



The Case for Parentalism at Work: Balancing Feminist Care Ethics and Justice Ethics through a Winnicottian approach: A School Case Study

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Received: 18 June 2021 / Accepted: 30 January 2023 / Published online: 13 February 2023
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Abstract

Using an ethnographic case study based in a UK state school for 11- to 18-year-olds, this paper explores the tensions that arose when the senior leadership team (SLT) introduced a justice-based ethic-of-care that prioritized good grades and equal treatment for all pupils over a feminist ethic-of-care (preferred by most teachers in non-leadership roles) that accentuated individual pupil need and placed greater emphasis on a broader social education. Through highlighting the tensions between a feminist ethic-of-care and a more ‘masculine’ style, justice-based approach to care-ethics, the paper extends the organisational care-ethics literature. We emphasise that such tensions occurred whether the different ethics were enacted by men, women, or non-binary individuals. In order to better understand the tensions between these two ethical approaches, we draw upon the theoretical work of Donald Winnicott, which highlights the importance both of maternal and paternal roles during infancy. We update Winnicott’s ideas, noting how maternal and paternal caring roles can be undertaken by people of varied gender identities. Building on Winnicott’s theory, we propose a new ‘Parentalist’ ethic-of-care, which has the potential to balance and hold together ideas of both a feminist ethic-of-care, and a justice-based ethic. A Parentalist ethic-of-care could support teachers yet recognize the context of the contemporary neo-liberal environment, where most children need to attain formal qualifications in a marketized world, and where such measures of success are highly valued.

Keywords Feminist care ethics · Winnicott · Justice ethics

Introduction

Rhodes and Pullen (2018) suggest that research within business and management studies must interrogate relationships between organizational power and business ethics and investigate how ‘business not only privileges the masculine, but also ... entails a corporate appropriation of the feminine’ (p. 495). Responding to this, we explore the consequences, within the context of state education in England, when a High School Senior Leadership Team (SLT) introduced a ‘masculine’ style, results-based ethic-of-justice for all pupils in a situation where a ‘feminist’ style ethic-of-care, that privileged pupil-teacher relationships (and made adjustments for those students less likely to hit standard and standardised results/performance metrics), was preferred by teaching staff (Gilligan, 1982). It is important to say: we do not suggest that those enacting an ethic-of-justice care less than those enacting an ethic-of-care. Rather, we seek to emphasise that, though intimately connected, an ethic-of-care and an ethic-of-justice seek to preserve and protect different approaches.

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More broadly, we look at the ethical implications of New Managerialism as applied to an educational context through an ethnographic study within a school. We conducted a 12-month ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) among teachers in a school for 11–18-year-olds in Northern England that we call North School (a pseudonym). Referencing teachers, a professional group who are by nature of their roles ‘in loco-parentis’ and drawing upon the work of Donald Winnicott (see, Petriglieri et al., 2019; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010, 2015; Sutton, 1997, 2018) we consider how teachers interpreted their caring and educative responsibilities within North School. We also observe how far (or otherwise) the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at the school offered to teachers what Winnicott terms a ‘holding’ environment which facilitated their personal needs. We observe a preference among teachers who were not members of SLT for a feminist ethic-of-care based on concerns that a more masculine, neo-liberal and justice-oriented perspective, would compromise both their relationships with SLT, and the care provided to children at the school. At the same time as observing the potential for masculine-style, justice-based discourses to suppress a more feminist ethic-of-care (Gilligan, 1982) however, we highlight how the SLT were committed to the notion of justice-based ethics for the purpose of encouraging higher grades and exam success for the benefit of pupils and the school.

As our theoretical lens, we utilize the work of Donald Winnicott, the British psychoanalyst and paediatrician. He was perhaps most famous for a series of radio broadcasts on the BBC in which he discussed the ‘good enough mother’, a notion which emphasised close mother-infant relationships, yet allowed for mothers sometimes to prioritize their own needs while infants learn how to cope in the world.

Marking the 50th anniversary of Winnicott’s death, we draw on his formulation that maternal (child-focused/caring) roles and paternal (protective/externally facing) roles are both essential for a child’s healthy development and that a key aspect of the paternal role is to intervene, to prevent unnecessary or unhelpful external impingements on the mother–child dyad. We link Winnicott’s emphasis on differentiated maternal and paternal roles (Winnicott, 1971) to the conflicts we observed in North School between a feminist care-ethics approach and what we describe as a masculine-style, justice-based ethic. This applies as Winnicott discussed the relevance of his ideas beyond the parent–child relationship in detail, and in many of his writings (Winnicott et al., 1986). He has been acknowledged as contributing to a ‘politics of care’ (Kellond, 2019) and some of his thinking was adopted in the creation of the welfare state (Kellond, 2019). Alexander (2013) and Kellond (2019) have both discussed how Winnicott exerted an influential form of ‘soft’ power, particularly through his BBC broadcasts and articles in newspapers and magazines. He also promoted

psychoanalytic thinking as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and through his role within the Institute of Psychoanalysis (Kahr, 1996; Kellond, 2019). Winnicott’s contribution was based on his ‘interwar work with mothers and children’ (Kellond, 2019, p. 327) He wrote with concern about the separation of mothers and children during the evacuation of civilians during the second world war. As Kellond (2019) and Gerson (2017) noted, Winnicott’s attentiveness to his patients’ relationships and experiences aligned with the position of the reformers of the war and post-war period in the twentieth century. These reformers, social democrats and liberals ‘believed sociality to be the core human motivation and saw recognition of this as central to justifying the emerging welfare state’ (Kellond, 2019, p. 328). Most saliently, Richards (1984) considered ‘the translation of war-time practices into wide-ranging civil objectives to reform capitalism by applying theoretical insights into the infantile dimension of adult psychology to practices in welfare and industry; in short to humanize capitalism according to psychoanalytic principles’ (Richards, 1984, p. 13).

Within the context of business and management studies, there are precedents for drawing upon Winnicott’s work in relation to the relevance of facilitative/safe ‘holding’ environments in organisations, especially in the context of new managerialist, marketized approaches to public sector working (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010, 2015; Petriglieri et al., 2019). Building on these precedents, we draw upon Winnicott’s ideas regarding the roles of mother and father to illuminate the interactions between a feminist-based care-ethic and a more masculine-style ethic-of-justice, and the tensions that arise between these approaches. Through the analysis of a relevant empirical case, we propose the notion of ‘Parentalism’, a notion first developed by Sutton (1997) in a clinical context to emphasise the importance of balancing paternal and maternal roles. We argue for a new Parentalist ethic-of-care as a concept for holding together a feminist care-ethic and masculine-style, justice-based approach. Although exploratory in nature, our broad research question was:

To what extent are an ethics-of-care and an ethics-of-justice held in balance in North School?

Ultimately, we highlight that although both SLT and the teachers sought to care for the children, each engaged with different ethical priorities and value systems, especially regarding approaches to measurement and the opportunities (or otherwise) for a teacher-led (rather than SLT-led) curriculum. Our study, concerned as it is with conflicts between management and front-line workers, draws parallels with other examples of tensions arising out of New Public Management (NPM) and managerialism (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2019; Treanor, 2005) and could therefore easily relate to health care/social services, as well as academia.

To begin, we provide an outline of UK education policy before introducing New Managerialism as it applies to schools in the context of critical business ethics, exploring specifically the balance between a feminist ethic-of-care and a justice-based ethic. Additionally, we provide an overview of facilitative/‘holding’ environments (involving the provision of an almost perfect response to a baby’s needs followed by gradual exposure to failure as the baby becomes capable of handling this) and the development of this idea towards Parentalism (Sutton, 1997).

