Editor in Chief's Message: Nearly summer greetings' to everyone. Please enjoy the latest read on moral dispositions of leadership

Abstract

In this co-constructed reflection two participant-researchers examine how their thinking about leadership experiences helped to shape their moral dispositions as scholar-practitioners. Each participant-researcher adopts a lens based on aspects of critical autobiography and auto-ethnographic inquiry to analyze their reflections of their experiences and make meaning of they reflected on these experiences and how this way of thinking implicated moral values they held as educational leaders. In what ways do principal interactions, experiences in the field, and philosophical development allow practitioners to develop the reflective skills needed to make meaning of complex ethical dilemmas in uncertain times? Results are discussed in terms of authenticity and moral literacy.

Key Words: authentic leadership, educational values, ethics sensitivity, moral literacy, reflective practice

Developing Moral Literacy by Reflecting on Leadership Values: A Scholar–Practitioner Collaborative Inquiry

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In this inquiry, we, as two educational leaders concerned with scholar-practitionership, present a co-constructed narrative reflection of the way our respective administrative experiences are shaped by how we think about moral literacy. Engaging in this reflection provided a means for developing a personal framework for better understanding moral dispositions, thereby developing our ethics sensitivity, and ultimately making meaning from our experiences. As participant-researchers, one currently a university faculty with ten years experience as an elementary principal and one a second-year high school principal with one year of experience as an assistant principal, we reflect on moral dimensions that emerged from a dialogue about the identity of scholar-practitioner educational leaders. Our reflections on our processes of thinking about certain ethical situations faced as leaders are presented as an auto-ethnographic dialogue, with one offering a practitioner perspective and the other with a scholarly lens.

As a scholar and a practitioner, our two reflective narratives aim to reveal how connecting theory to practice can function to develop more deeply the leader's moral self and moral understanding of how we think (Dewey, 1933). Our lived experiences deal with a behind-the-scenes opportunity we each had as leaders to frame our moral perspectives, to learn about ourselves as ethical leaders, and to develop as morally-literate administrators struggling to foster authenticity in their practice. Specifically, in the case of the second author, I address empathy, fairness, honesty, respect, and humor from a practical, pre-theoretical lens. For the first author, I attempt to frame these values theoretically as critical moral dispositions—moral care, moral justice, moral honesty, moral respect, and moral humility.

Coupled, our inquiry serves as a means for the two individuals invested in educational

leadership to explore how these dispositions relate to authentic thinking (and doing) for principals from conjectural and applied positions—i.e. both ends of the scholar-practitioner spectrum. Ultimately, our work here speaks to the manner in which the development of such value frames have enabled us to think as leaders to identify the underlying processes we engaged with confronted with complex dilemmas. We view our reflection on our responses to uncertainties via deliberation and moral imagination in our respective spaces of educational practice as viable as the cases and decisions themselves. Therefore, our co-constructed inquiry does not deal with the specifics of our critical incidents, but instead focuses on the moral values that guided our decisions and how we thought about those values.

Significance of Study

At the heart of this study is the recognition of the importance of moral literacy to both the practice and preparation of school leaders. Expressly, we are concerned with the way leaders think about their doing. We believe training leaders to engage in a type of moral metacognitive reflection is critical. As Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) have stated about care, "If the ethic of care is used to resolve dilemmas, then there is a need to revise how educational leaders are prepared" (p. 17). Thinking about thinking must be as much a part of preparation and practice as thinking about doing.

But most importantly, this study is about how two educators have engaged in a dialogue from two ends of the scholar-practitioner spectrum to co-construct a personal, yet professional, way of viewing educational morality and ethics. As Sagnak (2012) stated, "[S]chool management and teaching necessitate the highest rate of ethical responsibility, amongst the current professions" (p. 1425). As Gautam and Lowery (2017) noted, "Through deliberation or engaging their moral imagination [educational leaders] must draw critical conclusions based on experiential and observational data collected and analyzed from the bound but likely multicultural surroundings" (p. 160). Our inquiry deals directly with the aspect of drawing moral conclusions based on experience. Support for this was found as well in Shapiro and Stefkovich's belief that "educational leaders should be given the opportunity to take time to develop their own personal codes of ethics based on life stories and critical incidents" (p. 23).

A Framework of Relevant Critical Moral Dispositions

We recognize that our inquiry owes much to the conceptual framing of several scholars, namely Begley (2001), Greenfield (1985, 2004), Hodgkinson (1991), Starratt (2004a, 2004b, 2005) and Tuana (2006, 2007) that have helped develop the notions of moral literacy and ethical leadership. Additionally, we credit theoretical grounding to Dewey (1908, 1909), and Herman (2007) as well. However, our project draws directly and extensively from Jenlink's (2014) Educational Leadership and Moral Literacy: The Dispositional Aims of Moral Leaders and Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2016) Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education.

