The Quality of Narrative Research: On a Theoretical Framework for Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology that has been gaining popularity with social science researchers internationally. However, its proliferation doesn't mean narrative inquirers (especially neophytes) are confident enough using still an "unconventional" and "alternative" methodology. The doubts and sometimes shocks about narrative inquiry and the perception they have that narrative inquiry suits less scientific research projects indicate the need for reinforcing and illustrating the fundamentals of narrative inquiry. Only when the *why* of narrative inquiry is explored and comprehended can a narrative researcher obtain a good understanding of *what* narrative inquiry is and *how* it should be done. This paper is a narrative researcher's own search for theoretical rationales for the use of narrative inquiry. Viewed as a research method, narrative inquiry is to inquire into *narrative ways of knowing*. Firstly, the researcher discussed the nature of narrative and how it is used as a research approach. Secondly, she developed a theoretical framework regarding narrative knowing, which contains

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Constructivist Theory, Humanist Theory, Feminist Theory, and Hermeneutist Theory, as well as the critical elements concerned, namely Truths, Voices, Dialogues, and Interpretations. Thirdly, she defended the quality of narrative research, exploring the criteria claimed to be used. Finally, she discussed some potential values narrative inquiry specifically has for teaching and teacher education.

敘說研究的本質：從理論架構談起

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摘要

　　不論國內外，敘說研究法在研究方法論上已逐漸獲得重視，尤其是受到越來越多社會科學研究學者的青睞，譬如護理學、藥學、法律學、組織學、社會工作學、諮商學、心理治療、教學等。儘管如此，敘說研究法仍屬於非傳統的另類研究法，特別對經驗不足的研究新手而言，單純的獲得「什麼」是敘說研究法和「什麼」是敘說研究法的步驟是膚淺的，唯有對其原理有個「整體」的概念，了解「為什麼」要用敘說研究法，研究者才能更有自信和能力做出優質的敘說性研究。這篇研究報告即致力於建構出一個全面性的敘說研究理論架構，作者先探討敘說的本質，接著提出敘說研究理論架構，以建構主義、人文主義、女性主義和詮釋主義來支撐敘說研究法的宗旨:「人類經驗中敘說性的知」，並揭露出以上各主義間之共通元素來闡明實踐敘說研究法時必需掌握的要素：真相、聲音、對話與詮釋，進而說明評鑑敘說研究時理應採用的規準，最後探討敘說研究可以如何應用在教學與師資培訓上。

關鍵字：敘說研究法、理論架構、敘說與師資培訓

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Introduction

Narrative inquiry, or narrative research, is a research methodology that is growing in acceptance and practice in disciplines such as nursing, medicine, and law, and especially organizational studies, therapy in health fields, social work, counselling, psychotherapy, and teaching (Clandinin, 2007, p. xi-xii). Like other methodologies used by social science researchers, narrative inquiry "inquires" into or asks questions about and looks for deeper understanding of particular aspects of life experience. In Taiwan, narrative inquiry too has been gaining its popularity with researchers since last decade. By using "narrative inquiry" as the key word to search in the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan, 247 entries were retrieved that included "narrative inquiry" in the title, key word list, or abstract; 345 entries were retrieved while using another broader term "narrative research".

However, the proliferation of narrative research doesn't mean narrative inquirers (especially neophytes) are confident enough using still an "unconventional," "alternative," and even in Thomas's (2011) term "contested" methodology. Thomas (2011) contends much of the controversy that remains is the result of naivety about the definition, purpose and process of, as well as the powerful possibilities offered by, narrative inquiry as a methodological approach (http://www.aqr.org.au/conference-2011/135-narrative-inquiry-politics-polemics-and-possibilities.html). The dialogue Johncox, Wiebe, and Hoogland (2009) had about the research potential of storied poems reveals the doubts and sometimes shocks young narrative researchers have. Likewise, the stance that narrative inquiry is not a conventional research method and thus suitable for less scientific research projects doesn't mean a solid foundation can be exempted. On the contrary, as narrative inquiry intends to invite the reader to

let "the imagination lead in decoding or understanding" (Johncox, Wiebe, & Hoogland, 2009), the fundamentals of narrative inquiry should be reinforced and illustrated so that not only the narrative researcher can become confident trying out "powerful possibilities," but the reader is also given a chance to understand why s/he is expected to use "imagination" while reading a narrative research report.

It is my supposition that knowing the *what* and *how* of narrative inquiry is definitely insufficient for narrative research to be effective enough to "push readers out of complacency" (Chase, 2005, p. 671) regarding the experience in question and even "compel readers to take action" (Richardson, 2000, p. 945). Only when the *why* of narrative inquiry is explored and understood can the quality and effectiveness of narrative study be revealed. Efforts to map a methodology of narrative inquiry have been made, such as Wells (2011), Clandinin (2007), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), but what is still missing is a "holistic picture" or a "plot," a narrative term I would intentionally use, that "tells" the why of narrative inquiry. This paper, like Chase's (2005) search for multiple lenses, is an attempt to develop theoretical rationales for narrative inquiry through my own *lenses* so as to present a "holistic" picture that is essential to the practice of narrative inquiry.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part aims to identify narrative inquiry via a discussion on the nature of narrative. The second part intends to present a theoretical framework for narrative inquiry by weaving together those theories concerned and to illustrate the critical elements attended while conducting a narrative study. The third part focuses on the criteria used to defend the quality of narrative research based on the theoretical framework. The last part attends to the potential values narrative inquiry specifically has for teaching and teacher education.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative

To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the nature of humanity itself (White, 1981). The following are some basic features of narrative extending from humanity.

