Teaching:

Art, Craft or Science

Shanker Institute Symposium

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April 2019


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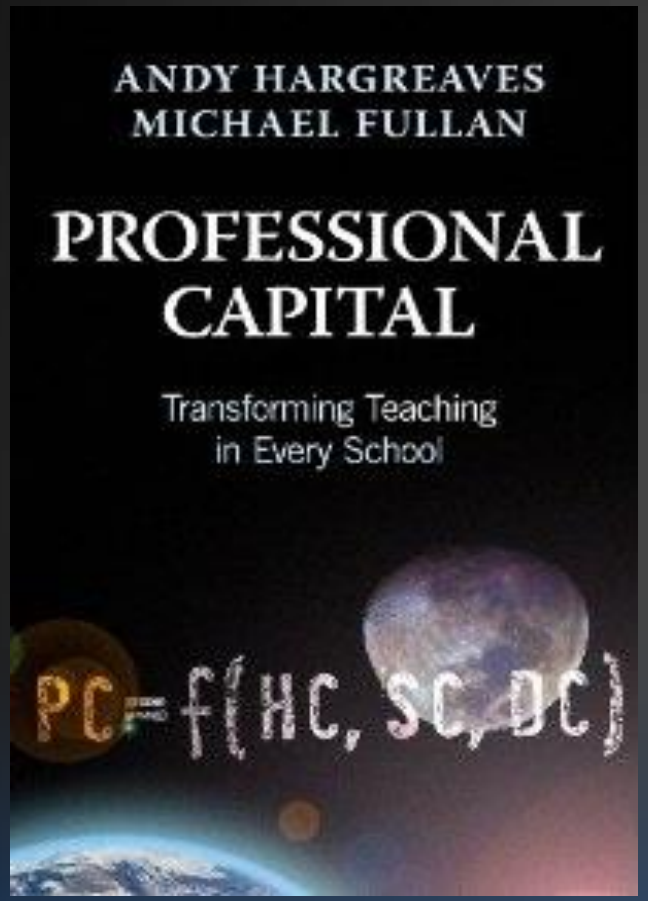

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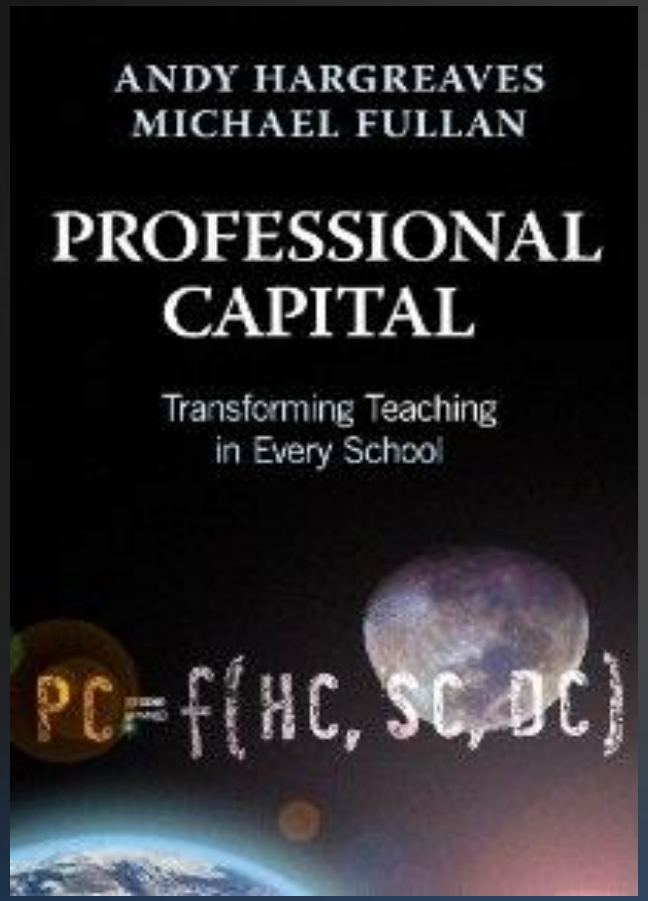

