



VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

FALL 2007

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1

EMPERICAL VERIFICATIONS OF NORMATIVE ETHICAL POSTURES AND VALUATION PROCESSES IN EDUCATIONL LEADERSHIP

William C. Frick
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
United States

“To be told that only a certain vocabulary is *suited* to human beings or human societies, that only *that* vocabulary permits us to ‘understand’ them, is the seventeenth-century myth of Nature’s Own Vocabulary all over again. If, with Dewey, one sees vocabularies as instruments for coping with things rather than representations of their intrinsic natures, then one will not think that there is an intrinsic connection, nor an intrinsic *lack* of connection between ‘explanation’ and ‘understanding’ – between being able to predict and control people of a certain sort and being able to sympathize and associate with them, to view them as fellow-citizens. One will not think there are two ‘methods’ – one for explaining somebody’s behavior and another for understanding his nature.”

Richard Rorty, Method, Social Science, and Social Hope, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Essays: 1972-1980)

Introduction

I begin this article by referencing Rorty’s (1982, p. 198) clear emphasis on the importance of epistemological clarity as it informs research methodology in the social sciences (or human science research). The issues pertaining to knowledge – what is and can be known – within social science disciplines has as much to do with a working understanding of critical social theory and sub-disciplines of philosophy proper as with the differences, albeit stark at times, between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodological research approaches to questions about human beings. This working understanding, as I call it, really is about a grasp of the philosophy of science (Gilkey, 1993). My intent is not to advocate for a preferred or special methodological approach to questions about values, valuation processes and theories, ethical frameworks or moral decision making in educational leadership. I would rather simply try to set the record straight and reassert, like others have so eloquently done in the past, that methodology proceeds from particular views about the nature and limits of knowledge and that these particular views are fixed within larger cosmovisions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) provide a clear taxonomy of how cosmovisions, or large-order paradigms, inform methodological approaches to questions pertaining to both the human and non-human universe. These differing paradigms operate as base-line or foundational assumptions. The very human work of conducting research necessitates beginning

VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Editor:

Paul Begley
*The Pennsylvania State University,
USA*

Editorial Board:

Derek Allison
*University of Western Ontario,
Canada*

Paul Bredeson
*University of Wisconsin-Madison,
USA*

Elizabeth Campbell
OISE/UT, Canada

Margaret Grogan
University of Missouri, USA

Olof Johansson
Umea University, Sweden

Kenneth Leithwood
OISE/UT, Canada

Pauline Leonard
Louisiana Tech, USA

James Ryan
OISE/UT, Canada

Jacqueline Stefkovich
*The Pennsylvania State University,
USA*

Allan Walker
*Chinese University of Hong Kong,
SAR China*

Managing Editor:
Angela L. Duncan

with our own selves, our presuppositions and beliefs, and a lot of other “stuff” before proceeding with the “scientific” methods which understandably yield results that resonate with the imprint of the researcher.

More Epistemology: Paradigms and Friendly Methods

The following table is taken from Guba and Lincoln (1994), and I have found it to be a carefully constructed and clarifying taxonomy pertaining to our discussion.

Basic Beliefs (Metaphysics) of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms

Item	Positivism [Modernism.....]	Postpositivism	Critical Theory et al.	ConstructivismPostmodernism]
Ontology	naïve realism – “real” reality and apprehendable	critical realism – “real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehended	historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	dualist/objectivist findings true [vocabulary is the language of nature]	modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community findings probably true [vocabulary adequately represents nature]	transactional/subjectivist; value mediated findings [vocabulary can represent nature, but is imbued with the desires, values and intent of the researcher]	transactional/subjectivist; created findings [vocabulary could represent nature, but temporary and pragmatically malleable]
Methodology	experimental/manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly	modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may	dialogic/dialectical; [mainly qualitative]	hermeneutical/dialectical; [mainly qualitative]

Can these various methods and supporting paradigms inform our work as researchers when studying topics, subjects, questions and ideas as complicated and complex as axiology applied to educational leadership? I think so. In fact a comprehensive literature review of research in this field of study indicates a robust application of methodologies consisting of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodological approaches to examining and exploring administrative valuation, moral cognition and reasoning, ethical decision making or judgments within educational contexts (Frick, 2006).

