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THE PRINCIPAL'S PRISM: THE ETHIC OF CARE

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The Qualitative Report

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My Background

- Free-lance Magazine Writer
- High School English Teacher
- Middle School Assistant Principal
- Middle School Principal
- Associate Research Chair, Center for Professional Responsibility in Education, University of Phoenix
- Interests
 - Reflexive methodologies
 - Ethics as lenses to examine our own prejudices and values

Metaphor of the Prism

“A prism breaks light into its disparate parts called a spectrum. Prisms are used for analyzing light and for determining the identity and structure of its materials and **can reverse the direction of light by internal reflection**” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012).

"My task is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm — all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."

Joseph Conrad

Problem

“School leaders ... lead storied lives that influence their ways of knowing and responding to the world.” It is vital, therefore, to understand the lived experiences of school leaders in order to better understand their decision-making and therefore improve the educational experiences of their students.

Purpose: To apply techniques of narrative analysis and autoethnography

- To determine how applications of ethic of care shaped my decisions.
- To become better aware of my own learning and thought processes
- To learn how I might have improved my practice
- To provide a record of my own thinking for narrative analysts
- To mark a path for others to learn from my inquiry

My Principal Demons

- Sexual Infidelity
- Alcoholism & Addiction to Prescription Drugs
- Emotional and Professional Collapse
- Decapitation death of a student
- Teachers of disabled students wrapped in a sexual tryst
- Incompetent teachers and staff protected by procedural morass
- Accusations of racial discrimination
- Deportation of an undocumented Mexican father
- Band director having sex with a student.

My Principal Angels

- Building school culture
- Distributed leadership
- Community involvement
- Global partnerships
- Synergy

Some Educational Ethics Researchers

- Starratt
- Shapiro and Stefkovich
- Noddings
- Gilligan
- Beck
- Sergiovanni
- Begley
- Blasé and Blasé

Ethical Frameworks



Starratt and the Ethic of Care

Claims of injustice are often in conflict. What is right for one might be wrong for another. In order for an ethic of justice to serve its more generous purpose, it must be fulfilled in an ethic of love. (It) recognizes the “intrinsic dignity and worth” of each individual and is “grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred” (1994, p. 52).

Personal Narrative

Based on the recursive process of personal reflection

Cole and Knowles argue, “every in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context brings us that much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities” (2001, p. 11).

Ellis and Bochner (2000) define personal narratives as “critical autobiographical stories of lived experience” (Alexander, 2008, p. 91).

Self-Reflection

Connelly and Clandinin (1990), believe that as professionals make decisions about practical action, they are drawing on the totality of their knowledge. This knowledge is neither exclusively personal nor professional, but a unique blend of multiple sources of knowledge (Zehm, 1999).

“A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Examining experience is the key to education ” (Dewey, p. 305).

Self-Reflection

“Complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts” are increasingly central to the world of professional practice (Schon, 1983, p. 14).

“Reflecting on personal experience can often provide us with patterns of characteristics to which many are likely to respond in the same way” (Sergiovanni , 2009, p. 7).

Self-Reflection

“A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Examining experience is the key to education ” (Dewey, p. 305).

“If reflection doesn’t lead to action, what good is it?” (Saldana, TQR 2016)

Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly define narrative inquiry as “trying to make sense of life as lived” (2000).

Stories that illuminate and reflect

“Understanding of self is not narcissism; it is a precondition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others” (Pinar, 1988, p. 150).

Narrative Analysis

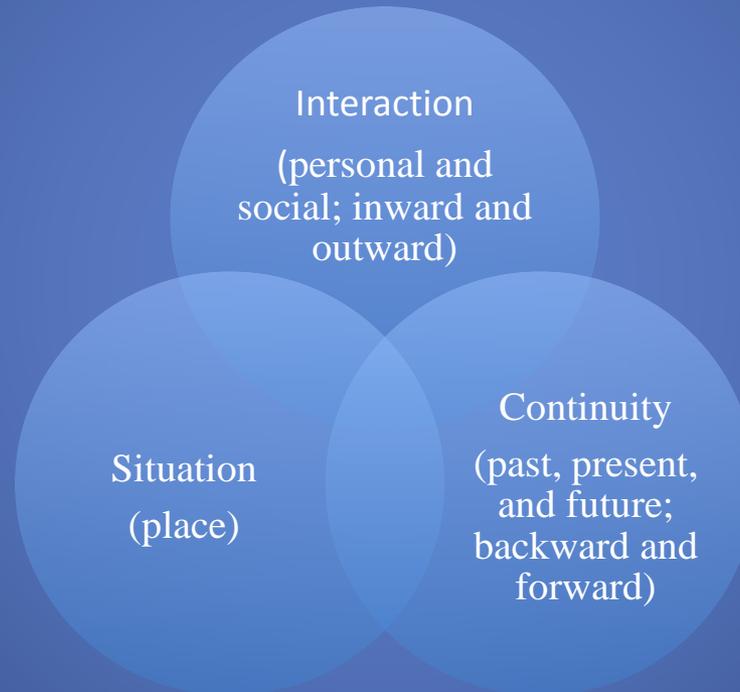
Many researchers (Riesman, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) describe the reading and analysis of field texts as a cyclical, recursive act.