Art

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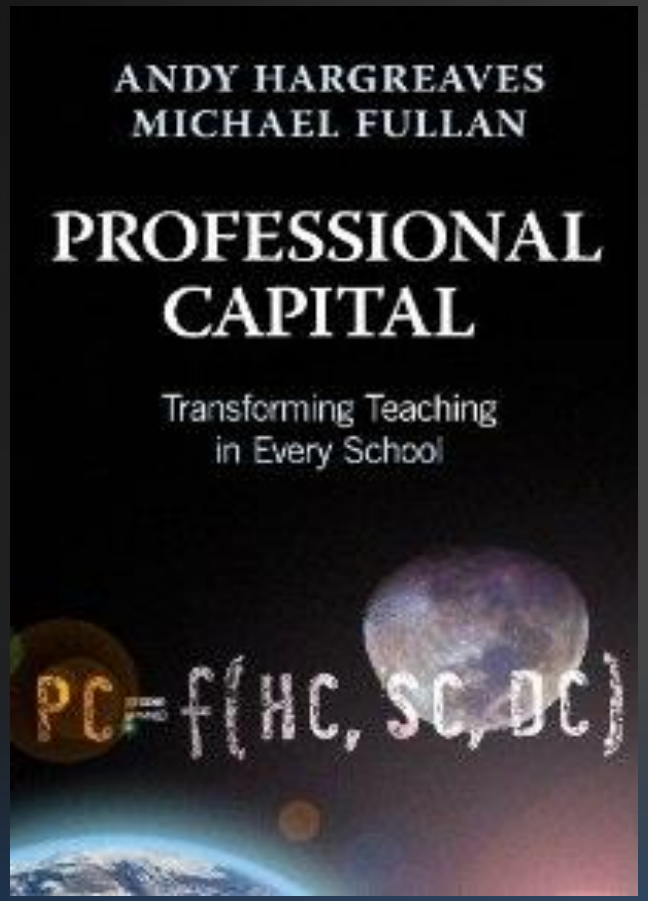