As primary act of mind. Narrative is a vital human activity and it crosses all boundaries. As Roland Barthes remarked, narrative "is simply there like life itself… international, transhistorical, transcultural" (White, 1981, p. 1). Barbara Hardy regards narrative in its most fundamental form

> as a primary act of mind transferred to art from life…. For we dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (cited in Rosen, 1987, p. 13)

As life story. Based on Barbara Hardy's assertion, humans live by narrative and "make up stories" to live. In other words, narrative is life story. In fact, many researchers use the terms story and narrative interchangeably. From Western humanistic view, the characteristic that clearly sets humanity apart from other beings (mineral, plant, and animal) is self-awareness. This self-awareness is seen as the ability to think and to know: "I think, therefore, [I know] I am." "Know" and "narrate" have a common origin in the Indo-European "nga" (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/narration). To know and to narrate, therefore, are intimately related human actions. Through narrative we find ourselves in the process of reconstructing our experiences,

as Barbara Hardy would say, composing a "life story." Humans are storytelling organisms whose individual and social lives can be seen as a series of stories, as Connelly and Clandinin has ascertained since two decades ago (1989, 1990, 2000). As such, narrative is viewed as a language of possibility which dissolves the boundary between fact and fiction (Rosen, 1987). Gordon Wells bluntly points out, "The power of stories is to create possible or imaginary worlds through words" (cited in Schaafsma, 1993, p. 35).

As life history. Humans as storytelling organisms live not only individual storied lives ("make up stories about ourselves, the personal past and future") but also social storied lives ("make up stories about others, the social past and future," Barbara Hardy would say). Narrative is a story of life history. A Chinese philosopher, Hsun-Kwang[1], proposed that human beings are different from animals because they have the ability to distinguish right from wrong. He also said, "Mineral has vesicle and no life; plant has life and no consciousness; animal has consciousness and no morality and justice; human, having not only breath [vesicle], life, consciousness, but also morality and justice is, therefore, the highest level of beings." With this Eastern view, the ability of individuals to make moral judgments illuminates and emphasizes humans as social beings. *Narrate*, used profoundly in Chinese, is 敘述 *(Hsu-Shu)*. *Hsu* means to describe, to express, and to evaluate. *Shu* means to explain and to expound (http://www.tigernt.com/cgi-bin/ecdict.cgi). Thus, narrative is what is described, expressed, explained, expounded, and evaluated by giving details. It is the attention to "giving details," together with the fact that humans are social beings, that makes narrative life history. In this sense, narrative is

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[1] 「水火有氣而無生，草木有生而無知，禽獸有知而無義，人有氣、有生、有知，亦且有義，故最為天下貴也。」《荀子‧王制》。

context-sensitive and root searching.

Narrative: human experience and meaning making

Narrative, viewed as life history, is the language of past-oriented social existence. Viewed as life story, narrative is the future-oriented language of possibility. As a primary act of mind, narrative is the present-oriented language of understanding. Therefore, narrative defined by nature is both human experience and the meaning making (Polkinghorne, 1988; Rosen, 1987), of and for, the past, the present, and the future.

Narrative inquiry

Based on the nature of narrative already discussed, using narrative as a research methodology means to study the ways humans experience the world and how they make meaning out of their experience. In discussing the narrative method, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain that they call the "phenomenon 'story' and the inquiry 'narrative.' Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2).

In response to the disagreement on the origin and definition of narrative inquiry noted by some researchers, Clandinin and Huber (2010) suggest that there is indeed some agreement on the definition, contending that

> Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story…is a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.

Similarly, narrative inquiry as a research method is, in Van Manen's

(1990) terms, "hermeneutic phenomenology":

> … it is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to attend to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. The implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the "facts" of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitable an interpretive process. (p. 180-181)

The idea of "language" used to capture the meaning of experience echoes Polkinghorne's view of narrative in the context of narrative inquiry. "Narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot," specified Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5). As such, he (1988, 1995) calls attention to the two primary types of narrative research: descriptive/analysis of narratives and explanatory/narrative analysis. Descriptive narrative research mainly addresses the question of "what?" Researchers collect stories as data and use paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce taxonomies and categories out of the common elements across the database. Explanatory narrative research addresses the question of "why?" Researchers gather events and happenings as data and use narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories. Between these two types of narrative research, Polkinghorne encouraged more researchers to engage in the narrative analysis type since that kind of

knowledge acquired by analysis of narratives is "abstract and formal, and by necessity, underplays the unique and particular aspects of each story" (p. 15). He argues, "reflectiveness and consciousness" are a must in explanatory narrative research (1988, p. 170). I find this to be resonant with Chinese profound meaning of narrative (i.e., attending explanation in detail).

However, Clandinin and Huber (2010) point out three dimensions--temporality, sociality, and place--that need to be simultaneously explored in undertaking a narrative inquiry. They urge narrative researchers to acknowledge that events under study are in temporal transition, to attend to both personal conditions and social conditions, so they will not subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship, and to recognize that all events take place in some place. The knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness; knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties and more toward wondering about and imagining alternative possibilities.

