Education Faculty Works   School of Education

2022

Who Governs? Blank Spots and Blind Spots in State Boards of Education in the United States

Bryan A. VanGronigen

Michelle D. Young
Loyola Marymount University, michelle.young@lmu.edu

Kevin Rodriguez

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/education_fac

Part of the Education Commons

Who Governs? Blank Spots and Blind Spots in State Boards of Education in the United States

Bryan A. VanGronigen
University of Delaware
United States
&
Michelle D. Young
Loyola Marymount University
United States
&
Kevin Rodriguez
University of Virginia
United States

Abstract: State boards of education (SBOEs) are one of many governmental entities that reside within the larger educational policymaking sphere. With recent U.S. federal legislation devolving more authority over education to states, state-level governmental

entities like SBOEs are in the spotlight perhaps now more than ever. Yet not much has been published about SBOE structures and functions, much less about their members and how they might influence educational policies and education broadly. Using critical policy analysis methods, this descriptive study focused on two areas: (a) the criteria and processes that states use to select SBOE members, and (b) the characteristics of today's SBOE members (e.g., demographics) and the extent to which SBOEs are representative portraits of the states they serve. Findings report similarities and differences among members within and between the 47 U.S. states with SBOEs. We close by critically assessing our findings, especially whether SBOE member selection criteria and processes and SBOE members themselves are well-positioned to best represent their constituents.
Keywords: state boards of education; educational policy; state governance; critical policy analysis

¿Quién gobierna? Espacios vacíos y puntos ciegos en los consejos estatales de educación en Estados Unidos

Resumen: Los consejos estatales de educación (SBOE, por sus siglas en inglés) son una de las muchas entidades gubernamentales que residen dentro de la esfera más amplia de formulación de políticas educativas. Con la reciente legislación federal en los Estados Unidos (EEUU) que delega más autoridad sobre la educación a los estados, las entidades gubernamentales a nivel estatal como las SBOE están en el centro de atención quizás ahora más que nunca. Sin embargo, no se ha publicado mucho sobre las estructuras y funciones de la SBOE, y mucho menos sobre sus miembros y cómo podrían influir en las políticas educativas y la educación en general. Mediante el uso de métodos críticos de análisis de políticas, este estudio descriptivo se centró en dos áreas: (a) los criterios y procesos que utilizan los estados para seleccionar a los miembros de la SBOE, y (b) las características de los miembros de la SBOE de hoy (p. ej., datos demográficos) y la medida en que las SBOE son retratos representativos de los estados a los que sirven. Los hallazgos informan similitudes y diferencias entre los miembros dentro y entre los 47 estados de EE. UU. con SBOE. Terminamos evaluando críticamente nuestros hallazgos, especialmente si los criterios y procesos de selección de miembros de SBOE y los propios miembros de SBOE están bien posicionados para representar mejor a sus electores.
Palabras-clave: consejos estatales de educación; política educativa; gobernabilidad estatal; análisis crítico de políticas

Quem governa? Pontos vazios e pontos cegos em conselhos estaduais de educação nos Estados Unidos

Resumo: Os conselhos estaduais de educação (SBOEs) são uma das muitas entidades governamentais que residem na esfera mais ampla de formulação de políticas educacionais. Com a recente legislação federal dos Estados Unidos (EUA) devolvendo mais autoridade sobre a educação aos estados, entidades governamentais estaduais como SBOEs estão no centro das atenções talvez agora mais do que nunca. No entanto, pouco foi publicado sobre as estruturas e funções da SBOE, muito menos sobre seus membros e como eles podem influenciar as políticas educacionais e a educação de forma ampla. Usando métodos de análise crítica de políticas, este estudo descritivo concentrou-se em duas áreas: (a) os critérios e processos que os estados usam para selecionar membros da SBOE e (b) as características dos membros da SBOE de hoje (por exemplo, demografia) e até que ponto as SBOEs são retratos representativos dos estados que servem. Os resultados relatam

semelhanças e diferenças entre os membros dentro e entre os 47 estados dos EUA com SBOEs. Concluímos avaliando criticamente nossas descobertas, especialmente se os critérios e processos de seleção de membros da SBOE e os próprios membros da SBOE estão bem posicionados para melhor representar seus constituintes.

Palavras-chave: conselhos estaduais de educação; política educacional; governança estatal; análise crítica de políticas

Who Governs? Blank Spots and Blind Spots in State Boards of Education in the United States

"Who governs?" is an essential question. "It is important because it affects who has influence over what governments do and how they do it" (Henig, 2012, p. 119). In the realm of K-12 education in the United States (US), the answer to the question of who governs is complicated by multiple levels of governance as well as the lack of a federalized education system. Instead, each U.S. state has its own unique system for governing education that involves multiple players, from state boards of education (SBOEs), chief state school officers (CSSOs), and state education agencies (SEAs) to gubernatorial staff and state legislative committees focused on education. This study examines one state-level governing body—the SBOE—asks the following three research questions:

1. What are the processes and eligibility criteria for becoming an SBOE member?
2. Who serves as SBOE members and SBOE leaders?
3. Who is (and is not) represented and advantaged based on SBOE memberships?

Currently, three U.S. states lack an SBOE: Minnesota, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. All other states and the District of Columbia have SBOEs, though state constitutions and state laws outlining the legal basis for SBOEs differ significantly across the US, as do the representative nature and membership of these boards. Given the significance of who governs, what governing bodies pay attention to, and what they work to achieve, surprisingly little is known about SBOEs (Henig, 2012; Young & Reynolds, 2017; Young et al., 2019). Historical overviews of state governance models related to education indicate that SBOEs first emerged in the early 1800s as citizen groups with responsibility for representing the public in the administration of states' education systems (Kysilko, 2011). How well SBOEs represent the public in their work, however, has been called into question. Specifically, Henig (2012) and Young and colleagues (2019) question whether SBOEs represent the shifting demographics of their states' populations generally or K-12 school populations specifically. As Henig (2012) suggests, "[t]he degree to which this is the case and the impact of the SBOEs' lack of representation requires further exploration" (p. 119).

Review of Relevant Literature

Historically, the notion of political representation was considered to be in opposition with true democracy or—at the very least—a poor substitute (Dahl, 1989). Today, however, almost every democratic political institution includes representative rather than direct democracy. Representation, according to Pitkin (1967), involves making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" within the public policy arena. It occurs when elected or appointed representative officials are provided with a mandate or authority to speak, advocate, or act in the public policy arena on behalf of their constituents. In essence, citizens delegate power to a representative who then independently makes decisions based on their understanding of what is best for their constituents and society at-

large (Tormey, 2015). Scholars of mandate representation, on the other hand, are less wedded to the notion that political representation should "mirror" society or that representatives can or should seek to thoroughly represent the interests and opinions of their constituents.

