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To cite this article: Sharon D. Kruse & Sandra Spickard Prettyman (2008) Women, leadership, and power revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West, *Gender and Education*, 20:5, 451-464, DOI: [10.1080/09540250701805797](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250701805797)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250701805797>



Published online: 01 Sep 2008.



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Women, leadership, and power revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West

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By examining the cultural images present in the popular musical *Wicked*, cultural norms and biases toward women in leadership and women's leadership practices are explored. The discussion rests on conceptions of male and female leadership 'styles', how power is obtained and utilised within organisational settings and how resistance and reproduction play key roles in how women as leaders are accepted.

Keywords: gender; leadership; media analysis; power

Introduction

Many adults in the US grew up reading and watching the story of the Wizard of Oz (Baum 1966; LeRoy and Fleming 1939). While many of us read the book as children, we continue(d) to watch the movie each year, waiting with impatience for its annual showing. We loved Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, who arrived in a bubble and whose 'goodness' everyone admired. We were afraid of the Wicked Witch of the West, whose green skin and beady eyes showed the world her true 'evil' nature. And we were in awe of the Wizard of Oz, that all-powerful, omnipotent (or so we thought until the end) magician who built the Emerald City, the Yellow Brick Road, and all that was good in Oz. This is a story about good and evil, but it is also a story about power and leadership – and what they should look like, especially with regard to women in the US. Paul Nathanson argues the story 'has become the cultural property of almost every American' (1991: 2) and that it produces as well as reflects American culture (260).

The original novel (Baum 1900, 1966) and the movie based upon it (LeRoy and Fleming 1939) tell the story of Dorothy, a young, innocent girl from Kansas, and her dog Toto, who are swept up by a tornado and awake to find themselves in the magical land of Oz. As Dorothy travels through Oz on her quest to return to Kansas, she must overcome a series of challenges orchestrated by the Wicked Witch of the West in order to find the Wizard, whom she believes to hold the power necessary to return her home. With the help and direction of Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, she is able to vanquish the Wicked Witch's evil and find her own way home.

These texts use the characters of Glinda, the Wicked Witch of the West, and the Wizard of Oz to tell a story about good and evil, about who gets defined as such, and about the consequences of these definitions. Through our interaction with these texts, many of us in the US learned life-long lessons about good and evil, as well as about power and leadership, especially as they relate to women and femininity. However as viewers, most of us 'simply' watched the movie, taking in these lessons without questioning or critiquing them. Recently, a new text, written by Gregory Maguire (1996), uses Baum's original work to explore these lessons by going back in history to see the characters in an earlier time, before Dorothy came to Oz. This new text plays with the representations in the original book and the movie in interesting ways, giving the Wicked Witch of the West a name (Elphaba) and a history, providing a context for how she became 'Wicked'.

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In Maguire's rendition of the classic text, readers come to know Elphaba and Glinda as young women who attend Shiz University together. While the two young women are vastly different, they eventually become friends and challenge our original ideas about good and evil as present in the novel and popular movie.

Today, Maguire's text serves as the basis for a new musical, *Wicked* (Schwartz and Holzman 2003), that presents its own interpretation of the stories of Elphaba and Glinda. In *Wicked*, Stephen Schwartz and Winnie Holzman portray the story of the unlikely friendship between Elphaba and Glinda, two extremely different women who both crave power, but also acceptance. This new musical tells story of these two women introducing a new and different narrative than the original text suggests (Cote 2005; *Wicked* 2007). While in many ways a feminist retelling of both the Baum and Maguire texts, *Wicked* ultimately relies on a patriarchal subtext about women, leadership and power – perhaps the reason it has risen to such wild acclaim. Thus, the story of Glinda, the Wicked Witch of the West, and the Wizard of Oz is once again at the forefront of American culture, bringing us images that we use to make meaning of the women and men in leadership and power in our own lives.

Our ability to examine the assumptions that underlie concepts like leadership and power in texts like *Wicked* are limited by the notion that this is 'just entertainment'. While often entertaining, these images and texts also serve as powerful lessons, which often reinforce, but also have the power to critique and reject, traditional norms and values. Today, *Wicked* is seen daily by thousands of spectators around the world, and the recording has sold millions of copies (Cote 2005; *Wicked* 2007). The story, the songs, and the staging provide a mechanism through which our ideas about leadership and power (along with good and evil), and women's relationship to them, get reinforced and institutionalised. In this article, we explore this (re)presentation through a feminist lens, deconstructing the lessons in it about women, leadership, and power – especially as they relate to schooling.

We argue that while *Wicked* attempts to present these in new and contemporary ways, it still relies heavily on patriarchal (and American) norms and values, ultimately (re)enforcing traditional understandings of women, leadership, and power. The argument we present uses the characters of Elphaba (the Wicked Witch), Glinda (the Good Witch), Madame Morrible (the headmistress at Shiz University), and the Wizard, along with contemporary literature on women and educational leadership to excavate what it means to be a woman in power.