Therefore, a close research relationship, one "akin to friendship" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) is required. In other words, a sense of equality is of great importance and it is also important that both feel cared for. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000) argue that narrative inquiry should be a collaborative process where, as Witherell and Noddings (1991) explain, "through telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories—one's own and others'—those engaged in this work can penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of the self and the integrity of the other, and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities" (p. 4). That is, a narrative inquirer needs to encourage both "voices" of the participant and the researcher himself or herself to be heard.[2]

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[2] This is a point particularly supported by feminist theory and will be elaborated in the next section.

Data for a narrative study can come from various sources: field notes of individual or shared experiences, journals, interview transcripts, observations, storytelling episodes, letter writing, autobiographical writing, documents such class plans, newsletter, etc. Whatever the data sources are, the data are diachronic data. "The data describe when events occurred and the effect the events had on subsequent happenings," explains Polkinghorne (1995, p. 12). It is the diachronic data narrative researchers collect that make narrative inquiry unique and different from other qualitative research in which synchronic data, short of the historical and developmental dimension, are used (Polkinghorne, 1995).

To sum up, narrative inquiry is used as a research methodology to allow the inquirer/researcher and readers to enter into the experiences of others and serves as a starting point for understanding, interpretation, and imagination.

Theoretical Rationales for Narrative Inquiry

The study of narrative is of interest to disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, philosophy, anthropology, theology, linguistics, art, psychology, drama and history. Thinking about the problem of narrative has moved beyond the province of the "aesthetic" in poetic, dramatic or fictional narrative to the exploration of the role of narrative in social and psychological formations, particularly in the formation of value and cognition (Mitchell, 1981).

In terms of cognitive functioning, narrative inquiry aims to produce knowledge of human experience. It is viewed as a research method to inquire into "narrative ways of knowing." The following is the framework regarding narrative knowing which I have constructed to manifest the theoretical

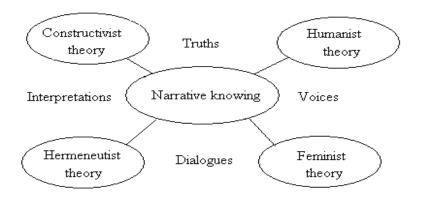rationales for narrative inquiry as well as the critical elements concerned.[3]

Figure of Theoretical Rationales for Narrative Inquiry

Constructivist Theory

As a research methodology, narrative inquiry is supported by constructivist foundations, as suggested by Mildon (1992):

> The basic tenet of "constructivism" is that knowledge is a "constructed reality" whereby we impose meaning upon the actual world in ways that seem familiar and "understandable," in ways that "fit" what we understand already. This creates two worlds, the actual world and the "constructed world," separate entities, but it is only the constructed world that we can claim to "know." This world "which is constructed is an experiential world that consists of experiences and makes no claim whatsoever about *truth* in the sense of correspondence with an ontological reality." (p.

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[3] Long quotes from respective theorists are intentionally presented to make their "words" apparent, and to justify the relationally constructed framework.

34, emphasis in original)

The constructivist view has altered the previously unshakable acceptance of the positivistic world view. It also has been a cornerstone for qualitative research of which narrative inquiry is a part. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) suggest several developments that may explain the "interpretive turn" in social science. The first development is the loss of faith in the empiricist view. Specifically, the theory-free observation base is no longer a credible supposition (p. 2). Social theorists are thus said to "concoct stories, if only implicitly, whenever they conceptualize human experience and behavior" (p. 3). Secondly, the study of narrative has acquired a new hermeneutic self-consciousness and transformed theories of criticism and history. The relation between accounts of the world and the world of which scholars give us account is no longer treated as simply representational, mimetic. Therefore, the development of all knowledge of the world must be shown not by a graph approaching the asymptote of truth but by a story relating the instigating problematics to the concepts, models, interpretations, plots, and theories put forward. The third source of the interest in narrative accounts stems, Rosenwald and Ochberg believe, from the struggle for the rights of the disenfranchised, such as women's movement, etc. (p. 3).

Narrative Truths

All autobiographic memory is true.

It is up to the interpreter to discover

in which sense, where, for which purpose.

~Luisa Passerini~

(cited in Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 261)

From the constructivist view, plural truths or multiple realities are the result of the telling, retelling, living and reliving of stories. Schafer (1981) points out that humans are forever telling stories both about themselves and others that are "life historical" or autobiographical. However, these may not always reflect events as they actually were. "We change many aspects of these histories of self and others as we change, for better or worse, the implied or stated questions to which they are the answers" (p. 31). With this in mind, therefore, "Narrativist researchers set out their narrative purposes and set out an appropriate context and then counsel readers to play the believing game [a process of self-insertion in the other's story as a way of coming to know the other's story and as giving the other voice] to ascertain the truth of the story. Readers assuming this way of participating in the narrative experience of another must be prepared to see the possible meanings there are in the story and, through this process, come to see possible other ways of telling their own stories" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989, p. 18). Whether life accounts correspond with external reality or not is, to a great degree, decided by the individual. Peshkin (1985) asserts,

> My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries. (cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8)

A common concern among narrative researchers is "How do we know if the subject is telling the truth?" Wiersman (1988) provides a good answer to this question. "The person being interviewed tells us some sort of truth about himself or herself when he or she tells anything at all—that is, he or she gives

us true data about something if we have but the wit to interpret it" (p. 205).