We then share our anonymised findings, highlighting the masculine justice-based or paternalistic approach to ethics taken by the Principal/SLT. We recognise the Principal’s commitment to reflexive practice/continual improvement in the school, yet note an apparent lack of reflexivity where it concerned the dominant modes of subjectivation at work in education, namely the results/grades-based discourse. We show how this was perceived by teachers in non-managerial roles as undermining both teacher and pupil identities, through constraining facilitative environments and a feminist ethic-of-care more generally (regardless of the gender identification of teachers). We make our case for a Parentalist care-ethic that facilitates both approaches.

Background and Context for the Study

UK 11–16 Education

The push for schools to gain ‘Academy’ status within UK schools has been, and remains, significant (Blower, 2010). Academies are state-funded schools (funded directly by the Department of Education) that have independence from local authorities and are instead managed by an Academy Trust that may run several schools (Academies are not-for-profit companies that employ staff and have trustees responsible for monitoring performance (UK Government, 2022). Academies form a part of an educational reform ‘package’ and are ‘embedded in three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity’, (Ball, 2003, p. 215). In the context of the ‘reform package’, schools have moved away from ‘a traditional state-centred, public welfare idea of teaching [with] a focus on caring relationships—to a new postmodern, private sector concept of a corporate teaching and learning context’ (Skinner et al., 2021, p. 2). Such ‘Global Education Reform’ (Sahlberg, 2012) leaves teachers accountable for pupil performance (Edwards and Crump, 2017; Skinner et al., 2021) and compels schools ‘to conform to the norms of the market’ (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2019, p. 1). The marketization of schools is linked strongly with neoliberalism and a NPM approach, whereby primacy is placed on ‘efficiency, decentralization, cost effectiveness and global competitiveness with particular focus on caring

and educational public sector services’ (Fitzgerald and Hall 2021, p. 324; Clarke & Newman, 1997). Such a shift represents a significant change in the way that schools, as a public service, are managed, particularly in respect of increasing performance management (Ferlie, 2017).

Specifically, Academies have more financial and curriculum control (Bassett et al., 2012) and are run essentially as businesses, measuring success/productivity in terms of grades/achievements and efficiency/the bottom line. North School converted to Academy status in 2012, having been awarded outstanding¹ status by Ofsted (the Office for standards in Education, Children’s service and skills who ‘inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people’ in England, Ofsted, n.d.) in 2011, this result gave them increased freedom to self-monitor progress and receive fewer inspections.

Our ethnographic research sought to understand how far North School teachers felt the conversion to Academy status had changed the educational climate, which required us to gain an understanding of national policies as they related to the school and the policies of the SLT within the school.

The UK government White Paper “The Importance of Teaching” (Department for Education, 2010) began the push we now see to measure progress among and between age groups. Points are awarded when, on average, pupils exceed expectations by a grade, and points are lost when grades fall below certain levels. This type of measurement has shifted teacher attention away from a minority of struggling pupils hovering on the borderline between good and poor grades, placing a greater overall emphasis on most pupils who receive average grades, with the intention that the overall performance of the school will improve. Such improvements might come at the expense of struggling pupils who are no longer the focus of teacher effort. Additionally, performance-related pay for teachers has now been introduced, adding to the results-based focus (Department for Education, 2013). This turn to performativity drew negative reactions from the main teaching unions at the time and it was highlighted that ‘Morale across the profession has reached dangerously low levels’ (Blower & Keates, 2013). Our data, though collated in 2015, is very relevant, and may in fact be increasingly relevant due to declining levels of teacher recruitment as noted by the School Teachers’ Review Body: “Last year saw a further deterioration in both recruitment and retention. The Government’s overall target for recruitment to postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) was missed in 2017/18 for a sixth successive year” (National Education Union, 2018). A report (Sibieta, 2018) published by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) found that only “60% of teachers were

¹ The top grade available. Grading ranges from 1—Outstanding to 4—inadequate.

working in state funded schools in England 5 years after starting training. This five-year retention rate was lower for high priority subjects such as physics and maths, where it was just 50%” (National Education Union, 2019). Yet the number of pupils attending Academy schools has increased year-on-year since 2015 (www.gov.uk, 2021). In 2021 ‘over half of all pupils (52%) were attending an Academy’ (www.gov.uk, 2021). It has been suggested that the neoliberal organization and its control strategies have led to increased anxiety among employees (here, teachers) because of the extent to which they now find themselves responsible for issues that they cannot easily control, such as pupil grades (Pullen & Rhodes, 2018). As such, our research into Academies has a continued and growing relevance due to the intensification of the Academy system and increased teacher attrition within the context of new managerialist and marketized approaches to education.

Literature Review

New managerialism is often referred to as ‘introducing private sector financial and managerial techniques and ideologies’ into the public sector (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2019, p. 1). In education it is tied closely to a neoliberal agenda (Lynch, 2014) whereby ‘the existence and operation of a market ... is seen as an ethic in itself’ (Treanor, 2005). It has further been associated with a ‘masculine’ based approach, grounded as it is in rational modes of thought involving notions of measurement and production (Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Lloyd, 1993; Morgan & Knights, 1997; Rhodes & Pullen, 2018; Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004).

In this study, we link New Managerialism more specifically to the privileging of a justice-based ethic. We note Held’s (2006) view that justice-based rational action may be both abstract and utilitarian in its principles, enshrining legal protections for vulnerable groups and serving the majority perhaps at the expense of individuals and minorities. We note at the same time, that a feminist-based ethic-of-care is less likely to be results-focused. This might come at the expense of exam grades that are important to schools and pupils in a neo-liberal, marketized economy, yet offer the advantage of growing pupil-teacher relationships and offering more individual support to those students that might have opportunities for a form of success that lies beyond the standard performance metrics used. Indeed, it was frequently the case that such students were reflected on by teachers as very strong in other areas. We explore the relationships, in practice, between justice and care-based ethics. Importantly, it is not the purpose of this paper to prioritize one approach over the other. Rather, we explore the possibility of holding together these two approaches within a school setting.

Justice Ethics

It has been argued that justice-based ethics are important to uphold principles in cases where a group or individual may be subject to some form of exploitation or unequal treatment (Held, 2006, p. 64). Indeed in discussing an ethic-of-care in relation to women, minority groups and care work, Held (2006) notes, ‘an ethic of care that extols caring but that fails to be concerned with how the burdens of caring are distributed contributes to the exploitation of women, and of the minority groups whose members perform much of the paid but ill-paid work of caring in affluent households, in day care centres, hospitals, nursing homes, and the like’ (16, see also Hester, 2018).

In relation to schools, justice-based ethics may be prioritised as a means of focusing on a majority of pupils to enhance the position of institutions where success is measured on exam results, yet at the same time it may play a role in protecting and providing for pupils as a group, ensuring they receive equal amounts of teacher attention and are encouraged to gain higher grades. Indeed, it should be reiterated that having a commitment to justice ethics in no way implies that a person cannot also value care ethics. A justice ethic sits separately from, though intimately related to, an ethic-of-care. Nevertheless, proponents of justice ethics highlight the difficulties inherent in care-ethics attempting to ‘deal with the structural inequalities and discriminations of gender, race, class and sexual orientation’ (Held, 2006, p. 6). While care ethics ‘value[s] relationships between persons and empathetic understanding, justice value[s] rational action in accord with abstract principles’ that support a greater focus on the needs of the majority Held, 2006, p. 7). Justice then does enable a much stronger focus on transparency, fairness and universal norms than might a feminist-based care-ethics approach. In the context of education, justice-ethics fits well with the league table approach, seeking to provide as many pupils as possible with a realistic opportunity to obtain the grades and qualifications necessary for further achievement. In other words, justice-based ethics emphasise ‘universal moral principles’ (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2012) where care is linked to a generalised ‘other’ rather than a specific individual (Liedtka, 1996).

