* and the new realities of the *field*. For Scott, his family's rise, fall, rise and fall again, has provided him lived experience of the rates of exchange (*capital*) in society. What we have been struck by is the durability of critique and reflexivity as consistent and crucial features of our *habitus*. This is in contrast to a Bourdieuan reading which locates these agentic features as arising from temporary moments of crisis in which the dissonance between *habitus* and objective conditions becomes so great as to lead to the replacement of 'habit' with 'rational and conscious computation' (Crossley, 2003, p. 48). In Jane's case, a predisposition towards social activism arising from early childhood experiences of gender and class discrimination has governed her professional adoption of an 'outsider within' location within her educational administration scholarship, as she negotiated the various shifts from schooling, academia and her family of origin. Likewise, Scott's inherent mistrust of the game, having experienced both the rewards and loss of what is on offer, has also pre-reflexively shaped the choice of 'outsider within'. This subject location has been an enduring feature of both Jane and Scott's trajectories (both professional and personal), shaping the hybridity, which characterizes their identity construction/s.

A key strength of Bourdieu's scholarship lies in his rejection of theory for theories' sake and the notion of intellectual autonomy. In mobilizing these threads of Bourdieu through the use of auto-ethnography, we contend that 'intellectual' be interpreted writ large. Our argument is that in the practice of educational administration scholarship, there is a need for contestation. Critical and scientific intellectuals—not limited to those who work in universities—should seek to engage with, and regain some of the terrain lost to technocratic administrative elites. Bourdieuan social theory clearly provides the intellectual resources to articulate the means of (re)production in society, and specifically education. In doing so, it also provides the means through which leverage points and creative frictions can be interrogated for the purpose of bringing about spaces of, and for, change.² The methodological tools of Bourdieuan social theory and auto-ethnography can provide alternative means by which reflexivity and critique can be dialectically embedded in the intellectual practice of educational administration.

Conclusion: implications for educational administration theory and practice

Here, we examined the question of whether Bourdieu's social theory could be mobilized to understand the formation of a critical disposition towards educational administration scholarship. This may seem an odd question to have posed, not least because Bourdieu is frequently por-

trayed as little more than a (re)productive theorist with a consensual view of society. However, through the auto-ethnographic narratives of our experience/s, we have shown how Bourdieu's social theory is instructive for further reflections on what conditions are likely to lead to critical scholarship. We do not seek to replace one master narrative (managerialism) with another (Bourdieu). Rather, we have explicitly brought Bourdieu into conversation with educational administration in managerialist times. That said, the intellectual resources employed do not lie directly in Bourdieu's understanding of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* as means of (re)production. Instead, we suggest that consistent with his pursuit and protection of intellectual autonomy, such resources can be located through connecting interrogations of the mundane elements of everyday practice, one's location in the social, and what these signify in terms of broader analyses of power.

This is a crucial form of labour, particularly given that managerialist discourses have constructed an orthodoxy (or *doxa*) of meritocracy and the accumulation of *capital* as a means of advancing one's standing with a *field*. What we have not done, is argue for the establishment of another *field* or *subfields* such as 'critical educational administration studies', as such proliferation of *fields*—in the Bourdieuan sense—is neither desirable or helpful. Such actions would lead to further confusion regarding Bourdieu's notion of a *field* as a (semi-)autonomous social structure and the practices that take place within such locations. In addition, despite our attention being focused primarily on our *habitus*, we cannot stress enough that this disposition formation can only be understood in terms of *capital* and *field*.

As noted previously, this work fits within the critical tradition on educational administration. Despite a rich and theoretically diverse discourse, the critical has not provided substantive disruption to the technocratic administrative hegemony of educational administration. Our focus on an 'outsider within' subject location is novel within educational administration and runs counter to managerialist discourses of progress. Following Adkins (2011), we contend that while the task of the social scientist was once to make the familiar strange, it is now our job to make the strange familiar. By engaging with, and interrogating the spaces of strangeness, educational administration research can reorientate its relation with reflexivity and critique. At a time when civil unrest in England has raised troubling questions about the role of education in the social formation of youth, and educational administrators are described as having the 'life-blood of hope ... drained from them' by the 'burden of ... everyday' schooling (Jansen, 2008, p. 155), such reflexivity and critique can afford important resources of intellectual vitality for practice and scholarship.

Notes

1. We are indebted to our colleague Laurette Bristol, for her insightful observations in this section.
2. Many thanks to our colleague Laurette Bristol for this point.

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