

EBONY N. BRIDWELL-MITCHELL, PH.D.



Herbert A. Simon Professor of Education, Management and Organizational Behavior
Faculty Chair, Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Program
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Monroe C. Gutman Library, Rm. 451
6 Appian Way Cambridge, MA 02138
Telephone: 617-496-4236
E-mail: ebony_bridwell-mitchell@gse.harvard.edu
Web: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty/ebony-bridwell-mitchell>

BIOGRAPHY

Ebony N. Bridwell-Mitchell is the Herbert A. Simon Professor of Education, Management and Organizational Behavior at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. She studies how institutional conditions shape the implementation of U.S. K-12 education reform policies using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including social network analysis. Her research has appeared in leading peer-reviewed journals, been translated for practitioners, supported by funders like the National Science Foundation, and awarded by professional associations. The main aim of Dr. Bridwell-Mitchell's research program is providing researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with theoretically grounded and empirically rigorous conceptual frameworks, analytical tools, and research evidence to improve schools and extend educational opportunities, especially for underserved students. The values grounding Dr. Bridwell-Mitchell's work were instilled by parents with long careers in education and human services, rural roots prizing integrity, hard work, and fair play, and an early Montessori education encouraging self-directed, interdisciplinary learning, and problem solving as much for the sake of personal fulfillment as individual attainment. She brings these values not only to her work as a researcher and teacher in academia but also when partnering with leading-edge education organizations to support organizational development, institutional change, and school reform across the U.S. and globe.

A video introduction to Dr. Bridwell-Mitchell's research program can be viewed [here](#).

EDUCATION

New York University Leonard M. Stern School of Business Doctor of Philosophy – Management and Organization Theory	New York, NY May 2008
Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government Master of Public Policy – Human Resources, Labor, and Education	Cambridge, MA June 1999
Cornell University College of Arts and Sciences Bachelor of Arts – American Policy Studies, <i>Summa cum Laude</i> Concentration – Education Policy	Ithaca, NY May 1996

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Harvard University Graduate School of Education Professor of Education	Cambridge, MA 2022-Present
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Associate Professor of Education	2016-2022
Assistant Professor of Education	2012-2016
Brown University	Providence, RI
Assistant Professor of Sociology	2008-2012
Commerce, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Faculty	

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed Journals

- Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. & Lee, S. (2025). What can institutional analysis tell us about school improvement and reform? *Review of Educational Research*. Retrieval from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00346543251379901>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N., Jack, J., & Childs, J. (2023). The social structure of school resource disparities: How social capital and interorganizational relationships matter for educational equity. *Sociology of Education*, 96(4), 275-300. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380407231176541>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. & M. Yurkofsky (2023). Defying logic? Exploring the multiple network pathways for principals' institutional logics. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 59(2), 306–338. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X231156874>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (2020). Between what is and what is possible: Theorizing the role of institutional interstitiality in state-led school turnaround. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 95(4), 423-438. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2020.1800177>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N., & Fried, S. A. (2018). Learning one's place: Status perceptions and social capital in teacher communities. *Educational Policy* 34(7), 955-991. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818802117>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2017). Them that's got: How tie formation in partnership networks gives high schools differential access to social capital. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(6), 1221 – 1255. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217717815>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E., & Sherer, D. G. (2016). Institutional complexity and policy implementation: How underlying logics drive teacher interpretations of reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(2), 223-247. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716677567>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. and Cooc, N. (2016) The ties that bind: How social capital is forged and forfeited in teacher communities. *Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 7-17. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X16632191>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2016) How peer learning in communities of practice enables and inhibits micro-institutional change. *Organization Studies*, 37(2), 161-192. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840615593589>
- Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2015). Theorizing teacher agency and reform: How institutionalized instructional practices change and persist. *Sociology of Education*, 88(2), 140-159. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040715575559>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. & Lant, T.K. (2014). Be careful what you wish for: The effects of issue interpretation on social choices in professional networks. *Organization Science*, 25(2), 401-419. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2013.0840>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (2013). The rationalizing logics of public school reform: How cultural institutions matter for classroom instruction. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 7(2), 173-196. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812468792>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. & Mezas, S.J. (2012). The quest for cognitive legitimacy: Organizational identity crafting and internal stakeholder support. *Journal of Change Management*, 12(2), 189-207. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2011.645053>