In Jenlink's (2014) text, he explores a number of moral dispositions of which we are primarily concerned with five: moral care (as we relate it to empathy), moral honesty, moral justice (as it relates to fairness), moral respect, and moral humility (which we will explore as akin to a leader's sense of humor). In this section we present our fundamental understanding of these dispositions,

beginning with moral care. Finding its grounding in the works of educational scholars (Begley, 2003, 2006; Dewey, 1909, 1932, 1933; Greenfield, 1985, 2004; Noddings, 1984, 2005; Starratt, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Tuana, 2006, 2007), Jenlink's work provided us with the critical moral questions that we asked ourselves as we engaged in this self-study and reflective practice.

Among Jenlink's (2014) questions that relate to the themes that emerged from our critical dialogue and guided our reflections are: "To what extent do I engage in caring relationships that enhance justice and build social capital?" (p. 25), "To what extent do I analyze the knowledge I have and use that knowledge in a socially responsible way?" (p. 27), "To what extent do I stand against oppression, marginalization, and domination?" (p. 28) "To what extent do I demonstrate respect for others (even when their values and beliefs differ from mine)?" (p. 30), and "What do I really know (about myself, about the situation, about another person, about what is going on in the world)?" (p. 27). These questions and others shared in our framework served to guide the scholar-practitioner (or rather scholar-to-practitioner) dialogue we held.

Our personal/professional framework for moral literacy is further discussed theoretically in the following sections as moral care (Jenlink, 2014; Noddings, 1995; Tuana, 2007), moral honesty (Brambilla et al., 2012; Carr, 2014; Jenlink, 2014), moral justice (Bush, 2014; Jenlink, 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016), moral respect (Jenlink, 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016), and moral humility (Jenlink, 2014; Nichols, 2014). Finally, a synthesis of these five themes as element of authentic leadership is provided under moral authenticity.

Moral care. In Nodding's (1995) framing, leaders employing moral or ethical care should recognize that an ethics of care "does not posit a source moral life beyond actual human interaction" (p. 139). It is about how we define our ability to care for others and how we understand from our own experiences what it means to care-about and care-for. School leaders drawing on an ethic of care recognize care as a form of pragmatic naturalism and "turn to an ethical ideal constituted from memories of caring and being cared for" (p. 139). Therefore, as Noddings points out, "ethical caring requires reflection and self-understanding" (p. 139).

Care, according to Tuana (2007), differs from utilitarian and deontological ethics, and instead "views the specific needs and interests of individuals as key to ethical behavior" (p. 372). Therefore, with that in mind, "A caring relationship is one in which an individual is both attentive to the specific needs and interests of another, as well as acting to advance them" (p. 372). It must then be interactive and requires that the educational leader as the "one-caring" is responsive to the reactions of the stakeholder (i.e. student, teacher, parent, community member) as the "cared-for" (Noddings, 2003; Tuana, 2007).

Likewise, Jenlink (2014) framed moral care as being concerned with "care for individuals as unique persons" (p. 25). It nuances the fine line between "caring-for and caring-about, where caring-for is directly concerned with one person caring for another and caring-about is seen as instrumental in establishing the conditions under which caring-for can flourish" (p. 25). Ultimately, moral care is encouraged through reflecting on questions such as "To what extent is my caring based on a genuine concern for others?" (p. 25) and "To what extent do I engage in caring rela-

tionships that enhance justice and build social capital?" (p. 25).

Moral honesty. In their analysis of three social psychological studies, Brambilla et al. (2012) averred, "Whereas sociability is predominantly associated with cooperation and with forming connections with others (e.g., friendliness, likeability), morality is predominantly associated with characteristics pertaining to the correctness of social targets (e.g., honesty, sincerity, and trustworthiness)" (p. 151). Brambilla et al. referred to the moral dimension to which honesty belongs as part of the warmth dimension. Their results indicated that the moral dimensions, in particular honesty and trustworthiness, were a dominant factor in making good impressions in social settings.

In his philosophical analysis of honesty's human and educational significance, Carr (2014) recognized that honesty was "necessary to the successful conduct of moral life" (p. 9). This observation was predicated on the idea that "honesty functions as the indispensable epistemic component of Aristotelian practical wisdom" (p. 9). Carr, however, arrives at the notion that "virtuous honesty requires a commitment to the truth, not merely for fair and just dealings with others but for its own personally and morally formative sake" (p. 10).

This virtuous understanding of honesty implies that moral honesty extends beyond mere truthfulness into a formative domain of understanding one's self and one's actions. Jenlink (2014) stated that, especially for educational leadership, the disposition of moral honesty is equally concerned with "making decisions and taking actions that result in the expression of both the knowledge one has and truth in action that results" (p. 27). Moral honesty asks, "To what extent are my decisions and actions concerned with or animated by truthfulness?" (p. 27).