A note before we begin. We recognise that separating our discussion and analysis into sections on 'traditional masculine', 'traditional feminine' and 'Other' may be interpreted as reductionist, we argue that these categories serve as valuable heuristic devices through which to explore current cultural conceptualisations of gender and leadership. Indeed, we do not mean to imply that these categories are related to categories of male and female, rather we recognise how many women adopt and adapt to traditionally masculine (not male) models of leadership, as well as how men may adopt traditionally feminine (not female) models. Our effort is not to further dichotomise the intellectual landscape. Instead, we seek to employ the theoretical constructs of the masculine and feminine as they relate to leadership and power and to surface the complexity and veiled the nature of gender politics as they are portrayed in media images.

Media and its power to define

Giroux (1999) argues we must begin to take seriously the cultural images that surround us, specifically those brought to us through the media, and the tremendous influence they have on our lives. These images help construct our ideas about schooling, about identity, and about leadership, helping us make meaning of them in our lives. Clearly, media images of gender impart constructed cultural norms and biases that we come to believe are 'normal' and 'natural'. We

argue the media is a powerful force that helps inform our understanding of schools, leadership and women's roles.

Freeman and Bourque (2001) argue that while women are prepared to assume leadership positions and exercise power today, 'their potential constituents have not been acculturated to the notion of a female leader' (7). In part, this is due to the cultural context in which we live that continues to define leadership and power as traditionally masculine realms that are imbued with masculine values and attributes. These same cultural norms also define women in ways that make it problematic for them to be powerful and assume leadership roles. Freeman (2001) argues that this is due in part to 'critical differences between reality and perception', and that 'to date perception has held sway at the leadership gate' (38). While women do lead today, and lead in effective ways, the public still perceives leadership in terms of masculine traits and characteristics that continue to define what leadership is and who is able to lead. These perceptions, created and perpetuated in part by the media, are used by the public to make decisions about who is a leader and who is not, who is effective as a leader and who is not, and what leadership looks like and what it does not (Freeman 2001; Guy 1993; Lord and Mayer 1991). We argue that cultural images and texts like *Wicked* produce and sustain discursive patterns that position women in relationship to leadership and power in particular ways, influencing our perceptions and acceptance of women as leaders.

Examining women and leadership

The study of women in leadership has, within the last several decades, unfolded to include historical studies of women's roles in schools and schooling (Blount 1998; Tyack 1990), studies that raise the issue of barriers to women's attainment of positions within administration including the superintendency (Brunner 1999; Chase 1995; Shakeshaft 1987, 1989; Sherman 2005; Tallerico 2000), studies that focus on the experiences of women who hold administrative positions (Brunner 1999; Chase 1995; Grogan 1999), and discussion that seeks to understand how women and men lead together (Pounder 2000; Shakeshaft 1999). These studies have helped us to understand the ways in which women have contributed to the field of education and to education as a profession (Björk 2000). They have also allowed us insight into the ways in which women have experienced stereotyping and discrimination (Chase 1995; Shakeshaft 1987, 1989) as well as to the barriers they face once they attain positions of authority (Brunner 1999; Chase 1995; Tallerico 2000). In addition, more recent work on women and leadership highlights the need to move beyond universalistic approaches toward a more multifaceted understanding (Court 2005). This work focuses on the multiplicity of experiences, identities, approaches and outcomes that women bring to and have in leadership. While the work is neither exhaustive nor complete it affirms the need for ongoing critical lenses with which to view those aspects of the position and of society that influence women's experiences with power and within leadership positions.

Although the study of women in leadership has largely taken a perspective that studies women in relation to the contexts in which they lead (or seek to lead) findings have been relatively consistent suggesting that women tend to be task-oriented problem-solvers and hold high expectations for themselves and others (Brunner 2005; Grogan 1999; Shakeshaft 1999). Research has also suggested that women have strong instructional backgrounds and focus their leadership efforts on student growth and achievement (Chase 1995; Grogan 1996, 1999). When research on women leaders turns to the identification of images of women as leaders they are often characterised as collaborative, caring, courageous and reflective (Grogan 1999; Tallerico 2000; Sherman 2005). Another commonly used term is 'relational' suggesting that women in positions of leadership seek, more often than their male counterparts, relationships that are facilitative of others' effort rather than solely of their own (Brunner 1999; Chase 1995; Shakeshaft 1999).