Book Chapters, Reviews, and Rejoinders

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (Forthcoming) “Inside the place of policy implementation: Understanding and overcoming institutional inertia in school organizations.” In A. Hargreaves, A.L. Goodwin, C. Stone-Johnson, V. Showunmi, and J. Weiner (Eds), *Third International Handbook of Educational Change*. New York: Springer Press.

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N., Daly, A. J., Frank, K., Spillane, J. Borkland, P., Jr., Caduff, A., & Orbegozo, E. F. M. (2025). Chapter 32. Social network analysis: How relationships and the methods for studying them matter for education policy. In L. Cohen-Vogel, P. Youngs, & J. Scott (Eds.), *Handbook of Education Policy Research* (Vol. 2nd). American Educational Research Association. Retrieval from <https://www.era.net/Publications/Handbook-of-Education-Policy-Research-2nd-Edition>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (2020). Rejoinder: “More than a metaphor: What we miss in the charge to ‘Change the Grammar of Schooling’.” *American Journal of Education Forum*. November 2, 2020. Retrieval from <https://sites.psu.edu/ajeforum/2020/11/02/more-than-metaphor-what-we-miss-in-the-charge-to-change-the-grammar-of-schooling-by-dr-ebony-n-bridwell-mitchell>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2019). Book Review: “Lesson plans: The institutional demands of becoming a teacher” by J.G. Everitt. *Contemporary Sociology*, 48(3), 301–303. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306119842138n>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2018). Chapter 9: “Too legit to quit: Institutional perspectives on the study of school organizations”. In M. Connolly, D. E. Spicer, C. James, & S. D. Kruse (Eds.), *Sage International Handbook on School Organization*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications. Retrieval from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526465542.n9>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2018). Book Review: “Corporate elites and the reform of public education” by H. Gunter, D. Hall, & M.W. Apple (Eds.). *Teachers College Record*. March 15, 2018. Retrieval from <https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=22306>

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (2018). “System self-regulation and static equilibria: How socio-cognitive control processes regulate school responses to external reform,” In H. Shaked, C. Schechter & A. Daly (Eds.), *Leading Holistically: How Schools, Districts, and States Improve Systemically*. New York: Routledge Press. Retrieval from <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203712184>.

Milliken, F.J., Lant, T.K. and E.N. Bridwell-Mitchell (2005). “Barriers to the interpretation and diffusion of information about potential problems in organizations: Lessons from the space shuttle Columbia

disaster” p. 246-266 in W. Starbuck and M. Farjoun (Eds.) *Organization at the limit: NASA and the Columbia disaster*. New York: Blackwell. Retrieval from <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Organization+at+the+Limit%3A+Lessons+from+the+Columbia+Disaster-p-9781405131087>

Work Under Review or In Progress

“ТУЯНЕДАЯOUND: How states work to save the institution of American public schooling” (2025) – Book Manuscript

“Organization theory in education: Seeing and setting the conditions for thriving schools and systems” with K. Kennedy and M. Yurkofsky and (2025) – Edited Book Manuscript

“The strength of the relational state” with M. Combs (2025) – Working Paper

“Turning things around? The work of state-provided technical assistance in changing school institutions” with K. Larned. (2023) – Working Paper

“Beyond fidelity of implementation: How professional collaboration enables and inhibits instructional innovation” with E. F. Martinez Orbegozo and E. Kaufman (2023) – Working Paper

Cases, Trade Publications, and Media

Anderson, J. (2024, December) Want a Better School? Invest in the People. *Harvard EdCast*. 1(454). Retrieval from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/edcast/24/12/want-better-school-invest-people>.