Cole and Knowles (2001) argue for a holistic approach to understanding the experiences portrayed in the texts.

Three-Dimensional Space

“To adequately understand an experience or event, one must “experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way”. Thus, the researcher must write “a research text that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

Three-Dimensional Space



Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a form of narrative study that is written and recorded by the individual who is the subject of the study (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Creswell, 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, et al, 2011).”

Autoethnography

The autoethnographer sees the universal through the particular. As the audience reads the text, they generalize it to their experiences, provoking reflection and spurring knowledge development.

Evocative Autoethnography

“Autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis, et al, 2011).

Analytic Autoethnography

Anderson argues for a more analytic approach to personal reflection (2006)

Autoethnographic Questions

- Did I learn anything new about myself?
 - Did I learn more about processes and relationships?
 - Will the story help others cope with or better understand their worlds?
 - Is it useful, and if so, to whom?
 - Does it encourage dialogue?
 - Does it have the potential to stimulate social action?
- (Ellis, 2000, pp. 275- 276).

Data Collection

Data sources and field texts

To recall, recreate, and interpret particular conflicts

Notes

Memos

Agendas

Emails

Reflective journals

Outside readers

Vignettes

“Auto-ethnographies show people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and what their struggles mean Writing difficult stories is a gift to self, a reflexive attempt to construct meaning in our lives and heal or grow from our pain” (Ellis, 2007).

“I am shocked and pained by (current) nonsensical policy stances: ‘Scientific research’ – and only scientific research – is to be the authorizing criterion in judging educational practices and proposals for change. The reflective experience of practitioners, the documented observations of scholars... and the memories and case studies of an array of inquirers are to be ignored. Such nonsense! Apply this same criterion to the fields of medicine, law, engineering, oceanography, and the space sciences, and this house of cards will quickly come tumbling down” (Goodlad, p. 205).

Implications – When Researchers Care

- Difficult and often painful work
- Epiphanies don't come easily and are often unfriendly
- Does care signal weakness?
- Applying too much care for one group may injure another
- Compassion fatigue
- What do I want? I want people to take responsibility for themselves and avoid self-destructive behavior

Implications – When Researchers Care

“My brother was murdered by Oakland Police in 2010. He was a very well known barber, but all they saw was a black man that they thought was dangerous and they thought he had a gun. At the time, I was up for an attorney position with the City of Oakland, where I would be defending the police as a part of my job.”

Implications – When Researchers Care

“I also worked as an intern in the same department when I was a law student where I conducted mediations with the community and the police. I am now conducting trainings with the San Francisco Bar around this very topic. Can you tell I am excited to submit this proposal?”

University of Phoenix colleague

Implications and Thoughts for Further Study

- Collect stories of other principals
- Compassionate interviewing
- Implications for training of school leaders
- School partnerships
- Global partnership
- Vulnerable populations
- How school infrastructure often disenfranchises vulnerable groups

Implications and Further Study

- How teacher unions often protect mediocrity and injure marginalized groups
- Interactions with students in disciplinary procedures
- Power and privilege
- Compassion fatigue
- Transformational leadership
- Servant leadership
- Professional growth

Implications and Further Study

Applying an ethic of care helps one wrestle with dilemmas that confront school principals daily. Research must always keep this ethic of care in the forefront. We must care about students. We must also understand the personal and professional needs of teachers and staff, seeing them as individuals requiring an equal element of care.

Delta

Adrienne Rich

*If you have taken this rubble for my past
raking though it for fragments you could sell
know that I long ago moved on
deeper into the heart of the matter*

*If you think you can grasp me, think again:
my story flows in more than one direction
a delta springing from the riverbed
with its five fingers spread*