Yet as we consider next, such an approach might be antithetical to a feminist ethic-of-care requiring a greater focus on the individual (see, Rhodes & Pullen, 2018; Sutton, 2018).

A Feminist Care-Ethic

Lawrence and Maitlis (2012, p. 654) note the importance of: ‘organizational members hav[ing] the freedom and capacity to engage in caring narrative practices. This can be facilitated or undermined, however, by the

organizational conditions in which members work'. Following Gilligan (1982), Tronto (1993), Held (2006) and others, a 'feminist' ethic-of-care speaks to the value of relational and personal interactions that are traditionally associated with women's work (Powell, 2020). While it has been recognised that the notion of a feminist ethic-of-care could reinforce stereotypical views of women and a 'pervasive biological view of women and motherhood' it is argued that 'care should not be conflated with the gendered nature of the 'carers' (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021, p. 2). Indeed Held (2006) and Tronto (1993, 2010) discuss the links between feminist theorization and care, whilst simultaneously 'challenging the associations of care with women' (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021). Here, we suggest that a feminist ethic-of-care can apply and be enacted regardless of gender identification: men, women or non-binary individuals may equally value and prioritise caring relations (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006).

A feminist ethic-of-care depends upon "persons as relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically," rather than independent, self-sufficient actors (Held, 2006, p. 13). Indeed, although care in organizations is positioned as a response to suffering (Dutton et al, 2006; Frost, 2003) feminist writers have seen care as 'a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible' (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). In essence, a feminist ethic-of-care is not about standardized policies, or regulations, but rather motivated out of morality arising from "the memory of maternal care" (Noddings, 2003, p. 3). For Noddings: "To care is to act not by fixed rule but by affection and regard" (2003, p. 24).

A feminist ethic-of-care emphasizes the individual needs of people with whom the carer is in a relationship (here, the pupil-teacher 'dyad'). It draws attention to the ways in which individual problems (e.g., low pupil attainment) are rooted in problematic social conditions requiring personal attention (Tronto, 1993).

Liedtka (1996) has argued that for organisations to foster an ethic-of-care, and for organizational systems, strategies, values, and goals to be supportive they need to focus on allowing each individual worker the necessary 'reach' and freedom to carry out "caring work on a daily basis, in an autonomous way" (Liedtka, 1996, p. 193). Further empirical studies on an ethic-of-care within organizations are necessary, given the limited work in this important area (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021; Kroth & Keeler, 2009; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). In response to this, we explore how approaches founded in justice-ethics (fairness for all) can stand in the way of feminist care-ethics in the management of teaching staff within an educational institution.

Winnicott and Parentalism

The tensions between feminist and justice-based ethics suggested to us that the work of Winnicott would be particularly helpful as a theoretical lens. A Winnicottian understanding of the memory of a maternal care-ethic, in its relevance to everyday care, relates closely to his understanding of the 'good enough mother' who is the primary carer and nurturer within the private world of the home, taking care of the individual embodied needs of the child which as an infant, exists in the world only through its mother's care. Winnicott treated mothers and infants as, initially, an inseparable dyad, the good enough mother gradually encouraging independence in the infant and allowing for the risk of failure as she develops her own approach to mothering through learned experience—as might a high school teacher committed to a feminist care-ethic. Winnicott's interpretation of the role of the father is to protect mother and child, negotiating relationships with the external world on behalf of the family to enhance the situation for all family members (the role of father operating similarly to justice-based ethics which links care work to external agendas). In this view, the fulfilment of both maternal and paternal roles is essential—Winnicott argued for these as complementary processes, individually identifiable, and integrated to produce well-adapted care and an environment which meets the child at their level of consolidated development and in their zone of 'proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978). Winnicott did not elevate the paternal over the maternal role, hence we suggest the need for the term 'Parentalism' to identify the integration of these roles and avoid gendered misunderstanding, e.g., paternalism (Sutton, 1997). Winnicott regards infant and maternal well-being as inextricably linked—in his view children can only thrive if mothers or primary carers are well and happy. Below, we highlight the relevance of the notion 'good enough mothering', following Noddings (2003) and later Petriglieri et al. (2019), balanced with the supportive role of the father (Reeves, 2020) to foster a greater understanding of the relationships between justice and feminist care-based ethics, leading us to observe how purely justice-based approaches can hamper the development of a facilitative care-based ethical environment at work.

For Winnicott there is no imbalance between care for the new-mother and her baby—a mother cares for her baby by caring for herself and allowing others to offer care. Here, we explore the idea that for a school to be 'good enough', teachers need to feel that they are themselves in a facilitative and caring space so that the care they offer to pupils can flourish in ways that extend beyond grades and league tables. For Winnicott, an ethic-of-care ultimately involves some limit to the capacity of maternal care within the home and contact with the external experiences to which we are all subject via the role of the father who takes on the wider world (Reeves,

2020; Winnicott, 2005, 2018). In this way a Winnicottian notion of ‘Parentalism’ can hold a space in which both an ethic-of-care and a justice-based approach can exist. There are paradoxes in what is necessary for justice-ethics to operate, yet Winnicott was a lover of paradox and there is much to be gained in here exploring the tensions between care and justice-based ethics through the lens of Parentalism. This exploration may be applied to the situation of North School, where justice-based, paternal, and externally focused ethics advocated by SLT were increasingly a priority. This caused conflict and tensions among teaching staff who had been previously more comfortable with a feminist ethic-of-care that privileged the pupil-teacher dyad, protected by the fulfilling of the paternal role by an SLT, organised to prevent disruptive external impingement.

Within Winnicott’s work there lies a fundamental understanding concerning what is necessary for health. Winnicott, in highlighting both the protective function of a father figure and the crucial role of the mother, emphasises the value not only of maternalism or paternalism but rather of Parentalism (Sutton, 1997). He gives crucial roles to both mother and father and does not prioritise one over the other, but rather acknowledges their different but important functions. Some would say that Winnicott was focussed largely on the mother, and we acknowledge that argument, however we draw from Reeves (2020) here in highlighting the central role that the father played in Winnicott’s work. The need for perfect adaptation fluctuating though this will be, the need to provide a facilitative environment, to protect a nursing couple, yet in the context of the external environment. We do not pretend that Winnicott’s work is an ‘easy fit’ in twenty-first century management understanding. The gendered nature of Winnicott’s work is problematic in today’s context of more fluid family practices. We suggest however that his traditionally central roles can be held by people of varying gender identities. We further uphold the relevance of the roles to be played in and of themselves. The simple idea that a healthy relationship should account for both roles, carer and protector, is worthy of consideration and useful in relation to ethics of care and justice, as is the notion that the maternal role and the infant (here, teachers and pupils) should be treated as intertwined protected by the paternal figure (here, SLT and North School).

As shown below, in exploring how both teachers and the SLT viewed a good education we found a commitment to duty and justice (SLT goals) overtaking and superseding the feminist care-ethic often discussed by teachers. This approach could be seen to limit opportunities for North School to be a facilitative and caring environment and is the key reason that we draw on Winnicott. Particularly in his extrapolation of his ideas to broader society (Kellond, 2019), we see support for the relevance of both caring and justice-based ethics.

We now outline our method and explore the justice-informed approach to a simultaneously caring and disciplinary profession that we found at the school.