Ayer, D. (2021, February) A talk with Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell. *Montessori Public*. 5(2). Retrieval from <https://www.montessoripublic.org/2021/02/a-talk-with-dr-ebony-bridwell-mitchell>.

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. and S. Lallinger (2020). Access, autonomy, and accountability: School governance dilemmas in post-Katrina New Orleans. Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Case Series PEL-092; PEL-093. Retrieval from <https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/case-studies-notes>.

Bridwell-Mitchell, E.N. (2020, October). Governing schools in the wake of upheaval: Lasting lessons from Katrina. *School Administrator*. Retrieval from <http://my.aasa.org/AASA/Resources/SAMag/2020/Oct20/Bridwell-Mitchell.aspx>.

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2019). Them that’s got: How school partnerships can perpetuate inequalities. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(8), 32-36. Retrieval from <https://kappanonline.org/them-thats-got-how-school-partnerships-perpetuate-inequalities-bridwell-maxwell>.

Quinn, R. (2019, May). [Ebony N. Bridwell-Mitchell on...] How school partnerships can perpetuate inequalities. *CPRE Knowledge Hub Research Minutes*. Retrieval from <https://cprehub.org/research-minutes/how-school-partnerships-can-perpetuate-inequalities>.

Shafer, L. (2018, July 29). [Ebony N. Bridwell-Mitchell on...] What makes a good school culture? *KQED/NPR News Mind/Shift*. Retrieval from <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/51746/what-makes-a-good-school-culture>.

Bridwell-Mitchell, E. N. (2015). Getting your ducks in a row: The principle of alignment and what it means for school leadership. *Principal Leadership Magazine*, 16(3), 53-55. Retrieval from <https://www.nassp.org/publication/principal-leadership/volume-16-2015-2016/principal-leadership-november->

[2015/november-2015-viewpoint.](#)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

W.T. Grant Use of Research Award. (\$249,229). Convening and catalyzing school turnaround through conceptual research use. *W.T. Grant Foundation*. 2025-2028.

Scholars of Color Mid-Career Contribution Award Nominee. *American Educational Research Association*. 2022

Harvard Graduate School of Education Dean's Venture Fund. (\$55,275). The relational infrastructure of instructional reforms: Designing teachers' collegial work to foster institutional change. *Harvard Graduate School of Education*. 2017-2020

Lyle Spencer Research Awards - Finalist. (\$872,204). The relational infrastructure of successfully implemented school reform: A proposed study of intentionally designed teacher communities and institutional change. *Spencer Foundation*. 2016.

Radcliffe Institute Exploratory Seminar Award. (\$21,450). Implications, interventions, and impact: Putting organizational research to work in real world school contexts. *Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study*. 2015

Best Paper Award. Institutional complexity and the embedded logics of public school reform. *American Educational Research Association Organization Theory SIG*. 2014

Brown University Richard B. Salomon Faculty Research Award. (\$15,000). 2012-Terminated
Brown University Commerce, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Program Faculty Research Award. (\$10,000). 2009-2010; 2010-2012

Brown University Office of the Vice President of Research Departmental Small Grant Funds Award. (\$2,000). 2008; 2009; 2010

National Science Foundation (\$460,190) with Co-principal Investigator, Stephen J. Mezas. Human and Social Dynamics Competition [SES-0433280]. 2004-2009

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Invited Lectures and Symposia

"The Strength of the Relational State." Paper Presentation – *Economic Sociology Seminar*. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. April 2025.

"The Strength of the Relational State." Paper Presentation – *Networks, Governance, and Education Seminar*. Michigan State University. East Lansing, MI. March 2025.