In contrast, scholars like Williams (2000) criticize traditional conceptions of representation for failing to consider the injustices experienced by minoritized populations in the US. She recommends re-envisioning representation in light of such experiences. Reflecting on the importance of trust, voice, and memory, Williams (2000) frames representation as a form of "mediation" and argues for the inclusion of more representatives of minoritized populations in the public policy arena. Drawing on the historical experiences of Black citizens in the US, Williams (2000) charts the betrayal of those Black citizens by White representatives that gave them valid reason for distrusting White representatives and government as a whole. She asserts that the deliberative nature of government requires the presence of individuals who have direct access to or can speak directly from historically excluded perspectives. Many governing bodies in the US fail to reflect the demographic representation of their broader populations—such as local school boards (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2007), city councils (Trounstine & Valdini, 2008) and state legislatures (Clark, 2019)—and SBOEs are no exception. A thorough review of the educational research literature yields little more than "superficial answers" to the question of who represents the public on SBOEs (Young & Reynolds, 2017).

One exception is the work of Young and colleagues (2019) who conducted an exploratory study of SBOEs in Florida, Texas, and Virginia. The team found that none of the three SBOEs' membership reflected the demographics of their state. Moreover, only two of the three SBOEs included at least one member with a background in education despite a primary responsibility of these SBOEs being to support the quality of their state's education system. In contrast, the authors discovered that many SBOE members—particularly in Florida—represented the business, legal, and political sectors, and some had potential conflicts of interest (e.g., associations with alternatives to public education). Similarly, a number of SBOE members in each state were connected to deep, powerful business and/or political networks, both locally and nationally, which raised questions about the influence of those SBOE members' networks as well as the blurring of lines between public and private spheres of influence.

More insight is available concerning the size of SBOEs, how SBOE members are elected or appointed, and SBOEs' responsibilities. In the early 1890s, SBOEs ranged in size between four and 11 members (Beach & Will, 1955). Between 1950 and 1990, the variability in size increased significantly from four to 27 members with an average around nine (Young & Reynolds, 2017). Reviewing data from numerous primary and secondary sources, Young and Reynolds (2017) charted how SBOE members were selected and by whom between 1913 and 2015. Like McCarthy and colleagues (1993), they found that a majority of SBOEs reflected four education governance models: (a) Governor appoints SBOE, SBOE appoints CSSO; (b) SBOE is elected, SBOE appoints CSSO; (c) Governor appoints SBOE, CSSO is elected; and (d) Governor appoints both SBOE and CSSO. From these sources, the most significant change over time appears to be the increase in gubernatorial appointments of SBOE members, rising from 17 in 1913 to 33 in 2014 (Young & Reynolds, 2017).

A majority of the work on SBOEs includes descriptive reviews of SBOE structures, such as the literature noted above, and reviews of areas of authority and various trends, including the politics, values, and concerns of a given time period. According to Young and colleagues (2019), SBOEs are primarily involved in setting curriculum standards, adopting state tests, and designing state accountability systems. However, the literature indicates that—over time—SBOEs have taken on a variety of additional roles in shaping educational policy and practice across the US (Young &

Reynolds, 2017). A 2015 review by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) identified four roles common to SBOEs: (a) *policy makers* who are responsible for policies that promote educational quality, (b) *advocates* who are responsible for quality education for all students, (c) *liaisons* who seek to foster relationships and two-way communication between education and others, and (d) *consensus builders* who work to find common ground among the various parties that influence educational policy (NASBE, 2015).

How well SBOEs actually fulfill the two latter roles—in particular—was the subject of a 2021 investigation by Young and colleagues. The authors examined the opportunities SBOEs provided for public engagement via online media, such as websites and discussion boards. They learned that few SBOEs offered means for the public to engage in two-way communication (NASBE Role 3) or to influence educational policy (NASBE Role 4). Although SBOEs are "one of the most understudied policy making entities in the field of education" (Young & Reynolds, 2017, p. 21), they engage in critical policy work and serve as a significant point of access to educational policy making for a vast array of interests (Young et al., 2019; Young et al., 2021). As McFarlane (2009) argued, researchers should be paying much closer attention to the work of this particular state-level governing body.

Conceptual Framework

> The research frame one uses dictates, to a large extent, the way one identifies and describes policy problems, the way one researches these problems, the policy options one considers, the approach one takes to policy implementation, and the approach taken for policy evaluation. (Young, 1999, p. 681)

Like Young (1999), we appreciate the significant role of conceptual frameworks in shaping our thinking, questions, and research of SBOEs. In this study, we devised and employed a framework that draws on three concepts: (a) blank spots and blind spots (Wagner, 1993); (b) critical feminist theory (Young & Marshall, 2013), and (c) diffractive methods of policy analysis (Barad, 2006; Dixon-Román, 2016; Ulmer, 2016).

Blank Spots and Blind Spots

We begin our exploration with a consideration of Wagner's (1993) assertion that "all scientists operate in a world defined by what they think and know to be true" (p. 16). The phenomena that researchers do not know about—or are ignorant of—represent their blind spots. As such, the findings of normative research, Wagner argues, can perpetuate popular or normative misunderstandings of a given phenomenon.

According to Wagner (1993), "ignorance is a better criterion than truth for assessing the usefulness of educational research" (p. 15). In his analysis of ignorance, Wagner (1993) distinguishes between what he calls *blank spots* and *blind spots*. When research focuses on questions already in circulation—but not investigated to their full extent—that research may fill blank spots in terms of knowledge or contributions to emergent theory. When research asks new questions, it may illuminate blind spots—or "areas in which existing theories, methods, and perceptions actually keep us from seeing phenomena as clearly as we might" (p. 16).

Often, the forms of educational research that are most visible and most persuasive to lay audiences and policymakers are those that provide simplistic—and sometimes misleading—treatments of issues. Wagner (1993) challenges researchers to question their most basic assumptions, not only about the phenomenon of study, but assumptions that undergird research questions that seem most obvious and urgent to us. He encourages us to examine, think, and map beyond what has

been thought before, to reach for questions that extend beyond the data and methods already employed, and to strive not for "capital T" truth, but to reduce ignorance. "Given the blind spots necessarily created through their dedication to particular blank spots, truth seems a peculiar and inappropriate point of reference for judging what they do" (p. 18).

Applying Wagner's (1993) concepts to the present study on SBOEs, one might conceive what has been produced thus far to be a finite body of knowledge produced by a set of methods and assumptions about the importance of mapping and describing these governing bodies. Doing so framed a series of blank spots that were subsequently filled with information. It also fostered a host of blind spots about SBOEs. What blank spots remain, and what blind spots have been created? The questions we ask in the present study about who governs seek to address a set of blank spots, thus reducing some of the ignorance around the governance of the U.S.'s education system. In addressing the latter—blind spots—Wagner, like Barad (2006), points to the utility of thinking beyond one's disciplinary practice for insight into new theories, methods, and questions—"questions that are not new on the face of the earth, just new to researchers doing the borrowing. They are old questions for those they have been borrowed from" (p. 18). To substantiate and better accomplish this end related to blind spots, we adopted a lens of critical feminist theory.