A recently constructed organizing framework by Langlois and Begley (2005) reveals broad and sophisticated approaches to the study of values, ethics and moral leadership in schools. Specifically, the framework attempts to categorize and map out existing literature and serves to clarify different perspectives and research directions within the field. This framework is an “omnibus conceptual framework” (p. 6) that serves as a guide for theorists and researchers in knowing what the landscape of the discipline looks like and offers meta-theoretical and empirical analyses in order to bring coherence to the study of values, ethics and moral educational leadership.

The framework is essentially a two sided matrix with one axis depicting three levels of “grounding” which include: 1) theory building and epistemological focuses, 2) qualitative and quantitative descriptive research, 3) practice and social relevance

literature. The other axis depicts four levels of “analysis” which include: 1) microéthique (individual), 2) mésoéthique (group or organization), 3) macroéthique (society or government), 4) mégaéthique (cross-cultural or comparative and international). The matrix places in context a large portion of the literature; and within twelve quadrants or “domains” a sense of clarity and accessibility is achieved for the area of moral leadership studies (Langlois & Begley, 2005).

An Epistemological Caveat

Our knowing by way of scientific research methods (better understood as the careful, systematic, and rigorous collection and analysis of information recognized as data) (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007) is, and always will be, limited, insufficient and sometimes regrettably flawed. This realization does not change the ontological basis of what is studied and researched. What I mean by this is, just because we cannot know “for sure” (in an absolute sense of clarity and precision), that because there are limits to our knowing and vocabularies (words and numbers), it does not conclusively follow that what is studied is not real. The reality of what is studied (in ontological terms) is not dependent on our inadequate knowing. Rather than framing human values, valuation processes, ethics and moral leadership behavior as only ephemeral and illusory subjects not given to empirical examination, we can simply assert that the topics are so very complex that even carefully crafted research methodologies permit us to see parts and not the whole, shadows rather than full reality itself. Because of this distinction between epistemology and ontology I’m inclined to support Maxcy and Caldas (1991) when they state,

Moreover, following Lakomski¹ we believe that the work of Hodgkinson² and T. B. Greenfield³ which ‘treat *all* values as ethical and moral ones...’ and as subjective and non-cognitive (never true or false, but only ‘good’ or ‘bad’) – makes the comparative evaluation of *competing* values virtually impossible (p. 71). As Bloom⁴ tells us, we are awash in a world of relativism where anyone’s values are as good as anyone else’s. In a sense, the value subjectivist position of the moral imaginationist is as dangerous as the earlier logical positivist claim that value claims are mere ejaculations: both camps insulate values from rationality. (p. 48)

There is an important point to be made here. The predominant “philosophic moves” to address the competing conceptions of value judgment cannot be simply taking a side between universality and relativism. I concur with Cady (2005) and others (Moody-Adams, 1997) who indicate a very serious refusal to choose between the two positions in preference of a “mediating” stance of proposing value/ethical/moral “candidates” for universality that themselves reflect and rest on acknowledging diversity and pluralism. Cady (2005) goes on to explain:

Diversity considerations often are cited as grounds for skepticism about value universality, and value universality is usually taken to be in tension with value

pluralism. I want to entertain the notion that these seeming incompatibles may, in fact, be quite compatible. (p. 105)

This stance has been expressed by Begley (public communication, November 11, 2006) who has indicated that considerable progress has been made, over a significant period of time, in coming to a much clearer consensus of what constitutes the value/ethical/moral “candidates” for educational leadership. Seeing parts and shadows has brought clarity to the field.

From Theory to Methodology

Some scholars have argued for a particular paradigmatic focus and research agenda within the field of educational administration/leadership at large (Smith & Blase, 1991) that moves us from strict empiricism to hermeneutics. Personally, as a researcher, I think it is very important to closely examine participant meaning making; especially with the topics and questions we consider interesting and important. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994):

Human behavior, unlike that (the nature) of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities.... The etic (outsider) theory brought to bear on an inquiry by an investigator (or the hypothesis proposed to be tested) may have little or no meaning within the emic (insider) view of studied individuals, groups, societies, or cultures. Qualitative data, it is affirmed, are useful in uncovering emic views; theories, to be valid, should be qualitatively grounded (Glaser & Strauss, 1967⁵; Strauss & Corbin, 1990⁶). (p. 106)

