

## **Provisions of Trustworthiness in Critical Narrative Research: Bridging Intersubjectivity and Fidelity**

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*This paper is a reflective-reflexive examination of provisions of trustworthiness in critical narrative research. The author presents her understanding of provisions of trustworthiness as a science and as an art, and blurs these boundaries as she acknowledges their tension in practice. She weaves between theory and her experience in two studies—first the study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program and secondly the study of Amish culture and education—where the author felt a deep sense of responsibility that she maintain trustworthiness. This paper examines the provisions of trustworthiness as evidence of research accountability and shared responsibility and brings to the forefront an intersubjective understanding of fidelity that emerged through understanding participants’ struggles, seeing researcher as a co-struggler for cultural-political identity, and recognizing the role of politics in the work of action research for democratic education. In short, the author presents an intersubjective understanding of fidelity issues within multiple identities. Key words: Provisions of Trustworthiness, Fidelity, Intersubjectivity, Narrative Methods, and Critical Ethnography*

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Teresa Perez: I’m in the two-way immersion model. Two-way immersion means that the kids, Spanish speakers and English speakers, are mixed together in a classroom. My partner and I had 44 kids mixed. In my homeroom I used to have Spanish speakers and English speakers, and my partner had Spanish speakers and English speakers. I think that’s the perfect model. I don’t know why, but it was changed. I think an English-speaking parent complained about the kids being mixed, English speakers and Spanish speakers. They want all the Spanish speakers in one class and all the English speakers in another class. I think that after the program was already created, someone complained and 44 kids were changed. Is that fair? Is that racism? Is that power? It means benefit for one and not for the others. English-speaking parents want their children to learn both languages, but they don’t want them mixed physically. That’s why my homeroom is now made up of only Spanish speakers, and my partner has English speakers with some Spanish speakers because there were too many to put all of them in my homeroom. That change in the program was made two or three weeks after school started. I don’t want to say that all English-speaking parents feel the same, but at least one does. (Moss, 2001, p. 172)

Teresa Perez is the pseudonym for one of the participants in a study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program I conducted for my dissertation work in 2001. Teresa, a teacher, who came from Spain to teach in a dual-language program in East Texas, resigned at the end of the school year after participating in my study. When she signed up to participate in a cultural exchange program, she believed that she would share her teaching expertise and learn from teachers in the United States. In practice, she soon realized that the program was being used as a means to recruit bilingual teachers from Spain to fill a teaching shortage in Texas.

The following fall, I accepted a university teaching position in the Midwest, where I prepare secondary classroom teachers. In May of 2002, I met Henry, an Amish middle school teacher. He, one of my university colleagues, and I collaborated in a critical analysis of research about the Amish and in a narrative analysis of Amish life and experiences (Zehr, Moss, & Nichols, 2002a). The following is Henry's voice in our unpublished manuscript (Zehr, Moss, & Nichols, 2002b).

The economy has changed and that has had an impact on the Amish society as a whole. Amish views and their outlook on things have dramatically changed compared to agriculture or an agriculture-based community that existed many years ago. There is a trend toward modernization, and our homes are a good example. Our homes are being built more like the homes Amish construction workers are building everyday where they work in the city communities. The structure of Amish homes is becoming more modern. For example, they are beginning to put a new style of roof on homes. Amish houses used to be an A-frame, straight square box style. Now there are all kinds of architectural changes. I'm not saying that's bad, but some would look at it as a negative trend. But non-approving Amish would see it as bringing the outside world back home.

The impact of a changing economy is also felt in the Amish community in terms of agricultural changes. If there is someone still trying and struggling to make it off the land, he is just as busy or overworked as the construction worker that leaves for 12 or 14 hours a day and doesn't see his family. In any occupation people are in, it's what people make of it. But it has had an impact on our family. We can see it in our Amish children somewhat. They are not around dad and mom as much like they were in past years. I think that has changed and has had a negative impact on family life.

I opened a store in May of 2000, and it has affected my wife. Some of the changes would be she doesn't find as much time to get her sewing, cooking, and baking done as she had in the past when we had the dairy. Since we started the store, we have actually bought some clothes that Rose didn't make herself. That's the first time we have done that since we were married. But the store economically made that possible. It wasn't possible before. But my concept of having the store is that when we are out there, we are still all together as a family (p. 8).