Method

We approached North School for several reasons; it had recently become an Academy and we were interested to see what effect this had had on the staff. Following the Academies Act 2010 more and more schools were being encouraged to become Academies and so looking at this type of school was timely. We were also keen to look at a school that was doing very well in relation to official measures. As we were broadly interested in the approach being taken to education it seemed appropriate to look at a school where other factors including struggling in the league tables and children’s behaviour were not considered to be issues. North School as we have stated had been graded as ‘Outstanding’ by the inspector, Ofsted. Research access to North School was initially granted after the first author sent out a formal request to the school Principal. The first author was subsequently invited to a meeting with the acting Principal where the research aims were discussed. Access was then granted by the acting Principal on the 28th of February 2012. Soon after this the first author was given a school tour. Focused ethnographic work (Muecke, 1994) began in late April after receiving Criminal Records Bureau clearance. Focused ethnographies ‘allow for the investigation of a particular problem or specific research area, and hence are useful for directing research towards particular areas of importance’ (Edwards, 2020, p. 91). They offer ‘rich and contextually specific information that can be invaluable in the creation of new knowledge’ (Edwards, 2020, p. 104). The first author carried out an interview with the acting Principal, who was able to provide details concerning the way the school was run and their approach to wellbeing. This meeting was vital in better informing the first author of the work context, and in constructing some of the questions that were then asked of the teachers in the interview schedule.

There were 100 members of teaching staff in the school, around 60% identified as female. As a result, we recruited 15 teachers identifying as female and 10 identifying as men to take part in interviews of between one and two hours, and classroom observations. A breakdown of participant demographics is provided in Table 1. No participants identified as trans or non-binary, though we recognise that the data were collected at a time when revealing this may have been more difficult for participants. The main part of the ethnographic work began when the first author visited two school departments and met with the staff there after being introduced by the acting Principal. After gaining consent to act as a participant observer from the staff in those departments the first

Table 1 Participant information chart

	Identify as Men	Identify as women	White British	Identify as belonging to an ethnic minority group	Age			
					25–35	35–45	45–55	55+
Member of SLT	2	2	4	0	0	0	3	1
Head of Department	2	1	3	1	0	1	2	0
Teaching Staff	6	12	18	1	8	5	4	1
Totals	10	15	25	2	8	6	9	2

author acted as a general helper to staff as she began to get to know the school. Following this she gradually began to visit other departments/staff groups, ending contact in 2015.

The first author observed lessons, spent time in the staff rooms, volunteered with field trips, science days, and day-to-day manual work. These activities built a dialogue with participants. The observations concentrated upon the nature of the work being carried out and working relationships. This was done to illuminate more detail concerning the work of each participant, and more general information concerning staff opinions on the direction of the school in terms of its policy in relation to the UK government. Media portrayals of teaching and academy schools were also reflected on and helped to provide a clearer understanding of the comments made during interviews.

Following participant observation, the first author conducted three pilot interviews. These were designed to assess how far the interview schedule enabled us to explore our aim (Silverman, 2017). After the pilot interviews we made small changes to the phrasing of a few questions to clarify meaning for participants, but no significant changes occurred, the main interviews then commenced. These sessions were semi-structured to allow the flexibility to diverge from standardised questions (Hay, 2005; Silverman, 2004). All staff who took part picked an appropriate pseudonym. We note here that although participants had what we considered at the time to be a free choice, the first author primarily referred to members of the SLT by their title/family name, and members of the teaching staff by their first names. On reflection it seems likely that this strongly influenced the pseudonyms presented, and, as we will reflect on in more detail later is representative of a broader power dynamic within the school.

Purposive, snowball and criterion sampling were used (Coyne, 1997; Russell & Gregory, 2003). Participants were selected based upon willingness, their role as teachers, and gender identity. We initially recruited from all role types to build a broader data set and ensure that the researchers were able to understand the school from several perspectives. Here however, we focus on representative extracts from 25 interviews and observations with teachers with no or very limited managerial responsibility, as well as the SLT to discuss the organisation of ethics and rationality within the

school. Teachers were asked questions relating to their role, their personal wellbeing and histories, and their views on education provision within the school and the country more broadly. Detailed field notes were taken. All data were transcribed and a thematic search (Silverman, 2015) conducted. The text was coded and explored using content analysis (Creswell, 1998; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Silverman, 2015; Silverman & Seale, 1997). The data were therefore organised and indexed according to a priori and emergent codes. This is consistent with an ethnographic approach and allowed for unexpected themes to emerge (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Content analysis was used due to its usefulness in picking out important themes and appreciating them in more depth to interpret something of their “underlying meaning” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106; Silverman & Seale, 1997). A coding tree outlining the main themes and codes relating to this work is depicted in Fig. 1.

Findings

Our findings draw attention to competing views of what constitutes a ‘good enough’ education in relation to ethics of respectively feminist care and justice. We begin by analysing the ways in which the Principal and SLT (mostly men) embraced justice ethics and a stereotypically masculinist-type approach to management under the theme of; ‘**Miscommunication and differing visions: Masculine rationalities and justice ethics: A principal and her team**’. We draw from our coding tree. Codes relating to day-to-day pressures/tension points, differences in understanding and meaning making, as well as the meaning of education were all salient; these included; the SLT and monitoring systems, vision of care for/justice for pupils, professionalism, government/governing norms, family ethos, responsibility for performance, and change over time. We then consider how teaching staff in non-managerial roles—both women and men—frequently wanted to embrace caring practice in their jobs—a feminist care ethics approach, which many saw as in conflict with a justice-based ethic. Here under the theme of ‘**Miscommunication and differing visions: Substantive rationalities and care**’ we draw from all the codes within day-to-day pressures. We further consider differences in understanding and