Moral justice. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) articulated the nature of an ethic of justice quite clearly. In their words:

The ethic of justice . . . may take into account a wide variety of issues. Viewing ethical dilemmas form this vantage point, one may ask questions related to the rule of law and the more abstract concepts of fairness, equity, and justice. These may include . . . questions related to issues of equity and equality; the fairness of rules, laws, and policies; whether laws are absolute, and, if exceptions are to be made, under what circumstances; and the rights of individuals versus the greater good of the community. (p. 12)

Here the relationship of the ethic of justice with moral justice. Jenlink (2014) defines moral justice as "the disposition to treat each other according to some standard of justice, which is uniformly applied to all relationships" (p. 28). At its core is the essential notion of fairness or equal treatment (Jenlink, 2014). Moral justice asks, "To what extent do I stand against oppression, marginalization, and domination?" (p. 28) and "To what extent do I promote social justice by contributing to social change and public policies that increase fairness for all?" (p. 28).

In Bush's (2014) words, "Moral justice is perhaps the golden thread that holds the fabric of our society, culture, and social constructs together" (p. 157). Bush applies moral justice directly to democratic education, citing practices that foster "fair distribution of learning resources and procedures for allocating both school and community capital" (p. 158). Drawing from Rawls' (1971)

understanding of justice, moral justice causes the educational leader "to identify and explain why learning and development differ among students" (p. 160). As Bush purported, the responsibility of educational leaders is "to ensure that fairness is a lived reality for all learners within the school system" (p. 163).

Moral respect. Plainly put, moral respect can be defined as "the disposition to value others as human beings with equal rights regardless of the differences that distinguish one's self from others" (Jenlink, 2014, p. 30). It integrates both the idea of treating people as autonomous agents and the belief that "persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection" (p. 3). Moral respect asks, "To what extent do I demonstrate respect for others (even when their values and beliefs differ from mine" (p. 30).

As Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) stated, "[The] three Rs— rights, responsibility, and respect—are key to making ethical decisions that are in a student's best interest and, in turn, to fulfilling one's professional obligations as educational leaders" (p. 27). In the centrality of respect to the practice of the educational leader, Black (2014) stated,

School leaders as scholar-practitioners are responsible for doing what is morally right for the educators, students, and parents to ensure that a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development is created and maintained. Part of doing what is morally respectful is respecting the desires, goals, and plans others have for their lives. . . . If a school leader chooses to interfere, it is imperative that they do so honestly without manipulation or coercion. (p. 77)

Fundamentally, moral respect in the practice of school administration is an act of reciprocity based upon being "aware of different life histories and social positions of each person that we interact with" (p. 70).

Moral humility. Jenlink (2014) defines moral humility as "being aware of your biases, prejudices, self-deceptive tendencies, and the limitations of one's viewpoints" (p. 27). He also calls it "the knowledge of [one's own] ignorance" and says that it is "sensitivity to what one knows and what one does not know" (p. 27). In short, moral humility asks, "How do the beliefs I have uncritically accepted keep me from seeing things as they are?" (p. 27).

Nichols (2014) framed it in this manner: "The responsibility of the scholar-practitioner is to have a well-defined sense of self. The scholar-practitioner must not only recognize their strengths, but also their weaknesses" (p. 171). This does not mean merely acknowledging deficiency in organizational and instructional leadership but examining the moral self in all undertakings (Nichols, 2014). It means, "to truly stand up for others requires an individual to have a true sense of who he/she is and what his/her true motivations are" (p. 173). For the scholar-practitioner, this includes exhibiting authenticity, respect, being collaborative and culturally responsive, and acting as a moral democratic agent (Nichols, 2014). Additionally it should be added that humility requires keeping a good sense of humor.

Moral Authenticity

According to Jenlink (2014), moral leadership concerns being "true to one's self, acting upon one's values, beliefs, and purposes" (p. 24). Jenlink lists moral authenticity as the first of moral dispositions

relating to moral literacy, and we feel that this is an apt placement. Moral authenticity and its relation to authentic leadership have as their foundational concerns care, honesty, justice, respect, and humility. In Jenlink's words, to be morally authentic means "to be critically self-aware of one's own position or stance and to follow moral standards that define who one is. . . ." (p. 24).

As Begley (2006) so aptly noted, "Authentic leadership is a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration" (p. 570). Therefore, authentic leadership "implies the appropriateness of a focus on the perceptions of the individual in a school leadership role, or as a participant in the educational enterprise, and how the individual construes his or her role and environment" (p. 574).

Method: A Collaborative Inquiry Model

Our dialogue is presented as autobiographical and auto-ethnographic reflections. As a result, we, as reflective practitioners, reveal how connecting theory and research to practice and application fostered a sense of authenticity in our practice. This praxis emerged through developing our identities as leaders, learning about ourselves as ethical leaders, and acknowledging values as emerging morally literate leaders. Specifically, these values address empathy, fairness, honesty, respect, and humor. Ultimately, these "core" values are examined through their relationship to corresponding moral dispositions, namely moral care, moral justice, moral honesty, moral respect, and moral humility. This inquiry, then, serves as a means for the two of us as participant-researchers to explore how these dispositions have enabled us to identify these values in their respective spaces of educational scholarship and practice.