After all, a storied construction of reality has less to do with facts and more to

do with meaning. Similarly, Peshkin (1988) contends that it is imperative for

narrative researchers to "assert that their ideal is to achieve objectivity" (p.

17). Therefore, researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity

while their research is actively in progress, not retrospectively when the data

have been collected and the analysis is complete.

Humanist Theory

    I would like to share a story from The Zen Talk #100:

> Two monks are arguing in front of a temple, both facing up to
> a flag. One said, "Look, the flag is flying!" The other argued,
> "No, it's the wind!" Here comes Master. Hearing their
> argument, Master said to the two monks, "You both are
> wrong. Neither the wind nor the flag is moving. It's your
> mind that is floating."

    This story elucidates two points. First, truth is in the eyes of the

beholder and is rooted in every individual experience. Second, the ideal of

achieving an objectivity truth as promoted by Peshkin is desirable. The

Master is Master because he has, in Pagano's (1991) terms, "the desire to

ignore" (p. 201) the objectivity and paradoxically obtains the objective truth.

Narrative truth and intersubjectivity is related to personal knowledge based

on humanist theory.

    Humanist learning theorists emphasize that a person's perceptions

which are centered in their own *experiences* effect what they think they are

capable of becoming. In the humanist view, knowledge is gained through

experience and is relative to the individual. In his theory of personal

knowledge, Polanyi (1958) explains how constructing knowledge requires a reciprocal process whereby the individual takes meaning from an experience or idea while simultaneously giving the experience or idea personal meaning. The emphasis Polanyi places on reciprocal relationships between explicit and tacit knowledge, and subsidiary and focal awareness, incorporates the idea of negotiations between knowledge and awareness. This process is crucial if knowledge is to be integrated with personal knowing. "We can see then how the extension of this progression to an examination of the knowledge of another person. . . places us in a situation. . . [where]. . . the critical examination of this knowledge will become a critical reflection on our own knowledge" (ibid., p. 373). These series of negotiations lead to reflection, bringing the individual to ever new and deeper understanding.

It is plausible to say that this process of negotiating between knowledge and awareness is the process of translating knowing into telling. White (1981) sees the impulse to narrate as the natural way in which humans report on the way things really happened, viewing narrative as "a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling*" (p. 1). In other words, narrative becomes a channel or serves as a starting point through which one's implicit knowledge is called up front and turned into explicit personal knowledge.

The proponents of narrative as a research method recognize that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2000). They heighten awareness of the narrative nature of knowing and the place of story in teachers' development and understanding of practice. "Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18). It

is this fidelity to persons, to both the researched and the researcher, that legitimizes the use of narrative inquiry as a research method. It is especially suitable when a deeper and genuine understanding constitutes the research purpose, since understanding is a mutual process (even for self-understanding, such as autobiographical narrative research).

Voices

The translation from knowing into telling emerges as "voice," which in Bakhtin's terms, is "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 51). Morris (1994) further explains Bakhtin's concept of voice as speech with "a particular 'intonation' or 'accentuation', which reflects the values behind the consciousness which speaks. . . . To listen to other's voice means to subject that voice to a 'refraction', in such a way that what is produced constitutes a 'reaccentuation' of the original voice" (p. 251-252). Britzman (1990) succinctly defines voice as

> . . . meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community. . . . The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process. . . . Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of his/her experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (cited in Clandinin et al., 1993, p. 2)

In order to hear clearly what is being said, rather than hearing what the researcher anticipates will be expressed, a narrative researcher withholds

his/her own biases, preconceptions, and expectations. It means taking on a position of respectful curiosity, prompting open sharing in such a way that the researcher doesn't overstructure and guide the conversation, but instead allows participants to tell their own stories in their own unique ways. No matter how difficult this is, a narrative researcher makes efforts to surrender control and a position of authority. By doing so, the voices of the researched and the researcher can be heard carefully, attentively, and analytically.

Similar to the authority shift, voice as a term is often used "against the background of a previous silence, and it is a political usage as well as an epistemological one" (Elbaz, 1991, p. 10). Similarly, Freire (1970) contends that every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he/she may be, is capable of looking critically at his/her world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, he/she can gradually perceive his/her personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it. Furthermore, he/she can become conscious of his/her own perception of that reality and deal critically with it. In this sense, narrative inquiry provides a tool for rehumanization, a chance to create the space for all human's voices to be heard. The voice of the silent oppressed, in particular, has a root in feminist theory.

Feminist Theory

Narrative research approach is aligned with feminist research (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Elbaz, 1991; Carter, 1993). Stories or narratives give special voice to the feminine side of human experience—to the power of emotion, intuition, and relationships in human lives. In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al. (1986) write about the different ways of knowing—connected knowing—that women more likely than men have used as their dominant approach of thinking and learning.

Women have learned to value subjective ways of knowing, such as listening to a personal inner voice, or intuitively knowing a truth. Subjective knowing has been belittled by society, neglected entirely in our institutions and determined to be of lesser value in most of our schools. Whatever way of knowing is used, the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self are intricately interwoven for women and are inseparable, according to Belenky and her colleagues.

Feminist ways of knowing are concerned with women's personal empowerment. Likewise, narrative research is attentive to dialogue as a way to have voices heard.