Critical Feminist Theory

Critical feminist theory (CFT) focuses on issues of power and patriarchy and draws on critical theory's focus on social, political, and organizational structures (e.g., school boards, state legislatures) that perpetuate the power of some to the detriment and oppression of others (Young & Marshall, 2013; Young & Reynolds, 2017). CFT analysis enables the search for embedded facts and assumptions that were once constructed in some historical context and subsequently perpetuated as aspects of reality (e.g., board eligibility criteria) in order to dismantle intersecting and inter-related race-, class-, *and* gender-based systems of oppression and subordination. CFT is "employed to highlight power sources that control, through discourse and powerful policy artifacts (e.g., curriculum standards), the generation, legitimation, and interpretation of policy choices" (Young & Reynolds, 2017, p. 28) that benefit dominant groups and to identify how some groups have gained and maintained privilege over time (Young & Marshall, 2013).

CFT also shares some of the central tenets of critical race theory (CRT; Bell, 1987; Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Both perspectives, for example, highlight the ways that public policy arenas and courts have based decisions on the centrality of property rights and how, by doing so, individuals who are White and male are privileged, while those who are neither White nor male (the "other") are not. Like CRT, CFT offers an analytic tool through which to understand the powerful forces and belief systems (e.g., meritocracy, color-evasiveness) that perpetuate inequities. Through stances of critique, challenge, agency, and action, CFT promotes theoretical analysis and research aimed at re-framing phenomena—like educational policy—to eliminate oppressive practices and empower those whose voices and standpoints have been marginalized or outright silenced.

Feminist research in education (e.g., Young & Marshall, 2013) has revealed—over time—the persistent underrepresentation of women in educational leadership and policy positions along with the persistent failure of educational policymakers to address gender issues in their work. Moreover, this research has demonstrated how the combination of gender and race/ethnicity intensify issues of inequity (e.g., Young & Skrla, 2003). For SBOEs, CFT offers an opportunity to explore the composition of SBOEs and how processes and eligibility criteria might have shaped, and continue to shape, access (Young & Reynolds, 2017). CFT scholars are interested in understanding, for instance, why few states have adopted explicit requirements concerning gender or racial/ethnic diversity

(Young & Reynolds, 2017), such as why Hawaii limited women's appointments on the SBOE to no more than three of the 15 members at any given time (Beach & Will, 1955), how Hawaii's regulations influenced the work of the SBOE, and whether Hawaii was alone in adopting such exclusionary practices. Choices about who is fit to govern—and who is not—are based on dominant assumptions and beliefs concerning a range of identity markers, from gender and race to age, education, and socio-economic status (Young & Marshall, 2013; Young & Reynolds, 2017).

Given this theoretical orientation, we leveraged CFT to more closely scrutinize how people become SBOE members (e.g., processes, eligibly criteria) and who SBOEs currently represent and advantage, particularly with respect to women and minoritized populations. Indeed, a CFT-informed examination of the ways in which SBOE seats are filled and SBOE memberships more generally is not only an examination of the strength and depth of the predominance of White, middle and upper-class men in positions of power, it is foremost an examination of power, control, and dominance and the trail of inequities that such forces leave in their wake. "Who governs" determines who has influence, whose voices and perspectives are heard, what issues are identified as important, what issues are ignored or considered less important, what governing bodies do, and how they do it (Henig, 2012; Young & Reynolds, 2017).

Diffraction

Drawing on physical phenomena like oceans, Barad (2006) describes diffraction as a strategy for thinking about and reading data similar to the "way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading out of waves when they encounter an obstruction" (p. 74). These encounters disperse the waves, making outgoing patterns distinct from the original. However, Barad (2006) points out that remnants of the origin wave always remain in the outgoing patterns. Applying this view to the use of theory, Barad (2006) cautions against completely rejecting "old" ways of thinking, as there are always remnants of the old that are present within the new. Moreover, Barad's (2006) diffractive method refuses binary oppositions—instead, it seeks to think through and with multiple perspectives to yield fresh patterns and ideas.

When used in research, diffraction entails conducting "multiple layers of analysis upon a singular set of data" (Ulmer, 2016, p. 138). In the present study's case, we engaged data on SBOE membership in multiple conceptual readings to direct our attention to unique insights as well as the continuities and discontinuities between different layers. Reading and re-reading of data through concepts and theories is an approach similar to multifocal policy analysis (see Young, 1999). This approach involves a commitment to understanding and engaging with data that embraces the use of conceptual and theoretical frameworks to engage in "concentrated looking" (Diem & Young, 2015, p. 845) and "intensive explication" (Young & Reynolds, 2017, p. 23). The former—concentrated looking—involves what Bowe and colleagues (1994) describe as intensive examination and interrogation "to reveal and critically assess the 'carefully managed, prescribed viewpoints' that may be emerging" (p. 76). The latter—intensive explication—involves interrogating taken-for-granted constructions to uncover "deep patterns" (Morrow & Brown, 1994).

For the present study, we leverage a diffractive, multifocal method to examine data on SBOE membership from two lenses: Wagner's "blank spots and blind spots" metaphor and Young and Marshall's (2013) critical feminist theory. Specifically, we use these concepts to diffractively explore our three research questions on how people become SBOE members, who serves as SBOE members and SBOE leaders, and the extent to which SBOE memberships represent and advantage their constituents.

Methods

The broad purposes of this study were to examine and critically discuss SBOEs and their membership. To realize this purpose, we used an archival research design (Corti, 2004) to organize the study and then employed diffractive, multifocal data collection methods and data analysis strategies (e.g., Ulmer, 2016) to conduct the study. Corti (2004) defines archival research as the "locating, evaluating, and systematic interpretation and analysis of sources" (p. 21) found in archives. Morgan-Fleming and colleagues (2007) assert that archives consist of a range of different materials, from those residing only in physical spaces (e.g., library archives of printed primary source documents) to those accessible only in digital spaces (e.g., electronic documents, websites). These views of archival research and archives were particularly apropos for the present study because they permitted us to gather scores of documents and websites to create a comprehensive dataset that captured both SBOE membership processes and eligibility criteria and the results of those processes and eligibility criteria with respect to representation and advantage.

Sampling and Data Sources

We used a complete target population sampling method, which Patton (2002) advises when the research goal is to learn about all participants in a particular group of interest. Our final sample comprised all U.S. states with SBOEs ($N = 47$). Archival data derived from four main sources: (a) SBOE websites and accompanying webpages and downloadable documents; (b) non-SBOE website webpages related to SBOE members, especially social media profiles (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter); (c) the American Community Survey sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau; and (d) state constitutions, state laws, and state rules.

Data Collection

The creation of a single dataset was essential to our diffractive, multifocal approach. We needed this particular kind of dataset to perform "multiple layers of analysis" (Ulmer, 2016, p. 138). To start building this dataset, two research team members visited each SBOE's website between September 2018 and July 2019 to gather publicly available biographical information about SBOE members. Some SBOE websites included images and short statements about many (or all) SBOE members, such as their educational background, hometowns, current and prior job titles, and other elected or appointed civil service-oriented positions (e.g., current Rotary Club secretary).

