

Transforming educational knowledge through making explicit the embodied knowledge of educators in complex ecologies and different cultural contexts.

Jacqueline Delong, Brock University, Canada.

Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University, UK.

This poster focuses on making explicit the embodied knowledge of educators within complex ecologies using a living theory methodology in different cultural contexts. Using evidence from aboriginal and non-aboriginal contexts the meanings of the energy-flowing values that educators use to explain their educational influences in their own learning and in the learning of others, are made explicit. The evidence includes the living educational theories of professional educators, educational leaders and students as they study their practice in improving practice and creating cultures of inquiry. Evidence is drawn from an aboriginal context for a First Nation masters group and from living educational spaces in which creative and performance arts with visual narratives are used to bring non-indigenous and indigenous knowledges into the Academy with living standards of judgment.

The original proposal for a paper presentation can be found at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera10postpropok.pdf>

In this poster session we are focusing on the communication of the meanings of energy-flowing values that educators use to explain their educational influences. In particular we provide evidence to show meanings that are omitted from printed text based communications such as those in *Educational Researcher*. [We are thinking in specifically of contributions to the November 2009 issue of *Educational Researcher* highlights the 'Discourse on Narrative Research'. It seems to us that the topics 'Literary elements in narrative research' (Coulter & Smith, 2009), 'Narrative researchers as witnesses of injustice and agents of social change?' (Barone, 2009) and 'Relational ontological commitments in narrative research' (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009) are scholarly and about 'education' but do not include the explanation of an educational researcher's educational responsibility to constitute their research as 'educational'. There is no mention of 'educational' in the abstracts: (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 577; Barone, 2009, p. 591) Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 598).

We found the issues of agents of change and social justice (Barone, 2009, p. 591) and colonizing the story (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009, p. 585) thoughtful; what we found disturbing was the presentation of narrative research as stressing the story format, the role of the omniscient narrator (Coulter & Smith, 2009, 581) but with no mention of the need for research to be educational, merely about education. The dissection of narrative

research seems to be lacking the passion which is inherent in the work of the master's and doctoral students with whom we have been privileged to work (McFarling, 2009; Mills, 2009; McDougald, 2009; Nikiforuk, 2009; Kennedy, 2009; Proulx-Wootton, 2009).

Taking extracts from our separate paper presentations at AERA 2010 we are focusing on the clarification and communication of meanings of energy-flowing values in explanations of educational influence through visual narratives. In the original papers we both use 'I' as singularities in making meaning. In the text below, our individual 'I's have become 'we' as we share each other's understandings.

Extract from Jack's (2010) presentation on the question *Can a living theory methodology, using visual narratives with empathetic resonance and validity, help to make public the professional knowledge of teachers in different cultural settings?*

[Access the full presentation from

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera10/jwaera10pap010510opt.pdf>)

In generating a living theory using a living theory methodology an individual relies on their methodological inventiveness in the sense described by Dadds and Hart (2001):

" *The importance of methodological inventiveness.*

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes." (p. 166)

With the emergence and rapid spread of digital technology, including digital video, it has been possible for researchers to study themselves in their educational practices with the help of visual data. They can presence themselves to themselves in new ways as they can see themselves as others see them in the visual data. Making sense of such visual data can include energy-flowing values in being receptively responsive to what one is seeing. We are each developing an approach to analyzing visual data in terms of empathetic resonance and validity in visual narratives. Here are some recent thoughts on the use of this approach in communicating meanings of a passion for compassion. We are suggesting that enhancing the influence of this value, amongst others holds the key to making the world a better place to be.

Meanings of Empathetic Resonance and Validity in Visual Narratives: A passion for compassion and loving what we are doing.