Dialogues

Bakhtin's view of dialogism provides the theoretical underpinnings for the collaborative aspect in narrative research. Bakhtin, a philosopher and social linguist out of a psychology tradition, ascertains that "*Any true understanding is dialogic in nature*" (Morris, 1994, p. 11; Wertsch, 1991, p. 54).

Like all of Bakhtin's ideas, dialogism eschews simple, dichotomous, either/or distinctions. Morris (1994) explains, "Dialogue is perhaps the basic trope in all of Bakhtin's thought. There is no existence, no meaning, no word, or thought that does not enter into dialogue or 'dialogic' relations with the other, that does not exhibit intertextuality in both time and space" (p. 247). In other words, multiple authorship is a necessary fact about all texts, written or spoken. According to Bakhtin, meaning can come into existence only when two or more voices come into contact: when the voice of a listener responds to the voice of a speaker (Wertsch, 1991). His emphasis is on the shared meaning involved in the communication. As Schaafsma (1993) reminds us, "We have to ask ourselves not which version of 'truth' is correct, but how do

we negotiate between competing versions in such a way that we might retain the characteristic or experience—and 'common' knowledge—as complex and perhaps even conflictual. Story is one key component of the art of conversation which is community making" (p. xxiii).

Hermeneutist Theory

Along the lines of shared meaning making, the hermeneutic position emphasizes that life and story are only meaningful in and through mutual interaction (Widdershoven, 1993). From a hermeneutic perspective, life is human experience in the world. And life has an implicit meaning, which is made explicit in stories. Therefore, life and story are internally related. Widdershoven (1993) elaborates:

> . . . stories are based on life, and life is expressed, articulated, manifested and modified in stories. Stories make explicit the meaning that is implicit in life as it is lived. . . . Thus stories are interpretations of life in which the meaning of life is spelled out, in very much the same way as the meaning of a text is spelled out in a literary interpretation. In telling stories we try to make sense of life, like we try to make sense of a text when we interpret it. (p. 9)

The term "hermeneutics" means "the art and science of interpretation." It has been extended to cover all processes of interpretation that mediate between and incorporate different cultural and historical meanings and traditions. Texts and symbolic meanings are analyzed in their cultural and historical context with a view to applying or extending the meanings and traditions. The interpreter is concerned not just with the "objective meaning" of ideas or symbols but also with what they have to say to us.　As a tool of

inquiry, hermeneutics acknowledges the prejudices and fore-knowledge of the investigator in the interpretation, drawing on these directly to interpret the data. In this sense, hermeneutists are "constructing the 'reality' on the basis of their interpretations of data with the help of the participants who provided the data in the study" (Eichelberger, cited in Patton, 1990, p. 85). Therefore, researchers report the processes of their search, record the total trail of inquiry, and indicate the means by which sources were sought out, and material extracted.

Like feminist research which emphasizes "connected knowing," hermeneutic inquiry has a characteristic of "openly dialogical nature: the returning to the object of inquiry again and again, each time with an increased understanding and a more complete interpretive account" (Packer, 1985, p. 1091). That is, the interpretive process has been shifted from a researcher's interpretation of observed data to one of a mutual researcher-participant reconstruction of meaning in action.

Interpretations

The concept of interpretation is central in hermeneutist theory. Grounded in hermeneutics, narrative inquiry relies on the interpretation from which an understanding is obtained. Therefore, the theories of interpretation will help shed light on narrative analysis.

There are three theories of interpretation that may all be called hermeneutic. 1) Collingwood sees interpretation as a way of getting access to the *point* of (historical) thoughts and actions so that stories help us to recapitulate our past experiences and actions. 2) According to Gadamer, interpretation involves a dialogue that is interested in the *truth* of the text so that stories help us to express the unity of our lives and thus to create our identity. 3) Derrida says that interpretation is a process of citation so that in

stories experience is transferred to new contexts, and stories thus articulate the intertextuality of life (Widdershoven, 1993, p. 18-19). Accordingly, the individual narrative researcher adopts different interpretative strategies on the basis of his or her inquiry purpose. For example, Denzin (1989) presents three interpretive formats: from the subject's point of view (narratives are presented without the researcher's interpretation), subject produced autobiographies (the text becomes the data for interpretation), and making sense of an individual's life (the subject's life is interwoven with the researcher's interpretations of that life).

In order to understand and interpret the meaning of another's words, Bakhtin suggests, we have to ask and answer two interrelated questions: "*Who* precisely is speaking, and under *what* concrete circumstances?" (Tappan, 1991, p. 15; emphasis in original). This goes to the core of narrative knowing.

Narrative knowing: Translating telling into knowing

What does a narrator learn in the art of narrating? How does the storytelling process of sharing stories and the knowledge around those stories become a learning experience? These two questions are the fundamental quest of a narrative inquirer. For Bakhtin, a person develops an ideological self through an *internally persuasive discourse (retelling in one's own words)* and an *authoritative discourse (reciting by heart)*. The internally persuasive discourse has been affirmed through the assimilation of "the everyday rounds of our consciousness. . . half-ours and half-someone else's" (Tappan, 1991, p. 17). Authoritative discourse is external and demands that we acknowledge it.