Other SBOE websites, though, did not list some (or all) of this information. In these instances, our research team engaged in extensive Internet searches to manually construct SBOE member biographies. In a representative example, one state listed its SBOE members by name with no additional information, so two research team members used this list and employed Boolean search procedures (e.g., names in quotations) to identify relevant electronic documents and/or websites that provided insight about various SBOE members. Some websites like LinkedIn, for instance, offered self-reported educational and career background data, such as college graduation dates and current and prior job titles. Other documents, such as records of legislative proceedings, included statements submitted by governors that summarized SBOE members' qualifications for appointment that were akin to personal biographies.

Regarding SBOE members' gender, race/ethnicity, and age—in particular—some SBOE member biographies explicitly noted information related to these demographic characteristics (e.g., "most influential female", "chair of legislative Black caucus"). In other cases, though, our research team had to deduce these characteristics as best we could. Since archival research relies on existing

documents, two research team members used a combination of existing images, videos, and other documents (e.g., social media profiles) to infer an SBOE member's gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

To enrich an examination of SBOE member and larger constituency representation, one research team member downloaded the 2019 one-year wave of the American Community Survey. These survey data provided gender and race/ethnicity demographic information for all 47 U.S. states with SBOEs. The research team member then re-coded the aforementioned SBOE biographical information using the survey's gender and race/ethnicity categories.

Data collection efforts concluded with gathering information about SBOE member election and/or appointment procedures. One research team member visited each SBOE website to gather initial information about SBOE composition and then reviewed relevant state constitution sections, state laws, and state rules to verify information on SBOE websites. In one instance, an SBOE website listed SBOE composition information contrary to state law, which the SBOE later corrected after being contacted by a research team member. These legal documents provided information such as the number of SBOE members, who could vote, who was ex-officio, term length, and eligibility and confirmation criteria.

Data Analysis

All of the aforementioned data—SBOE biographical information, state gender and race/ethnicity demographic information, and SBOE-related legal documents—were combined into a single, comprehensive, and robust dataset for analysis. Following Ulmer's (2016) recommendations, we created five "layers" for data analysis (p. 138). The first three layers addressed queries already in circulation, but not investigated to their full extent. As such, they sought to fill blank spots in our knowledge of SBOEs. The final two layers, however, draw on CFT to ask new queries about SBOEs in an effort to illuminate blind spots. For each layer, we engaged in "concentrated looking" (Diem & Young, 2015, p. 845) to specifically identify and set aside emergent "carefully managed, prescribed viewpoints" (Bowe et al., 1994, p. 76). These viewpoints helped us, as a research team, interrogate seemingly common assumptions.

For our first layer, we used SBOE-related legal documents to learn how people can become an SBOE member. Because of our dataset, we intentionally used "can" as opposed to "do", a point discussed in a later section on future research. This first layer's focus centered on the processes related to how SBOE members were elected and/or appointed. Characteristic of diffraction, we then rereviewed the dataset to specifically examine SBOE member eligibility criteria, such as who could stand for election or who could be appointed as an SBOE member. Our focus for this second layer centered on eligibility to join an SBOE, which was of particular interest given prior research on who has and has not been eligible to be elected or appointed to SBOEs (e.g., Beach & Will, 1955).

Once we established a foundation of who could join SBOEs and how they could join, we then reviewed SBOE member biographical information. In this third layer, we sought to learn more about current SBOE members. In preparing for the present study, we found scarce literature about SBOE members generally and their demographic characteristics specifically. As such, this third layer helped address a sizeable blank spot in the field's current understanding of SBOEs. In reviewing who sat in SBOE seats between September 2018 and July 2019, we then analyzed the issue of general representation of SBOE members and their states. We compared gender and race/ethnicity demographic percentages between our SBOE member demographic information dataset and the American Community Survey's 2019 one-year wave dataset.

Prior research on who is and is not fit to govern (e.g., Young & Marshall, 2013; Young & Reynolds, 2017) prompted us to consider a fourth layer focusing on those in SBOE leadership roles (e.g., chair, vice-chair). We surmised that it was one endeavor for a person to be elected or

appointed to an SBOE (i.e., Layer 3), and it was an entirely separate endeavor to then be elected or appointed to lead an SBOE (i.e., Layer 4). Our fifth and final layer explicitly drew upon our conceptual framework's focus on blank spots and blind spots along with CFT to critically discuss the first four layers of our analysis.

Methodological Limitations

This study's purpose and methodology introduce three notable limitations about data collection, analysis, and reporting. First, following an archival research design (e.g., Corti, 2004), we did not collect primary data from SBOE officials, be they members, staff members, or other relevant stakeholders. This methodological decision was intentional because we wanted to craft a portrait of the U.S.'s SBOE membership using only publicly-available information (e.g., SBOE websites, social media profiles, state laws) since few people have considerable access to SBOEs (e.g., Young et al., 2021). Second, the comprehensiveness and accuracy of our dataset depended on publicly-available information. As governmental agencies like SBOEs create and refine their online presences, available data and the quality and presentation of those data can vary across states (e.g., Lee & Kwak, 2012). Third and finally, data limitations required our research team to deduce the gender, race/ethnicity, and age of some SBOE members. We recognize that we may not have captured this information correctly and/or that deductions may not reflect how SBOE members identify themselves. To help account for this issue and enhance our dataset's reliability, our research team engaged in triangulation (Denzin, 1978; see also Shenton, 2004) in which a third research team member separately reviewed the sources and deductions coded by two other research team members. Future research, as discussed in a later section, should leverage primary data collection methods to further enhance data reliability.

Findings

To answer our three research questions, we use our diffractive, multifocal method to organize findings into five "layers" (Ulmer, 2016, p. 138). Layer 1 and Layer 2 answer the first research question on the processes and eligibility criteria for how people can become SBOE members. Layer 3 and Layer 4 answer the second research question on who serves as SBOE members and SBOE leaders. For Layer 5, we transition from findings to discussion—and this final layer draws upon our conceptual framework to answer our third research question on who is (and is not) specifically represented and advantaged based on SBOE memberships.

Layer 1 – The Processes for Becoming an SBOE Member

To orient the present study, we first examined how SBOE members obtained their seats. Among the 47 states with SBOEs, 11 predominantly elected members, 33 predominantly appointed members, and three had SBOEs with both elected and appointed members (Nevada, Ohio, and Washington State). We say predominant for the first two groups because there were exceptions. South Carolina's governor, for instance, appointed one member while the remaining 16 members were elected. In states like Indiana, North Dakota, and Oklahoma, voters elected CSSOs to join SBOEs that were composed of all appointed members.

SBOE member constituencies—those whom they represented—fell into three main groups: state-created regions, U.S. Congressional districts, and at-large. SBOE members in Alabama and Texas, for instance, were elected from specific education districts while SBOE members from Kansas came from groups of state Senate districts. SBOE members in Arizona, Kentucky, and Mississippi—on the other hand—were appointed based on state judicial districts while Delaware,

Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, and North Dakota required certain SBOE members be appointed from specific cities, counties, and/or regions.

In some states, it was more than the general public who elected SBOE members. In South Carolina, for instance, local legislative delegations met to elect their respective SBOE members while New York's legislature used concurrent resolutions to elect its SBOE members. Regional student councils in Massachusetts elected representatives who, in turn, elected a president who, in turn, then served as the voting student representative on the SBOE. In Washington State, leaders of the state's private schools' association elected their representative on the SBOE.