Art

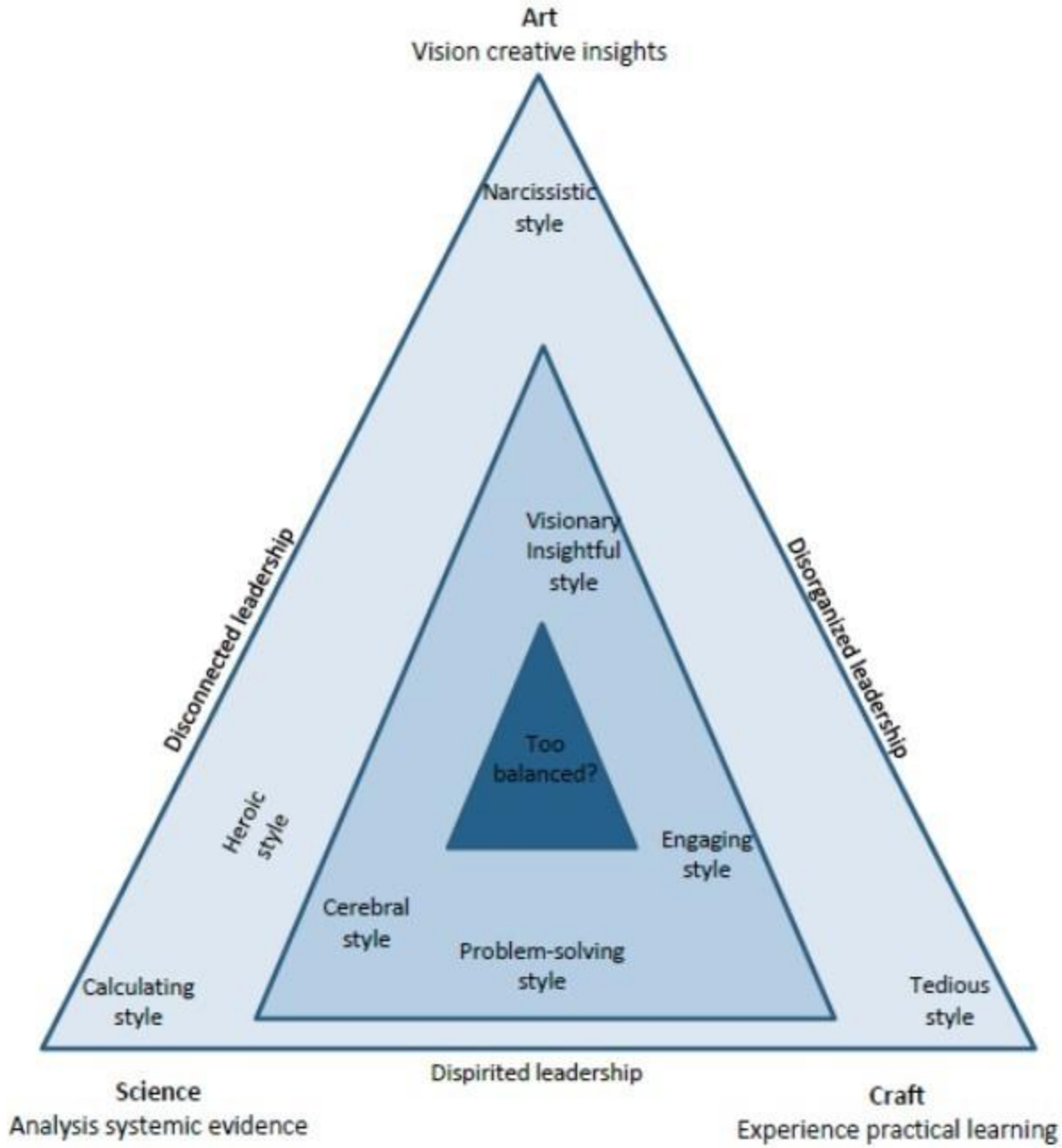
Craft

Science

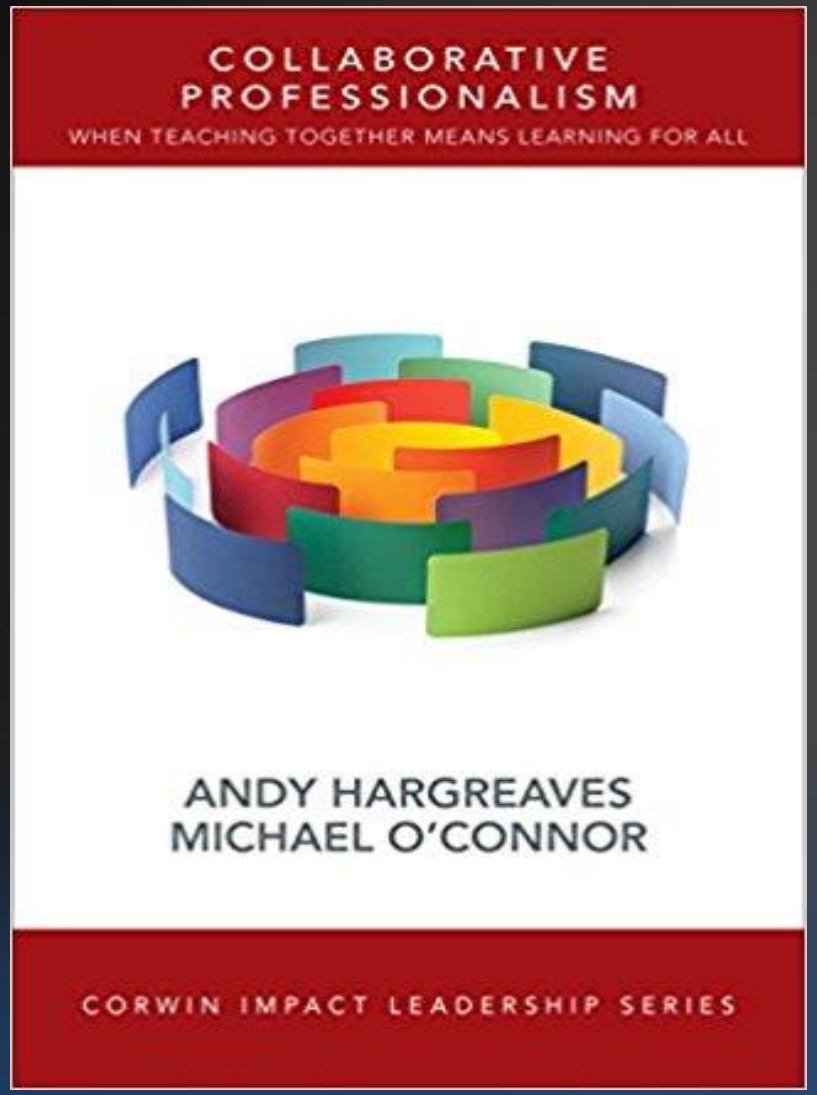
Calling

Service

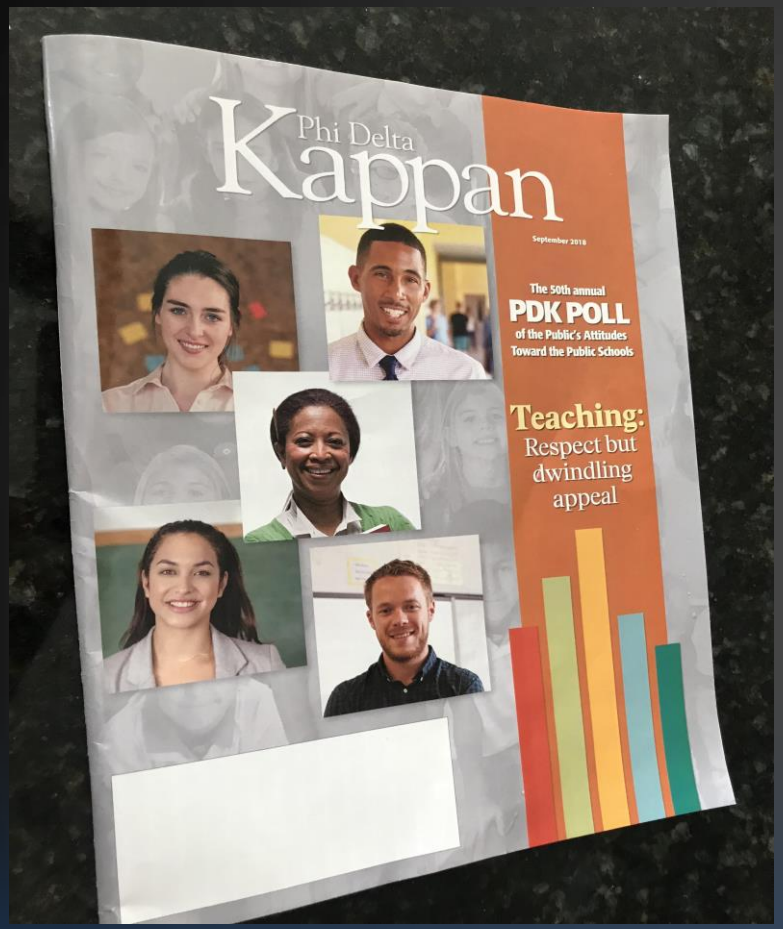
Job



The Art, Science, Craft triangle was developed by Henry Mintzberg



Solidarity & solidity



Solidarity with solidity:

The case for collaborative professionalism

Effective collaboration requires teachers to get their heads out of the sand and see what others are doing while relying on expertise to keep the sand out of their heads.

By **Andy Hargreaves & Michael T. O'Connor**

When teachers are stressed and overworked, it's tempting for them to hunker down and bury their heads in the sand, choosing to seclude themselves in their own classrooms rather than take the time to look around and see what their colleagues might be doing. But of course, unless they observe and seek out help from those colleagues, they'll likely never encounter new ideas about instruction or let go of tired old classroom practices. That is, unless they get their heads out of the sand, they'll never get the sand out of their heads.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, and building on Dan Lortie's classic 1975 study *Schoolteacher*, educational researchers began to give serious attention to professional collaboration in schools, exploring its value in contrast to traditions of teacher individualism and isolation. On average, they found, professional collaboration led to superior results in student achievement (Nias, Southworth, & Yeomans, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989; Schleifer, Rinehart, & Yanisch, 2017; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Further, strong links between professional collaboration and teacher effectiveness have continued to be observed over time and across various contexts, as confirmed by large-scale studies around the world (e.g., Day et al., 2007; Leana, 2011). For example, in its surveys of Teaching and Learning in Schools (TALIS), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concluded that professional collaboration tends to yield positive outcomes for student learning and achievement and for teacher motivation and retention (OECD, 2014; see also Papay & Kraft, 2017).

But not all collaboration is equally effective. Notably, Judith Warren Little (1990) has described a continuum of approaches, ranging from weak forms of teacher collaboration (involving, for example, nothing more than just the sharing of stories) to stronger ones involving joint efforts to analyze and solve significant problems of practice. Similarly, Andy Hargreaves and Ruth Dawe (1990) have pointed out that collaborative practices that have been mandated in a top-down fashion, or that seem "contrived," can easily backfire, causing teachers to collaborate even less than before — indeed, this may help explain why many U.S. teachers say they dislike their professional development programs, including those meant to be "collaborative" in nature (Jacob & McGovern, 2015).