Collaborative autoethnographic inquiry. As an autoethnographically-based inquiry this study is couched in "writing . . . and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis, 2004: xix). According to Ellis (2004), "Autoethnographic forms [can] feature concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot" (p. xix). For us, we focus predominantly on self-consciousness and introspection through a dialogue between the two of us—one with a focus on the practical, the other with attention to the theoretical. Cann and DeMeulenaere (2012) have cited co-constructed (or collaborative) autoethnography as a means to create unique collaborative spaces that allow not only for commonalities in experience to emerge but also highlight differences. Co-constructed autoethnographic inquiry "allows collaborating researchers and writers to more accurately represent the uncertainty, and complexity of relationships—creating a space for colleagues engaged in critical work to reflect together" (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012, p. 147).

While critical incidents are often an important component of critical autoethnographic study, reflective practice and self-study is equally a concern of such an approach. Concerning autoethnography in general, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) have posited,

Autoethnographers recognize the innumerable ways personal experience influences the research process. For instance, a researcher decides who, what, when, where, and how to research, decisions necessarily tied to institutional requirements (e.g.,

Institutional Review Boards), resources (e.g., funding), and personal circumstance (e.g., a researcher studying cancer because of personal experience with cancer). (para. 3)

Therefore, the way in which experience influences the process and the way in which meaning is made from personal circumstances can be manifested in a number of ways. How such reflections unfold is an issue of making meaning for those engaged in such an inquiry. Consequently, this allows for the meaning of uncertainty and complexity to be expressed through personal methods and via any number of narrative devices. Such narrative devices may serve not only aesthetic preferences, given that—as Cann and DeMeulenaere (2012) and Ellis (2014)—autoethnography is couched in writing, but also serve ethical concerns relating to confidentiality and the risk of presenting certain data.

For example, in our critical dialogue both of us alluded to critical incidents involving students and ethical dilemmas faced when making decisions relating to those students. Given the extremely sensitive nature of the events that engaged our capacities for moral literacy we made consciously purposed decision to not build our reflections or analyses around those delicate cases. Since this inquiry was an autoethnographic and autobiographical inquiry we felt that by sharing any details of those incidents would make the individuals involved identifiable. Instead we elected to begin with our reflections—a point of view as reflective practitioners—to think back on as it related to those cases and explore more deeply what those cases inspired in us as authentic leaders.

Participant-inquirers. As researcher-participants, and as reflective agents, we approached this study first and foremost as a collaborative and reflective inquiry model. In doing so, we viewed throughout the process the nature of the inquiry as being something akin to autobiographical and auto-ethnographic study. Methodologically, we engaged in dialogue between two educational leaders at different stages of their careers—one representing the voice of the practitioner and the other, the scholar reflecting back on how his practice impacted his understanding of the theory he now teaches in a preparation program. One of us, Travis, is entering his second year as a high school principal, after serving a year as an assistant principal in another regional district and previously as a high school social studies teacher of fourteen years in the school that he now leads. In this inquiry, his voice represents that of the practitioner. The other, Chuck, is now entering his fourth year as a professor of educational administration, having served as a middle school bilingual teacher, an elementary school principal, and a Title III bilingual programs coordinator. For our purposes here, his is the voice of scholarship. Collaboratively, reflecting on critical incidents we faced—one very recent and the other a few years back—we endeavored to frame key dispositions or values as integral to our developing as morally literate school leaders. We allowed Jenlink's (2014) questions that foster moral authenticity to guide our reflections on how we thought and acted relating to the cases that emerged in our dialogue.

Travis: On Preparation and Practice

As I reflect on my experiences—and in particular the incident inspiring the specific reflections in my section—I begin to consider more deeply who I am as a school principal. My thoughts drift to a handful of significant role models. I think of my family, in particular my father and grandfather, and the teachers and coaches

who instilled in me the importance of academics and the idea that working together will increase the odds of us achieving our greater goals. The reflective practice is not something that I had ever made a regular part of my life until entering into the Educational Administration Masters program at the university I attended.

During that program, students experience a two-year internship with their building principal and the reflective process is an integral part of the experience. In the first year of the internship, students focus on certain aspects of the principal position. During the second year of the internship, the reflective process focuses on a yearlong school improvement project. Throughout this process, a reflection is submitted every three to four weeks and a professor provides feedback and asks thought-provoking questions to provide ways to expand upon the reflection. The structure of the reflective process in this manner had several benefits. The first being the meaningful experiences to reflect upon that allowed me to examine how I would personally react in those situations. Another benefit is how course content is tied into the reflective process. The topics of reflections would often be used for whole class discussion and utilize content that was learned in previous courses. Preparing for a new position requires identifying the skillset that is going to be necessary for that position.