In states with appointed SBOE members, though, governors—in the majority of circumstances—held most, if not all, of the appointment power. In 26 states, appointed SBOE members required Senate confirmation while five states required confirmation from the entire legislature. There were a few exceptions where multiple parties shared appointment power, such as Indiana where the governor appointed eight SBOE members and the Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore of the Indiana Senate each appointed an SBOE member. In North Dakota, a three-person committee composed of the presidents of the state teachers' union, educational leadership association, and school boards association drafted a list of potential SBOE members from which the governor could choose.

Once elected or appointed, most SBOE members served terms that ranged from four years to nine years with a modal term of four years and an average term of five years. Other SBOE members, often those representing certain groups we discuss in a later section, served one- to two-year terms (e.g., a Teacher of the Year or a high school student for their junior and senior years). Nearly all CSSOs served four-year terms, and numerous states permitted current SBOE members to serve until their successors were elected or appointed. Among the 47 states, 31 did not institute term limits while 16 did. Two states limited SBOE members to one term, nine states limited to two terms, and five states limited to three terms. Yet, term limits in these 16 states differed. States like Colorado and New Hampshire did not permit SBOE members to serve more than a certain number of consecutive terms while other states like Illinois and Maryland only permitted SBOE members to serve a certain number of total terms. Nevada, which had both elected and appointed SBOE members, was an exception. If an SBOE member was elected and "termed out," that same person could be appointed to a new set of terms.

Layer 2 – Eligibility Criteria for Becoming an SBOE Member

If one imagines a typical meeting room, this layer describes who can sit in SBOE seats. Many states, especially those with appointed SBOEs, stipulated the kinds of people who could (and could not) become SBOE members. Delaware, for instance, said SBOE members needed to be of "good character and fitness." Illinois mandated the governor appoint SBOE members "as far as may be practicable on the basis of their knowledge of, or interest and experience in, problems of public education." Arkansas law said SBOE members should "reflect the diversity in general education" of the state. Kentucky and Texas set minimum age requirements. West Virginia forbade political party leaders from joining its SBOE. Texas banned lobbyists from being SBOE members. Kentucky and Oklahoma had minimum education provisions for SBOE members. Georgia, Kentucky, and Michigan did not allow "agent[s] of any publisher of school books" to be on their SBOEs.

Diversity stipulations fell into two groups: person-based and location-based. Only two states had person-based diversity stipulations. In New Jersey, at least three of the state's 13 governor-appointed SBOE members "shall be women." Among Tennessee's 10 appointed members, one needed to be "a member of the minority race" and, starting in 1995, "every other appointment of a new member [...] shall be a female until the membership of the board reflects the percentage of

females in the population generally, after which the provisions of this sentence shall cease to be effective." Moreover, Tennessee required that its governor "strive to ensure that at least" one SBOE member was at least 60 years old. Location-based diversity stipulations were more prevalent. States seemed to prioritize balancing SBOE representation between urban, suburban, and rural locales. Nevada wanted sparsely populated (and more common) rural areas to be represented alongside the heavily populated Las Vegas area. In Ohio, four of eight appointed SBOE members needed to "represent rural school districts." Illinois allocated SBOE seats to Chicago, Chicago's suburbs, and the rest of the state. Finally, Washington State used the Cascade Mountains to create "eastern" and "western" SBOE election and appointment regions.

In addition to diversity stipulations, 34 of 47 states permitted educators to serve on SBOEs while 13 did not (unless, as the next section discusses, they were filling an educator designated SBOE seat). Only nine of 47 states created an SBOE seat for a current K-12 teacher while Arizona and Nevada had a seat for a current superintendent and Mississippi and Wyoming had a seat for a current K-12 school-level leader (e.g., principal). In contrast to being an educator, several states required SBOE members have prior experience with or knowledge about education. Indiana required six of its eight appointed SBOE members to have "professional experience in education." Iowa mandated at least three voting SBOE members have "substantial knowledge related to the community college system." Pennsylvania was a unique case, having a 21-member SBOE with 10 members overseeing the state's K-12 education system and another 10 members overseeing the state's higher education system. State law specified requirements for higher education system appointees with three members needing to be "employed by an institution of higher education," including at least one faculty member and at least one administrator. There were no similar requirements for K-12 teachers and/or K-12 administrators needing to be among the 10 members who supervised the state's K-12 education system.

Taking into account all of these stipulations, we identified a total of 531 SBOE seats across the 47 states, which ranged by state from seven seats (e.g., South Dakota) to 21 seats (Pennsylvania) with an average of 11 seats. A majority of SBOE members were members of the lay public, but numerous states allocated SBOE seats for specific stakeholder groups. In order of prevalence among states from most to least, these seats were occupied by: a K-12 student (14); a K-12 teacher (9); a private business representative (5); a higher education administrator, faculty member, or staff member (4); a parent or guardian of a K-12 public school student (3); a labor or manufacturing representative (3); a local school board representative (3); a military representative (2); a K-12 superintendent (2); a K-12 school-level educational leader (2); a charter school representative (2); and an agricultural representative (1). Despite allocating seats to these stakeholder groups, many states barred these people from being voting members of their SBOEs: K-12 student representatives could not vote in 11 of 14 states; K-12 teachers could not vote in five of nine states; and higher education employees could not vote in four of five states.

Layer 3 – Who Serves as SBOE Members

Once we established a foundation of how SBOE members could obtain seats and who could sit in those seats, our efforts turned to learning more about who actually sat in those seats. Continuing with our imaginary typical meeting room, this layer provides a cross-sectional snapshot of the people elected or appointed to the 47 SBOEs and who sat in the meeting room's seats.

We note one reporting caveat for this layer before proceeding. In some states, it was difficult to pinpoint an exact count of SBOE members—be they voting or non-voting, ex-officio voting or non-voting, or advisory voting or non-voting. Georgia's SBOE website membership page, for instance, listed the state Teacher of the Year, but state regulations on SBOE composition did not

include the state Teacher of the Year. Alabama included all ex-officio members in its official count, but Oregon did not. Idaho permitted ex-officio members to vote, but North Carolina did not. States like Alaska and Massachusetts created other boards to advise their SBOEs, but these advisory board members—despite being able to attend SBOE meetings—could not cast "official" votes and, in some cases, were not listed. In Layer 2, we tallied 531 "official" SBOE seats, but this layer reports findings for the 547 people that we identified after visiting all 47 SBOE website membership pages between September 2018 and August 2019.

Among the 547 SBOE members, we surmised that 51% identified as female and 46% identified as male. Within individual SBOEs, females comprised 14% to 82% while males comprised 11% to 86%. In Florida, Vermont, and West Virginia, females comprised less than 20% of the SBOE membership while males comprised less than 20% of the SBOE membership in Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, and Utah. To compare an SBOE's gender composition with its state's gender composition, we drew upon figures from the American Community Survey's 2019 one-year wave. Female representation on SBOEs compared to their state's population ranged from being 37% underrepresented in Florida to being 32% overrepresented in California. Across all 47 states, females—on average—were 0.2% overrepresented on SBOEs. Male representation on SBOEs compared to their state's population ranged from being 39% underrepresented in Colorado to being 37% overrepresented in Florida. Across all 47 states, males—on average—were 3% underrepresented on SBOEs. Perhaps more striking is the difference in gender representation between the educator workforce and SBOE membership. In 2017-18, 76% of the educator workforce identified as female (NCES, 2021), a difference of 25% with respect to the average SBOE membership composition.