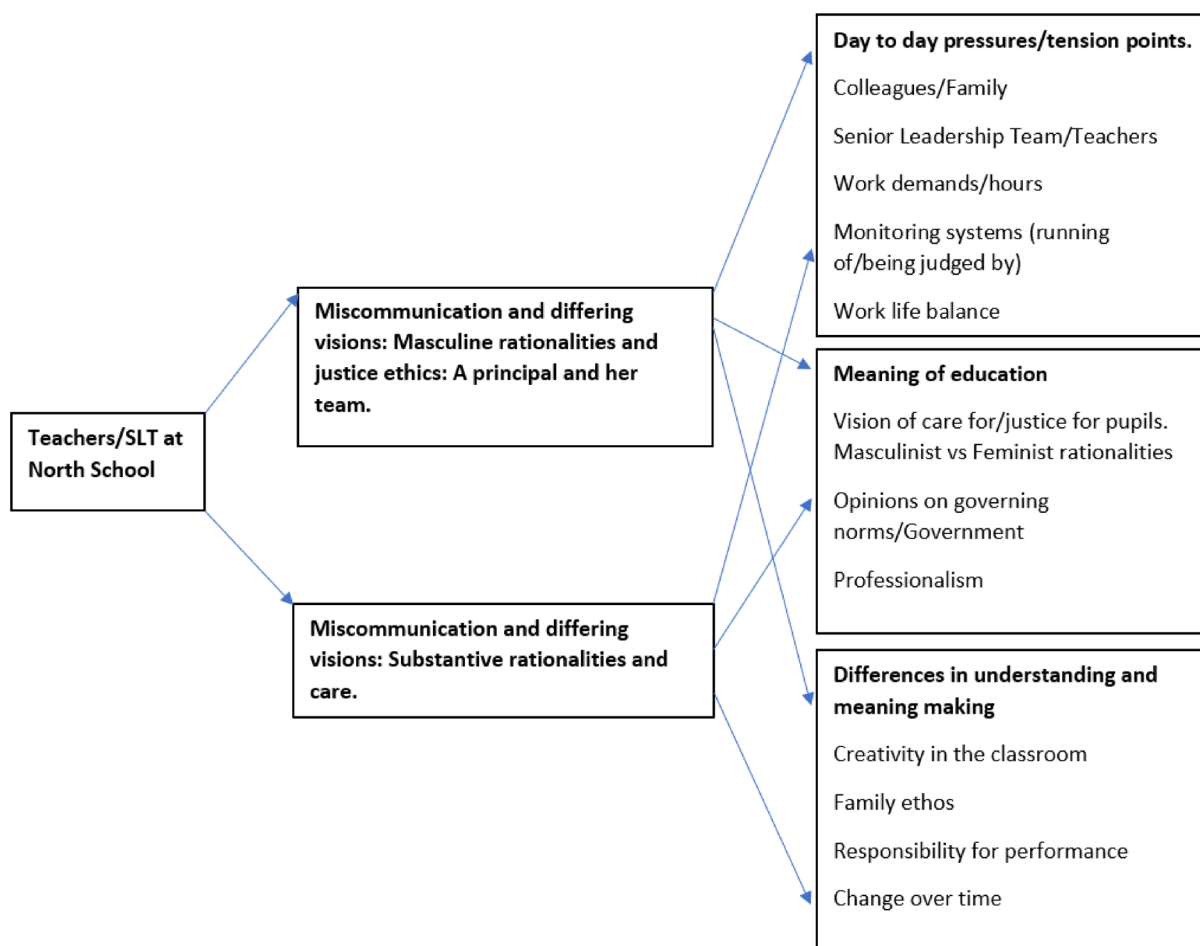


Fig. 1 Coding tree and main themes

meaning making such as creativity in the classroom and family ethos as they relate to the teaching body perspective, as well as the meaning of education in relation to professionalism and vision of care for/justice for pupils. We highlight how these different approaches caused tension. We organise our findings by our two key themes, highlighting a primary tension between the SLT and the teaching body.

Finally, in discussion, we think through the ways in which caring narrative practice is often conscripted into the service of a justice-based ethic. Drawing on Winnicott's work, we consider how teachers perceive this tug-of-war between justice ethics and feminist care ethics to leave them feeling exposed, unable to engage with some children at their level of development and need. We consider the effects of the school's paternalistic approach to teachers, offering a way of thinking about facilitative environments that endeavours to highlight the tensions between a feminist ethic-of-care and justice ethics whilst seeking to undermine the binary division between them. Drawing on Winnicott's work we suggest an understanding of care in the workplace that incorporates both a feminist ethic-of-care and a justice-based approach to

ethics that accounts for rules and norms. We seek to explore them together and to consider what is lost when Parentalism (the cooperation of both these ethics), does not operate.

Miscommunication and Differing Visions: Masculine Rationalities and Justice Ethics: A Principal and Her Team

To maintain their 'Outstanding' status and to be an objectively successful Academy, the SLT at North School introduced policies aimed at promoting best practice through the standardisation of lesson plans and the frequent observation of teaching staff. Such policies appeared unpopular among most teachers who were not part of the SLT. The school's 'open door' policy meant that teachers could at any time, be observed in their everyday practice. One of the Vice Principals, Mark, noted:

I prioritise the children over the teachers. And poorly performing schools often focus the other way around,

they aren't used to being watched (those over 45), being appraised, they want their doors shut, well tough.

Mark divided the teachers and the pupils by suggesting that a focus on teachers may disadvantage pupils. He saw the interests of teachers as potentially detrimental to justice for pupils. This led to most teachers feeling that they were not adequately supported. The power dynamics here are important. Members of the SLT hold overt power over teachers and seek to wield it, in their view to protect the pupils. The increased visibility of teachers via appraisals and performance-related policies when combined with the dismissive nature of the comments made by Mark here bred distrust, and ultimately came to reduce the authority of the SLT with teachers. The teachers resist the gaze, and further resist its domination inwardly, whilst outwardly conforming (Yar, 2003). Additionally, as Mark notes, older teachers were often singled out.

...We used to say: "the train's left the station. Either you're on it, or you're not". And some people are not able to adjust to, you know, a more rigorous approach shall we say—a more results focussed approach and err quite a few staff have, you know were moved on. Or have moved on erm and I suppose now I've appointed about well over 50% of the staff.

There was evidence from SLT that a large turnover of staff had taken place, nevertheless, as we explore in our upcoming substantive rationalities section, our results indicate a general dislike of the SLT approach rather than a dislike amongst only older staff. The national push for excellent results via school league tables and Ofsted (Ofsted, n.d.), and the promotion of particularly well performing schools through the introduction of Super-Heads' (high performing staff seconded to support more poorly performing schools), encouraged the prioritised operation of justice ethics within the school. The SLT were generally concerned with protecting and ensuring the rights of all pupils to a good education, and to the opportunities and advancements that it provides. Having limited contact with individual pupils, their ethical principles were often not tied to the advancement of individuals, but rather to the advancement of the majority of North school pupils in relation to government metrics. They focused on what is immediately measurable.

One of most notable findings from the ethnographic work related to the masculine-type rationalities that informed the work of the Principal at the school (Mrs Smith), though in the context of a justice approach this is unsurprising. Mrs Smith's role in the school, particularly given the UK context we have described, necessitated a focus on neoliberal surveillance and measurement. Mrs Smith adopted an approach normally associated with the masculine ethics-of-justice and neoliberalism. She engaged with, and actively promoted, a

results-focused culture. She concerned herself with universal principals of justice in her actions in the school. As one of her Vice Principals Ms Jones noted; Mrs Smith promotes those ends which deliver immediately measurable results for the children.

She firmly believes that the kids get one chance and it's her job to make sure they get the best chance. And if you're not up to the job, you know, as I say, she will tell you.

Mrs Smith was concerned to give the children the best chance in life that she could, and she believed this was best achieved through a justice-based approach to education. She suggested a preference for formal rules and principles associated with masculine rationalities;

Some people are not able to adjust to you know a more rigorous approach shall we say a more results focussed approach.

Mrs Smith enacted a masculine rationality in her management style and approach to the school. In doing so she undid the gender stereotype that she may be expected to perform to (i.e. as a woman she might be expected to prioritise a feminist ethic-of-care) and took a universalist approach to rules and norms for the children and teachers. She concerned herself more with the objective success of the children and the school in terms of grades and league table measurements, and less with what may be perceived to be the 'softer' side of education. Arguably, she cared about, rather than for, the children. Research demonstrates consistently how women enacting more typically masculine management styles suffer from harsher evaluations from their staff than men enacting these identities would (Bevan & Gatrell, 2017; Gatrell, 2005). There was certainly evidence in our case that Mrs Smith was harshly judged because of her performance of masculine-type approaches to rationality, as most staff described her in negative terms. However, interestingly the teaching staff appeared to judge men in the SLT equally as harshly as the Principal. Several comments were made that evidenced this, but we draw from a particularly salient one from Harold, here;

I think there is certainly one, possibly two people in the senior leadership team at this place who are fundamentally unsuited to managing people and also fundamentally unsuitable teachers. But that's another story, err yeh. So, because I keep most of the corporate suits at arm's length, yeh, I don't have much to do with them. I only engage with them when I need to be seen to be doing something ... So yeh I keep the suits off my case really.

This comment was typical of the feelings of many teachers, who felt that members of the SLT took a results-focused

approach to teaching that they did not agree with. Teachers also frequently commented on the lack of relationship between the teaching staff and the SLT. In this case what we observed the teachers objecting to was a ‘masculine’ justice-based approach to rationality, because they did not feel this sufficiently addressed the needs of pupils in their classes. This is not to say of course that Mrs Smith may not have suffered this judgement more harshly than her colleagues; she was disliked, and Bevan and Gatrell (2017) indicate that co-workers often deeply resent women leaders who embody typically male characteristics. Nevertheless, our evidence suggests that the performance of an instrumental or masculine approach, whether enacted by a man or a woman, was usually resisted by the teachers at North School who were not part of the SLT.