Recently, feminist researchers and theorists who examine the relationship between gender and leadership often argue that earlier work failed to ‘adequately acknowledge the complex negotiations of individual men and women as they take up leadership roles in schools’ (Collard and Reynolds 2005: xvi), and rather that ‘gender does not “determine” leadership style or performance even though there are powerful stereotypes that do affect leadership work’ (xvi). Indeed, many argue that it is important for us to begin to disrupt the normative discourse of leadership. While the term ‘leader’ has expanded to include women, and we have widened our understandings of types and styles of leadership, our ability to interrogate the characteristics or qualities that a leader embodies is still trapped in older stereotypes of power, of men, of women, and of organisations. In this way, studies of media portrayals of leaders can help both researchers and the public to see alternate forms of leadership and the choices one makes when one chooses or is placed in a leadership role.

The problem of seeing the inherent social phenomenon explicitly offered by *Wicked* is that it mirrors what we expect in our society. Yet, we must be careful not to reify society as we discuss it. Societies are not living beings, and they lack the power needed to assign us a gendered role. Instead, societies are made up of people who, in turn, create distinctions related to the male and the female as shorthand to note physical difference. In turn, we have come to believe that these distinctions are relevant to everyday life. To further the distinction, traits have become assigned by gender as they relate broadly to female and male. According to a male dominated culture men are aggressive, daring, rational, strong, objective, dominant, decisive and self-confident. Women on the other hand are portrayed in opposite terms, as passive, shy, intuitive, dependent, subjective, submissive, indecisive and nurturing.

Yet, even as we assign these distinctions we understand that they have little power to fully explain that which occurs daily in our lives. It may be true that a woman might be passive in the workplace and yet fiercely in control at home. A man may be domineering in the workplace and submissive when with his parents. So what are we? And why are we drawn to stories that suggest these distinctions are less muddy? And why is the ground so hotly contested when the discussion turns to the construct of leadership? We argue that understanding how power is gained and employed provides a useful lens with which to understand these dynamics.

Position, power and leadership

Power as defined by the concepts of control, influence and authority has long been foci of the social sciences (Johnson 2006; Weber 1947). In the contested landscape of organisational decision-making and choice, power, and those who exercise it, can be seen as related to three interdependent constructs – decision preferences, resistance and ability (Weber 1947). As a social phenomenon, power is something that is exercised when two or more parties interact. Within the logic of social systems and structures, power can be thought of as, ‘the capacity of an individual or group to realise desired ends in spite of resistance offered by others’ (Johnson 2006). As such, individuals derive power from their positional authority and role, their personal influence and charisma and their willingness and ability to impose their will upon others.

In this way power exists only as potential until such time that one chooses to influence others. Furthermore, it is only in the action where power is exercised that the nature of its force can be realised, and in turn, can its measure be calculated. Power then rests in a precarious balance, where the potential of one’s power is assumed, based on one’s position and influence (or another’s proximity to position or influence) rather than known. This unsteady balance becomes apparent in the context of resistance. In any given social arena, the ability to offer and overcome resistance varies across members. Some in the community are more powerful than others; some can offer more resistance than others.

Furthermore, social relationships are necessarily asymmetrical and are defined by an unequal distribution of material or social goods and resources (Blackmore 1999; Connell 1987). Thus, the social and cultural consequences of this unequal distribution of power can be explained by identifying: (1) what scarce resources are being contested (the what); (2) which actor(s) possesses the distribution of these resources (the who); and (3) which actors are dependent on these resources and why (the critical dependencies). Interestingly, such a view of power suggests that individuals may wield power as a byproduct of their position within a bureaucratic structure or as a result of policy rooted in long standing organisational practice. Similarly, they may wield power by chance, that is, as an unintended consequence of rank or title (leader/follower), class (ruling/worker) or sex (male/female).

Seen this way, power might be considered a neutral good, one that is vested in individuals and groups less by right and more byproduct of circumstance. However bucolic this reading of power might appear, in fact, history has suggested that the exercise of power has been anything but neutral (Nelson 2002; Tomasi 2001). Moreover, power is contingent on the dominance of societal networks and relationships and located in multiple sources (economic, social, historical and cultural) rather than in individuals. When power is viewed as a collective resource, reliant on the interactions and complicity of society, its conditional nature is best understood. For if power is contingent, it can be contested through intellectual and social means, and peaceful and violent forms. In turn, resistance of and to power becomes a source of power in and of itself, yet it remains as conditional as the more dominant forms. In the coming sections of this paper, we seek to further develop these ideas, exploring how the cultural and gendered representations of leadership and power play out in quite recognisable and patterned forms in the musical *Wicked*, and what these representations communicate to the viewing and listening public.

Madame Morrible: women who adopt traditional masculine models of leadership and power

Historically, it has been assumed that if women wanted to lead they needed to adopt a masculine leadership model that was ‘competitive, hierarchical, rational, unemotional, analytic, strategic and controlling’ in nature (Court 2005: 5). In order to succeed in this model, women needed to look and, more importantly, act like men. Many of us can visualise the woman leader’s wardrobe of the 1970s in the US, filled with blue ‘power suits’ and ties that hid her femaleness and supposed ‘weakness’. In addition, many women aligned themselves with men in power in order to obtain their own leadership positions – this became part of their analytic and strategic planning for their own leadership success. Women learned to ‘play the game’ by adopting traditional masculine characteristics, dressing like men, and aligning themselves with men. Their own power sublimated, they chose to settle for enjoying the referred power of the men with whom they aligned themselves (French and Raven 1959).