Turning to racial and ethnic demographics, the 547 SBOE members—as a group—identified as 77% White, 12% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 1% Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Native American or West Asian. While the percentage of White, Asian, and Native American, and Pacific Islander members are fairly similar to the national educator workforce (i.e., about 79% of teachers in the 2017-18 school year are White, 2% are Asian, and just over 1% are Native American or Pacific Islander), the percentage of Hispanic members are underrepresented compared to the educator workforce (9% are Hispanic) and the percentage of Black members are slightly overrepresented (7% are Black; NCES, 2021).

Within individual SBOEs, 27 of 47 SBOEs had at least 75% or more of members who identified as White with nine of 27 being 100% White. Among non-White races and ethnicities, 17 SBOEs were left without Black representation, 36 without Hispanic representation, 41 without Asian representation, 44 without Native American representation, and 46 without Pacific Islander or West Asian representation. We used the same American Community Survey data to compare an SBOE's racial and ethnic composition with its state's racial and ethnic composition. White representation ranged from being 53% underrepresented in Oregon to 35% overrepresented in Oklahoma ($M = 10\%$ overrepresented). Black representation ranged from being 19% underrepresented in Georgia to 20% overrepresented in Oregon ($M = 0.3\%$ underrepresented). Asian representation ranged from being 39% underrepresented in Hawaii to 15% overrepresented in Arizona ($M = 3\%$ underrepresented). Hispanic representation ranged from being 24% underrepresented in Arizona to 25% overrepresented in Oregon ($M = 4\%$ underrepresented). Native American representation ranged from being 16% underrepresented in Alaska to 10% overrepresented in Oregon ($M = 1\%$ underrepresented). Pacific Islander representation ranged from being 1% underrepresented in Alaska to 35% overrepresented in Hawaii ($M = 0.6\%$ overrepresented). We only had data about West Asian SBOE members for one of the 47 states, so we omit representation comparisons here.

We were able to calculate ages for 276 of the 547 SBOE members. Among these 276 people, ages ranged from 16 to 89 years old with an average of 56 (*SD* = 12). Approximately 30% of these 276 people were less than 50 years old, 54% were between 50 and 69 years old, and 15% were at least 70 years old.

Regarding their terms of service, we gathered detailed information for 507 of the 547 SBOE members. The year of current election or appointment ranged from 1976 to 2019 with an average of 2014, and 28% of SBOE members started their terms before 2014 while 72% started after 2014. We identified partisanship for 270 of the 547 SBOE members, finding 42% identified as Republicans, 37% as Democrats, 20% as non-partisan, and 1% as independent. Regarding other civic service among the 547 members, 22% held some kind of other elected position (e.g., local school board member), 11% held another appointed position (e.g., state transportation commissioner), and 45% held a non-elected or non-appointed, but civic-related position (e.g., local Rotary Club officer).

Turning to SBOE member educational backgrounds, 88% reported having a graduate degree, but only 74% of the 88% listed specific degrees. Among the 354 of 480 SBOE members who had graduate degrees, 31% had a non-education master's degree, 26% had an education master's degree, 16% had a juris doctorate, 13% had a Ph.D., 11% had an Ed.D., and 3% had a non-education terminal professional doctorate (e.g., Doctor of Nursing Practice).

A final characteristic about current SBOE members centered around what they did for a living. After reviewing SBOE websites and other documents, we were able to assign a job title to 496 of the 547 SBOE members. Among these 496 members, the seven most prevalent job titles were business executive (e.g., company owner, manager; 32%), educator (19%), retiree (14%), governmental official (9%), professional services provider (e.g., accountant; 8%), attorney (7%), and non-executive businessperson (e.g., salesperson; 6%). On the other side of the prevalence continuum, few SBOEs were populated by healthcare providers, social workers, farmers, and religious officials.

Layer 4 – Who Serves as SBOE Leaders

It is one thing to be elected or appointed to an SBOE as a member, but an entirely different thing to be elected or appointed as a leader of an SBOE. We re-reviewed data from Layer 3 to specifically explore characteristics of those charged with leading their SBOEs. Among the 547 SBOE members, we identified 97 in a leadership role: 44 chairs, 40 vice-chairs, and 13 secretary/treasurers.

Examining SBOE leaders generally by gender, 45% identified as female and 55% as male, which contrasted with the larger sample of 547 where 51% of SBOE members identified as female and 46% as male. For specific roles, 41% of chairs identified as female and 59% as male, 48% of vice-chairs identified as female and 52% as male, and 54% of secretary/treasurers identified as female and 46% as male. Turning to examine SBOE leaders generally by race or ethnicity, 80% identified as White, 11% as Black, 5% as Hispanic, 1% as either Asian or Native American, and no leaders identified as Pacific Islanders or West Asians. For specific roles, 84% of chairs identified as White, 11% as Black, and 11% as Hispanic. Among vice-chairs, 75% identified as White, 13% as Black, and 5% as Hispanic. Finally, 85% of secretary/treasurers identified as White while 8% identified as Black and 8% as Hispanic.

Regarding educational backgrounds of SBOE leaders generally, 90% held a graduate degree. Specifically, 93% of chairs, 88% of vice-chairs, and 85% of secretary/treasurers had a graduate degree. Turning to the job titles of SBOE leaders generally, the five most prevalent were business executive (33%), educator (18%), retiree (14%), attorney (7%), and governmental official (7%).

Business executive was the most prevalent job title for SBOE chairs and vice-chairs followed by retiree for chairs and educator for vice-chairs.

Discussion

In this section, we leverage our conceptual framework rooted in blank spots and blind spots along with critical feminist theory (CFT) to reanalyze and discuss the first four layers in the findings section. As noted above, this strategy for thinking about and reading data in waves and thinking through and with different perspectives can reveal new patterns in the data that are distinct from the original, while also maintaining remnants of the original patterns (Barad, 2006). On its own, CFT raises important questions about representation and access. However, applying CFT through a diffractive, multifocal approach enables the consideration of findings from more traditional analyses alongside more critical analyses, providing a fuller, more comprehensive examination. Following the application of our diffractive method, we then turn to several other considerations about SBOEs before concluding with implications and recommendations for future research.

Layer 5 – Who Is (and Is Not) Represented and Advantaged on SBOEs

CFT focuses on how power and patriarchy can be preserved via social, political, and organizational structures (Young & Reynolds, 2017). Within this focus is an attention to identifying and discussing how some groups of people have gained—and maintained—power and privilege (Young & Marshall, 2013). For SBOEs, CFT provides an opportunity to explore how policies— such as state laws—have shaped access and who appears to have (and have not) benefitted from that access. We structure this sub-section around our third research question, which queried who is (and is not) represented and advantaged based on SBOE memberships.