With respect to value theory, meta-ethics, valuation processes, ethical frameworks, and normative morality the above explanation is especially pertinent. Axiology, writ large; moral philosophy, in general; and value-informed decision-making theories, in particular; must be brought to the ground and tested by uncovering participants’ emic views and related behaviors against what the theory would tell us. Abstract theorizing, formal reasoning, narrow academic conventions of argument, algorithmic and quasi-scientific logic happens within separate value and ethical constructs, but these activities cannot prove or provide those constructs (Cady, 2005). There is no sense having a theory if it does not help us to both explain and understand what is happening on the ground.

It is good to recall that Western moral philosophy addresses essentially three kinds of thinking that relate to values and ethics: 1) Descriptive, empirical inquiry which portrays or explains the phenomena of morality or valuing. 2) Normative thinking that considers what is right, good, obligatory, or praiseworthy in particular circumstances or as a general principle and providing reasons and justifications for said judgments. 3) Analytical or critical studies that seek to answer logical, epistemological and semantical questions about the nature and meaning of morality (Frankena, 1973). Within the sub-discipline of normative ethics there consists theories of obligation (rules and principles), moral value or virtue (dispositions or traits of character), and nonmoral

value (the meaning of “good” and its senses, or what constitutes the good life). All three theories are significant for understanding valuation processes, ethical decision making and moral leadership practices in schools.

In the most general sense, my study examined secondary principals’ perspectives and experiences about the moral and ethical nature of their work. Based on my research questions, I focused on the meaning and utility of the expression, “the best interests of the student,” the unique moral aspects attributed to professional practice within the field of educational leadership, and the phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord experienced as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult moral choices.

In addition to the study’s primary focus, I was interested in knowing how secondary principals interpret key aspects of the Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students’ Best Interests (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006). My intent was to examine participants’ perspectives about their own decision making experiences – the ethical and moral deliberations experienced in professional practice. More specifically, I wanted to understand what meaning was ascribed to the experience of deciding morally or ethically, and what sense participants had of the plurality of values and situations in which choices between actions embody competing and irreducible moral standpoints (Swedene, 2005). Ultimately, I focused on whether practicing administrators experienced and constructed meaning over (or made meaning out of) their professional work, including decision making, in ways depicted and explained by the guiding framework.

My empirical investigation focused on principals’ perspectives about the expression “the best interests of the student” as a viable professional ethic for educational leadership. Also, I was interested in other aspects of professional moral reasoning and practice; particularly principals’ perceptions concerning what is morally unique about their work, the meanings ascribed to professional moral practice, and principals’ sense making about their own experiences and judgments when trying to decide and act ethically, particularly the internal value discrepancy or intrapersonal moral discord experienced as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult moral choices centered on personal versus organizational and/or professional value discrepancy.

To provide you with a sense of context in order to underscore the specific method I used in my own research, an account of the study’s topic, goals and foci will serve as a useful starting point. From the very beginning, this topic was married to a clearly defined goal: It focused on whether or not practicing administrators experienced and constructed meaning over (or made meaning out of) their professional work, including decision making, in such a way that either supported, modified, or disconfirmed aspects of the Ethic of the Profession framework and its Model for Promoting Students’ Best Interests. In essence, I asked secondary school leaders a series of general and specific interview questions; some directly and others indirectly related to the ethical decision making model. Both general and specific questions were designed to test the utility, comprehensiveness

and explanatory power of a professional ethic as proposed by Shapiro & Stefkovich (2001, 2005) and Stefkovich (2006). Central research questions were derived directly from this theoretical framework.