Henry teaches middle school Amish students in the community where he was raised, fifteen minutes from the university where I prepare teachers. The Zehrs are longtime residents of the Midwest community where I'm a newcomer, transplanted from East Texas, where I lived for 48 years and taught middle school students language arts skills and social studies for thirteen years.

What brought me into relationship with both Teresa and Henry were collaborative critical ethnographic narrative type research projects. What sustained the research relationship in each case was our mutual commitment to telling critical stories of experience as works of social justice. In the case of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, Teresa told her critical story to raise the awareness of educators (teachers and administrators) that the program was being unjustly implemented, advantaging English-speaking children and disadvantaging Spanish-speaking children. In the case of examining academic literature written about the Amish, Henry "was interested in seeing what's out there, seeing what researchers have written about us" (Zehr, Moss, & Nichols, 2002a, p. 39). He was also interested in broadening non-Amish people's understanding and perspective on the Amish culture.

When the American Educational Research Association posted the 2003 theme, *Accountability for Education Quality: Shared Responsibility*, I decided to focus this paper on the ways I had included the participants and outside readers in a collaborative process that would legitimate my critical narrative analysis of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program. Provisions of trustworthiness in critical narrative research, as used in a study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, became a central concern.

I expanded my inquiry into trustworthiness in critical narrative research as I continued to use narrative methodologies in a cultural study with an Amish middle school teacher. In each study—first the study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program and second the study of Amish culture and education—I felt a deep sense of responsibility that I maintain trustworthiness. With the Texas-Spain project, trustworthiness was in relationship to the participants; in the second study, trustworthiness was in relationship to the Amish co-researcher-participant and the broader Amish community. This paper specifically examines the provisions of trustworthiness as evidence of research accountability and shared responsibility.

With the above in mind, this paper is also further developed into three more sections. I present my reflective-reflexive understanding of provisions of trustworthiness as a science and as an art. I blur these boundaries as I acknowledge their tension. In the next section, I present my cultural political identity as a necessary condition and critical component of narrative inquiry, within critical ethnography as action research and scholarly practice are brought to the forefront as social action within the landscape of a democratic form of education. Finally, I connect all sections by presenting an intersubjective understanding of fidelity that emerged through understanding my participants' struggles, seeing myself as a co-struggler for cultural-political identity, and recognizing the role of politics in the work of action research for democratic education. In short, I grew to intersubjectively understand fidelity issues within multiple identities. It is to this complex blurring of trustworthiness understanding that I now turn.

### **Provisions of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness as part of critical narrative analysis of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program is highlighted by a particular tension. Trustworthiness can be understood as both a science and creative endeavor. I critically reflected on my use of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative as presented by Polkinghorne (1995) and critical storytelling as presented by Barone (1992). Barone had used narrative methodology from a creative perspective, and Polkinghorne had presented narrative methodology from a social science perspective. I found myself working within the tension of these two “trustworthy” perspectives as I constructed my critical narrative story as narrative analysis based on my analysis of teachers’ narratives.

As I worked within this tension in my application of narrative methodology, I outlined the boundaries between these two tensions. On the one hand, I systematically conducted an analysis of narratives by coding for themes within the categories of my research questions—cultural exchange and issues of language, culture, and participation. This coincided with trustworthiness from a social sciences perspective. On the other hand, I constructed a critical story as narrative analysis that would potentially engage readers in critical reflection of their personal, critical, and bilingual multicultural dispositions. Imbedded within this process, trustworthiness could be viewed as a creative art. Here, research for social action by telling critical stories around political power issues could emerge.

#### **Trustworthiness as a Science**

Trustworthiness as a science in qualitative research has been delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) within four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Guba and Lincoln (1989) have established “authenticity” in a constructivist paradigm as a measure of trustworthiness in rigorous research practices. It was not a process that I could set myself apart from as an objective researcher. It was a heart-felt process that involved trust and integrity.