Engaging in the reflective process gave me the opportunity to self-assess my capacity as an educator to examine the strengths and areas that I needed to improve upon to become a principal. Each reflection over the course of the two-year program provided an opportunity for me to analyze how I fit into the role of an authentic educational leader and, important to this inquiry, reflect on how I think about that role and what I do. Through my reflections I have been able to identify my core beliefs. Through reflecting upon the experience of any critical incident—and this one that involved the reputations and futures of three students at my school—I was able to identify the core values that I have as a leader: empathy, fairness, honesty, respect and humor. These are five traits had a direct impact on how I experienced, how I felt others should experience, and how I viewed the lives of the people implicated. As such, these dispositions are an integral part of how I think, how I conduct myself as the principal of my high school, how I frame an ethical dilemma—the one behind the scenes here or any other.

The practice of empathy. Empathy is at the core of each of my interactions as an educational leader. I have found that working to understand the perspective of students, parents, teachers, and other members of our educational community gives me a greater perspective of each situation. Oftentimes students have expressed to me in the past that the adults in their life don't understand the issues that they're facing. Actively showing the desire to understand the student perspective enables me to begin to build trust with each of our students. The empathy shown and the development of trust enables the students to begin to break down the perceived barrier that they have put in place due to their past experiences with the adult figures in their life.

Empathy for parents is a critical piece of being an educator. Parents trust us with their children for seven hours a day in our building, not including the bus ride that many of our students have. When interacting with parents, it's very important to understand how the school system is viewed through their eyes. The perspec-tive that parents have regarding their child's education is often shaped by their own experiences as a student. In many cases, listening for the parent's own student experience will allow me to begin to see pathways to make their child's educational experience more positive. Parents have consistently worked with me when I am able to display empathy for them and communicate back that I am seeing, or working to see, their point of view.

The same principles apply when it comes to working with the teaching faculty and other staff in our building. One critique of administrators that I have often heard as an educator is that decisions are made without consideration of how teachers and the other employees are impacted. Displaying empathy for our staff begins to build the trust that is necessary between building leadership and the employees of the building. An essential piece of that trust begins with the decision-making process and beginning by answering the question, "How will this decision impact the stakeholders who are in our building?" In other words, "To what extent is my caring grounded on an authentic concern or feeling for others involved?" The mindfulness displayed for our employees, in this case for parents and for the students involved, allows for a more open and honest dialogue that has a positive impact on the adult and student experience in our building.

Pragmatic honesty. For me, honesty goes hand in hand with empathy. As a building leader, I am obligated by my position to have honest conversations with all of our stakeholders. Once I have worked to understand the perspective of others, I can form a greater understanding of the topic and provide my open and honest input. As I work with the staff and students in our building and the parents and community members outside of our building, I make a great effort to communicate my perspective as the building leader through open and honest conversation.

The creation of an honest dialogue allows for true progress to be made. Building leaders impact the educational environment with their words and actions; therefore, honesty is a critical piece of how they conduct themselves. Honesty facilitates the trust that is necessary between administrators, teachers, parents and students. Where the students involved in the ethical dilemma I faced were concerned, I felt a need to advocate for both sides—I also felt it was critical to involve both sets of parents and keep the lines of communication open and honest. Establishing and maintaining that trust creates the type of environment in which others feel safe to express themselves for what they feel is best for their students—and in this case, for the students of others as well. The open line of honest communication can have a huge impact on the education that our students receive. By being honest with both parents and the students, I feel like a solution was arrived at more democratically—everyone felt authentically included, like they had a voice and could trust my ultimate decision.

Practicing fairness. As the educational leader of a building, the concept of treating others with fairness is something that is encountered daily. What one person views as fair is not always what another person or group will view as fair. Strong communication skills are required when conveying what I view as fair, along with trusting my instincts. By establishing that I am actively working to empathize with the people in my care and creating an honest dialogue, I can effectively convey my point of view, which allows others to gain an understanding of how I

am working to treat all parties with fairness.

Ultimately, there is one measure that I utilize when evaluating if I have applied fairness to a situation and that is by my own conscience. As an educational leader the situation that I faced was very different—each situation is very different. My conscience often tells me if I've handled a situation properly or if I need to go back and reevaluate any measures that I have taken. There have been a handful of experiences, this one included, that I have had where I experienced a feeling of something "not feeling quite right" about a decision that I have made. When reexamining each of those situations, I referred back to how each person was treated and what steps I took in my decision making process. Most often I found that I missed a particular piece of the situation or should have taken different measures to more thoroughly investigate a particular aspect. In the end, it was my instincts telling me that I needed to reevaluate how fairly everyone was treated. I was able to go back to the parties involved and admit my feelings about the situation and take the proper actions. Those actions, I believe, lead to an increased awareness of the importance of respect.

Being respectful. Respect is often something that we need to earn from others. As an educational leader, I work to treat all people who enter our building the same. I treat students, parents, and all employees with the same politeness, professional courtesy, and welcoming demeanor regardless of their position or standing in our community. The old adage of giving respect to get respect is something that I have certainly found to be true. In many cases with students or parents who might be in a heated state of mind, I often refer to how I have treated them in the past and how I am treating them in that current situation. I then provide them the time to process the situation and once they have a few moments to do so, they generally will begin to change their demeanor to one where we can work together to problem solve the situation.