How SBOEs are Populated

CFT encourages an intentional search for facts and assumptions—both implicit and explicit—that are embedded in policies. These facts and assumptions were once constructed in some historical context (e.g., 1950s) and then, as they perpetuated over time, became part of reality and "the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 231). We highlight one point related to SBOE populations. There was considerable variance in how states viewed educators with respect to SBOEs. While 34 of 47 states permitted educators or those with "professional experience in education" to serve on SBOEs, 13 did not. This finding suggests that approximately 30% of U.S. states with SBOEs did not have someone at the decision-making table who had intimate knowledge about the very system the SBOE was charged with governing.

Moreover, when educators were invited to the decision-making table, nearly half were relegated to be non-voting members. Even fewer K-12 administrators—school- or district-level— were formally part of SBOEs. Just four of 47 states explicitly allocated seats for K-12 administrators. We were pleased to see, though, the number of states who permitted students to be SBOE members. Despite being more prevalent members than K-12 teachers or K-12 administrators, though, even fewer students had the right to vote with some states, like Washington State, saying that "[a]lthough student representatives are nonvoting [SBOE] members, they are encouraged to provide meaningful input on issues regarding educational policy." What are states saying about those involved in the education system by not granting these people voting rights alongside their lay peers? There appear to be assumptions about whose voices should and should not count with respect to educational policy and decision-making. Given that the majority of those who learn and teach in K-12 schools are students and teachers, one would think that the state governing bodies that regulate teaching and learning would more fully include students and teachers in policymaking processes.

Instead, most SBOEs appear to observe the paternalistic practice of allowing representatives of the student (the majority of whom are minors with few rights) and the teacher (the majority of whom are women) populations to share their perspectives, but not share actual decision-making authority.

Whom SBOEs Represent and Advantage

Just because states permitted educators to serve on SBOEs did not guarantee that educators would be elected or appointed. Among the current job titles of SBOE members serving terms between 2018 and 2019, just 19% were educators while 53% had some affiliation with private business as either an executive, non-executive, or professional services provider. These findings suggest that business interests were likely overrepresented and over-advantaged at SBOE decision-making tables. Extending a point from above, students and those working in the education system were underrepresented among SBOEs in the US. Consequently, SBOE members skewed towards the private sphere, and some appeared to have little to no access to perspectives from the current education system.

Without these current perspectives, Barad's (2006) ideas about old and new come to mind. We found that SBOE members were, on average, 56 years old. Many likely came of age during the 1980s, which is when the Reagan Administration commissioned a report that found the U.S. education system faced a "rising tide of mediocrity" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). To what extent did that decade—and SBOE members' prior experiences with schools—inform what and how they think about education? More generally, what assumptions do SBOE members hold about the education system? To what extent have SBOE members kept current on recent research or the implications of accountability policies on minoritized students and communities? It bears repeating that only a handful of SBOEs reflected proportional racial diversity and only a few SBOEs deliberately invited current students and educators to contribute to discussions and vote on critical issues about an essential pillar of our society. As a result, we wonder whether many SBOEs made decisions that were informed by populations who would be subject to those decisions' consequences.

Differential Effects on Women and Minoritized Populations

Only two states—New Jersey and Tennessee—affirmatively worked to ensure that SBOE members reflected their state's general or student population in terms of gender and race/ethnicity. Tennessee's person-based diversity stipulation, though, had a sunset-type provision. When "the membership of the board reflects the percentage of females in the population generally", the stipulation "shall cease to be effective." This kind of language appears to presume that once there is parity between the SBOE membership and Tennessee's population, the gender "issue" has been solved.

Other states like Arkansas or Washington State seemed to take more symbolic actions, suggesting that governors "consider" a state's population when making SBOE appointments. As language in important, "consider" is not "shall" or "will," leaving governors with wide discretion on whom to appoint. Scores of other states took no action at all—neither requiring nor recommending person-based diversity stipulations. These findings contrasted with a number of states that intentionally sought to ensure specific populations were represented. One example is a concern that rural areas be represented alongside their suburban and urban areas—either by requiring rural areas be represented (e.g., Ohio) or allocating SBOE seats based on state-created education districts that were more numerous than the number of U.S. Congressional districts in a given state.

Implications and Future Research

To our knowledge, this study is among the first to take a comprehensive descriptive and critical look at the people who populate SBOEs in the US. While prior research (e.g., McCarthy et al., 1993) examined the structures and election and appointment procedures, numerous blank spots (i.e., what we have an incomplete understanding of) and blind spots (i.e., what we do not know)—as Wagner (1993) refers to them—remain unaddressed. To this point, our findings—while unique in many ways—filled some blank spots. They added to the body of knowledge about SBOEs produced thus far that has attempted to describe, map, and critique these policymaking entities.

The dataset we constructed for the present study and detailed findings we were able to offer, such as how Massachusetts elected its student representative on its SBOE, filled blank spots in the knowledge base. Recognizing that the illumination of blind spots requires thinking beyond normative practice—"questions that are not new […] just new to researchers doing the borrowing" (Wagner, 1993, p. 18), we adopted a CFT lens to think about SBOEs and their membership. Specifically, we engaged in "concentrated looking" (Diem & Young, 2015, p. 845), reviewing and re-reviewing the layers of our findings, asking how SBOEs might contribute to inequitable representation and inequitable distribution of power.

Based on this work, we highlight two implications. First, only two states explicitly committed to efforts to diversify their SBOEs by gender and race/ethnicity. In contrast, quite a few states worked to ensure that specific professions or areas of the state were represented. Who SBOE members appeared to represent differed from state to state, which had significant implications for what interests were represented, what priorities were chosen, and, ultimately, what influence the SBOE had on a state's education system. Williams (2000) would suggest that racial representation is particularly important, given the historical and institutional systems of privilege and oppression embedded within governing bodies like SBOEs. Affirmative policies like those in New Jersey and Tennessee were intended to normalize the inclusion of women on SBOEs, but many other states relied on those who appointed SBOE members to promote inclusion and ensure representation. With 70% of states with SBOEs permitting governors to appoint SBOE members, it stands to reason that governors—and those who exert influence on governors—are well-positioned to better ensure that SBOEs actually represent not only the state's population, but the population of people who attend and work in schools (e.g., students, educators).

Second, state legislatures should have frank conversations about whether educators and students should be permitted to be voting members of SBOEs. As scholars like Welton and colleagues (2017) and Bertrand (2019) have found, conversations between those making decisions (e.g., policymakers) and those subject to those decisions (e.g., students) can uncover assumptions—both implicit and explicit—that those in power hold about the education system and those who live in it. What does a state lose, for instance, by forbidding educators and/or students from joining an SBOE, much less being a voting member? Elevating expertise from those directly experiencing the system holds promise to improve the quality of decisions that SBOEs make (see Mitra, 2018).