I had meticulously transcribed my data because it was a matter of integrity to my mentor professor and a matter of professional, scholarly integrity. Concurrently, I felt immense tension as I considered my participants and how they were going to feel when they read the transcription. Trying to follow a strict, rigorous procedure, I presented the participants with the technical transcriptions and with the overwhelming task of editing. It felt wrong, but I was trying to adhere to professional rigor as I understood it from an academic, scientific viewpoint.

After the first four participants in the Texas-Spain project reviewed their transcripts, I visited with them to monitor their progress. They were all overwhelmed and embarrassed because they thought the transcriptions reflected a perceived illiteracy. What did integrity and trustworthiness mean in that situation? For me, it meant social action. I did not have to follow established procedures that had emerged over time from varying qualitative researchers’ experiences. Rigor is not a matter of strictly following procedures that have emerged in other researchers’ work but more a matter of building solid structures within the context in which one is working. This solid structure is characterized by interpersonal communication and intersubjectivity. I built this solid structure in the

Texas-Spain project by listening to the Spanish participants' needs and acting responsibly in my interpretation as I proceeded to skip this step (letting the participants edit the verbatim transcripts) in the process. I proceeded to analyze and interpret the transcribed texts for the critical stories told. Only after I had drafted the critical stories, primarily in the teachers' own words, did I present the teachers with a draft. I gave them the technical transcription and the critical narrative story for review and revision. Because I could not understand or speak Spanish, the bilingual teachers took responsibility for correcting my spelling of Spanish words.

I coded the 24 teachers' narrative stories of experience for post-formal analysis<sup>1</sup> information and themes that had developed with regard to the Texas-Spain Program as it was used in the district under study. Coding was the science part of trustworthiness. Critical to this scientific examination was the inclusion of diverse pieces of information and themes. I did not reduce the stories to common threads but included the unique experiences as well. It was a matter of faithfulness to put the teachers' voices in the forefront as they told their individual critical stories of experiencing discrimination rather than simply say one of the themes that emerged was a pattern of discrimination.

The above was a creative application of narrative inquiry. I worked to legitimize the critical experiences of cultural and linguistic discrimination experienced by teachers from Spain and their students. It was also a political application of narrative inquiry as the study had been designed within a critical frame of assimilation vs. multiculturalism (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). It was intended as an act of social justice. It created space for those teachers directly affected by the program policies to participate (Anderson, 1989) in the critical examination of the program for issues of identity. The term critical was used to describe the culture, language, and participation as issues of power in need of critique with the intent of emendation or alteration in the direction of social justice and participatory democracy. While the Constitution of the United States has been amended many times in an effort to promote social justice and equitable participation in the construction of a free society, practices in qualitative research it seems, can lag in carrying out similar revisions. However, "critical narrative" suggests a moral or ethical consideration when referring to social and cultural issues that identify human status and social structure, and trustworthiness, as an art in critical narrative research is social action towards a participatory democracy, where multiple voices or multivoicedness is allowed to flourish.

### **Trustworthiness as Creative Art**

Trustworthiness, as creative art, is framed within critical research practices intended to promote social action towards the above participatory democratic description. Drawing on Barone's (1992) use of critical storytelling and Quantz and O'Connor's (1988) use of Bakhtin's concept of "carnival," I included the voices of all 24 participating teachers in the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program in the district I studied. I also included different stories as well as common stories of experience. This led to a more

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<sup>1</sup> Post-formal analysis information in this study meant information about the origins, context of implementations, processes, and patterns (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993, 1999). Post-formal inquiry was a critical research tool as it proposed to go into the history, context and critical patterns with regard to power issues related to language, culture, and participation.

inclusive understanding of trustworthiness beyond establishing accuracy through member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), establishing “authenticity” through rigorous research practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), or scientific analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). I, and others, name this aspect of trustworthiness as fidelity.

Fidelity, another measure of trustworthiness in narrative research, as explored by Blumenfeld-Jones (1995), evaluates the quality of the resultant narratives and provided me with a tool for social action for altering inequitable social relations. Blumenfeld-Jones noted how narrative inquiry involves a “science/art conjunction” (p. 26). The science part of qualitative inquiry seeks some form of objective truth while the fidelity qualitative part seeks the aesthetic value and relies more heavily on subjective interpretation. He proposed these dimensions be joined through accurately chronicling events while arranging them into a meaningful and believable story. He defined fidelity as the act of faithfulness and integrity on the part of the researcher to preserve “the worth and dignity of the teller” (p. 27).