Also imbued in this conceptualisation of leadership is the notion of power as ‘power over’ which is experienced and enacted through ‘wealth, resources, influence, control, and physical strength’ (Freeman and Bourque 2001: 9–10). This power is most often used to control others and benefit the self, and male models of leadership often focus on achievement for personal gain (I win) rather than for collective gain (we win). In this model, leadership is defined by an emphasis on rational applications of ‘objective and neutral’ procedural actions in which leaders exercises their legitimate positional authority to achieve personal and organisational goals (Johnson 1997).

Miss Morrible, the headmistress at Shiz University in Oz, is such a woman. She is portrayed as a large woman, and while we are not led to believe she necessarily has great physical strength, we do come to learn that she teaches sorcery and has powers that provide her with strength. Early

on she expresses delight and support for Elphaba's nascent talent, offering to privately tutor 'her gift'. This promise becomes forgotten once she amasses great power and becomes a leader, not only at the university, but also in the government of the Wizard, due in large part to her alignment with the Wizard and her support of his policies. Eschewing her role as teacher and mentor, she uses her position at the university to recruit students who might also benefit the Wizard, often touting how the Wizard could 'make you his magic Grand Vizier' in her attempts to use and manipulate students.

Like the Wizard, Morrible uses power over to control and manipulate events and people. As the headmistress she has power over who gets to major in what, who has opportunities for sorcery, and where students can go. As the Press Secretary of Oz she has power over the 'official' story of Glinda's rise to power and Elphaba's dissent of and from the authority of the Wizard. Indeed it is Morrible who first labels Glinda as 'good' and Elphaba as 'wicked'. Her ability to 'name' and control public perception represents the tremendous extent of her power.

Morrible offers an interesting model for thinking about women and power. Although she commands considerable power in her own right, she chooses to repress those powers in favor of gaining and exercising authority within the recognised structures of the Wizard's governance. She perceives that what personal power she might hold as a result of her sorcery talents and position within the university structure pales in comparison to the power she might exercise if aligned with the Wizard – the omnipotent male. Purposefully and repeatedly she distances herself from more 'feminine' tasks and chores (such as teaching) to engage in more public (masculine) responsibilities and assignments (such as participation in ceremonial activities and meetings).

Her example is reminiscent of women who adopt a traditional masculine model of leadership eschewing ownership for their considerable talents in favor of assuming the referred power and influence of the more charismatic (male) leader (Raven and French 1959). In the context of Oz, one can clearly understand why. The Wizard, who has arrived in a time of unrest and governmental uncertainty, offers the citizens of Oz 'someone to believe in'. By casting himself as both 'an ordinary man' and 'wonderful' the Wizard offers the nation (and Morrible) a revisionist history, one in which access to social power and influence can be mistaken for talent and leadership.

Research has long acknowledged that men have greater access to social and interpersonal power regardless of their talent and skill set (Blackmore 1999; Blount 1998; Connell 1987). In the patriarchal, male-identified society simply being male proffers the individual power and in turn, access to positions previously unavailable to women. As women align themselves with men, adopting and replicating core patriarchal values and leadership methodologies, they both gain power and are subordinated to the men with whom their power resides. Like Morrible, they become trapped in a system where they are left to support that which oppresses their own talent and skill lest they lose their tenuous grasp of referred power and celebrity. Furthermore, they are forced to act in ways that are more domineering, more ruthless and more aggressive than men in similar positions to prove their right to power and privilege. In the end, Morrible horribly abuses her power, lying and manipulating to maintain her power along with that of the Wizard. Gone is the woman whose evident delight in teaching others commanded center stage. When the Wizard falls from power, she is the one who ultimately takes the fall for him. He is able to flee for greener pastures, while she must face the music in Oz.

Clearly, we do not want to argue that women who adopt masculine models will necessarily fall from grace, losing their power and position. Instead, we use Morrible as the model for women who lose themselves in their struggle to be valued. Morrible, admittedly ambitious, embodies the contradiction many women seeking to lead face – how to become who and what they wish while still honoring that which they are. In the end, she fails to resolve the contradiction of her culturally based (feminine) identity with the male-identified power she seeks.