A Phenomenological-Like Research Method for the Educational Context

Quantitative measurement, correlation, prediction and causality were not the investigative goals of my inquiry; rather my primary concern was with description – rendering an accurate account and interpretation of the experiences of educational leaders. My goal was to express empirically derived knowledge for theory building and bring conceptual clarification to what constitutes moral practice and ethical decision making among practicing school administrators while being informed by a specific theoretical framework. My aim, in studying human experience and the psychological and social phenomenon of moral decision making, was to uncover, among other things, the inherent logic of such an experience or phenomenon – the way in which moral and ethical choice was conceptualized and made understandable by participants (Dukes, 1984). Data of this kind were acquired by qualitative-naturalistic inquiry. Data collection techniques that were explorative and generative in nature were best suited for my research questions. I used a general, modified phenomenological-like approach suited for an educational research context in order to capture administrators’ perspectives about ethical practice, moral decision making experiences and the meanings attributed to those experiences. As Patton (1990) indicates:

A phenomenological perspective can mean either or both (1) a focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world (in which case one can use interviews without actually experiencing the phenomenon oneself) or (2) a methodological mandate to actually experience the phenomenon being investigated (in which case participant observation would be necessary). (p. 70)

My focus was on the essence of shared, common experiences and the meaning ascribed to those experiences from the participants’ perspectives. Particularly, I was interested in participants’ moral understandings in search of a commonality of basic elements in human experience and meaning making. This kind of phenomenological perspective applied to educational research is formally based on the philosophical works of Husserl (1913/1962; Kockelmans, 1967). Basic concepts of Husserlian phenomenology are important considerations when preparing for field research. Although there is no standard methodological mandate for phenomenological procedures and techniques, general and specific guidelines exist that guided me in research preparation, data collection and analysis. It is important to note that a phenomenological study within the educational research context involves “studies of schooling [that] elicit the meanings that participants in the educational process assign to themselves and what they are doing” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1992, p. 850). Therefore, within this psychological research tradition the researcher is obliged to understand and faithfully report the

depictions, perspectives and interpretations of participants, or the emic, without necessarily providing a thoroughgoing analysis or explanation of participants’ experiences and views.

From the phenomenological perspective, human experience is intelligible and makes sense prior to interpretation and theorizing. The sense or logic of experience “is [part of] an inherent structural property of the experience itself [and] not something constructed by an outside observer” (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). The goal of this kind of research is to uncover the inherent meaning of human experience and faithfully articulate this understanding without distortion. This methodological frame of reference allowed me to understand a part of the lived experiences of secondary school principals when they recounted the times they were presented with difficult ethical and moral circumstances that required important choices and action. An understanding of participants’ experiences and the meanings they attributed to them was ultimately achieved by integrating the stories and descriptions of participants which included perceptions, thoughts, feelings, life examples, ideas, and both personal recollections of past situations and reactions to a contrived circumstance within the interview context in the form of a dilemma vignette.

A clear methodological distinction was made between individual subjective experience and participant experiences as related to me within the interview context. The former is the personal, private, arbitrary mental processes of the individual and the latter is “neither private or arbitrary, but [rather] publicly accessible experiences belonging to a [participant]” (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). This methodological perspective posits that publicly accessible experiences are modes of being “whose logic or sense is invariant for all persons who live them, across time and culture” (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). A transcendental, psychological phenomenological tradition (Creswell, 1998) informed the approach I took when planning for data collection and entering the field. This perspective tells us that human experience, in all cases, has a particular discoverable structure regardless of the unique facts of varying circumstances.

Sources of data for this methodological approach relied primarily on interviews. As stated by Seidman:

A researcher can approach the experience of people in contemporary organizations through examining personal and institutional documents, through observation, through exploring history, through experimentation, through questionnaires and surveys, and through a review of existing literature. If the researcher’s goal, however, is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry. (1998, p. 4)

Statements from participants, that were essentially descriptions of the experience and meaning making being investigated, served as the “brute data” of the lived world of people – publicly accessible information consisting of beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values, and ways of thinking. These “brute data” came from “collecting...words and marks of people given in response to questionnaires and constructed interviews or, in some cases, by recording their overt nonverbal behavior” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p.

210-211). Participant descriptions of their experiences and the meaning ascribed to those experiences, in the form of interview data and reflective memos pertaining to observations made within the interview context, allowed for a systematic and rigorous interrogation of personal responses pertaining to how practicing administrators think about their work as being morally unique, the meaning and use of the expression “the best interests of the student,” and the phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord when faced with difficult ethical decisions.

Without engaging in detailed description of phenomenological theory, concepts and processes; a summary description of the general methodological approach informing my study is warranted. A phenomenological-like research approach applied to an educational context is derived from a combination of distinct methodological approaches as articulated by Moustakas (1994), Giorgi (1984) and Polkinghorne (1989).