Under the rubric of fidelity, “crystallization” as used by Richardson (1994, 1997) leads to means of constructing social action stories. I define social action stories as critical stories about power issues that have the potential of evoking consciousness in the reader that leads to social action. Richardson (1994) drew on the image of crystals as “prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions” (p. 522). Our perception of reality is influenced by our angle. Crystallization, defined by Richardson (1997), is based on “light theory, where light can be both waves and particles” (p. 92). The resultant knowing that is discovered is multi-dimensional, partial, and critical. I presented the stories in part as truth and in part as contextual within the peculiar use of dual-language in the bilingual education program in the local school district where the study took place. Again, I saw waves of common threads and experiences among the teachers, and I included what sometimes appeared as particles or isolated fragments of the whole story. One such particle was critical to telling the truth about the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, as it compromised the meaning of dual-language programs that work towards pluralism by privileging White, English-speaking students. This was among Teresa’s critical stories of experience and is included as the opening story of this paper.

I analyzed my use of narrative methodology for legitimacy in terms of production of educational knowledge. Working within this tension in my application of narrative methodology, the boundaries between these two qualitative perspectives on trustworthiness was fuzzied. On the one hand, as one form of trustworthiness, I employed a systematic analysis of narratives by coding for themes within the categories established by the research questions—cultural exchange, language, culture, and participation. On the other hand, I co-created stories as narrative analysis that would potentially engage readers in reflection of their personal multicultural dispositions, place that in the broader critical multicultural and bilingual education discourse, and consider the implications for their local educational context in the struggle for equitable social relations.

In the present paper, as I reflected on the AERA theme, accountability for educational quality: shared responsibility, I reflexively connected the theme to the provisions of trustworthiness in the Texas-Spain project. I considered the roles the participating teachers and outside readers had played in sharing the responsibility of constructing and legitimizing my final critical story, which was a narrative analysis of the

Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program in the context of the district where I studied its implementation. The feedback from the eight readers served as a measure of trustworthiness and shared educational accountability. Working within the tension created by my sense of ethical responsibility to participants and responsibility to scholarship, fidelity became a central issue, resulting in a new depth of understanding of the role of fidelity as an essence of trustworthiness in legitimizing critical research. Not unlinked to the tension of trustworthiness is my own identity politics. I move toward this politics as a way to bridge intersubjectivity-fidelity-trustworthiness with my own sense of self as a critical researcher.

### **Critical Researcher as Political Author**

As a middle school teacher for 13 years, I was a champion for at-risk students and challenged fellow teachers to view themselves as professionals, who could make a difference during the time they worked with students in the classroom. I refused to believe that any student could not learn. I believed that I could make a decisive difference in the education of the students assigned to my classroom just as one special teacher had modeled to me when I was in ninth grade.

Having repeated second grade, continuing to lack reading comprehension skills, and believing I had been socially promoted to high school, I had little confidence in my academic abilities. My self-perception began to change when Grace Shelton accepted an English teaching position in my school at midterm during my freshman year. She was the first teacher, who talked to me in a way that made me feel like a person. She convinced me that I could read by giving me full credit for reading all the words I knew on the assigned pages each day even if I couldn't answer the pop quiz questions. I learned to read better in the process, and eventually returned to that school as a middle school social studies and reading teacher.

In 1988, I transitioned from teaching in the parochial school of my youth to teaching in a public middle school, where 48% of the students were African American and a large percentage of all the students were on free and reduced lunches. I had two classes of students, who were in transition from years in self-contained resource classes to mainstream classes in response to state mandates that schools undo their tracking system. I was told right away that I would not be able to teach these mostly minority students the same way I taught students in a parochial school setting. The message I received was that these students could not learn. I experienced that they could learn often times by using the same strategies I had used with privileged children in the parochial setting. I decided to build relationship with my students and look for their potential and abilities just as Grace Shelton had done for me. Learning could not take place without understanding my students' cultural differences. While building interpersonal relationships with my students and challenging them to think in the parochial setting was the norm, expecting the students in my new setting to think and express their thoughts appeared as political action.