> The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. . . . Its authority was already

acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is
therefore not a question of choosing it from among other
possible discourses that are its equal. It is given (it sounds) in
lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a
special language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo. (cited
in Tappan, 1991, p. 16)

This recognition of the process by which an individual internalizes and
assimilates the words of others helps us in the "process of selectively
assimilating others' words" (Tappen, 1991, p. 16). As a result, we may
discover some "embryo narratives" (Rossen, 1987, p. 37) and make
storytelling "discovery learning" (ibid., p. 35). Rosenwald and Ochberg
(1993) also believe that it is the teller in particular who has the potential to be
transformed through his or her tales:

. . . the stories people tell about themselves are interesting not
only for the events and characters they describe but also for
something in the construction of the stories themselves. How
individuals recount their histories—what they emphasize and
omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship
the story establishes between teller and audience—all shape
what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories
are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about
one's life, they are the means by which identities may be
fashioned. It is this formative—and sometimes deformative
power of life stories that make them important. (p. 1)

Moreover, the distinction between authoritative discourse and internally
persuasive discourse provides a helpful guide to interpreting interview texts

(stories): it is possible to distinguish between a text in which a speaker speaks primarily in authoritative discourse and one in which a speaker speaks primarily in internally persuasive discourse. Narrative researchers should be mindful of "Who is doing the speaking?" and "Who is being addressed?" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 53).

This "heteroglossia" idea of Bakhtin (which literally means "different-speech-ness" and refers to discursive and multiple perspectives; Morris, 1991, p. 248) echoes the constructivist view of knowledge as a "constructed reality," and both validate narrative ways of knowing. Bruner (1986) proposes two modes of thought, each distinctive in its ordering of experience and construction of reality. One is the paradigmatic mode which is used in the formal sciences, logical reasoning, and searches for universal truths. The second mode is narrative understanding. The narrative mode is concerned with the explication of human intentions in the context of action. Polkinghorne (1988) refers to this as the search for "the changing directions and goals of human action" (p. 17). Bruner (1986) goes on to conclude that his purpose is

> to explore some of the ways in which we create products of mind, how we come to experience them as real, and how we manage to build them into the corpus of a culture as science, literature, history, whatever. . . . to make the strong case that it is far more important, for appreciating the human condition, to understand the ways human beings construct their worlds. . . than it is to establish the ontological status of the products of these processes. For my central ontological conviction is that there is no "aboriginal" reality against which one can compare a possible world in order to establish

some form of correspondence between it and the real world.

(p. 45-46)

Pllkinghorne (1988) provides an encompassing and concise history of how "narrative knowing" evolved through a long line of philosophers searching for a unified explanation of life events, of historians looking to the epistemological problems of truthfulness, and of later analytical philosophers seeking methods that would produce "real" knowledge (p. 67). Part of the process of knowing experience involved moving through the act of "narratizing" personal encounters to "making story." To "narratize," as White (1981) calls it, is to substitute, ceaselessly, meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted or encountered. And this is translating telling into knowing.

To sum up, the fundamental quest of narrative inquiry: narrative knowing is supported by Constructivist Theory, Humanist Theory, Feminist Theory, and Hermeneutist Theory. The common element extracted from theories: Truths, Voices, Dialogues, and Interpretations are what need to be considered while practicing narrative inquiry.

Quality of Narrative Research

A painter takes the sun and makes it into a yellow spot.

An aritist takes a yellow spot and makes it into a sun.

~ Pablo Picasso ~

A narrative researcher, like an artist, works very closely with the participants—observing carefully, communicating intensively, feeling sincerely—so as to "create a text" (Eisner, 1991, p. 21) which is itself

presented as a written narrative. Linking narrative inquiry to art making, Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) establishes the importance of connections between reality (objects) and interpretation (art forms or narratives). He argues that fidelity and believability are appropriate for judging both art and narrative inquiry.

As a work of art again and again catches people's eye, so does a good narrative text have such an invitational quality. An inviting research story must be a plausible one: it must be believable and tend to ring true. If a reader can say "I can see that happening," the story has "plausibility," or "apparency" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). Polkingorne (1988, 1995) sets down the criteria for descriptive and explanatory narrative research. Descriptive narrative research needs to reach the specific criterion of "accuracy." The transcripts of interview materials must be available to readers so that they can follow the researcher's move from data to interpretation. For explanatory narrative research, it needs to have "coherence" which carries with it "intelligibility" and "explanatory power" as the evidence to support the conclusions. It produces "likelihood," "verisimilitude," "meaningfulness" and "importance," and has "dependability" of the data for "trustworthiness." Usually, these criteria can be taken care of through triangulation (comparing data from one source with data from another source), peer examination (agreement among competent others), or an audit trail (the investigator describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry) (Patton, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Merriam and Simpson, 1995).

Like a work of art that often implies a deeper meaning, a good narrative study expresses more than it says. This is the power of stories—"to direct and

change our lives" (Noddings, 1991, p. 157). To claim this power, the research story must have "referential adequacy: the expansion of perception and the enlargement of understanding" (Eisner, 1991, p. 113). The end result of narrative research may be "working hypotheses—hypotheses that reflect situation-specific conditions in a particular context" and "reader or user generalizability" (Merriam and Simpson, 1995, p. 103). It is not up to the researcher to speculate how findings can be applied to other settings. It is up to the consumer of the research. According to Eisner (1991), the aim of artistic approaches to research, such as narrative inquiry, is to try to locate the general in the particular and to shed light on what is unique while at the same time conveying insights beyond the particular. This idea of "particularity" reveals the unique feature of narrative inquiry. Using research on pedagogy as an example, Van Manen (1990) states,