Glinda the Good: women who adopt traditional feminine models of leadership and power

While some women have assumed leadership positions by adopting a traditional masculine model, other women have chosen to emphasise that which is not masculine in their effort to attain position and status. For these women a carefully polished external persona offers them insurance against potential negative evaluation. As Freeman and Bourque (2001) suggest, 'Long-standing beliefs about gender roles – what is deemed appropriate behavior for males and females – militate against women wielding the type of power associated with male leadership' (8). When women do adopt masculine models they are seen to violate cultural norms of femininity and 'are apt to be evaluated negatively' (8). Thus, many women reject the traditional masculine model and choose instead to adopt a more feminine model of leadership. This is often depicted as 'cooperative, team working, intuitive/rational, focused on high performance, empathetic and collaborative (Court 2005: 5).

Women who adopt this model recognise how their dress, speech, actions and demeanor must remain appropriately feminine in order for them to be successful in leadership positions. Blackmore (1999) eloquently depicts this in her research with female bureaucrats, arguing that for many women 'deviant' dress, language, or actions signified 'organisational opposition' (172) and was 'risky business' for women in leadership positions.

Central to the act of 'performing' leadership is the body. Women leaders made frequent reference to being careful about dress, of dressing for the occasion, of being highly conscious of their bodily appearance, of being different, but not too different. (Blackmore 1999: 170)

Women whose outward physical appearance did not fit stereotypic images of femininity were harshly judged in terms of their leadership abilities and were often perceived as 'deviant, difficult, and certainly not promotable' (173). The focus is on compliance with feminine norms of outward appearance, with 'emphasised femininity' (Connell 1987) that accommodates the needs and interests of men.

In this model, power is also engaged with differently, and Brunner (2005) argues that women often 'use their power differently from men' (131). This traditional feminine model casts power as power with instead of power over, focusing on connection and collaboration in the leadership process. However, such power also presupposes a 'we' with whom power with can be achieved, and in order to engage it, a leader must have the support of the group. Sometimes this is accomplished through the relationship between outward physical appearance and others' attraction to it, or through focusing on leadership for collective gain (we win). In either case, this power is often based in and on the external.

Our model for this type of leadership model is embodied in Glinda. Glinda arrives at Shiz University and makes her presence known immediately. She is depicted as ever so feminine – blonde, pretty and petite, with the right wardrobe, voice and style. Although she aspires to major in sorcery at the university, Glinda invests much of her attention and time in solidifying her status as 'popular'. Rather than resisting or attempting to negotiate the public text of mainstream femininity Glinda wholeheartedly accepts the plot line, characterisation and likely conclusion of the narrative. Accommodating to the needs and interests of the men of Oz, Glinda quickly becomes a leader at Shiz, in large part due to her feminine beauty and ability to connect with others. In her show-stopping signature song, she suggests that it is 'shrewd' to be popular and that popularity (with its resultant power and position) is less a result of 'aptitude' and more about 'the way you're viewed'.

It would be tempting to suggest that Glinda seeks referential power just as Morrible, she aligns herself with the handsome but lazy leading man, Fiyero, seeks Morrible as an ally for her aspirations and befriends Elphaba when her talents become evident. Yet, unlike Morrible who willingly and knowingly represses her powers, Glinda is still too young to understand the potential of her

mature power. Instead, she capitalises on her youth and bodily perfection, focusing on emphasising her femininity (Connell 1987) and down playing her own intelligence, power and potential. Her power is grounded in and reward for her compliance with accepted norms of beauty and behavior and is vested in her legitimate expertise in the realm of popularity. Unable to challenge the role her gender ascribes to her, Glinda embraces it and becomes that which society expects – compliant, accommodating and conforming. She seeks to engage others in causes with which she aligns herself, and in doing so reinforces the stereotype of feminine leadership as connected, caring and collaborative; however her causes lack focused intent and structure and tend to favor the frivolous.

However, her friendship with Elphaba offers a challenge to these norms. As Elphaba becomes increasingly resistant to the will of the Wizard, Glinda is tempted to accept a more radical stance. When faced with the chance and choice to resist, she backs down, unwilling to embrace the unknown and fearing the personal cost of difference. Instead, she allows herself to be appointed (or anointed) in opposition to Elphaba's wickedness. Thus Glinda retains her external image and remains safe, yet trapped, by the external. Her passivity over the loss of Elphaba's friendship, the obvious and overt corruptness of the Wizard's rule, and Madame Morrible's manipulation of Glinda further reinforce the gendered idea that women should not openly seek power. Instead, her story suggests that we should wait until power is thrust upon us and only then accept it in exchange for the promise that we not defy that which has come before us. In the end, Glinda's femininity (and indeed femininity in general) is secure and the very foundation of her power uncontested.

Glinda, we argue, embodies a second contradiction many women seeking to lead face – how to become more than their external selves, unbound by the cultural limitations of their gender. Glinda's youth and naivety offer us a model of how (young) women are conscripted into the narrative of oppression and subjugation when alternative models are not evident. The fact that in the closing moments of the stage show, she ascends to power in post-Wizard Oz only further reinforces the mythology that 'nice girls' (read pretty and popular) do win.