The majority of teaching staff were uncomfortable with SLT’s interpretation of justice-based ethics in relation to standardised teaching methods, and the approaches to performance management that had been introduced. This ‘caring about’ rather than ‘caring for’ (Tronto, 1998) the children was, in their view, measurable success usurping personal connection. It demonstrated a commitment to ‘paying attention to the need for caring’ rather than assuming ‘responsibility to meet a need’ (Tronto, 1998, p. 16). As Ms Kirk noted:

I am told how to teach, I have to use the [North School] ‘Excellent Lesson’ [plan] and I have to use ‘Co-operative Learning’ and ... it’s not something that I can choose,—it’s practical but in a way I have to “bend forward” myself to put inside things that (sharp intake of breath) maybe they are not that convenient in that lesson.

The “excellent lesson” plan was disliked by all the teachers, at every level outside of the SLT, with the exception of Mike, a member of staff who welcomed this intervention. The plan broke each lesson down into four parts and required that teaching staff use at least one method of co-operative learning in each class.

This plan, designed to ensure best practice amongst teachers, was felt to pose a threat to teacher autonomy, spontaneity in response to individual children’s needs, and creativity in the classroom, particularly as the school now operated an ‘open door’ policy for teachers with ‘learning walks’ (whereby members of the SLT unexpectedly observe classes) occurring frequently. Teachers felt that they always had to observe the policy as they could be ‘caught out’ at any moment. Teachers were concerned that they could receive a poor evaluation during official observations and would be obliged to accept teacher coaching. The SLT had introduced teacher coaching and it was seen by the Principal Mrs Smith as;

Our model for school improvement really, improving teaching and learning, you know working with people working alongside them helping them to improve their practice.

This justice-based policy was viewed by the teachers as a form of criticism, with many seeing teacher coaching as ‘a step on the disciplinary ladder’. The ‘excellent lesson plan’ and ‘Teacher Coaching’ were just two examples of a broader suite of policies that saw an increasingly justice-based approach to the educational offering at North School.

This is not to say that Mrs Smith and her team did not make efforts to engage with the staff, but this came only after a realisation that the SLT approach to education was not one shared by the broader staff body. Before the current management had taken over, the staff spoke of the ‘North Family’ prevailing. There could be a certain amount of looking back with rose-tinted glasses here, however it was regularly discussed. Mrs Smith however had noted that;

Everybody in North School knows about the North family and I hated it, I hated it, I thought this is a school this is a professional environment, this is not a family -but- I’ve come to understand that it suits here quite well and that people come in and they’re taken in to the school community—it is like being part of a family, people stay a long time so there’s a lot of sort of mothering and fathering goes on and I think that’s all important but I think it’s also important that I am seen to value people, seen to thank people, and I go out of my way to do it and I still get criticised for not doing it enough you know and ohhh (exasperation).

The SLT’s efforts did not resolve the dissonance between themselves and teachers. Although Mrs Smith stated that she made efforts to ‘leave cake in the staffroom’ this did not reconcile a fundamental disagreement over the purpose and practice of education. The North ‘family’ favoured a feminist care-ethic and a concern with the specific needs of individuals. Teachers reminisced about a previously supportive management environment, close friendships, pub-quiz teams, book-groups, etc. By contrast the professional environment that Mrs Smith wanted related to her association of professionalism with justice for the pupils, with enhanced pupil outcomes/grades. Mrs Smith and the SLT more broadly regarded the strong focus on the familial as a potential threat to best outcomes for pupils.

Pullen and Rhodes (2018, p. 96) note that ‘contemporary anxiety rests on a primary distinction between the masculine and the feminine, with the privilege resting with disembodied rationality, action orientation, instrumentalism and market-oriented economic production’. Here however, we see a different take on the masculine; as provider of universal norms, of justice, of fairness and, as Mrs Smith notes,

professionalism. Unfortunately, this approach appeared to invoke anxiety among North School's teaching staff through its prioritisation of results and teachers' views that that this was overly instrumental. The extent to which this approach to ethics hampered a feminist care-ethics approach and therefore the operation of a facilitative environment is something we now consider.

Miscommunication and Differing Visions: Substantive Rationalities and Care

Having outlined the approach taken to education at the school by Mrs Smith and her SLT we now explore the different approach to education espoused by the non-managerial teaching staff that were interviewed and observed. Where for Mrs Smith and her team justice-ethics was prioritised, for most of the teaching staff a care-ethic tended to dominate. Nevertheless, 'Mike' approved of and found useful the new practices introduced. In previous years Mike suggested that to 'prove' himself he had worked long hours which had been detrimental to his marriage; the new forms of measurement allowed him to quantify his performance and reduce his working hours.

Mike: "Well my first marriage didn't work -I might have been working for maybe the first 20 odd years of my life on 55-to-60-hour weeks, every week. That's no understatement, because you can't run a football team, a cricket team, a rugby team, do your Saturday mornings, and keep up with your academic work."

We suggest that the older management style was less structured, making it difficult for Mike to judge how well he was doing and resulting in him over-working because he had no way of measuring the level at which he was supposed to be working or what he had achieved. SLT changes to policy in the school were very positive for Mike as they allowed him to enter a 'caring' and 'creative' space via a route with which he was comfortable. He felt able to stop several of his extra-curricular commitments and welcomed the spaces created by the SLT, within the workday, to complete preparation for classes. The SLT and their policies were able to provide space for a feminist ethic-of-care for Mike as they affirmed for him the justice-based value systems he already subscribed to surrounding meeting targets and performance management. His relationships with management then tended to be positive rather than strained, as they shared a mutual vision and understanding. This then allowed for him a kind of creative living.

I work as hard as it takes to do the job and that's what I've always done. So ... I think you're paid a salary, you're paid for a lot of your time. Therefore, if demands are that you do reports or you work at

home—you work at home. You work till the job's done. But [now] I have more time allocated to do that and I make better use of that time. The unions and the schools have fought very hard to make, like the time I'm sat in now, in the past I could have been called on to cover or invigilate exams so you couldn't do your work. So basically I think that the profession—and certainly I—have become much more proficient in managing my time better at work. The school gives me the time to do the job I'm meant to do.

The general dislike of the teachers for the SLT was thus not universal. Somewhat counter-intuitively, Mike, subject to the justice-based concerns of the SLT, felt himself to be in a facilitative environment. This served to protect his ability to do his job well and engage in an ethic-of-care with the pupils, that provided them with individualised relational care within the usual confines of a working week. Mike's case highlights the mixed-up nature of the boundaries between justice-ethics and care-ethics. He emphasises the need to look beyond binary distinctions and to recognise the interdependence between them. Mike makes use of SLT policy to engage in practice that he believes in and finds valuable. His method of engagement implicitly subsumes a caring ethic within a broader concern with justice, and hence his case is not one that speaks of an attention to Parentalism as we would see it. Nevertheless, his case offers a hope and a warning. It is hopeful as it shows how an attention to care for staff can persist within the current system, and it is a warning as it models how easy it is for attempts to engage in a care-ethic to be overtaken by notions of justice. Parentalism then is not a neat 'fix', it requires a continuous and difficult process of reflection.