I consistently display a sense of respect for the staff members who are employed in our school district. Professional respect and courtesy is something that I always appreciate as an educator and something that I desire to convey to my fellow educators. Respect is shown in many ways, not just by how we interact with each other. I try to display that by good communication skills, working to problem solve with other professionals in my building, following up on situations that have occurred, and providing any assistance that I can to allow for an easier workday for our employees. I take how others are treated very seriously and I work to communicate that my desire is for people to have a positive experience when they interact with our students, staff and greater school community. Treating others politely, professionally and with respect will help foster the type of atmosphere that is conducive to efficient teaching practices and a supportive educational environment in which to learn.

Humor as praxis. Humor is a core value for me because I have always found that it helps me stay grounded to the type of person I am. As a classroom teacher I would always try to inject a little bit of humor into my lessons. The empathy that I had for my students allowed me to see that my class was probably not the most important thing that they had taking place in their life. Displaying humor in the classroom allowed me to catch their interest in our subject matter, but also allowed me to never take myself too seriously. A little bit of humor injected at the proper time always allows me to relate to my students in more fun and engaging way. Humor permits me to show a more human side to my students and creates a more comfortable educator-student relationship.

Utilizing humor as a building leader follows the same general principles but must be carefully done. As the building administrator it's important that the adults in our building understand that I take my job very seriously, however as with my students, it's important for them to understand that I don't always take myself so seriously. A properly timed laugh in a meeting or brief interaction allows for a good mental break from the daily tasks that our jobs involve. When utilized properly, humor helps keep morale up and can create a sense of trust that we don't always have to keep our guard up in the workplace.

Chuck: On Theory

The theory of moral dispositions has captured my attention since my doctoral studies and practice as a school principal. Most recently in my role as a professor of educational administration it has even become more significant—this significance has been highlighted by reflecting on and thinking about decisions I made as a practitioner. The following sections represent my reflections on theories or available scholarship relating the role of care, honesty/authenticity, justice, respect, and humor/humility in the development of moral literacy for a scholar–practitioner educational leader.

Theorizing care. For me, moral care indicates the leader's ability to be approachable or accessible. As well, it refers to her or his connectedness to others in the sense of caring for them as individuals (Jenlink, 2014). Implied is attentiveness. As I reflected on the critical incident at the heart of my dialogue with Travis, I began to think about Noddings. In her earlier work, Caring, Noddings (2003) employed the term engrossment. For Noddings (2010), engrossment included both receptive attention and the empathy or "the 'feeling with' that accompanies such attention" (p. 8). Not only does this affect the environment for "establishing, maintaining, and enhancing justice," to use Jenlink's (2014) words, it also is inherently linked to empathy as a core value. Responding to the needs of a student—or any stakeholder—such as the case I have in mind requires an understanding of how empathy and caring-for relate as concepts.

Additionally moral care involves relatedness or connectedness. Perhaps the way in which we think about connectedness is couched within the notion of empathy. As Starratt (2003) stated, connectedness requires . . .

. . . *an empathetic embrace of what is different from the autonomous actor to make and sustain the connection. Community enables the autonomous individual to belong to something larger; it gives the individual roots in both the past and present. However, the community is not automatically self-sustaining. It is sustained by autonomous individuals who transcend self-interest to promote the common good, who join with other individuals to re-create the community.* (p. 139)

Therefore, having made a decision about a student's treatment—whether fair or unfair—was dependent upon my ability to transcend my concerns about how I would be viewed or ridiculed. Likewise, it required me to think about care in terms of how I was joined to the community and how that community trusted

me. Tschannen-Moran (2014) conceptualizes care in terms of benevolence as a facet of trust. Goodwill, being positive and appreciative, supporting teachers and others, and being fair are descriptors that accompany care. As such moral care, as exhibited through empathetic leadership, is foundational to Starratt's idea of autonomous educational leaders that put their self-interest aside to foster a common good for the school and society. And, if trust is a factor then truth is implicated as well.

The theory of honesty. As stated earlier, Jenlink (2014) has averred that moral honesty is "concerned with truthfulness, and making decisions and taking actions that result in the expressions of both the knowledge one has and truth in action that results" (p. 27). Concomitantly, Carr (2014) grounded honesty in terms of an ethical virtue, writing that honesty is . . .

. . . *a key virtue, not only because it contributes to the common good . . . but because it conduces to the good or welfare of the characters or souls of honest agents themselves. On either score, of course, the teaching or promotion of honesty would have to be regarded as of the highest educational importance. (p. 1)*

According to the Josephson and Hanson (2002), "There is no more fundamental ethical value than honesty. We associate honesty with people of honor, and we admire and rely on those who are honest. But honesty is a broader concept than many may realize. It involves both communications and conduct" (p. 4). Conceptualized as such, honesty does not only encompass truthfulness but also sincerity and candor (Josephson & Hanson, 2002).