These implications and the present study's findings generally provide a number of fruitful and necessary avenues of future research. We highlight two here. First, we need to know more about why SBOE members are appointed. This study highlighted the "how," but future research can critically examine why certain SBOE members were appointed, for instance, while others were not. This kind of research can help uncover potential influence networks that may or may not support public education. Second, we encourage others to use diffractive methods to construct their own datasets and then use critical theories—like we did with CFT in this study—to examine and critique those datasets. Governing bodies like SBOEs and SEAs and those in power, such as CSSOs, likely want to project a certain

image to the public—and it is incumbent upon researchers to interrogate those images to see if substance, in fact, matches aesthetic.

References

Barad, K. (2006). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Beach, F. F., & Will, R. F. (1955). *The state and education: The structure and control of public education at the state level* (Misc. No. 23). United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education.

Bell, D. 1987. *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice*. Basic Books.

Bertrand, M. (2019). "I was very impressed": Responses of surprise to students of color engaged in youth participatory action research. *Urban Education, 54*(9), 1370-1397. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916648744

Bowe, R., Gewirtz, S., & Ball, S. J. (1994). Captured by the discourse? Issues and concerns in researching 'parental choice'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 15*(1), 63-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569940150104

Clark, C. J. (2019). *Gaining voice: The causes and consequences of black representation in the American states*. Oxford University Press.

Corti, L. (2004). Archival research. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. Futing Liao (Eds.), *The Sage encyclopedia of social science research methods* (pp. 21-23). Sage.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 140*, 139-168.

Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of organizational life*. Addison-Wesley.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Diem, S., & Young, M. D. (2015). Considering critical turns in research on educational leadership and policy. *International Journal of Educational Management, 29*(7), 838-850. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2015-0060

Dixon-Román, E. J. (2016). Diffractive possibilities: Cultural studies and quantification. *Transforming Anthropology, 24*(2), 157-167. https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12074

Hardy-Fanta, C., Lien, P. T., Pinderhughes, D. M., & Sierra, C. M. (2007). Gender, race, and descriptive representation in the United States: Findings from the gender and multicultural leadership project. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 28*(3-4), 7-41. https://doi.org/10.1300/J501v28n03_02

Henig, J. R. (2013). *The end of exceptionalism in American education: The changing politics of school reform*. Harvard Education Press.

Kysilko, D. (2011). *State boards: A critical link to quality education*. National Association of State Boards of Education.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F., IV. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47–68.

Lee, G., & Kwak, Y.H. (2012). An open government maturity model for social media-based engagement. *Government Information Quarterly, 29*(4), 492-503. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.06.001

McCarthy, M., Langdon, C., & Olson, J. (1993). *State education governance structures* (Research No. EG-93-1). Education Commission of the States.

McFarlane, C. (2009). Translocal assemblages: Space, power and social movements. *Geoforum, 40*(4), 561-567. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.05.003

Mitra, D. (2018). Student voice in secondary schools: The possibility for deeper change. *Journal of Educational Administration, 56*(5), 473-487. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2018-0007

Morgan-Fleming, B., Riegle, S., & Fryer, W. (2007). Narrative inquiry in archival work. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 81-98). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n3

Morrow, R. A., & Brown, D. D. (1994). *Critical theory and methodology*. Sage.

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). (2015). *State education governance models*. Retrieved from http://www.nasbe.org/

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2021). Characteristics of public school teachers. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. A report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*. United States Department of Education.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Pitkin, H. (1967). *The concept of representation*. University of California Press.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Tormey, S. (2015). *The end of representative politics*. Polity Press.

Trounstine, J., & Valdini, M. E. (2008). The context matters: The effects of single-member versus at-large districts on city council diversity. *American Journal of Political Science, 52*(3), 554-569. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00329.x

Ulmer, J. B. (2016). Diffraction as a method of critical policy analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 48*(13), 1381-1394. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1211001

Wagner, J. (1993). Ignorance in educational research: Or, how can you not know that? *Educational Researcher, 22*(5), 15-23. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X022005015

Welton, A. D., Harris, T. O., Altamirano, K., & Williams, T. (2017). The politics of student voice: Conceptualizing a model for critical analysis. In M. D. Young & S. Diem (Eds.), *Critical approaches to education policy analysis: Moving Beyond Tradition* (pp. 83-109). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39643-9_5

Williams, M. (2000). The uneasy alliance of group representation and deliberative democracy. In W. Kymlicka & W. Norman (Eds.), *Citizenship in diverse societies* (pp. 124-153). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/019829770X.003.0005

Young, M. D. (1999). Multifocal educational policy research: Toward a method for enhancing traditional educational policy studies. *American Educational Research Journal, 36*(4), 677-714. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312036004677

Young, M. D., & Marshall, C. (2013). Critical feminist theory. In B. Irby, G. Brown, R. Lara-Alecio, & S. Jackson (Eds.), *The handbook of educational theories* (pp. 975-984). Information Age Press.

Young, M. D., & Reynolds, A. L. (2017). Critically examining policy workers and policy work within state boards of education. In M. D. Young & S. Diem (Eds.), *Critical approaches to education policy analysis—Moving beyond tradition* (pp. 19-41). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39643-9_2

Young, M. D., & Skrla, L. (Eds.). (2003). *Reconsidering feminist research in educational leadership*. SUNY Press.

Young, M. D., VanGronigen, B. A., & Reynolds, A. L. (2019). State boards of education: Lesser known policy actors. *Educational Policy, 33*(1), 205-233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818807311

Young, M. D., VanGronigen, B. A., Rodriguez, K., Tmimi, S., & McCrory, A. (2021). Do state boards of education offer an avenue for public voice? *Urban Education, 56*(4), 552-580. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920953887

About the Authors

Bryan A. VanGronigen
University of Delaware
bvg@udel.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8352-8473
Bryan A. VanGronigen is an assistant professor of education specializing in educational leadership in the School of Education at the University of Delaware. His overarching research focus is on organizational resilience and change management in K-12 schools with specific interest areas in school improvement efforts, the preparation of educational leaders, and educational policy analyses.

Michelle D. Young
Loyola Marymount University
michelle.young@lmu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8380-9176
Michelle D. Young is dean of the School of Education and a professor of educational leadership and policy at Loyola Marymount University and executive director emeritus of the University Council for Educational Administration. Her research focuses on the development of educational leaders along with educational politics and policy.

Kevin Rodriguez
University of Virginia
kar3mz@virginia.edu
Kevin Rodriguez is an undergraduate student at the University of Virginia who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in political philosophy, policy, and law. Following graduation, Kevin plans to attend law school in preparation for a career as a lawyer or in politics.

About the Editors

Sarah Diem
University of Missouri
diems@missouri.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0798-5220
Sarah Diem is a professor of educational policy and leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri. Her research focuses on the sociopolitical and geographic contexts of education, paying particular attention to how politics, leadership, and implementation of educational policies affect outcomes related to equity, opportunity, and racial diversity within public schools.

Jeffrey S. Brooks
Curtin University
jeffrey.brooks@curtin.edu.au
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5742-3958
Jeffrey S. Brooks is a professor of education and head of school of the School of Education at Curtin University. His research focuses on how leadership influences (and is influenced by) dynamics related to social justice, racism, and globalisation.