Most teachers, whilst concerned with the performance of their pupils in exams/coursework, espoused a significantly greater focus on the overall welfare of pupils. Teachers, were motivated by the enculturation of pupils into society, and by the concern to develop and encourage them. The teachers demonstrated a commitment to prioritising the holistic care of pupils. They adopted a broader understanding of education than the exam-based focus catered for by justice-ethics. Moreover, most teachers felt that their concerns for the children were not adequately supported, their anxiety was stoked rather than contained by these systems. As Marjorie noted;

You get three categories, behaviour for learning, quality of teaching and then the progress of learners. And the progress of learners comes out top, so if you're an amazing teacher and you've got a fantastic relationship with your kids and the behaviour for learnings [that's] brilliant but if the kids haven't progressed that well in your classroom, you'd still get a bad grade—as a teacher you haven't pitched it, so it's my fault that child has not made progress, I've not pitched my les-

son correctly—Very much as a teacher the buck stops with you, that's it. That is a lot of stress it's a lot of responsibility to have.

Teachers experienced anxiety because they considered that management systems ('excellent lesson plans', learning walks, observations, and teacher coaching) restricted autonomy beyond what they felt was reasonable. The performance management system measured them against goals that they did not feel that they could control. The SLT drew on universal principles of justice-based ethics to provide the students with what they viewed as 'the best education possible'. In drawing from justice-based ethical principles to address the pupils' education, the SLT engaged in policies to manage teacher performance. Frequently however this approach appeared to conflict with the care-based ethics upon which most teachers built their relationships with pupils. While the SLT (whatever their gender identification) prioritized justice-based approaches to manage teacher and pupil performance at the school, most teaching staff (whatever their gender identification) emphasised a feminist care-ethic where relations between individuals are key (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006, 2018). Most teachers felt the managerialist policies hampered their ability to develop pupils socially, culturally, and vocationally, and to provide the space for play and creativity that Winnicott (1971) so revered and attributed with health. Roo states that;

thousands of kids get forgotten about, the kids that are good with their hands—skills out of examinations are completely forgotten about in this country at present, it's a total injustice, total injustice.

Interestingly, clear reference is made to justice here. Those teachers seeking to preserve an ethic-of-care and lamenting the difficulties in achieving this, nevertheless, rely on the language of justice to discuss those children that they feel are poorly served by a system that itself operates via a justice-based ethic. A justice-based ethic here then serves to disadvantage those pupils who do not conform to expected norms. In many ways this illustrates the value of 'Parentalism' (inspired by Winnicott), in honouring the images of both the maternal (care) and paternal (justice). Teachers objected when they felt unable to provide for pupils the breadth of education that they considered valuable. They objected when pupils that they felt may benefit from different types of lessons or a focus on different topics, did not receive these opportunities. Teachers felt that this itself was an injustice. This symbiosis then of justice and care is representative of the broader concern in Winnicott's framework and our understanding of Parentalism, that suggests that both maternal and paternal roles have value. Lorna was animated in a discussion concerning her lowest set Chemistry class. She noted;

Wouldn't it be better to teach them something they're gonna use in the future that they're actually interested in, actually spark that little: 'Oh, I actually quite like science!'. Or do I just stick ploughing on through the rubbish topics that I've gotta teach.

Lorna's concern was that she felt she was doing a disservice to the lower set pupils that she taught, by focusing exclusively on exam preparation for the benefit of the majority. As with many of the teachers, Lorna wanted to create an experience for the children that they would be inspired by and enjoy. To achieve this, teachers perceived they needed greater levels of autonomy, or creative space in Winnicott's understanding (Winnicott, 1971) than was provided to them by a management system operating the 'excellent lesson plan'. The focus was firmly on producing the best objective and immediate results for pupils.

there is considerably more expectation on the part of the Senior Leadership Team about how I should be teaching. And everybody I think feels that there has been a considerable loss of professional autonomy for teachers as individuals in their classrooms. (Lorna)

Teachers argued that such lack of autonomy in the approach to teaching contributed to a reduction in opportunities to engage in creative practice during lessons. We understand from Winnicott's work that the space for creativity and playfulness is crucial for health, and that this arises from a paternal desire to support substantive caring narrative practice. Here however, we saw the prioritisation of one type of approach over another, which in the views of teachers was detrimental to a good enough facilitative environment, and ultimately teacher health. Helen noted;

I dislike the fact that some of my colleagues feel quite under pressure from... from SLT or from the monitoring, observation, coaching system, programmes.

...I mean they are aware that there are issues of well-being...we have had people off with long term stress or depression and they are aware of that, but they will look to a management structure to solve it ... that's rather clinical in a sense, cos you know ...dealing with people is much more my style.. I'd rather somebody came and talk to me than signed me up for a healthcare package to make sure that if we're off we get back as quickly as possible.

The SLT approach to the wellbeing of teachers, the healthcare packages offered and their policy on teacher coaching, were seen in an instrumental light by teachers. The suspicion regarding the motives of the SLT speaks to the othering that occurred between the two groups and the breakdown of a facilitative environment for the teachers. Teachers felt constrained in the approach they could take to the children,

limited in creative freedom, and simultaneously instrumentally managed by the SLT. The teachers' feelings suggest that they did not experience a specific caring ethic being applied to them, and the wellbeing issues arising are a testament to this. Mrs Smith could not enact a specific caring-ethic with all staff as she did not directly line manage all of them herself. Nevertheless, teachers should not feel that systems/procedures actively get in the way of them developing such relations with members of the broader SLT/their specific line managers. Indeed, Liedtka (1996) has argued that for organisations to foster care, organizational strategies, systems, goals and values must be supportive. Therefore, "the architecture of... organization[s] would need to be highly decentralized to give each individual the 'reach' necessary to carry out the caring work on a daily basis, in an autonomous way" (Liedtka, 1996, p. 193). In institutions who perform caring work, this is vital.

Discussion: Towards Parentalism: Lessons from Winnicott

We now draw on Winnicott's work to consider the parental, i.e. the images of the father and the mother in combination, and the roles these figures play in constructing a facilitative environment. We find many parallels between the teachers and the (SLT) in North School, and the complementarity of mother/father roles in Winnicott's work.

Linstead and Maréchal (2015, p. 1467) suggest that by 'venerating the dominating father-figure and a masculine reading of [workplace environments] ... organizations deprive themselves of a mother-figure, and the associated benefits of a nurturing culture'. We argue that holding masculinist and feminist ethics in balance is crucial. Teachers and school leadership teams are in many ways dependent upon the performance of the pupils to receive performance-related pay, 'outstanding' reports, etc. We acknowledge that concepts of fairness and good education for all play an important role. However, the need to 'be seen to be doing well' is relevant because this attracts resource, advantaging all if 'bottom-line' results (in our case examination and financial performance, that also allow pupils the best chance of financial survival in a neo-liberal system) are enhanced.

Yet the school environment is itself dependent upon the well-being and motivation of teachers. We know that the national picture demonstrates teacher disillusionment and attrition from the profession: it is difficult to provide care for another if we do not feel cared for ourselves. This is apparently the case among many teachers in North School and in the national context (National Education Union, 2018). We further acknowledge the need for "adaptation, starting almost at 100% and turning in graduated doses towards de-adaptation according to the new developments

in the infant which are part of the gradual change towards independence" (Winnicott, 2018, p.239). Therefore, with respect to teachers, there needs to be enough autonomy to develop within their pupil's sufficient independence (as does the mother with her growing infant) so that 11–18-year-olds develop personal resources to cope outside the school environment.