The general guidelines that assisted in informing this investigation and that address the requirements of an organized, disciplined, systematic and rigorous study include: 1) Initial Preparation – investigate a topic and question rooted in human experience constituting autobiographical meanings and values as well as having social implications of significance, and conduct a literature review; 2) Data Collection – construct criteria to locate and select participants, develop questions and topics to guide face-to-face interviews, provide participants with information about the nature and purpose of the research and establish an agreement that includes informed consent, and conduct lengthy interviews with participants that focus on a specific experience; and 3) Organizing and Analyzing Data – transcribe audio recordings of interviews into individual participant records, read and study each transcript in its entirety, divide transcripts into units or blocks that express self-contained meaning, code statements relevant to the research topic and questions with simple language that express dominant meanings, list or cluster meaning units into common categories or themes that represent the words of participants, develop textural descriptions of experience from thematically organized meaning units using the participants’ own words, and integrate and synthesize textural descriptions into a structural description, or a composite portrait, of the essence of the experience being investigated.

The careful development of an interview protocol for this investigation was necessary in order to elicit the deep-seated perspectives of participants. This methodological step was important to the entire study. As Patton (1990) indicates:

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. The purpose for open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone’s mind (for example, the interviewer’s preconceived categories for organizing the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe....The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions....We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they

attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about these things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (p. 278)

My assumption as a researcher, within a phenomenological perspective, is that the perceptions of others are knowable, understandable and able to be made explicit through intersubjectivity and empathy.

Data derived from participant interviews, observations and analytical notes were organized and categorized along deductive themes. I divided participant transcripts into units or blocks that expressed, or appeared to express, a self-contained meaning corresponding to the theoretical model under investigation. Meaning units were further broken down into smaller sub-sets of words and ideas and these classifications were essentially derived by searching for finer grained regularities and patterns in the words of participants.

In addition to using a theoretical framework to initially inform this study, it became important to utilize the established practices of constant data comparison, analytic induction, and searching for discrepant evidence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants’ words indicated experiences and conceptions that extended beyond what my organizing framework (a theory of ethical decision making and moral practice for leadership in schools) would allow. At this point, original domains and categories of tabulated codes were adjusted by either completely abandoning the initial deductive coding derived from theory or collapsing deductive codes into new, re-conceptualized themes and categories. This process served as a secondary analysis of the data. Where the data did not fit the theory, a secondary analysis provided a way to contrast practicing principals’ views against the theoretical explanation.

Putting coded information back together in thematic categories that best fit the text, a bottom-up approach that began at a low level of inference, was the procedure I used for sorting and coding data for the central phenomenological exploration reported in my study. I took clustered (grouped) meaning units (text containing similar meaning) and developed textural descriptions of participants’ experiences using their own words, including verbatim examples. This process followed a data analysis procedure for a phenomenological-like investigation and concluded with my effort to reflectively examine and accurately capture the experiential components of intrapersonal moral discord experienced by principals as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult professional moral choices within schools.

The final step in data analysis, specifically as it relates to a phenomenological research stance, was taking the separate meanings and understandings of individual participants (in the form of textural descriptions of experience as it relates to moral discord) and synthesizing those descriptions into an isolated expression, or structural description. The resulting structural description provided a depiction of the *essence* of intrapersonal moral discord or a “clashing of codes” when faced with difficult moral choices. Evidence from first-person reports of life

experience were reduced to meaning units, substantiated by textural descriptions, and organized into a coherent description of the most essential constituents of the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994); or in other words, a composite portrait of intrapersonal, professional moral discord as experienced by participants.

This final stage of analysis called for a particular task known as “imaginative variation.” Imaginative variation required me to seek as many possible meanings of articulated experiences through the use “of imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). Imaginative variation enabled me to derive a structural theme from textural descriptions, where, as explained by Husserl (1962, pp. 50-51), I found by “fantasy” (my own subjectivity that constitutes sense and being), “the potential meaning of something that [made] the invisible visible” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98).