A theory of justice. At the core of the incident I shared with Travis was a concern of the just treatment of a student by his teacher. Moral justice can be grounded in the Rawlsian concept of justice as fairness. According to Rawls (1985),

Justice as fairness tries to adjudicate between these contending traditions first, by proposing two principles of justice to serve as guidelines for how basic institutions are to realize the values of liberty and equality, and second, by specifying a point of view from which these principles can be seen as more appropriate than other familiar principles of justice to the nature of democratic citizens viewed as free and equal persons. (p. 227)

What did this imply for me as a practicing principal or as an individual that valued fairness as a core belief? How did the teacher view fairness from her perspective?

In retrospect, fairness may remain an abstract notion that manifests in a number of possible paradoxes when dealing with opposing value systems or ethical constructs—parent versus school or teacher versus student. Moral justice, in such cases, should be "uniformly applied to all relationships" (Jenlink, 2014, p. 27). In common terms, it is a concern of fairness or equal treatment (Jenlink, 2014). As Jenlink asserted, moral justice incorporates . . .

. . . *two understandings of justice, namely, justice understood as individual choice to act justly, and justice understood as the school community's choice to direct or govern its actions justly. The dispositional aim of moral justice is [to] understand that we are entangled within arrangements, relationships, and systems of oppression, and that our responsibility is to ensure that the rules of fairness are a constant in the lives of all. (p. 28)*

Relatedly, Bush (2014) called moral justice "the golden thread that holds the fabric of our society, culture, and social constructs together" (p. 157). She added, "When all individuals have access and opportunity to improving their way of life, fair and just democratic practices are most likely guiding principles of schooling and learning" (p. 157). In my case, this was about balance.

As Rawls (1985) pointed out, "justice as fairness is intended as a political conception of justice. While a political conception of justice is, of course, a moral conception, it is a moral conception worked out for a specific kind of subject, namely, for political, social, and economic institutions" (p. 224). Likewise, my decision attempted to link justice as fairness to democracy, realizing, "justice as fairness is framed to apply to what [he] called the 'basic structure' of a modern constitutional democracy" (p. 224). My dilemma was saturated with public and political dimensions, and I had to acknowledged the "deep disagreement [that] exists as to how the values of . . . equality are best realized in the basic structure of society" (p. 227).

Since schools reflect a microcosm of the society in which they are situated the basic structure of the school is one conducive to moral dichotomies. Fairness, then, can often become an issue. Similarly, my ability to operationalize moral justice within the political arena of the school not only was a challenge but also controversial. After all, whose side was I on? My teacher's or the student's? What developed was a space of contending expectations and traditions. I had to exercise attentive reasoning and deep sensitivity to handle this as an ethical situation. I had to figure out how to recognize the role of awareness and connectedness in relation to the dimensions and dynamics of moral uncertainties I was facing.

Theoretical respect. Conceptualizing respect as an ethical responsibility, Josephson and Hanson (2002) put respect in these terms:

People are not things, and everyone has a right to be treated with dignity. We certainly have no ethical duty to hold all people in high esteem, but we should treat everyone with respect, regardless of who they are and what they have done. We have a responsibility to be the best we can be in all situations, even when dealing with unpleasant people.

According to Dillon (1992), respect is "an attitude, a way of treating something, a kind of valuing. But most centrally, it is a particular mode of apprehending something, which is the basis of the attitude, conduct, and valuing" (p. 108). In Dillon's view, respect, like care, means paying attention to something; in other words, "To ignore, neglect, or disregard something, or to dismiss it lightly, thoughtlessly, or carelessly is to not respect it" (p. 108).

As Dillon put it, "For respect is grounded not in personal desire or interest. . . ." (p. 110), that is, "We experience the value of the object [or individual person] as giving directions to our actions and constraining our attitudes, independently of what we might happen to desire" (p. 110). Therefore, educational leaders have a moral obligation to be attentive—to be respectful—to students and stakeholders. Putting aside our opinions and biases, this integration of care and respect allows us to focus our attention realistically and rationally on the needs of others. Without care and respect to ground our work as school leaders the tensions and stresses of the work will frustrate and leave us emotionally

exhausted. The notion of respect came to bear on my situation.

Linking respect back to moral care required that I recognize the humanity of all those I served. In other words, "the fundamental moral orientation of respect and of care involve the same perception of their objects, regard the same dimensions of human beings as worthy of attention" (p. 117). It is respect coupled with care that preserved my ability to act fairly with justice and maintain my authenticity as a morally honest leader; likewise respect for others (and incidentally for myself) was preserved by a desire to demonstrate both humility and humor.