"Constructing new possibilities for racialized organizations theory in educational research." Discussant – Organization Theory Special Interest Group Symposium at *American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*. Philadelphia, PA. April 2024

“Leveraging organizational theory to make educational systems more effective and racially equitable.”
Session Chair – Organization Theory Special Interest Group Paper Session at *American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*. Chicago, IL. April 2023

“Braver, brighter, bolder: School renewal for a brand-new world.” Keynote address at

- *Washington Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*. Tacoma, WA. March 2023
- *New England Association of Schools and College Annual Meeting*. Boston, MA. December 2022.

“Overcoming the institutional status quo? The role of meso-level practice change.” Paper presented at *Indiana University Department of Sociology*. Bloomington, IN. November 2022

"Partnering for improvement? How school-partner network characteristics matter for student outcomes." Paper presented at *University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Visiting Scholar Program*. Philadelphia, PA. December 2019

“So high we can’t get over it? Overcoming inherent obstacles to radical change in longstanding institutions.” Keynote address – “By All Means” Convening. *Harvard University Education Redesign Lab*. Cambridge, MA. May 2019

“Busting out of the iron cage: Network mobilization and professional prescriptions” Paper presented at

- *Michigan State University Education Policy Innovation Collaborative*. Lansing, MI. April 2019
- *Vanderbilt University Peabody College of Education Leadership, Policy, and Organizations Colloquium Series*. Nashville, TN. October 2018

“Them that’s got: How tie formation in partnership networks gives high schools differential access to social capital.” Paper presented at

- *University of Connecticut*. Storrs, CT. April 2017
- *University of Southern California*. Los Angeles, CA. November 2016
- *University of Texas Austin*. Austin, TX. October 2016

Refereed Lectures and Symposia

“Strength of the Relational State.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*. Organization. Chicago, IL. August 2025

“What can institutional analysis tell us about school improvement and reform?” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Organization Theory Special Interest Group. Philadelphia, PA. April 2024

“Institutions, innovation, and impact: Dynamics of exclusion and organizational responses.” Symposium Organizer for the *Annual Meeting of the European Group for Organization Studies*. Subtheme 12: Institutions, Innovation, Impact. Vienna, Austria. July 2022

“Beyond fidelity of implementation: How professional collaboration enables and inhibits institutionally divergent instructional innovation” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Organization Theory Special Interest Group. San Diego, CA. April 2022

“Pandemics and organizational dynamics in schools.” Paper Discussant at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Division A-Administration, Organization, and Leadership. San Diego, CA. April 2022

“Turning things around? The work of state-provided technical assistance in changing school institutions” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Division L – Educational Policy and Politics. San Diego, CA. April 2022

“The strength of the relational state: How institutional change is enacted in U.S. public schools.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* – Organization Theory Special Interest Group. Toronto, CA. April 2019

“Place, positionality, and performativity: Understanding and overcoming the barriers to better research practice partnerships.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* – Organization Theory Special Interest Group. New York, NY. April 2018

“Three takes on fragmentation and social capital.” Paper Discussant at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Division A-Administration, Organization, and Leadership. San Antonio, TX. April 2017

“Thinking beyond the institutional status quo: The effects of managerial advice networks on isomorphic issue response.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Division A-Administration, Organization, and Leadership. Washington, DC. April 2016.

“The ties that bind: How social capital is forged and forfeited in teacher communities.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Division A-Administration, Organization, and Leadership. Chicago, IL. April 2015.

“Learning one’s place: How status matters for social capital in teacher communities.” Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Organization Theory Special Interest Group. Chicago, IL. April 2015.