> Pedagogical theory has to be theory of the unique, of the particular case. Theory of the unique starts with and from the single case, searches for the universal qualities, and returns to the single case. The educational theorist, as pedagogue, symbolically leaves the child—in reflective thought—to be with the child in a real way, to know what is appropriate for this child or these children, *here and now*. (p. 150, emphasis mine)

This quality of "utility" or "pragmatism" is especially critical for research on and with practitioners because the "reflective turn" of narrative researchers carries with it an attention to make the study of practice useful to practitioners (Schon, 1991, p. 348). Pondering over the quality of narrative studies of teaching and teacher education, Gomez (2000) argues that fostering

such storytelling aimed at changed classroom practices is not enough, instead "a genealogy of context" should be created. Therefore, she proposes judging such studies by their efficacy in 1) helping researchers and their participants to locate themselves in socially, politically, culturally, and historically constructed contexts, 2) helping to develop and support cultural critique, 3) helping to understand how to catalyze and sustain collaborative social action among teachers, students, and families, and 4) helping teachers to work with students and their families toward greater learning. Overall, researchers who adopt a practical approach are concerned with the criterion of what Kvale has called "pragmatic validation" of findings:

> … the intended audience can see new relations and answer new but relevant questions. Validity comes to depend on how the data are used by the intended audience…. A main conclusion is that there is no validity of the interview [qualitative] methods as such; it is the *results* of an interview [qualitative] study which must be validated in a concrete situation. (cited in Patton, 1990, p. 484, emphasis in original)

Related to the quality of "promise" for practice is Van Manen's (1990) conviction that the research story must have "a dialogic textuality—methodological requirements that render a human science text, a certain power and convincing validity" (p. 151). He goes on to give four criteria.

1)　The text needs to be oriented. That is, researchers need to be oriented to research and writing an awareness of the relation between content and form, speaking and acting, text and textuality. Mishler (cited in Clandinin and Murphy, 2007) also encourages narrative inquirers to make visible in

their research texts the process by which they chose to foreground particular stories. Taking a step further, Schon (1991) cautions researchers to be aware of their "underlying stories"—the fundamental messages or argument they seek to communicate through the telling of a manifest story. He suggests that researchers even construct an underlying story to be "as alert to the stories not told as to those that are" (p. 346), thus avoiding "the Hollywood plot, the plot where everything works out well in the end" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). Connelly and Clandinin have never stopped advising researchers to watch for "narrative smoothing," which is the process of leaving some stories out or obscuring others in order to have the narrative turn out well in the end (1990, 2000). Gomez (2000) also cautions that researches and readers carefully consider in whose service stories are told, recorded, and published. In other words, researchers must include the multiple "I's" that have been involved in the telling of stories, and the "I's" of the various characters who are given voice within the story. I find all these echo the Master's wisdom in the Zen story I told earlier: striving for objectivity by "having the desire" to ignore it!

2)   The text needs to be strong. Van Manen (1990) explains when educational researchers try to gain clarity about a certain notion, they should use their orientation as a resource for producing pedagogic understandings, interpretations, and formulations, and strengthen this resource in the very practice of this research.

3)   The text needs to be rich. A rich and thick description is concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications.

4)   The text needs to be deep. Rich descriptions which explore the meaning structures beyond what is immediately experienced gain a dimension of depth. Van Manen uses Marcel's idea of "the secret," of what is

beyond the ordinary to refer to the notion of depth. He argues that to present research by way of reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet with it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it (Van Manen, 1990, p. 151-153).

Since narrative inquiry usually combines with a research design of case study, the following criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba to assess the quality of case study reports can as well be applied to narrative research. I find they serve as a good synthesis. 1) resonance: reflect the multiple realities constructed by the respondents in the inquiry, reject generalizability, display and take account of the value influences, and demonstrate conscious reflexivity. 2) rhetoric: relevant to assessing the form, structure, and presentational characteristics of the case study, such as narrative power, creativity and persuasive force. 3) empowerment: the ability of the case study to evoke and facilitate action on the part of readers; what action steps are indicated by the inquiry should be made clear. 4) applicability: the extent to which the case study facilitates the drawing of inferences by the reader that may have applicability in his or her own context or situation; the importance of "thick description" as making clear levels of meaning (cited in Somekh, 1993).

Interpretive work, such as narrative inquiry, is a divergent task, requiring a style open to exploration and free from the need for specific and certain answers. It is methodologically open and ambiguous and thus requires a confidence that one (both the researcher and researched) has done sufficient exploration to present an understanding of self and of each other. If the work is to produce succinct and useful findings (such as studies of practitioners), the inquiry needs to be continually guided and focused toward that which

will be understood broadly. That is, the study must be strategic as well as thorough. Wiersman's (1988) profound insight rings true: it depends on the researcher's "wit" to do the work-- to create a work of narrative art.

Narrative Inquiry as A Language of Possibility
in Teaching and Teacher Education

Let me start this section with the story of "The magic triangle" my elementary math teacher demonstrated. On the blackboard, she first put a dot. Then she put another dot and showed us two dots make a single line. Then she added another dot away from the line and connected it with the two dots. "Ta Da! This is the magic triangle. In this triangle, we have three dots and three lines. We have 'dot' and 'line' both!"