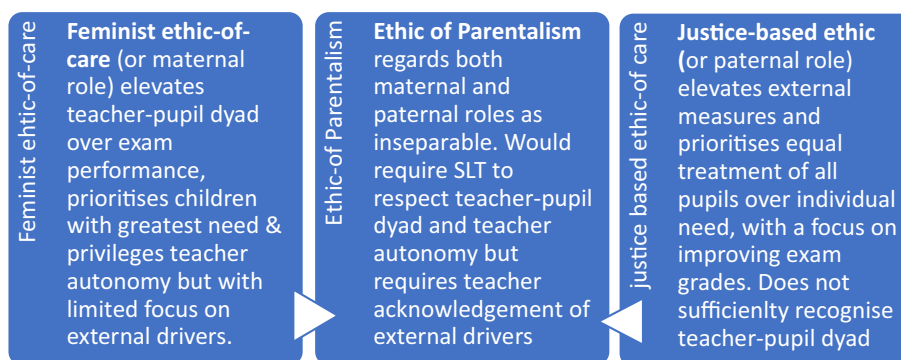
The push on Academies, and new methods of measurement at the national level, appear to have further encouraged a continuing focus on results that has grown since the original data collection. For North School the loss of attention to individual needs and the space for play and creativity (Winnicott, 1971), alongside teacher wellbeing, was the price paid. This increases anxiety among teachers who find themselves responsible for issues (class grades) which they feel they may not easily control (Pullen & Rhodes, 2018). In the teachers' view, a feminist ethic-of-care (in the style of Winnicott's maternal role) between teachers and pupils, and between teachers and the SLT, was diminished by the prioritizing of masculine justice-ethics (in keeping with the Winnicottian notion of a paternal/externally facing role).

In understanding the value of the father's role as protector in Winnicott's writing, it is possible to see what constitutes an ethic-of-care/justice ethics conflict at North School. Winnicott would have seen maternal care as essential to the care of the baby, seeing mother and infant as an inseparable dyad (Winnicott, 2018, p.39). However, the same is not the case for how the SLT saw the relationship between teachers and pupils: they were viewed separately. Despite being concerned with the wellbeing of staff, SLT prioritised pupil achievement over teacher preference, creativity, and playfulness in classrooms. A feminist care-ethic would embrace both the carer and the cared-for in its approach (Gilligan, 1982). This conflict compromised the development of a facilitative environment and contributed to 'othering' for both teachers and SLT, whatever their gender identification.

At the heart of Winnicott's work is the notion that a carer must be trusted to make sense of their role for themselves and live with the possibility of failure (the maternal), whilst acknowledging the value of having a person walking the boundary of that caring relationship (the paternal) to ensure that the infant-mother (or teacher-pupil) dyad is protected. Nevertheless, maintaining relationships with the wider world.

A Winnicottian approach values 'Parentalism', i.e. the notion of what is gained from the maternal and paternal working together dynamically. In keeping with the observations of Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010), teachers and SLT perceived that their values were at odds: teachers felt a lack of autonomy, and SLT were frustrated by teacher attitudes to contemporary educational reforms.

Fig. 2 An ethic-of-parentalism



Proposing a New Ethic-of-Parentalism

Our observations regarding the tensions between an ethic-of-care and justice-ethics, as these were enacted in North School, leads us to propose a new lens for looking at the balance of control between those providing the care (here, teachers) and those managing caring professionals (here, SLT). We suggest a collaboration, a coming together of these ethics that might encourage a freer inspection of their interactions. We are however realistic. In a public sector dominated by managerialism and new public management any such endeavour will suffer setbacks and failings, sometimes necessary ones where there are broader concerns of exploitation and risk (see Held, 2006; Hester, 2018). Nevertheless, we see no harm in proposing a lens through which an eagle eye can be traced on how far a caring ethic is flourishing. No fix or check box exercise, rather a method of paying attention.

Of course, there are models of education that may more closely align with Parentalism, the systems in the Nordic countries being perhaps the most obvious. Mortimore (2013) when discussing differing Nordic approaches to education highlights ‘common foundations: openness and contestability, the search for equity, the protection of the years of childhood, trust of teachers, local control—through ownership of schools—and a patient search for quality’ (vii). Even here though, where it is considered important to place trust in teachers, an infiltration of neoliberal market-based ideologies and NPM has not been avoided (Mortimore, 2013). However, there is a sense in which the strength of the cultural and social approach taken to education in Nordic countries has presented a more comprehensive resistance, with Mortimore (2013) noting that an ‘open-distributed-style of leadership is worth fighting for’ (viii). In this sense we do see evidence of how a leadership approach that promotes something closer to Parentalism may be created, and crucially persist.

Drawing upon Winnicott’s ideas we propose a new ‘Ethics-of-Parentalism’ (Fig. 2) that would enable facilitative environments for teachers (or those who act in caring professions)

while recognising external demands—in this case the importance both for SLT, and pupils themselves, to achieve maximum grades that will attract future investment in the school and advantage pupils in the job market.

For Winnicott there was ‘no such thing as a baby’ (Winnicott, 2005), an infant did not exist except in relation to its primary carer. Similarly, pupils exist only in relation to their teachers and the environment they provide for them. Parentalism then, though not about parenting, is the protection of the teacher pupil dyad. It involves authorising those who can apply their resources at the local level to act with sufficient autonomy to fulfil supportive responsibilities which affect welfare.

Teachers might need, for the benefit of pupils, to be more accepting of the demands of the wider and changing education landscape and the requirement for the majority of 11–18 year-olds to achieve the best grades possible to function in a neoliberal, marketized society. Senior leadership teams, on the other hand, would be required to acknowledge the importance of the dyadic teacher–pupil relationship and to offer greater flexibility and autonomy to teachers regarding how performance-based education is delivered, recognising teacher commitment to developing pupils regarding not only examination grades, but social skills (Winnicott, 2018). While externally measured performance must be pursued, the risk of failure (as well as success) should teachers develop their own ways of gaining results (beyond the compulsory lesson plan), must be incorporated.

As a novel approach, a Parentalist ethic-of-care may be extended beyond North School to embrace other schools and the caring professions more widely. Parentalism offers a means of finding and interrogating the balance between the views of caring practitioners (here, teachers) and those who lead them (here, SLT), in the wider context of a marketized audit society.

Conclusions

In our study, we have followed Rhodes and Pullen’s (2018) suggestion that research needs to interrogate the relationships between organizational power and ethics, exploring

how business ‘entails a corporate appropriation of the feminine’ (p. 495). Building on the work of Elley-Brown and Pringle (2021; Kroth & Keeler, 2009; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015) we have explored the implications of the contrasting positions of feminist and justice-based ethics for caring practices within a school, observing attempts by the SLT to conscript the feminist-care-ethic into the service of justice-based ends. Uniquely, we have drawn on Winnicott’s work to show how tensions between justice-based ethics and a feminist ethic-of-care compromised the facilitative environments of teachers at North School. We have identified how in practice a feminist-ethic-of-care may lack acknowledgement of the wider environment which might be important for Senior Leadership Teams and some colleagues (like Mike). An ethics of justice, by contrast, has focused on the benefit for all externally measured performance-based narratives, and lacks an understanding of the teacher–child dyad.

There are limitations. Ours is a case study in a single school and focuses only on the adult teachers and SLT within that school. It does not investigate the experiences of children or their parents, which might be something for future research agendas to consider.

We do not know therefore how pupils feel about the attainment-focused approach of the Academy, or whether pupil views might differ depending on other factors such as ability or social advantage/disadvantage. We further appreciate the difficulty in arguing for management as protector of a facilitative environment when managers must field numerous demands to ensure the survival of institutions.

Nevertheless, in proposing a Winnicottian ‘Parentalist’ ethic-of-care we have illuminated the need for a balance between justice-based (paternal), and feminist, care-ethics based (maternal) approaches. This creates future opportunities for caring professionals and senior leadership teams to work together, rather than in tension.

Acknowledgements We acknowledge the support and funding of the ESRC.

Funding This work was supported by the economic and social research centre.

Data availability The datasets analysed during the current study are not publicly available. Permission was not sought at the time of ethical approval to distribute data to third parties.

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