Elphaba: resistance and positioning the 'other'

As we have argued, *Wicked* offers the viewer two traditionally positioned and proscribed roles for women in leadership and of power. Yet, the stage show does not suggest that these are the only avenues for women if they choose to exercise their intelligence, their potential and their ambition. As Freeman and Bourque (2001) note, women today are leading 'in unusual ways and in unexpected places' (15) and there is growing evidence that women are forsaking traditional models and paths to leadership (Blackmore 1999; Blount 1998; Brunner 1999, 2005; Chase 1995; Reynolds 2005). Instead, as Freeman and Bourque (2001: 19) argue, '[Women] are forging independent and innovative institutions and organisations in which they can employ different leadership styles and pursue a more explicitly feminist agenda'.

These women reject both the traditional masculine and traditional feminine models of leadership for a different position that allows them to pursue different ends through different means. This model rejects the dichotomy between masculine and feminine leadership models and does not rely on competition, aggression, rationality and a focus on the external in order to accomplish goals. However, women often recognise that in so doing they position themselves, and are positioned by others, as 'Other'. They are often willing to assume this position, recognising that: 'Those who try to break the usual gender scripts are seen as trouble' (Reynolds 2005: 139) and often cast as bitches, or in this case as witches.

Elphaba, or the Wicked Witch of the West as we have come to know her, embodies this position, literally and figuratively. An unsightly shade of green, Elphaba enters the world only to be

shunned by those around her. Although gifted with extreme talent she attempts to hide her powers, lest she become the center of even greater, unwanted attentions. Yet, almost as soon as she enters Shiz University, she is outed and her powers exposed. Madame Morrible notes her nascent abilities and quickly offers to mentor her, promising an audience with the Wizard should she 'make good'. Elphaba quickly becomes a star pupil, praised for her intelligence, insight and compassion for the suffering of others. However, based on her external characteristics, she is still shunned by her peers and remains a social outcast.

Despite an initial 'loathing', she and Glinda become friends and ultimately she lobbies for Glinda to be included in the exclusive sorcery seminar. She works hard at her studies and is a diligent student. She is also committed to social justice, choosing to free a scared and trembling lab specimen and defend the rights of Animals and others in Oz. Emboldened by her friendship with the popular Glinda, Elphaba begins to participate in a world previously inaccessible to her. However, under Glinda's tutelage, Elphaba appears to be tempted by the external. Wanting to be free of her defining difference, she begins to fantasise about how her efforts might be rewarded by the Wizard. She imagines that if she can be good enough, play by the rules, and be noticed for her efforts, she might be transformed, 'de-greenified'.

Yet, Elphaba's status as an outsider offers her insights into Oz that others overlook. She notes the unjust treatment of Animals, the questionable conduct of the Wizard, and the ways in which greater equality might be achieved. She puzzles about the contradictory nature of Oz and about how the Wizard can be 'great and powerful' yet offer little in the way of solutions to social and cultural injustice. Finally, given the chance she challenges the Wizard on these matters. She realises how corrupt he is and in response to his great anger, she flees his inner sanctum, only to be trapped with Glinda in a castle turret. There she offers Glinda the chance to work with her to challenge all that is wrong in Oz. Glinda demurs, deciding instead that it is too dangerous to leave the security that her beauty and popularity offer.

As the Wizard's guards beat on the door, Elphaba realises that she must choose, to either 'grovel in submission' as she accuses Glinda of, or to 'defy gravity'. She sings: 'I'm through with playing by the rules of someone else's game... I'm through accepting limits, 'cause someone says they're so ... it comes at much too high a cost'. Yet, the cost she pays for standing up to authority is extreme indeed; she is labeled a 'witch' and made 'wicked'. One result of this cost is that the citizens of Oz now recognise her evilness and promise to 'bring her down'.

Elphaba's narrative offers a counterpoint to the dichotomised scripts of Glinda and Morrible. Her story casts her as both outsider and resistor and illustrates the costs involved. Whereas women who adopt a traditional feminine model of leadership risk little due to their compliance with societal expectations and while women who adopt masculine models risk more, each has a clear script for their actions. By becoming a 'troubling wom[a]n' (Blackmore 1999) Elphaba risks sanction by all. She is not recognisable to either group and by metaphorically creating a third sex (neither male nor female) she threatens both.

In an effort to sanction Elphaba, Morrible labels her a 'Witch'. In this act, Elphaba ceases to be, replaced by a label, linked to all that is evil and wicked. Yet as we all know, witches are creative, magical people who have power to change the world around them. Morrible (and western society) has co-opted the term and taken away the power associated with it. By naming Elphaba as a witch and portraying witches as wicked, they are devalued and made less powerful. In turn, her resistance is devalued as well, and whatever power she retains is to be feared.

