Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, in her Ted Talk the Danger of a Single Story, says, “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.” Stories can be used to develop a bigger picture of a “lived” or “shared” experience, it can be used to study culture, to gain a bigger view of the world that we live in, it can also be used to validate an individual person’s view of the world.

With that, narrative inquiry and phenomenology both stood out to me. Phenomenolgy literally looks at “a focus on the experience itself” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 25) and is not an approach to categorizing the world, but exploring our world “prereflectively” and defined by Van Manen as quoted by Merriam and Tisdell, “Prereflective experience is the ordinary experience that we live in and that we live through for most, if not all, of our day-to-day existence (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 26). Phenomenology ties nicely into narrative inquiry.  As Merriam and Tisdell note, “Stories are how we make sense of our experiences, how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (2016, p. 33-34).  Stories have a definitive “beginning, middle and end” and are not about life but more importantly “interacts in life” (2016, p. 34).

In Bryan Brown’s Science in the City, he talks about Ajay Sharma and Charles Anderson in their work, “Transforming Scientists’ Sceicne Into School Science” talks about the EPE Framework.  In their framework they note that, “As individuals move through the world, they have numerous experiences. These experiences produce a smaller number of patterns.  As people begin to recognize these patterns, they offer an even smaller number of explanations to make sense of their experiences” (Brown, 2019, p.51) If you take a cultural groups stories and analyze them and they all present similar themes and concepts, their narrative (experience) becomes a pattern and a pattern leads to explanation or theory.

Since my PoP changes every day, if I am looking at Trauma that Professional Student Affairs Staff (mainly in residence life) experience through their jobs, hearing the narrative of these professionals will be extremely beneficial to understand the nature of the job.  With that, it is nice to hear in the readings that the research design is not as linear as people would think, and that it is more a triangle that can bounce back and forth between each section based upon new data, new experiences, new ideas and observations (Knapp, 2017, p. 5-6). Knapp notes, “the entire process is one o gradual discovery” (p. 5). It also is refreshing to see that multiple approaches can be cobbled together as in Deborah’s research where Deborah utilized multiple lenses with a narrative center (Netolicky and Barnes, 2018,p. 6)

As an aside, I also am fascinated about grounded theory.  In Student Affairs we talk a lot about student development theory and the important works of Bloom and Maslow, Piaget and Chickering, Magolda, Terrinzini, and Pascarella. I could only imagine that most of these theorists started out with some sort of idea, notion, or experience and put it to a test and then developed their theory based and grounded in the experience and data that they discovered.

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