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3-7-2018
Psychology
Abstract from Dissertation

Dissertation Title: THE NARRATION OF CONFLICTING ACCOUNTABILITIES
IN THE ERA OF HIGH-STAKES TEACHER EVALAUTION

ABSTRACT

The U.S. Government's Race to the Top program inspired a wave of education reforms across the nation aimed at holding teachers individually accountable for their students' "growth" on test scores. These individualized programs implemented new forms of audit technologies aimed at orienting teachers' priorities toward the calculations produced by students, rather than towards students' holistic growth and well-being. In so doing, these programs signify an ideological rupture for teachers in that their long-shared sense of interpersonal accountability is institutionally re-directed – and reinforced with consequences – toward calculative accountability. In this dissertation, I investigated teachers' experiential navigation of the introduction of one such individualized consequential accountability policy in New York City. Taking a multi-contextual approach, I conducted four distinct narrative analyses that (a) examined prevalent patterns in teachers' experiential accounts, (b) situated their narration in the context of mediatized narrative constructions, (c) attended to their voicing of ideological dilemmas, and (d) focused on the life history of one exemplary teacher. In the foundational study of this dissertation, I found that the enactment of the new policies engendered assaultive social organizational processes in schools, which facilitated teachers' sense that they were engaged in the violation of their relational morality. In a complementary voice-based analysis, I found that this violation was not merely an affront to their ideological position, but also an

embodied assault that struck at the core of their being. The teachers frequently narrated ways that this assault compelled them to leave their jobs, and accordingly, most of the teachers in this study made their exit. Moreover, while the teachers navigated institutional conditions that facilitated the violation of their sense of relational morality, teachers' expression of that value-stance was absent in the most prominent news media outlets of their time. Such an omission is congruent with the historic pattern in which non-educators have dominated the discursive construction of the policy paradigms that coordinated the lives of teachers. In my final analysis, I found that that the assault, domination, and moral injuries that were common throughout the teachers' narratives were vivified in the contours of one teachers' life history, which illuminated dynamic resonances between her more contemporary narration of policy enactment and previous traumatic experiences. Collectively, these complementary analyses illuminate how the enactment of individualized consequential accountability is a multi-layered process entangled in embodied, moral, interpersonal, existential, sociopolitical, and sociohistorical spheres of meaning-construction. Accordingly, this research expands upon dominant contemporary conceptions of education reform by illuminating the psychological consequences of teachers navigating individualized consequential accountability policies. Moreover, this dissertation also provides a potential model for narrative researchers pursuing multi-contextual investigative approaches grounded in the meaning-making processes of those who are the subjects of policy.

Key words: Multi-Contextual Narrative Analysis, Individualized Consequential Accountability, Relational Morality, Ideological Rupture, Mediated Institutional Assault