In this way, Elphaba's power grows, yet she becomes ever more isolated and alone. Those whom she sought protect become further oppressed and their oppression becomes normalised and accepted. However, in a society where oppression is normalised, isolation of those who are different is often the only way for those in power to remain so (Johnson 1997). By surfacing and defining difference as a key issue, society fails to provide alternative narratives for what might

be. In turn, the vision of a society that offers clear choices about what one may and can become has little to do with the differences themselves. Instead, it has much to do with perpetuating the status quo, the values of the leading (masculine) class and the consequences they produce.

Once she is defined as 'wicked', Elphaba seeks assistance from those who she believes she has helped in the past. As each rejects her she becomes further convinced that 'no good deed goes unpunished' and further committed to finding a way to demonstrate the Wizard's manipulation and her own goodness. Yet when she offers irrefutable proof of the Wizard's evilness to Glinda, her friend is unable to accept it, choosing instead to 'still be with the Wizard'. Elphaba has now lost all that is dear to her, and recognises her inability to effect change. Her resistance ultimately results in reproduction of the status quo (Fine 1990), and her deviance costs her not only those she loves, but also her capacity to create the type of change she so desperately believes is necessary.

In the end, Elphaba realises her resistance is no longer effective, and tells Glinda that she must assume power in order to accomplish what needs to be done. Elphaba is later 'liquidated' and melts into a puddle of green, leaving her friend Glinda to right the wrongs of Oz. It appears that Elphaba has quite literally died for her cause, having lost all that mattered, only to be remembered as deviant. However, while Glinda is exposing the Wizard and assuming power, the audience is able to see Elphaba's resurrection. She is met by the handsome leading man Fiyero, and they run off together, only safe because Elphaba is willing to let the myth of her death and deviance remain uncontested. We submit that the success of the musical is, in part, due its happy ending: the Wizard's evilness is exposed; Glinda rises to power; and the inconvenience of Elphaba's resistance remains unaddressed. The viewer is left feeling that all will be righted in Oz, although the critic in us asks, 'How?'

Discussion

The cultural representations in *Wicked* provide multiple ways of viewing women, leadership and power that provide viewers with an alternative to traditional models that rely heavily on external factors (such as referent power or physical beauty) to confer and sustain leadership. While Elphaba presents one alternative model for thinking about women, leadership and power, we argue that perhaps the more interesting and educational model is that of Glinda. Although Glinda originally adopts a traditionally feminine model of leadership based on the external, she ultimately recognises that in order to create genuine change she must be true to herself (and perhaps to her friend Elphaba). In assessing the lessons she learned from Elphaba, she comes to realise that following her heart and her head may help her become a just and compassionate ruler who could bring Oz back to its glory.

Before we take on Glinda's rise, we first want to further explore Elphaba's inability to create the change she sought. Our argument rests on two constructs, reproduction and resistance (Apple and Weis 1983; Giroux 1988; Smith 1990). To understand the process of societal reproduction in Oz one must consider both Elphaba's resistance to and of the power structures of Morrible and the Wizard as well as the counter-resistance which developed in response to Elphaba's efforts. As powerful as Elphaba was, both intellectually and in sorcery practice, her powers were in the end, not equal to those of the state. As the Wizard and Morrible sought to silence her actions, Elphaba's responses provided them greater reason to marginalise her. The more 'shrill' her voice became the more reason those in power had to silence her. In agreement with Lynch (1990), we note that resistance occurs within cultural and political contexts in response to the beliefs, policies and practices of a dominate class. In short, resistance is contextual and as such is framed within and by those to whom it is directed.

Clearly, the Wizard and Morrible had an interest in reproducing a societal model that benefited them. By controlling the dialogue about and around Elphaba's opposition Morrible and the

Wizard were able to suggest that it was they and only they who could protect the citizenry from her well publicised and glorified wrath. As her resistance and the counter-resistance to her grew the argument that no matter how imperfect the Wizard's rule it needed – indeed was required – to exist. By making Elphaba the enemy, the Wizard and Morrible deflect attention from their own deficiencies and in doing so reinforce their own power. In the end, Elphaba's greatest failure was that inadvertently she becomes a tool in the reproduction of that which she sought to oppose. Her wickedness is reinforced, her difference made an issue and her suffering repressed.

Furthermore, Elphaba's isolation from other students at Shiz and the citizens of Oz put both her and her causes at risk. By becoming increasingly isolated, she became less able to initiate or sustain change. Alone, she lacked the resources necessary for success. Unable to muster support for a collaborative resistance movement Elphaba was unable to shift the power dynamic in her favor. We argue that Elphaba's femaleness emphasised her inherent differences – her status as an outsider and her otherness fostered and reinforced her isolation. Her attempts throughout the story asked the other players to both think and act. Neither of these imperatives fit the traditionally defined narratives that women in leadership (or aspiring leadership) roles are encouraged to inhabit. As Chase (1995) found, women are able to inhabit powerful leadership roles only if they attain these positions through the largess of others. Openly seeking power is viewed as 'unbecoming' and 'forward'. By flaunting the feminine and embracing the masculine Elphaba becomes labeled a Witch.