So the question is, what can be done to maximize the effectiveness of teachers' collaborative experiences and minimize their flaws? School and district leaders who want to improve collaboration have no shortage of options. Since the 1990s, professional learning specialists have created a number of approaches — such as data teams, professional learning communities, critical friends circles, and learning walks — designed to make professional collaboration more deliberate and effective. But which design should you choose? And how do you make sure it will fit your school's unique circumstances and culture? The answer is to pay attention to two things: the *solidarity* of the group and the *solidity* or *substance* of its ideas and methods.

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Solidarity without solidity

While we were writing this article, one of us visited an elementary school in Europe. Outside, on the stone steps of their outdoor theater, the grade 2 children joyfully sang their school song, featuring lyrics about belonging and togetherness. Inside, we met with the principal, who had been at the school for almost all of her career, along with some of her staff. The teachers said they loved the school and added that few colleagues had ever left their jobs. They supported each other, talked about the children and their teaching, and took an interest in each other's lives. It was a perfect collaborative culture characterized by great solidarity — not the kind we associate with teachers unions (although that is important) but the sense of togetherness expressed in mutual support and the feeling that everyone is in the same boat and doing their best.

About a year ago, these educators decided to push this collaboration deeper by giving each other feedback, including ideas about how to improve. They began by observing each other's classes, awarding a star for one thing that went well, along with two question marks about something to work on.

"How did that go down?" we asked.

"It was dreadful," they replied.

The conversations disrupted the staff's friendships rather than strengthening them. The teachers struggled to move their school culture, marked by strong personal relationships, to a deeper level, where tough questions can be asked, mistakes acknowledged, and alternatives provided in a way that is based on solid expertise concerning how to collaborate and what to collaborate about. Effective collaboration needs specific designs, protocols, structures, and processes to guide conversations so that peers can improve their practice without jeopardizing existing relationships. It needs solid expertise about curriculum, teaching, and learning, too.