We are aware of a difference in communication between our experience of the meanings of embodied expressions of energy and values that we and others use to explain why we do what we do in our educational relationships, and the meanings of explanatory principles of educational influences in learning, in pages of printed text. The difference is important because of our belief that the explanations in pages of printed text are distorting, masking or omitting the sharing of vitally important understandings which we embody in what we do. We are claiming below that the ideas of empathetic resonance (Sardello, 2008) and validity (Polanyi, 1958; Habermas, 1976; Dadds, 2008) can help to prevent such distortions, maskings or omissions with the inclusion of visual data in the communication of meanings of energy flowing values in explanations of educational influence. Hence the question we are seeking to answer is:

Are ideas of 'Empathetic Resonance' and 'Validity' helpful in communicating meanings of embodied expressions of life-affirming energy and values? We are thinking of energy flowing values of compassion, love and learning in explanations of educational influences in learning.

a) Empathetic Resonance

We first encountered the idea of empathetic resonance in the writings of Sardello (2008). For Sardello, *empathetic resonance*, is the resonance of the individual soul coming into resonance with the Soul of the World (p. 13). Sardellos' meaning carries a religious commitment. We are using *empathetic resonance* from our humanistic perspective to communicate a feeling of the immediate presence of the other in expressing the living values that the other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life.

Because we felt empathetic resonance as we watched a video-clip, taken by Marian Naidoo (2005) in her doctoral enquiry with a wife and husband, Marion and Charlie, where Charlie was caring for Marion as they lived with Marion's dementia, we want to see if we can communicate this feeling of resonance by reenacting the scene where we experienced it.

This is how Naidoo sets the scene in her doctoral thesis for the second of two video-clips:

“Shortly after meeting Charlie and Marion we were given the opportunity to make a documentary about dementia for a medical series. The Director asked if any of the patients and/or carers would like to make a contribution to the film. I asked Charlie and Marion if they would like to be involved and they agreed to help us. I felt it was very important for the filmmakers to meet them both before the filming in order to develop a relationship with them and to put them at their ease. Charlie and Marion handled the whole event with confidence and dignity. The account of their lives together and their love for each other was very moving. The director asked them at one point how they like to spend their day. Charlie replied that they just enjoy each other's company and sometimes they just sit together on the sofa, quietly, and hold each other's hand. As he spoke he was holding his wife's hand, and although she now finds language very difficult, with her other hand she gently touched his face. As we packed up all the filming

equipment the director, who was still very moved by the interview said to me, “*Today I experienced real unconditional love for the first time and that image of Charlie and Marion will stay with me for ever.*”



Marion goes on to write:

“You can share some of Charlie and Marion’s experience of living with and caring for someone with dementia in DVD chapter 2, “*Breaking down the walls of silence.*” I have included the first clip of Charlie and Marion in their home in conversation with me. In this first clip I have tried to show the life affirming energy of this couple who engaged in a warm loving and trusting relationship with me as they talked about living with dementia. I have included the second clip of Charlie reading from a letter he had prepared for me because he wanted to make sure he was able to communicate his feelings clearly. As I was filming and listening to Charlie I was becoming anxious about Marion who seemed to be drifting away and becoming excluded from what was happening. There follows which is for me a very beautiful and significant moment where Marion, who is now unable to use very much language found another way to communicate. In this moment she catches my eye and gestures behind Charlie’s back in a very comical way that she thinks he is being big headed. I have included this clip because I believe it shows that I am being inclusional and responsive in my engagement with Marion and Charlie. I also believe it shows how the relationship I had developed with them both was one of mutual trust and respect.” (see Naidoo, 2005) pages 188-190

Here is the second clip Naidoo describes above.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJJuUVE0qA>

The clip is 1:03 seconds and the moments described by Marian can be seen clearly at 54 seconds in this image:



Naidoo's thesis brings an energy-flowing value of a passion for compassion into the Academy as a living standard of judgment. As we watch the 1:03 video-clip above and read Marian's words we are aware that both are necessary in the visual narrative to evoke our empathetic resonance with an embodied expression of a passion for compassion.

Extract from Delong's (2010) paper on Teaching empathy (Access the full presentation from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera10/jddAERA20100402OKopt.pdf>)

Ruth Mills (2009), a member of the Brantford II cohort rigorously studied the Roots of Empathy (Gordon, 2005) program as part of her question, 'How can I create a peaceful school?' in which we see her influencing social justice and power relations.