Nevertheless, this is, after all, a modern American musical, and true to formula, cannot end with Oz in shambles, without hope. In the closing moments, just before her 'death', Elphaba asks Glinda to look at all that she has accomplished. As both women sing that they have been changed, 'for good' Elphaba stresses that her powers are now limited and that Glinda, 'can do all I couldn't do'. In this way she passes the torch (literally the Grimmerie, the text of magic spells) to Glinda, asking that she continue her work but never to try to clear her name (Cote 2005). Wisely, she allows Glinda to rise to power seemingly appointed by the people to succeed the Wizard and unburdened by the threat of the Wicked Witch.

For her part, Glinda is able to accept the role because unlike earlier in the plot, she now understands the cost of and the purpose for her rule and leadership. She is acceptable because she embodies all that the citizens of Oz expect – she is pretty and popular, kind and good, smart and strong. She has stood up to the Wicked Witch, commanded the attentions of the powerful and influenced the citizens of the land. She knows the structures and the politics of the society she shall now lead. Glinda is a satisfactory even welcomed leader, her lack of obvious resistance and seemingly conventional policy make her an apparent and pleasing choice. We argue that because of her acceptability her ability to create real and lasting reform is possible. In this way, she shall succeed where Elphaba was unable, armed with the necessary positional and charismatic power to affect change.

And what of schools and leading schools? The context for *Wicked* is, at least in part, a school, Shiz University. Although the headmistress, Morrible, is nominally in command, it is clear from the opening bars that the real power lies with the Wizard, a man. She teaches both implicitly (through her actions and alliances) and explicitly (through her lessons and comments) that power in Oz is granted and exercised by men. Should Elphaba progressed as expected and learned to harness her exceptional gifts, Morrible would have introduced her to the Wizard and given her 'all she ever wanted'. Her reward for excellence would have been to be able to serve the Wizard, to 'make good'.

Undoubtedly, school leaders wish to do well by those they lead. Whether is it to increase student achievement or opportunity for success in later life, the men and women who choose to lead schools do so not for the inherent wealth or prestige, but generally out of some sense of calling and purpose. In this way, 'making good' is a shared, gender-neutral goal. However, we

suggest that the ways men and women in school leadership positions are encouraged to ‘make good’ differ and *Wicked* reinforces these subtle differences.

Although Elphaba is the most talented of the students at Shiz, she is encouraged to study and do well so that her talents might be of use to the Wizard and his dreams. Glinda too, is encouraged to think about how her skills might be of use to the larger community. The male characters, although their roles are smaller, receive none of these exhortations. Much like the star quarterback in a game of American football, the handsome but lazy leading man, Fiyero, encourages the other students to lead ‘the unexamined life’. He does not see the need to work hard at the university, assuming instead that his physical good looks, prowess and charm insure his eventual success.

These words and actions echo what decades of researchers have noted about school leadership, namely it is acceptable for women to succeed in the principalship and other lower level positions (curriculum and special education directors, assistant superintendent, business manager and the like) but attainment of and success in the superintendency remains elusive (Blackmore 1999; Blount 1998; Brunner 1999, 2005; Chase 1995; Reynolds 2005). Put another way, women have been taught to ‘make good’ on the small stages of schools but discouraged from seeking center stage. When women do attain the superintendency they are challenged to explain their aspirations in ways that require them to minimise their ambition (Blackmore 1999; Chase 1995; Brunner 2005) and temper their authority and power (Collier and Reynolds 2005; Tallericco 2000). Glinda and Miss Morrible are able to, at least initially, attain a modicum of power as long as they are aligned with and work for the Wizard. However, Elphaba seeks to unravel the power of the Wizard, which would position her in a more central leadership position. She is subsequently demonised and in the end recognises her inability to lead in the future. As modern media reinforces the gendered scripts of leadership in our schools questions remain as to how and when women as leaders will be able to openly and expressively embrace their professional skill and competencies. The narrative of *women* as successful competent leaders has yet to become a primary narrative in American schools today.

Conclusion

While writing this piece, we were repeatedly reminded that *Wicked* was entertainment, and perhaps we were taking this all a bit too seriously. In particular, our children wished to remind us that not everyone goes to the theater and leaves offering a feminist critique of the messages within the production. Yet, we argue that very powerful lessons are learned from the media about whether or not women should be leaders and how they should act if they are leaders. Creating texts that challenge these assumptions and present alternative models might allow for the public and particularly young women, to consider different paths to and for leadership, different ways to use and dislodge power, and different ways of being in the world. By surfacing the critique, perhaps they will recognise the power and beauty in the ‘wicked’, and its potential to create change.

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