



UnLeading invites us to challenge common-sense assumptions and center often-silenced approaches to leadership, allowing us to re/imagine possibilities for leading, learning, and being in relation to ourselves, each other, and the more than human world.

<https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/>

Season 1: Facilitator Guide

“UnLeading requires a commitment to holding multiple truths, troubling common-sense assumptions, living the inquiries and sitting in the ambiguities of complex ideas such as leadership, schooling, and society. UnLeading asks us to engage in the praxis of leadership, a continual interplay of action towards systemic change and deep, inner reflection. In this way, it is a process of becoming, with no predetermined destination or finite goal. UnLeading asks us to look for leadership in unfamiliar places and challenge the notion of the individual leader.” (The UnLeading Project, York University)

SUMMARIZE by identifying several themes/concepts that arise in this conversation with the guest speakers. Note similarities, differences, tensions, connections, and possible contradictions between and among them. Additionally, note the perspectives, ideas, and voices that might be missing as well in this conversation. You are also invited to draw out compelling quotes from the speakers and comment on them

MAKE CONNECTIONS to your experiences in/with communities and to larger socio-political and historic contexts. Think about and comment on how the thoughts and ideas presented by the speakers connect to similar themes/concepts in other contexts of leadership.

REFLECT on how the conversations with the speakers inform your understanding of leadership outside of familiar frameworks using the guided reflection questions posed below.

ACT by committing to possible actions (immediate and long-term) that you will engage in to disrupt the status quo, which will steadfastly guide you in actualizing the type of leader you hope to be in and with communities.

The Four I's: Embracing Fractals as Possibilities for Leadership

“A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop.

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale. The patterns of the universe repeat at scale. There is a structural echo that suggests...that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.

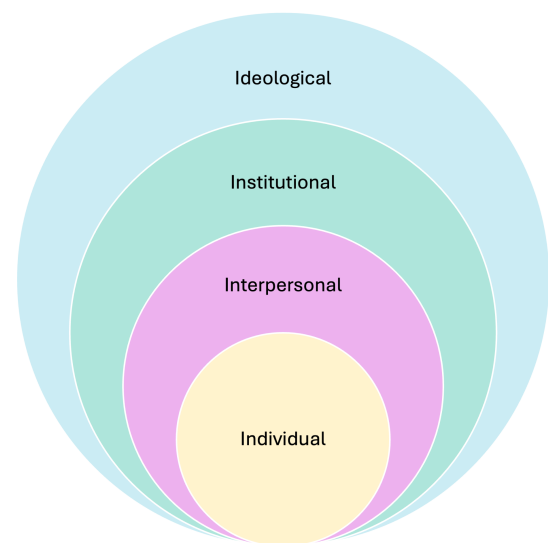
These patterns emerge at the local, regional, state, and global level—basically wherever two or more social change agents are gathered. And this may be the most important element to understand—that what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.” (adrienne maree brown)

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.



Season 1



QUEERING LEADERSHIP

(Click image to listen)



Guiding Reflection Questions:

How do we envision new possibilities for schooling and resist rigid frameworks of leadership by questioning and challenging what has become normalized in schooling and society?

1. How might we lead with our whole body and self, challenging institutional norms and heterogendered cultures?
2. How might we center queer identities in leadership practices?
3. What are the ways in which we build purposeful community and create inclusive spaces?
4. Who do we need to be as leaders to lead with the understanding of queer theories?
5. How might we apply this understanding to the work we do in communities, schools, and academies?

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

“Queering leadership is just trying to find my space to feel like I am understood in the entirety of my being without having to chop myself up, to make it work.” (Beyhan Farhadi)

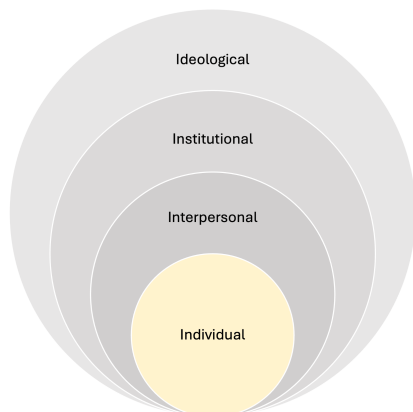
“It feels very much like a reciprocal, relational responsibility that I have as a being to all my relations.” (Margaret Alexander)

“I guess the thing I'd say is I hope what it (queering leadership) does for leaders is it just creates as many questions as it does certainties. I think that's part of what the legacy of queering leadership should be: possibilities and questions.” (Lance McCready)

“I lead with my whole body, practice being right-sized, and consider how I take up space. I honour the messy, the uncategorizable, and the vulnerable. I feel into accountability and interdependence. I lead in service of surviving, thriving and collective liberation.” (Zena Sharman)

Reflection:

How do these statements resonate with you in terms of how you see yourself leading?