Consider an example from a study one of us has been involved in (Hargreaves et al., 2018). Like a lot of school systems, Ontario, in Canada, has been focused of late on improving students' learning and achievement in mathematics. Collaborative inquiry was a key component of the system's earlier success in improving literacy instruction, so teachers and administrators decided to employ the same method once more. However, while elementary educators usually feel they already know a lot about literacy, many of them (particularly in North America) lack confidence in mathematics. This created problems because many of the collaborative inquiry groups included nobody with real expertise in the subject area.

In our visits, a number of district coaches and consultants didn't realize that this might undermine their efforts. "Nobody's an expert at anything," they claimed, "and we're just here to learn and grow and be the best that we can be." But, in fact, authoritative knowledge has an indispensable role to play in teacher collaboration. Educators should be wary of a trend toward the "death of expertise," in which no member of the group is expected to stand out as an authority, or in which everybody is assumed to have equally valid experience and knowledge (Nichols, 2017). Not only does this negate the hard-won expertise that some teachers have acquired, but it leaves the larger group adrift, without anybody to ground the inquiry process in solid research and knowledge.

Solidity without solidarity

If solidarity can benefit from more solidity, the converse is true as well. For example, imagine what's likely to happen when a principal comes across an interesting new approach to fostering collaboration … and then tells teachers that they will be required to implement it.

According to a study by the Boston Consulting Group (2014), professional learning communities (PLCs) were one of the most disliked forms of professional development among surveyed teachers, even though providers and administrators were highly supportive of the approach. A given PLC model may seem to offer a promising blueprint for collective inquiry and shared decision making. But if teachers see it as (just another) reform imposed on them from above, then they'll likely experience it as such. The protocols and terminology may be new, but they'll grumble about being forced, yet again, to go through the motions of meeting with each other, agreeing on group norms, defining shared goals, and so on.

All too often, PLCs and other efforts to promote collaboration come across as *contrived collegiality* (Hargreaves, 1994). The research base may be solid, but unless the work is grounded in a strong culture of solidarity among teachers and between them and their administrators, the PLC will be a waste of time.

The meaning of collaborative professionalism

Collaborative professional relationships that positively influence student learning need better tools and deeper trust, clearer structures and stronger cultures, expertise and enthusiasm, knowing what to do and how to be with each other — both solidity and solidarity. Such *collaborative professionalism* requires what Judith Warren Little (1990) calls "joint work," featuring rigor, dialogue, expertise, and open and honest feedback.

Over the last several years, we have studied and con-

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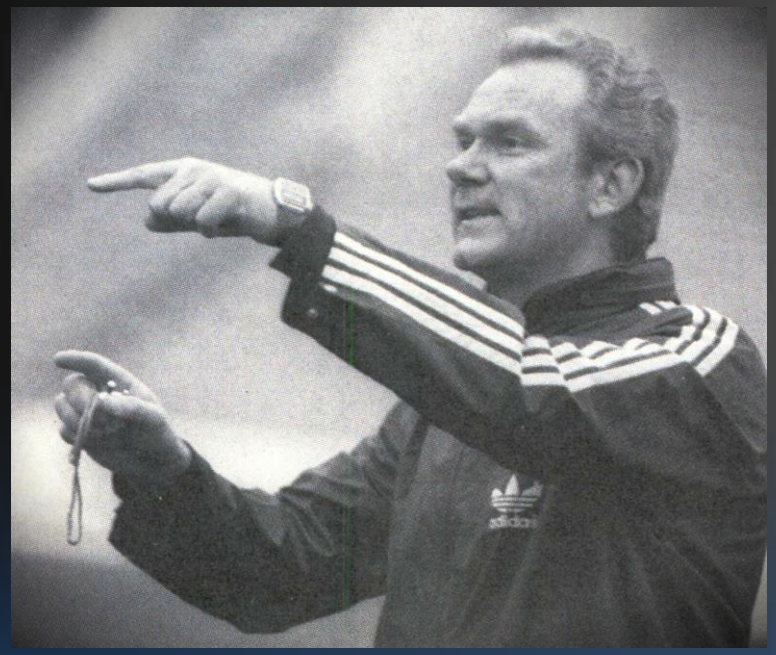
http://webtalkradio.net/Shows/WomenWhoLead/wwl071717.mp3