I was acting and exploring how to teach in ways that my students could learn. Concurrently, I was receiving mandates from the government that required rigid teaching for low-level mastery, monitored by standardized testing, which in essence ensured that our accomplishments were short-lived and that tracking reigned supreme. I became more

rigorous in my inquiry into the standards, adopted curriculum, best practices, and my students' individual needs. The task of teaching seemed to be growing into a political nature. As one form of resistance to rigid state requirements, I maintained the use of two kinds of portfolios with my students. The writing portfolio was developmental as the students used it to assess their own writing progress. The other set of portfolios documented where my students were in relation to the standards at the beginning of the year and as the year progressed growth measurements on each academic target. While portfolio assessment was considered a professional teaching practice, it became a political safe-guard for me as I increasingly felt terrorized by the term "accountability." I brought these practices to my doctoral studies and finally to teacher education.

I immediately learned in my doctoral studies that the term teacher-researcher described action research conducted by K-12 practitioners working independently or in collaboration with university researcher-scholars to conduct studies in schools or classroom settings. While I had not experienced an opportunity to collaborate with a university scholar in research while I was a middle school classroom teacher, I read research, attended professional teacher conferences, and built my practice on what I understood to be research-based practices. I also presented my teaching knowledge at annual teacher conferences. I collected data in my classroom on a regular basis so as to realize the impact of my teaching strategies on learning for my students as well as to diagnose my students learning needs. These were acts of teaching integrity. I stayed abreast of state and national standards, higher education and local curriculum requirements, and most importantly, my students' academic abilities, cultural frames, emotional and psychological needs, and styles of learning.

Following 13 years of full-time classroom practice in middle level education, I transitioned to doctoral studies, where I learned more formal research methodologies. I was attracted to narrative methodology and critical ethnography because they were conducive to critical participatory studies with classroom teachers. I was committed to a critical pedagogy of research that would both draw classroom teachers into the research process and create space for their voices to be heard in the academy. It was in my dissertation research work that I grew to appreciate the concept of provisions of trustworthiness as more than simply a technical component of the research methodology. Provisions of trustworthiness appeared to me in practice as a moral act of faithfulness to participants and truth, similar to the integrity I had maintained in my teaching practice; but it also became a matter of political identity and social action towards a participatory democracy.

This raises a critical question: Does highlighting the voices often left out compromise the resultant picture of "what is going on" by downsizing the voices of the dominant ones? Quite the contrary: it rather broadens the picture of "what is going on" in a setting where the voices of the dominant ones are already situated, often unquestioned, in decision making. Adding the marginalized voice to the picture of "what is going on" democratizes the dominant voices rather than downsize them.

In my study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, all 24 participating teachers (12 from Spain and 12 Texas teachers) told their stories of experience. Teachers were paired, English teacher and Spanish teacher, and in the ideal classroom, each had a homeroom made up of 11 English-speaking students and 11 Spanish-speaking students. None had the ideal because only a few English-speaking students were in the dual-

language program. For some teachers, all their students were Spanish speakers. The students switched between the two teachers' rooms and were taught in English half the time and in Spanish half the time. When I interviewed Teresa's partner, Mary Lambert, she did not tell the critical story that Teresa told. She stated:

The Spain teachers have regular positions like everyone else, but they're teaching in all Spanish instead of English in the two-way immersion model. Two-way immersion is a bilingual program that brings together ESL strategies and bilingual strategies so children are learning English as a second language and Spanish as a second language. My homeroom class has fifty-percent English speakers and fifty-percent Spanish speakers, eleven English speakers and eleven Spanish speakers. They spend half a week in my room learning in English only. I speak in English, and my partner, who's one of the Spain teachers, teaches only in Spanish. Our English speakers are learning Spanish as well as our Spanish speakers bettering their first language. In my room English speakers are strengthening their first language, and the Spanish speakers are learning English as a second language. (Moss, 2001, p. 172-173)