Roots of Empathy is an award winning program that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among children by increasing empathy and social competence. The program is designed to reach elementary schoolchildren from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The foundation of the program is a neighbourhood infant and parent who visit the classroom every three weeks over the school year.

A trained ROE Instructor teaches the students to observe the baby's development and to identify the baby's feelings. The baby becomes the "Teacher" helping children to identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others. When children are more skilled in understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others (empathy) there is less bullying and aggression and more kindness and compassion both in the classroom and on the playground.
(<http://www.rootsofempathy.org/ProgDesc.html>)

In addition to thousands of photos, many included in the her final project, Ruth took many hours of videotaping of her work in classrooms, with special care to include children's voices as co-researchers and to overcome any writing limitations with the younger students:

All students and teachers who participated in the program this year were given a flashback questionnaire that asked how they thought Roots of Empathy had changed the school and how it could change the world. Due to their writing limitations, the grade three students were also interviewed using video. The student flashback questionnaires and video taping were done in the students' classrooms during the regular classroom time. (Chapter 6, p. 7)

The children's voices have been captured during interviews and in my journal during or after lessons. I interviewed the grade three students using video. I then transcribed their responses for coding and analysis. I gave the students the questions in written format first so that they could have time to think about their answers and record any thoughts before I interviewed them. I collected the responses from the grade seven students in written format only as I knew they had better skills for writing their thoughts down and that they might feel more comfortable with writing their responses than they would being video taped. During the interviews I asked the children:

What have you learned from Roots of Empathy?
How can Roots of Empathy change the world?
Could Roots of Empathy change a school? (p. 81)

"It teaches us that we can talk about our feelings without feeling embarrassed"
(Student A1, flashback questionnaire, June 11, 2009).

As I read the last comment from a male student I am reminded of the day that I was in Julie Drekić's class during a family visit. The children were sitting around the green blanket and baby Myles was exploring some of the ROE toys. Some of the boys were playing with the toys too as they often did on these visits. Myles was just beginning to crawl and as he tried to get to a toy he fell forward onto his face and started to cry. Without hesitation, student A1, who was playing close by gasped, got onto his knees and scooped up Myles into his arms to comfort him. "Poor Myles", he cooed. "Are you OK?" Myles of course reached in the direction of his mother and as A1 handed Myles to his mother he said, "I feel sorry for him".

Here was a 13 year old boy showing that he was not embarrassed to feel sorry for an injured baby and not embarrassed to show empathy to another human being. injured baby and not embarrassed to show empathy to another human being.



Grade 7 student A1 spontaneously scoops up baby Myles to comfort him

Another nice part to this story is that not one of the students in the class who witnessed this act of caring and compassion said a negative word. There was no teasing or laughter, just caring remarks for Myles as his mother took him.

It is important to note here that despite the fact that Ruth had written parental permission to use names and photos of her and the children in the Roots of Empathy classrooms, the Research Ethics Board insisted that she anonymize the children's names and destroy the photos and videos once the project was completed. I will elaborate on this point in Part Four of the paper.

In the following videoclip, you will see Ruth describing and explaining with her life-affirming energy the variety of activities that she has created in order to answer her question, 'How can I create a peaceful school?'



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpcVF7mkSzw>

Video 3.

In this poster session we are focusing on the issue of whether print-based textual communications of explanations of educational influence can carry the meanings of the energy-flowing values in the explanatory principles. From the visual evidence in the visual narratives above it is our contention that the print-based textual communications in publications such as Educational Researcher are masking, distorting or omitting, the energy-flowing values that distinguish the expression of the educational responsibilities of the educator and educational researcher. In this multi-media poster we believe that we

have provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the validity of our case. There is one additional point we wish to make in relation to the use of digital technology and multi-media narratives for communicating the meanings of energy-flowing values in sustaining educational conversations.

Whilst we have sustained our educational conversations over some fifteen years, we are finding the use of SKYPE, and the integration of recordings of conversations in explanations of our educational influences, helpful in sustaining our collaboration. Here is an extract of one such conversation in which we are focusing on making explicit our understandings of life-affirming energy:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcgT297QltY>

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