Action:

- What parts of yourself do you allow to be seen in your leadership? What parts of yourself do you hide in your leadership?
- What do you hold to be “certain” about leadership? How can you challenge this certainty by considering different possibilities and asking different questions?
- How do you lead in ways that honour the messy, the uncategorizable and the vulnerable? In what ways do you lead in opposition to this?

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

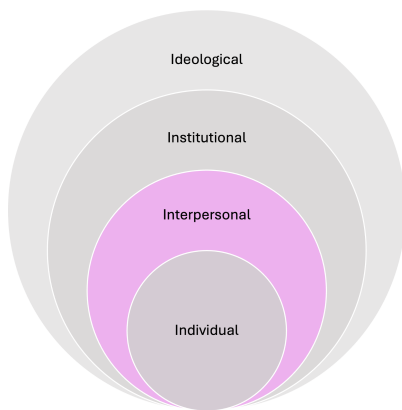
“I've been thinking a lot about what it would mean to practice a kind of engaged pedagogy, as bell hooks encourages us to do and to sort of imagine (that) kind of reciprocal relationship.”
(Syrus Marcus Ware)

“Students are entirely coded from the minute they walk through kindergarten in that door, they are coded and shaped. By the time I'm encountering them, trying to sort of build different ways of relating.” (Beyhan Farhadi)

“I understood leadership in this kind of Euro-Western construct...it was this binary of some people are legitimized as leaders, which then means there are followers. It calls into question the idea of power.” (Margaret Alexander)

Reflection:

How might we lean into vulnerability, humility, interdependence, and love as we lead for change?



Action:

- Practice reciprocal relations in which there is a give and take with clear and respected boundaries. What do you find difficult in this process? How might you work through these difficulties?
- There are many examples of binaries in leadership (good vs. bad, pure vs. evil, leader vs. follower). Practice challenging the binary between being a leader or a follower. Notice and name what becomes possible beyond these opposite understandings of leadership that maintain clear power structures.

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

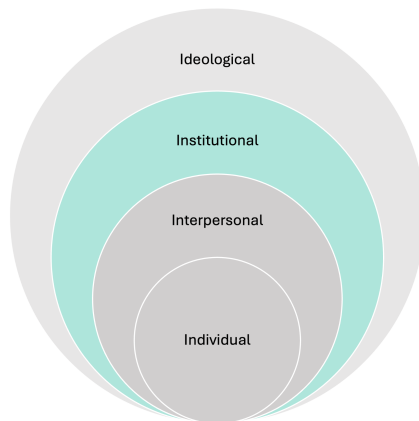
“It was interesting to think about this formalized learning about leadership in a school setting because it reflects a particular construct of what leadership looks like. It made me wonder who now is seen to have leadership, "potential", and who gets chosen to lead in ways that are often circumscribed by institutional power structures.” (Zena Sharman)

“I think that that is what queer folks have always done in institutions, is question, is make space, is prop doors open, is create liminal space, do all of these things that sort of make new things possible.” (Syrus Marcus Ware)

“Queerness to me is this imagination of possibilities that are much more than what's in front of you and the ability to think about something different or be different or imagine something different.” (Margaret Alexander)

Reflection:

How can educational institutions center queer identities and support queering leadership approaches?



Action:

- Make a list of the possibilities that you open up in your leadership. Make a list of the possibilities that you have abandoned over the years. Choose 1 possibility to work towards in the next month.
- Choose 1 way in which you can take collective action in the next few months. This might mean getting involved in an established movement or cause or it may mean creating community around a cause you have identified as needing your attention and activism.

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

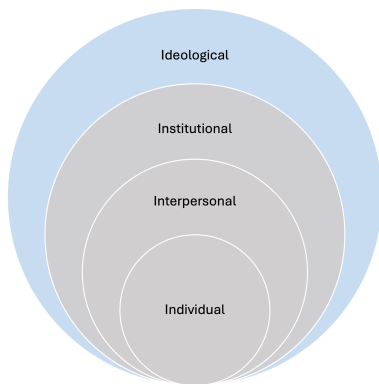
“My hope is that queering leadership might offer us ways to resist assimilation in service of building something more nurturing and liberatory.” (Zena Sharman)

“Queering leadership is thinking about pleasure differently. I feel like that doesn't even land. I feel like there's not even space for that for thinking about pleasure outside of such a narrow, restrictive disciplinary framework.” (Beyhan Farhadi)

“It will look much more like webs, like networks, like collective groupings, like shared knowledge, like reciprocal learning, like shared leadership, like all boats rising.” (Syrus Marcus Ware)

Reflection:

How have you been assimilated as a leader? What have you been assimilated into? How have you resisted assimilation?



Action:

- Look for examples of pleasure in leadership both in your experiences and in the experiences of others? What might it look like if leaders were to see pleasure and foster experiences of pleasure in their everyday work?
- Practice leading as part of a web, part of a network, and part of a larger collective. What does this mean about your influence and importance? What might this mean about possibilities for transformative change?