I observed in all 24 teachers' classrooms and had many informal conversations with each teacher. I observed that Teresa's story and Mary's story were both accurate. Teresa had 22 Spanish-speaking students, and Mary had 11 English and 11 Spanish speakers. I questioned Mary about the critical incident that Teresa had told. Mary acknowledged the truth and inequity of the incident and expressed a feeling of tension in working in a program that privileges one parent's voice. She expressed care for Teresa, knowing she had felt very hurt at the time of the incident. Teresa had felt supported by Mary at the time of the incident. In reviewing the text of her story, I realized she had stated:

One of my worst days was when I learned they were going to move the English kids out of my homeroom into my partner teacher's homeroom. When they changed the kids, I went to her class and had the confidence to say to her, "I don't like this. I don't think this is good for the kids. Why did they do this?" I was complaining and asking, "Why didn't they ask us?"

She was a support. She said, "Don't worry. I don't think it's good either, but it's the way it is. We are teachers, and we are going to go on with teaching. There is not going to be any difference." She explained that there is not going to be any difference, that the English kids are just going to put their backpacks in one classroom. She said that. I liked that. It's like it wasn't going to be any difference from her point of view, and I thought that was what I needed to hear from her. (Moss, 2001, p. 184-185)

Multiple truths are contained in these stories. Perhaps Theresa and Mary were both marginalized as teachers in an educational system that did not let either one of them have a voice in the decision that affected both of their classrooms. This shows the complexity of critical narrative research and parallels the complexity of building a participatory democracy in a diverse society. I believe I was faithful to all 24 teachers'

voices, those from the dominant culture and those from the minority culture; but I realize that I was in a position of authority, privilege, and power as researcher—a position I had achieved by securing the consent of the superintendent to allow me to conduct the study. The bilingual education director, principals, and teachers all supported me during the study; but I only worked directly with the teachers.

Every teacher had the final say about their chapter story or their contribution to a chapter story as it appeared in my 325-page dissertation. The dissertation contained three solo chapter stories, three paired chapter stories, one chapter by five Texas teachers, one chapter by six Spanish teachers, and one chapter by four fifth-grade teachers (two Spanish and two English). In the chapters with multiple authors, each contributor read the entire chapter and approved their contribution within the product. Thus, Mary participated in further supporting Theresa's desire to tell her critical story. Perhaps Mary, as part of the dominant culture did not feel free to tell the critical story. Her participation in the chapter allowed the story of marginalized teachers to be heard through Theresa's voice.

Did I use my authority to privileged Teresa's voice and Henry's voice through narrative methodology? Does social justice work require a privileging of those voices that were previously marginalized? Those are hard questions. It seems to me that as long as educational organizations perceive participation in decision making to be the responsibility of those in positions of authority rather than a responsibility of all members, social justice work may require privileging those, who are marginalized. Mary, while privileged as part of the English-speaking population at her school, was marginalized as a classroom teacher in that she had no voice in the decision that changed her homeroom class as well as Teresa's.

### **Some of the Literature and Fidelity as Social Acton Connected**

My above story, as well as the narratives of the participants in the studies, connects more broadly with critical ethnographic type literature. Carspecken and Apple (1992) have distinguished the critical in ethnographic research by the presence of a political frame. In the study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, the political frame was assimilation, pluralism, and critical multiculturalism to examine for issues of power with regard to language, culture, and participation. The presence of this political frame highlighted the importance of trustworthiness in the critical ethnographic study. Similarly, trustworthiness was crucial to the use of critical narrative methodology to construct critical teacher stories of experiences.

The critical analysis of qualitative research methods for legitimacy in this study became a complex issue because I had brought together multiple methods—critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Carspecken & Apple, 1992), post-formal inquiry (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993, 1997, 1999), narrative methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, 1994, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1995), and critical storytelling (Barone, 1992). Both monoculturalism that leads to assimilation and multiculturalism that leads to pluralism based on commonality have been brought under the critical multicultural lens of people like Banks (1991), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), Sleeter and McLaren (1995), and Nieto (1998). Critical multiculturalism “is dedicated to the notion of egalitarianism and the elimination of human suffering” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 24). In other

words, critical multiculturalism “is concerned with the contextualization of what gives rise to race, class and gender inequalities” (p. 25).