SELECTED UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

(Co-)Chair, Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Program – Harvard University Graduate School of Education. 2020-Present

Editorial Board Member, *Sociology of Education*. 2015-2017; 2022- Present

Research Advisory Board Member, Spencer Foundation Teacher Turnover Project Research Advisory Board. Principal Investigators, Holme, J. & Jabbar, H. University of Texas at Austin. 2019-2024

Faculty Mentor, Academy of Management Organization and Management Theory Division. Doctoral Student Consortium. Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. August 2022

Board Member, Shared Systems Research Advisory Board – Partnership for the Future of Learning. 2019-2022

Member, Harvard University PK-12 Task Force. 2019-2020

Associate Editor, *American Educational Research Journal*. 2018-2020

Editorial Board Member, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Since 2019

Editorial Advisory Board Member, Journal of Education Policy. 2018-2020

Chair, American Educational Research Association, Organization Theory Special Interest Group. 2015-2018

Program Chair, American Educational Research Association, Division A- Section 2: School and Organization Effects. 2016-2017

Secretary/Treasurer, American Educational Research Association, Organization Theory Special Interest Group. 2012-2014

SELECTED TEACHING & ADVISING

Course Teaching

A-504: The Organization Science of School Improvement. Harvard Graduate School of Education. 2022-Present

S-417/A613: Social Relationships and Networks in School Organizations. Harvard Graduate School of Education. 2012-Present

A-362: Institutional Change in School Organizations, Systems, and Sectors Harvard Graduate School of Education. 2013-Present

A-607: Organizational Leadership and Management in K-12 Schools and Systems. Harvard Graduate School of Education. 2013-2022

S428 – Mixed Methods Research Practicum on Institutional Change. Harvard Graduate School of Education. 2018-2021

Soc 1030: Organizational Theories of Public and Private Sectors. Brown University. 2009-2012

Soc 187L: Advanced Seminar in Economic Sociology. Brown University. 2009-2012

Soc 1050: Methods of Research in Organizations. Brown University. 2009-2012

Doctoral Supervision Completed

Dissertation Committee Chair, Jeraul C. Mackey. “Rewarding equality, while hoping for equity: The unintended consequences of fair-minded hiring practices.” Harvard University. 2023

Dissertation Committee Chair, Simone A. Fried. “School district takeovers, state-district relationships, and the evolving role of the state education agency in the United States.” Harvard University. 2022

Dissertation Committee Member, Maxwell Yurkofsky. “When Reason Confronts Uncertainty: Continuous Improvement, Technical Ceremonies, and the Changing Structure of American Schools.” Harvard University. 2020

Capstone Committee Member, Stefan Lallinger. “Driving Social Change in a Large, Complex, and Highly Political Bureaucratic Organization: School Desegregation and Integration in New York City 65 Years After Brown.” Harvard University. 2020

Capstone Committee Co-Chair with D. Cohen, Frances-Victoria Olajider. “Entrepreneurial Intermediary Organizations and The Business of Impact: Enacting a Vision for Equity by Leveraging Learning.” Harvard University. 2017

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE – BOARD SERVICE, TRAINING, CONSULTING & KEYNOTES

Harvard University Graduate School of Education Instructor, Programs in Professional Education	Cambridge, MA 2013-Present
Providence Public Schools Community Advisory Board Member	Providence, RI 2021-Present
National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector Board Member	West Hartford, CT 2020-Present
College Visions Board Member	Providence, RI 2020-2024
International Center for Leadership in Education, HMH Conference Address, Annual Model Schools Conference	Orlando, FL 2023
New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) Keynote Address, NEASC Annual Conference	Boston, MA 2022
Council of Chief State School Officers Annual Meeting Address, TLL Collaborative	Washington, DC 2018
KIPP, Knowledge is Power Program Trainer, Summer Leadership Institute	New York, NY 2008-2018
Microsoft Corporation Speaker, Microsoft Corporation Procurement Summit	Redmond, WA 2017
Alief Independent School District Trainer, Summer Leadership Institute	Houston, TX 2016
New York State Council of School Superintendents Trainer LEAF Summer Institute; Cabinet Leadership Summit	Albany, NY Cambridge, MA 2017; 2016
John Peter Sinnott Magnet School for Health and Health Careers Instructor, Instructional Lead Teacher	Brooklyn, NY 1999-2002