My assertions, arguments and conclusions are made from participants’ words found directly in the data. Any claims and interpretations inhere in the data and an evidentiary line of reasoning derived from participants’ words and my observations were made transparent by using direct quotes and providing the reader with a set of data displays, coding categories and a tree diagram. From these data findings relevant and useful analyses, conclusions and implications will hopefully buttress and also modify theory with empirical-based knowledge.

Limitations with Phenomenology (and Other Qualitative Methods)

Qualitative studies are not embarked upon with the specific intent to generalize to a larger population. As opposed to quantitative and positivistic approaches to acquiring knowledge, favoring specification of variables, control and prediction, my study was a journey of another kind. I can make no claims of strict generalizability beyond what was investigated, although results and analysis of findings can contribute to our understanding of educational leaders’ professional moral deliberation and inform theory. Judgments can be made by those who wish to apply the findings of qualitative research to their own circumstances, research or situations (Kennedy, 1979), and readers will ultimately make a decision about the usefulness of such research in other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

As stated earlier, part of my goal was to derive a composite portrait of professional moral discord (between personal beliefs and values and organizational expectations) through publicly accessible experiences that are modes of being “whose logic or sense is invariant for all persons who live them, across time and culture” (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). So in a phenomenological sense, I do make a claim at depicting some aspects of a transcendent quality in educational leaders’ professional moral decision making, irrespective of the unique facts and varying circumstances of participants contributing to the research.

The methodological procedures and techniques detailed in this article serve to address issues of research limitation. Regardless of this fact, the research method described here does not formally consider sociological factors such as a particular organizational climate or the institutional characteristics of mass schooling that could, and clearly do, influence the values, decision making, choices and behaviors of individual actors. Moral agency, from the onset of this research, was understood as situated within the individual person and not the community. Although values, beliefs, and morality are products and processes of socialization, my interest was in the psychological activity (mind, will, and emotion) of individual persons – both their common and unique understandings and interpretations of the morally unique aspects of the profession of education administration, the expression, “the best interests of the student,” and intrapersonal moral discord experienced when faced with value incongruity between oneself and the organization or profession.

The nature and scope of my study and the methods it employed falls within the realm of basic research. By focusing on an empirical contribution to fundamental knowledge and theory building within the field of educational leadership, my study was limited in scope. Application of findings and specific policy implications were limited based on my focus in making an empirical contribution to a specific theory. Also, my study was not a philosophical analysis of moral theory or an argument for or against a particular overriding value within a formalized ethical tradition or perspective within educational leadership. I make the following point because our sub-sub-sub-field of study pertaining to values and ethics in education administration is heavy in normative theory making and light on Frankena’s (1973) first kind of thinking: descriptive, empirical inquiry which portrays or explains the phenomena of morality or valuing.

Another very important limitation, in all forms of human science research, that I clearly recognize, is one specified in the work of Coles (1991, 1986) as he documented the moral and spiritual life of children. Studied at great length by Blasi (1983, 1990), the specific problem is the relationship between the interplay of mind, will and emotions and subsequent behavior. Coles (1986) shares a comment from Carol Gilligan addressing the issue: “The point of a body of psychological research, she pointed out, has to do with an analysis of moral thought, of moral judgment and moral values; and moral behavior, indeed human behavior, is by no means necessarily a direct consequence, in anyone, of ideas” (p. 286). Yet, as Coles (1986) explains, “Kohlberg, especially, has tried to straddle these two worlds; he has tried not only to explore ‘thinking’ but to have an influence on behavior...” (p. 286). Hence the dilemma: research, the production of ideas and the generation of knowledge and yet the realization that “Pascal’s old division between mind and heart was no mere pre-modern superstition, but an important piece of psychological information that probably scares many of us a great deal” (Coles, 1986, p. 287). In my own research and the methods I chose to employ, I certainly wanted to know about what is involved in principals’ moral and ethical reasoning and their perspectives about the decisions they had made, but this knowledge does not speak to whether they indeed do or have done what they have said.

In addition, the nature of the research questions I asked and the kind of data collected and analyzed made it difficult to determine an adequate or sufficient sample size. The consequences of using a limited sample of participants (eleven in all), especially with the methods I employed, include gender, racial, ethnic, geographic, cultural, and religious distinctiveness, although every effort was made to address these issues in purposeful sampling while recognizing the fact that all participants had generally experienced similar structural and social conditions within middle class schooling bureaucracies. Also, this was a study involving secondary school leaders in a public school setting. Whether the findings of my investigation are pertinent for understanding school leadership at the elementary level, non-public sector, or central school system is open to question.