In the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers project, I designed the project to create the possibility for exposing the ways that school policies and the ways that programs are implemented can give rise to inequalities with regard to language, culture, and participation. I had already spent a year studying the implementation of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program in another district, only to have the Bilingual Education Program Director restrict me from presenting the findings in a public way. Because I had written into the consent form that participants could withdraw at any point they chose, I had to honor the director’s decision to withdraw the district from participating. My established relationship with the participants put me in the position to hear the disapproval of several of the teachers from Spain. I felt trapped and angered by the power of the administration to silence the voices of the teachers. I maintained trustworthiness to the director as representative of the district, but I still feel tension as I consider how I fell short of creating the space I had offered to the participating teachers. Consolation is the gratitude that several of the teachers from Spain expressed to me for listening to their critical stories of inequity as they were oppressed by the rigid policies that forced them to teach contrary to their knowledge and understanding of best practices for teaching Spanish-speaking children. Consolation is knowledge that several of the teachers resigned and returned to Spain at the end of their first year.

Critical in the design of a similar study in a different district the following year was negotiating with the superintendent for conducting the study. While I initially approached the Bilingual Education Director with the proposed study, I secured approval on multiple levels, including the personnel director, bilingual education director, school principals, and superintendent. This broad spread support of studying the implementation of the program to determine emergent social and cultural power dynamics was critical to the completion of the project.

With all the above in mind, one can connect trustworthiness-fidelity-and critical research to emerging and intersecting theoretical research trends—constructivist paradigms, post-formal inquiry, critical narrative ethnography, critical pedagogical research, and social justice research. It seems to me that these trends, exemplified by my study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, allowed for a complex, theoretical, and practical space for teachers’ voices to be heard in the academy. Trustworthiness must move beyond the context in which the study is conducted and include the situating of the resultant knowledge or voices of critique in the academy for a participatory democracy to become more intersubjective between researcher, researched, and literature.

Trustworthiness took on a new dimension, as I was tempted to reframe or retell the stories for publication. Fidelity became real. It meant staying true to my commitment to put the teachers’ voices in the forefront of knowledge. It had taken courage for the classroom teachers, especially the marginalized teachers from Spain, to tell their critical stories of experience that included racism, inequitable use of educational funds, the privileging of English over Spanish in schools, and the misuse of dual-language research to advantage English-speaking children over their Spanish-speaking counterparts.

Similarly, in the new study with an Amish middle school teacher, I wrestled with contextualizing fidelity within the study of Amish education and culture. I was conscious that the Amish middle school teacher might be influenced by reading educational journal

articles about the Amish and by the extended dialogue sessions with two teacher educators. We (university colleague-researcher participants) had to consider fidelity in terms of the stories of experience told by the Amish middle school teacher, fidelity to the broader Amish community in which the teacher was a member, and fidelity to scholarly research methods and their impact on the researchers and researched. We decided from the start to put Henry's name as first author because the purpose of the project was to bring an authentic Amish voice into the academy as a voice of critique of the many pieces of Eurocentric research that had been conducted on the Amish. More than simply positioning Henry's name as first author, the critical narrative analysis in our unpublished manuscript is Henry's authentic voice of experience in contrast to our academic review of the literature in the paper.

The Amish teacher-researcher-participant reflected on research articles written about the Amish culture and educational practices and reflexively examined his own experience growing up Amish and teaching in Amish schools (Zehr, Moss, & Nichols, 2002a). We, two university teacher educators (myself and a colleague), met for seven 90-minute dialogue sessions to examine the content, methodologies, and conclusions of the articles for accuracy from the Amish teacher's experiential point of view. Central to the dialogues was Henry's reflective-reflexive critique. Similar to the use of member checks and critical readers in the study of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program, Henry contributed multiple reviews of the original transcriptions and resultant article narrative drawn from the transcribed dialogues. Because the university professor-researchers were linguistically deficient in the local Amish dialect, Henry's first reading of the transcribed data was important in terms of correcting inaccurate transcriptions. It also served as a stimulus for Henry to expand his story of experience by adding and clarifying what he had already told.