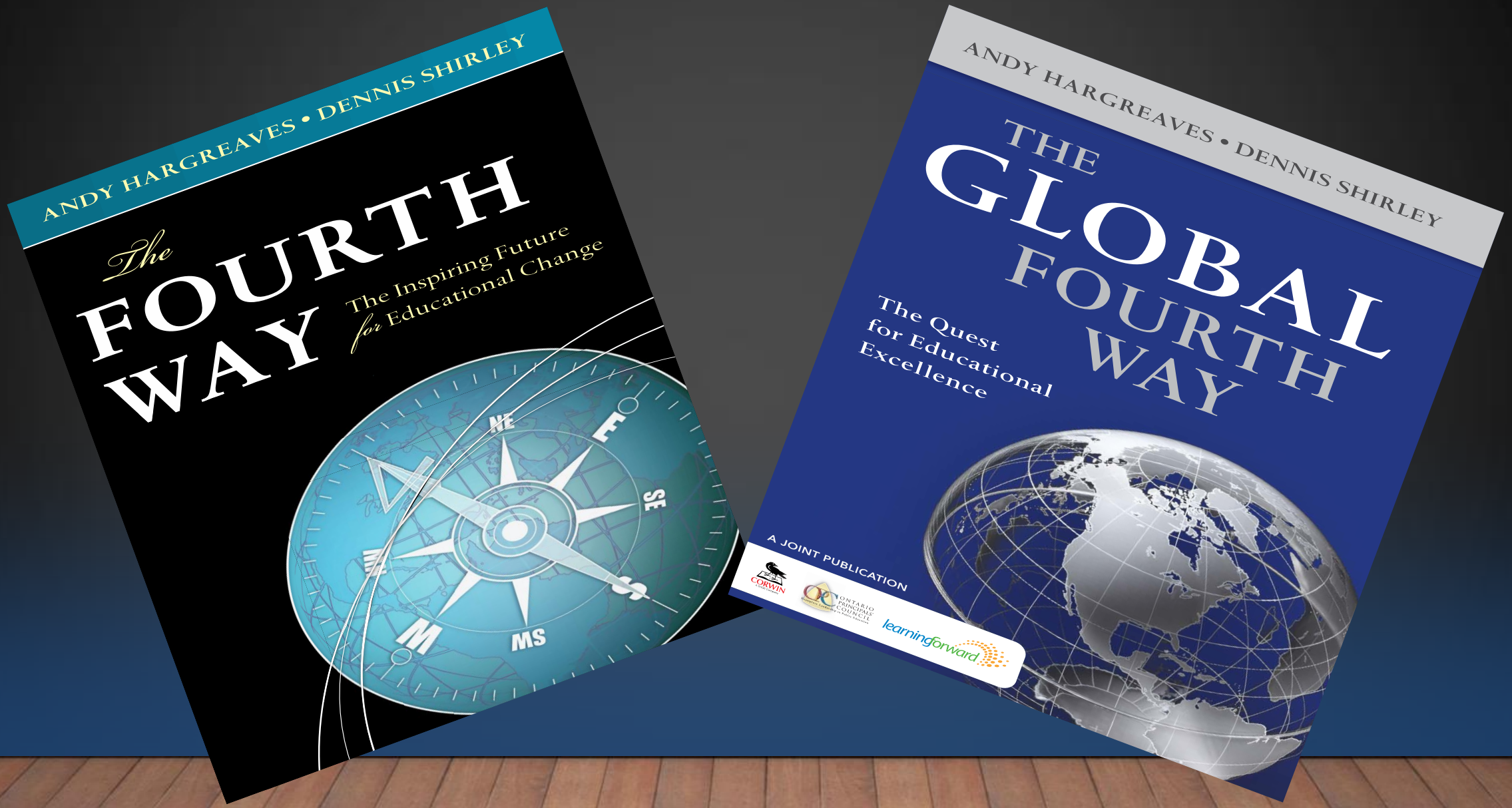
The Scientific Marxism of Soccer: Kiev 1970s



"rewards a very specific style of play: physical and frenetic. Players work tirelessly to compile points. They play defense more aggressively than offense, because that's where points can be racked up.

In stifling individual initiative, (it) mimicked the Soviet regime under which it was conceived. Nothing in Lobanovsky's point valuation measures creativity or daring. A vertical pass receives the same grade as a horizontal pass; a spectacular fake means nothing".