A theory of humility and good humor. The relationship between humility and humor may not be immediately obvious. However, humility and humor share etymologically a common root; a root they both share with the words human and humus (Gilbert, 1996; Kurtz, 1992). However, humility and humor share more than just a Proto-Indo-European antecedent. They are linked in ethics, in leadership, and as a signature of wisdom. Ethically speaking, Scott (2008) has stated, "Humility and humor seem to be coworkers in perfecting our character" (para. 4). He went on to explain, "Humor helps us to become better people by keeping us humble in a positive way" (para. 4).

Relating to leadership, Bruno et al. (2015) stated, "Leaders [in schools] must be bigger than the job, bigger than naysayers, and big enough to lighten up" (p. 57). This implies a coupling of humility and humor. Humbly bringing humor into my delicate situation was an imperative. Again: "Humility has to come with a healthy and hefty dose of humor and, really, sometimes all you can do is laugh. Leadership can be stressful. Life can be stressful! Laughter helps release stress in ways that nothing else can" (p. 58). Therefore, the coupling of practical humor and moral humility provides a much-needed dimension in the development of morally literate school leaders. In my daily work with parents, board members, community members, and other educators in my districts the tension and accompanying uncertainties I confronted demanded a balance of professionalism and humble lightheartedness. I can only hope I did so.

Conclusion

These collaborative autoethnographic reflections of the practitioner and the scholar (we as scholar-practitioners) represent the basis of how we think about our respective understandings of values as moral democratic agents of educational leadership. These are two unique lenses. Intentionally, we have presented each lens separately to this point—a space where we attempt to bring our unique perspectives together. These views speak to the ethical dimensions required of school leaderships in contemporary society, in the practice of today's school setting and in the preparation of leaders ready for contemporary school systems.

Travis, as the practitioner voice, and Chuck, as the scholarly view, not only speak to the moral values that they deem fundamental to their past and present roles as educators but their voices together also hint at the possible capacity of school-university partnerships as scholar-practitioner networks. Such partnerships can and do offer powerful opportunities for the theoretical and pragmatic domains to function collaboratively in the development of morally literate educational leaders.

The presentation of our dialogue metaphorically follows the way in which theory informs practice and practice in turn illuminates

theory. Laying out a conceptual framework with five of Jenlink's (2014) moral dimensions of leadership set a stage for Travis's reflections of these dimensions interpreted for practice as a high school principal; subsequently, Chuck's brief survey of existing theoretical underpinnings for these concepts follows on the pragmatic application of each—and, speaks to his own practice as a university professor. Our hope is that jointly this co-constructed method will represent the continuum of the scholar-practitioner educational leader as a morally literate thinker—a reflective agent—from the point of preparation to the duration of practice.

From the autoethnographic writing process of our inquiry, our reflections inspired the following observations:

1. Moral literacy and the moral dimensions should be given explicit consideration in leadership preparation programs;

2. More inquiries that explore other moral dimensions, such as moral critique, moral judgment, moral perseverance, and moral selflessness, should be considered;

3. Scholars and practitioners of educational leadership can be engage in more of these types of dialogues to better inform and illuminate one another;

4. Scholars and practitioners alike should deliberate on ways to engage in dialogues and shared experiences to strengthen existing and establish new school-university partnerships;

5. Scholars in leadership preparation programs should remain up-to-date on current concerns and timely trends by authentically connecting to practitioners facing today's ethical dilemmas;

6. Broader understandings of the scholar-practitioner educational leadership ideal need to be envisioned and explored from broader theoretical and pragmatic lenses; and

7. Scholars and practitioners, ideally scholar-practitioners, in the field of education can benefit from delving more profoundly into the moral dimensions of care/empathy, justice/fairness, respect, honesty/authenticity, and humor/humility in developing as authentic morally-literate leaders.

We do not intend these to be seen as recommendations based on our supposed expertise; what we provide are shared observations grounded in our authentic experiences. These are intended to provide scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners with points on which they can reflect and engage in dialogue with one another. Expressly, theorists are encouraged to build upon this framework and explore new constructs of thinking about moral literacy within varied partnerships. As Begley (2006) stated,

[O]ur transcending agenda as theorists, researchers and practitioners ought to be the following: to promote reflection on personally held values by individuals; followed then by promoting a sensitivity to the value orientations of others, individuals and groups; and thirdly encouraging a sustained dialogue among all as the only hope of reconciling certain tragically persistent values conflicts and breakdowns in communication between and within our societies. (p. 572)

Given the ethical dilemmas, mounting complexities of diversity, and increasing issues of uncertainty faced by educational leadership in our societies, we believe it is imperative that school administrators and professors of educational leadership programs give

pause to reflectively consider the moral dimensions of their field.

As the nation waivers under bipartisan divisiveness and school leaders confront issues of racism, gender and sexuality, and a widening political gulf of community concerns at the local level, autoethnographic dialogues and inquiries such as the one we have provided here can potentially serve as a means to foster in school leaders a sense of their ethical selves and aid in developing their moral literacy. Reflecting on our moral selves through such exercises, we feel, can only increase our capacity for moral integrity and expand our aptitude for a decision-making that is authentically grounded in moral literacy.

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