A third component of this member check process had a critical nature in that Henry teaches North American standard English in his school, and while he speaks an Amish dialect, he recognized the dialect in print as different from his knowledge of standard English that he instructs from books in school. Provisions of trustworthiness took on another dimension. Henry wanted to correct what he recognized as incorrect grammar and writing conventions as used in the academy. He had reviewed 17 published journal articles during the course of our project and was concerned that if the paper was published, readers would focus on his grammar and make inappropriate judgments about him and the broader Amish community and miss the critique he had offered. Maintaining faithfulness to Henry's voice and the Amish community became complex. What constituted Henry's voice? Was it what he had to say, or how he said it? My university colleague and I struggled with questions such as: Are we influencing Henry? How much do we explain writing conventions to him? Is teaching Henry academic writing conventions during the research process altering Henry's story? Some of the revision dialogue sessions lasted as long as five hours in an effort to ensure that what Henry wanted to communicate was captured in conventional English. The process still begs the question: Was this a process of assimilation? If we had influenced Henry to leave his words in his dialect, we would have been dominating. While giving Henry the information he wanted about writing conventions, we were influencing him. I believe we were faithful to Henry and his community to the best of our ability. Similar to the way I solicited eight readers in the Texas-Spain study, Henry gave copies of the manuscript

containing his perspective to six Amish friends and one English friend in the community to serve as critical readers to ensure that Henry's voice did not misrepresent the broader Amish community. Five of the Amish readers were male and one was female. Henry's wife Rose also read the manuscript and validated its accuracy from her point-of-view. The English reader, who is male, grew up near the Amish community but had only two years close experience with the Amish. All of the readers confirmed the credibility of the narrative text from their experiential point of view.

It is my role as a reflective researcher joined with the teachers and the critical readers in intersubjective accountability to sustain the work of social justice for participatory democracy. This commitment begs the question: How was fidelity intersubjective, and how is intersubjectivity-fidelity-trustworthiness sustained? In part, this means not giving into the temptations to objectify the participants as subjects of academic research. It means maintaining the forefront position of the participating teachers' voices as knowledge of the Texas-Spain Visiting Teachers Program is made public. It means sustaining the "carnival" of all of our voices as intersubjective teacher-researchers.

### **Final Reflection**

As I reflect on narrative inquiry theory and my personal knowledge of experience, both as a middle school classroom teacher for 13 years and as a scholar-practitioner, researcher, and teacher educator for two years, I realize the best I can do is present one more educational commentary. It can be framed as critical narrative analysis, discursive hermeneutics, critical dialogue, post-formal inquiry, or critical pedagogical research practice. What remains profoundly immanent, however, is the intersubjective fidelity issue of trustworthiness. Teresa, Henry, and I were linked by an identity politics struggle for social action via a participatory democracy bent on viewing knowledge as a unified form of power.

I define provisions of trustworthiness of this sort as acts of integrity that researchers take to ensure they seek truth by contextualizing their studies and disclosing all relevant procedures used in the study. I further define provisions of trustworthiness in critical narrative research by the researcher's commitment to include all points of view as contrasted to the common points of view that emerge, protecting participant's well-being while putting their voices in the forefront as a model of authentic participation in educational research. Finally, trustworthiness in critical narrative research goes beyond the study itself and includes the publication of the critical stories and taking responsibility for the resultant social action that may result by design or consequence from the study.

Using analysis of narratives to examine the four sections of this paper and reflexively examining my experiences in critical narrative ethnography, I define social action as fidelity in terms of disclosing critical design and researcher political history. In the collaborative studies with Teresa and Henry, telling critical stories around power issues was an act of Freirean (1998) cognition as we built a dialogical relationship for inquiry. The critical teachers' stories in the Texas-Spain program made it possible for the administration to change policies to achieve equity for the Spanish-speaking children. Post-formal inquiry, which contextualizes knowledge rather than generalizes it as power over others in different contexts, is a social action tool. The process itself is a

participatory practice, thus promoting participatory democracy in practice in the K-12 setting. Similarly, collaborative narrative inquiry practices are a form of social justice because they provide for authentic participation and co-construction of knowledge. Finally, adapting rigorous research protocol to meet the needs of participating teacher-researchers is an act of fidelity that defines social action as action taken within society to achieve equity among members.

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