Foer, F. (2004). *How soccer explains the world*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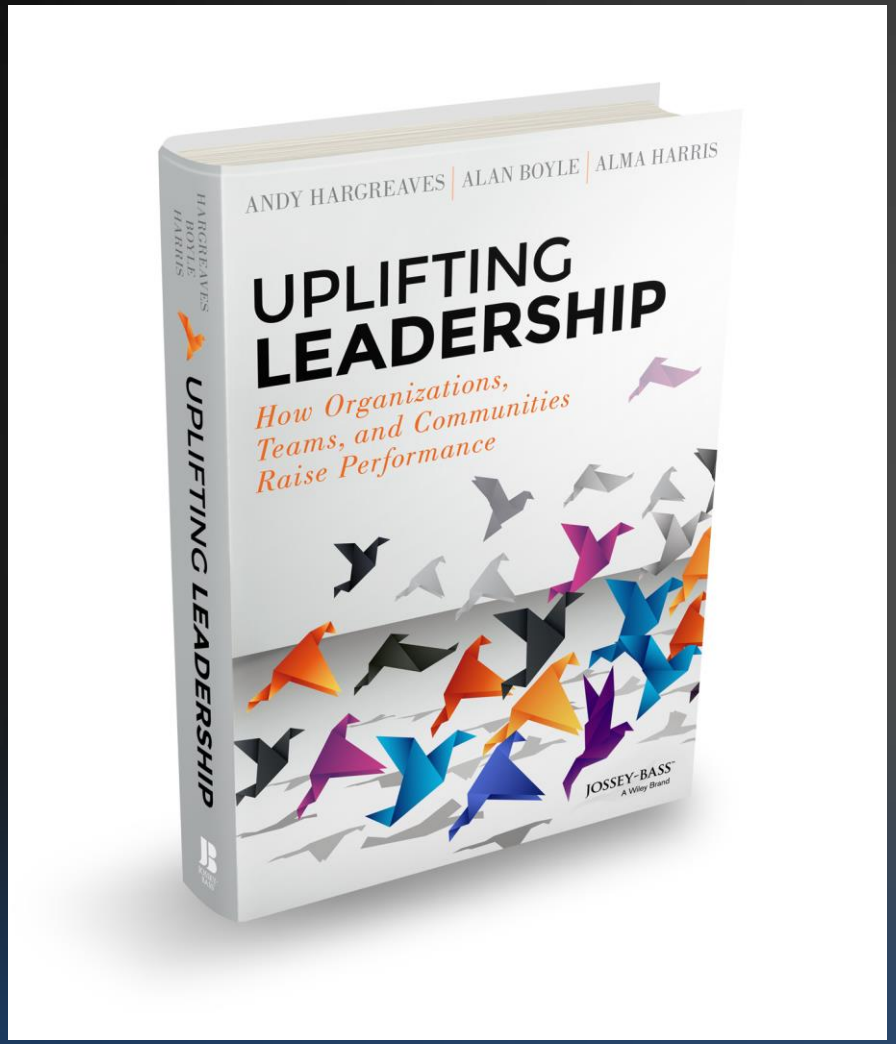

Among the 15 factors that the study found to be associated with high performance was the use of performance metrics that were generally regarded as meaningful, fair, broad, varied and sensitively applied.

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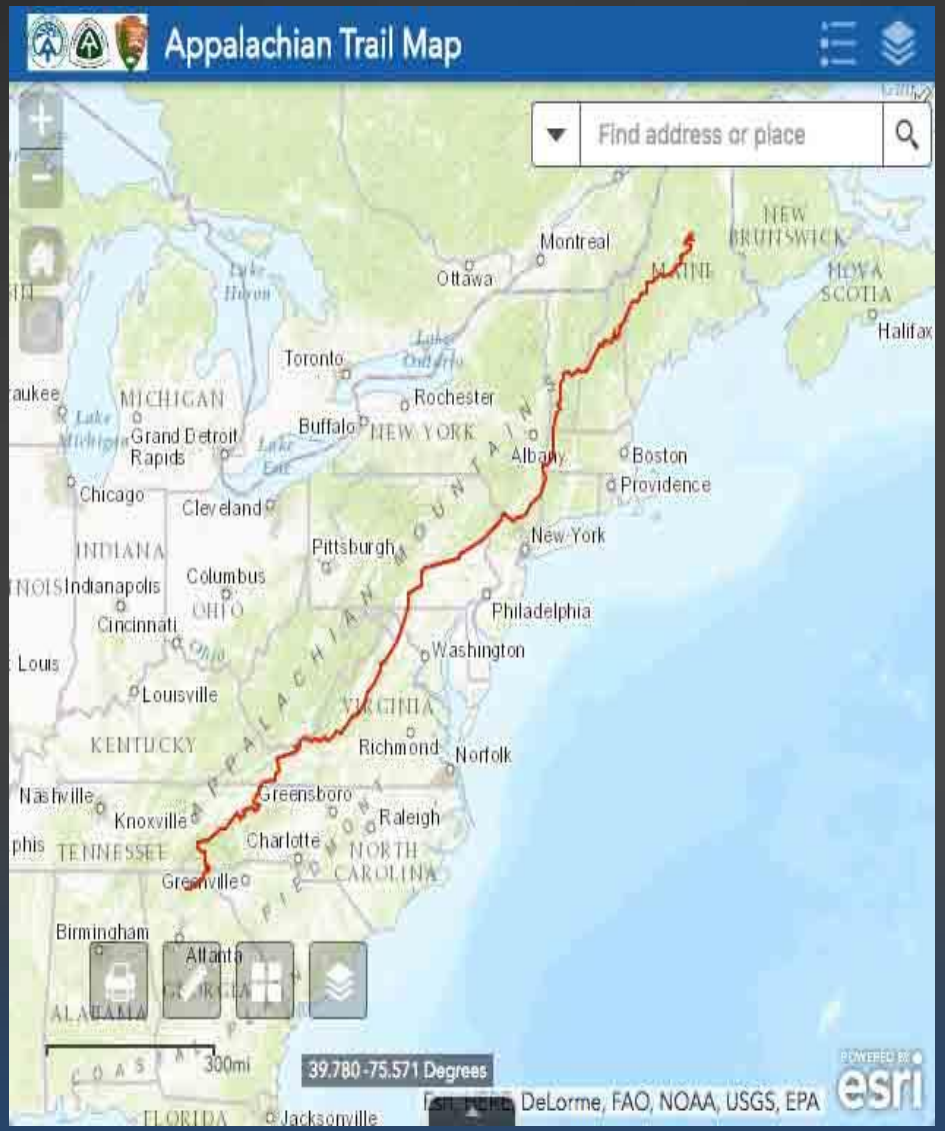
Which medical specialization has the least representation among women?