Conclusion

We know that theory and research on values, ethics and moral decision making in educational leadership has called for ontological and epistemological changes in research and theory building that focus less on perspectives pertaining to logical positivism (naïve realism) and more toward paradigms that are naturalistic, post-positivistic, transactional and constructive (Smith & Blase 1991; Maxcy & Caldas 1991; Willower 1994). This point is especially important to the field of educational leadership, where Mitchell (2006) has suggested, rather strongly, for an “integrated framework for the study of educational policy, politics, and administration” (211) that proposes an inquiry methodology of “sensationalism;” technically defined in terms of phenomenological epistemology for informing and conducting human science research. This investigative perspective could provide the “schema needed to link moral and factual questions into a common inquiry methodology” (212).

I hope the accounting of my thinking and research methods will provide us with a measure of confidence as a research community - that empirical research employing sound methodologies can indeed inform theories of moral agency within the professional role of school leadership. Abstractions in the form of frameworks, theories, postures, constructs or even “methods” within moral philosophy are indeed “stripped of the contextual details that would give them relevance and specificity necessary for application” (CSLE, 2007). The purpose of my research effort was to contribute to the definition and negotiation of one particular, and I believe, meritorious ethical posture or framework designed to inform educational leadership. With further empirical research designed to assess the normative and meta-ethical claims of the Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students’ Best Interests (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006), we can, over time, be more confident in the framework, and other normative postures as well, as they continue to assist practitioners in guiding their work.

Notes

1. Lakomski, G. (1987). Values and decision making in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 23(3), 70-82.
2. Hodgkinson, C. (1978). *Toward a philosophy of administration*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
3. Greenfield, T. B. (1986). The decline and fall of science in educational administration. *Interchange*, 17(2), 57-80.
4. Bloom, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
5. See References section.
6. Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

References

- Begley, P. T. (2006). Public communication. UCEA Convention, 15.9 paper session on “*The Ethical Challenge: Morality, Spirituality, and Social Cohesion*” (San Antonio, TX, November).
- Blasi, A. (1990). How should psychologists define morality? or, The negative side effects of philosophy’s influence on psychology. In T. Wren (Ed.), *The moral domain. Essays in the ongoing discussion between philosophy and the social sciences*. (pp. 38-70). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Blasi, A. (1983). Moral cognition and moral action: A theoretical perspective. *Developmental Review*, 3, 178-210.
- Cady, D. (2005). *Moral vision*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics (CSLE). (2007). 12th Annual Values and Leadership Conference welcome page. Retrieved April 7, 2007 from <http://www.ed.psu.edu/uceacsle/Conference07/index.htm>.
- Coles, R. (1986). *The moral life of children*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Coles, R. (1991). *The spiritual life of children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human services. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 23(3), 197-203.
- Frankena, W. (1973). *Ethics*. (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Freeman, M., deMarrais, K., Preissle, J., Roulston, K., & St. Pierre, E. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse. *Educational Researcher*, 36(1), 25-32.
- Frick, W. C. (2006). An empirical investigation of secondary school principals’ perspectives on “the best interests of the student” as a viable professional ethic for educational leadership. Retrieved April 7, 2007 from <http://etda.libraries.psu.edu/theses/approved/WorldWideIndex/ETD-1605/index.html> (The Pennsylvania State University eTD [electronic Theses and Dissertations]).
- Gilkey, L. (1993). *Nature, reality, and the sacred*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg-Fortress Press.
- Giorgi, A. (1985). Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method. In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Phenomenology and psychological research*. (pp. 8-22). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Press.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W. R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.). New York: Collier Books. (Original work published 1913)
- Kennedy, M. M. (1979). Generalizing from single case studies. *Evaluation Quarterly*, 3, 661-678.
- Kockelmans, J. J. (1967). (Ed.). *Phenomenology: The philosophy of Edmund Husserl and its interpretations*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company.
- Langlois, L., & Begley, P. T. (2005). Meta-ethical analysis in educational leadership: Mapping the existing models and theories. In P. Begley, *Self-knowledge, capacity and sensitivity: Prerequisites to authentic leadership among principals*. Paper presented at the 10th Annual Values and Leadership Conference, D. J. Willower Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics of UCEA (University Park, PA, October).
- LeCompte, M. D. & Preissle, J. (1992). Toward an ethnology of student life in schools and classrooms: Synthesizing the qualitative research tradition. In M. D. LeCompte, W. Millroy, & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education*. (pp. 815-859). San Diego, CA: Academic press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxcy, S., & Caldas, S. J. (1991). Moral imagination and the philosophy of school leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 29(3), 38-53.
- Mitchell, D. E. "Science and sensationalism: Renewing the foundations (Part IV)." In *New foundations for knowledge in educational administration, policy and politics: science and sensationalism*, edited by D. E. Mitchell (pp. 211-212). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006.
- Moody-Adams, M. (1997). *Fieldwork in familiar places: Morality, culture, and philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of Inquiry*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience*. (pp. 41-60). New York: Plenum Press.
- Rorty, R. (1982). Method, social science, and social hope. In R. Rorty, *Consequences of pragmatism (essays: 1972-1980)*. (pp. 191-210). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shapiro, J., & Stefkovich, J. (2005). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education*. (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Shapiro, J., & Stefkovich, J. (2001). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Smith, J., & Blase, J. (1991). From empiricism to hermeneutics: Educational leadership as a practical and moral activity. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 29(1), 6-21.
- Stefkovich, J. (2006). *Best interests of the student: Applying ethical constructs to legal cases in education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Swedene, K. (2005). Feeling better about moral dilemmas. *Journal of Moral Education*, 34(1), 43-55.
- Willower, D. J. "Values, valuation and explanation in school organizations." *Journal of School Leadership* 4 (1994): 466-483. (5)

EDITORIAL OBJECTIVES: Values and Ethics in Educational Administration is dedicated to promoting and disseminating a broad range of scholarly inquiry relating to the areas of values and ethics, and their relationship to theory and practice in educational administration. The editor believes that the areas of values and ethics represent a promising direction for research into the practice of educational administration, and is prepared to consider a wide range of disciplined empirical and conceptual works of interest to both scholars in the field as well as practicing administrators.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION: All articles will be reviewed by the editor to determine their suitability for this publication. In addition, at least two additional reviewers will conduct blind reviews of the article.

MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS:

Manuscripts should be submitted via e-mail to ptb3@psu.edu. Manuscripts should be double spaced and leave wide margins. Manuscripts should not identify the author(s) of the work. A separate page should be included which provides the author(s)' details, including contact information (address and e-mail). In addition, an abstract of 100-150 words should be included, as well as up to six keywords which identify the central subjects addressed in the manuscript. Diagrams, tables, and figures should be kept at a minimum, appear in black and white, and follow the manuscript in numbered order corresponding to numbered placeholders in the text. Footnotes and Endnotes should be avoided whenever possible. Reference lists should adhere to APA format, and appear in the following format:

Stanley, R. J. & Hollander, M. P. (1992). Beyond the boundaries: The quest for knowledge. *Administrative Life*, 2(3), 36-49.

References and citations should be in alphabetical order, and chronological within alphabetical order. The editor reserves the right to make changes to the manuscript to ensure that it conforms to the house style. Generally, manuscripts should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words in length. Prospective author(s) must include a statement which indicates they agree to the submission of the manuscript, and that the manuscript has not been published, and is not under consideration for publication, in part or in substance, elsewhere.

Authors of accepted manuscripts will be required to provide a final version of the text as a word document e-mailed to ptb3@psu.edu

PUBLICATION DETAILS: Values and Ethics in Educational Administration is an independently published quarterly by the Rock Ethics Institute (www.rockethics.psu.edu) and the Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics, a Program Center of the University Council for Educational Administration, housed in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Pennsylvania State University. This journal is published both in traditional hard copy format as well as on-line (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/uceacsle/>)

EDITORIAL CONTACT INFORMATION: Address all papers, editorial correspondence, and subscription information requests to: Professor Paul T. Begley, 207B Rackley Building, Department of Education Policy Studies, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, 16802 United States of America. Tel. 814-863-1838 Fax 814-865-0070
E-mail: ptb3@psu.edu