Appalachian Trail Map
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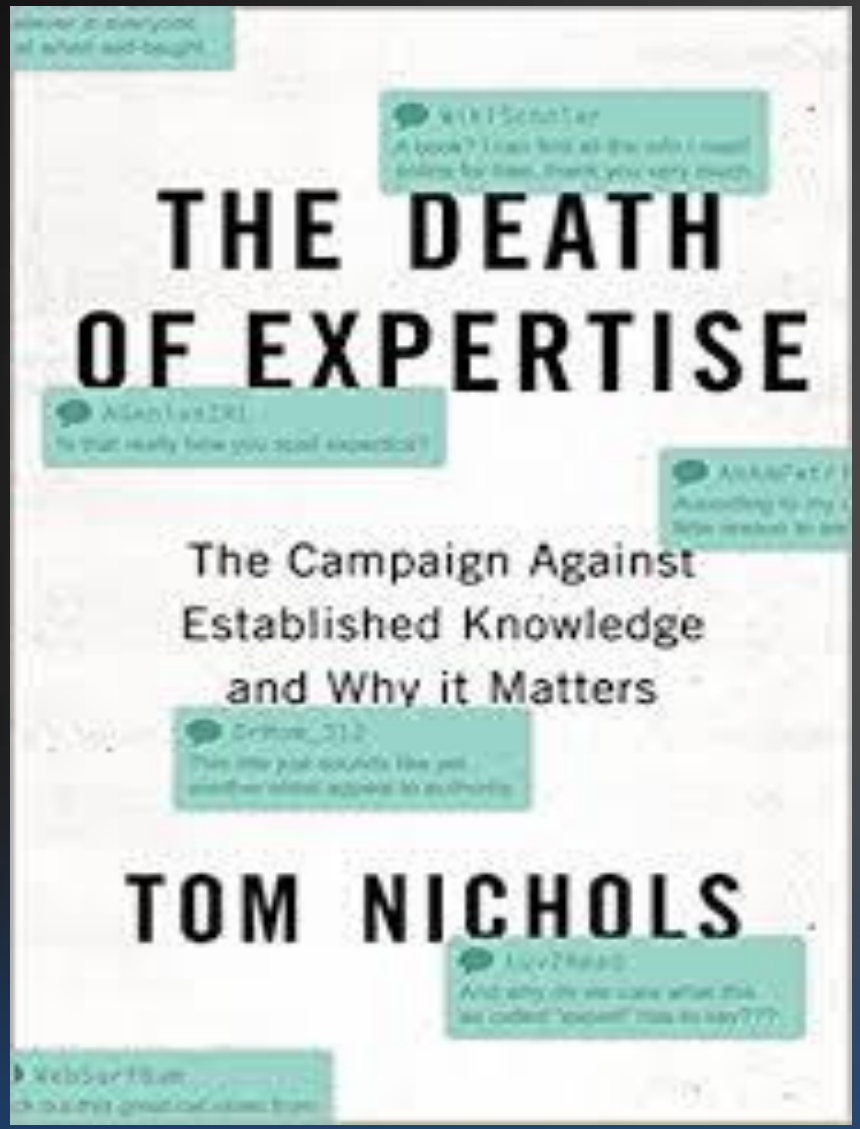
Solidarity:

The Fellowship of the Trail

Our Research Team

Solidity of Evidence & Expertise

Our



“Nobody’s an expert at anything and we’re just here to learn and grow and be the best that we can be, being respectful of everyone’s level and entry point (and) building strong relationships”.

Caring for the Team

To Care for The Thing

Our Research Team

Small Data as well as Big Data

Our Res

The graveyards of U.S. educational reform are littered with once-promising innovations that were poorly understood, superficially implemented, and consequently pronounced ineffective.

Catherine Lewis