A triangle is more impressive than a dot or a line can be. A triangle is a bigger and more detailed picture—including both dots and lines. The magic of triangle is also the magic of narrative. They both show a holistic picture which tells us more, impresses us more deeply, so that we know more. They both "provide a format into which experienced events can be cast in the attempt to make them comprehensible, memorable, and sharable" (Olson, 1990, cited in Carter, 1993, p. 7). Furthermore, the recognition that humans use narrative structure as a way to organize the events of their lives and to provide a scheme for their own self-identity is of importance for personal change and growth (Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, the use of narrative as an inquiry tool has important implications for teaching and teacher education.

Storytelling as Curriculum

The "liberation of the narrative genius of humankind" (Rosen, 1987, p. 19) has given rise to educational change toward more learner-centered, participatory, or Whole language, allowing "the heuristic of narrative [to]

come into its own and the narrative mode of meaning which runs so freely in the veins of the vernacular [to] be heard in the classroom" (ibid., p. 18). The fundamental belief of such change is that learners (adult, children and adolescents)—their characteristics, aspirations, backgrounds, and needs—should be at the center of instruction. This belief also implies that the relationship between the teacher and learners is collaborative. That is, it is a partnership learning.

Partnership learning, however, often creates more confusion than understanding, raising such questions as "Does that mean we're equals?" "Who's in control?" "Do we withhold what we know?" "Why don't you teach me?" These reactions reveal the depth of mistrust and fear of the power that we have as learners. Somewhere along the line, many people lose a basic belief in themselves—that they can and must be active in their own learning process. Therefore, Simon (1992) advocates "empowerment as a pedagogy of possibility,"

> Teaching and learning must be linked to the goal of educating students to take risks, to struggle with ongoing relations of power, to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside of their immediate experience, and to envisage versions of a world which is "not yet"—in order to be able to alter the grounds upon which life is lived. (p. 144)

Such a pedagogy of possibility is grounded in a curriculum as storytelling. In other words, storytelling gives a chance to the empowerment which entails individual's authorship and responsibility. As Tappen (1991) elaborates

> … telling a moral story also provides an opportunity for

> [one's] authorship (and authority) to be expressed…. Telling
> a moral story necessarily entails reflecting on the experience
> narrated, thereby encouraging her [one] to learn more from
> [one's] experience—by claiming more authority and
> assuming more responsibility for her [one's] thoughts,
> feelings, and actions—than would be possible if [one] were
> simply to list or describe the events in question. (p. 20)

Therefore, everyone (children, adolescents, and adults) should take on and be entitled to what Starkey (1994) calls "the responsibility of communication" (p. 79). Starkey argues that an individual who is not a part of the communication and decision-making process, who is not heard and is expected to only listen, feels to be a part *from* rather than a part *of*. Such a person often tends to act against the system because he or she loses or doesn't develop the skills necessary to be included in such processes.

As Starkey promotes, and Rosen (1987) emphasizes, "When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing" (p. 19), I believe that it is the teacher's or teacher educator's "obligation" to open the pie. The Chinese people have a long tradition in which scholars are highly valued and receive great respect. Scholars, persons of profound learning, are "to be the heir to ancient sages and the teacher of posterity." Thus the sense of hereditability entails obligations. At home, elder siblings have an obligation to help their younger brothers and sisters. At work, senior colleagues have an obligation to advise the juniors. At both high school and college levels, there is a "family" composed of seniors and juniors to help each other. Teaching, therefore, is an obligation built upon mutual assistance. This notion of mutual assistance echoes the "helping relationship" (Rogers, 1961) between the teacher and the learner and identifies the role of teachers as "facilitators." Hence, teachers or

teacher educators need to have "the virtue of humility" (Schaafsma, 1993, p. 205) so that they listen, watch, and make sure they don't impose their conceptions of the world on those they might hope to "liberate" through their imposition. They also need to encourage the silent members in the class and protect the minority view.

Narrative inquiry is the language of possibility in teaching and teacher education: "How we teach is what we teach." This is storytelling as curriculum.

Storytelling as A Vehicle

for Critical Reflection in Teacher Education

Both educational researchers and teacher educators have attempted to understand teachers' knowledge and its use to better assess, describe, and analyze the relationship between knowledge and practice. In the past, researchers focused their attention primarily on teachers' skills and dispositions; on what teachers need to know and how they can be trained, rather than on what they already know, and how that knowledge is acquired. Carter (1990) observes that a new mode of inquiry is emerging—one that gives greater recognition to the need for examining "the character and substance of teacher's knowledge" (p. 291).

Teaching is intentional action in situation, and the core knowledge teachers have of teaching comes from their practice (i.e., from taking action as teachers in classrooms). Teachers' knowledge is, in other words, event structured (Carter & Doyle, cited in Carter, 1993). Story or narrative, with its multiplicity of meanings, is a suitable form for expressing such knowledge which arises from action as teachers' knowledge. Elbaz (1991) argues,

> Story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which
> we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the

work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not
merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of
the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of
teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers'
knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best
be understood in this way. (p. 3)

In other words, the "uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy,"
"uniqueness," and "value conflict" (Schon, 1983, p. 15-16, p. 138-139)
teachers face every day ensure the need to use narratives of their own to
understand teachers' thinking and practice. Writing about teacher research,
Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) contend, "what is missing from the
knowledge base of teaching…are the voices of the teachers themselves, the
questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in
their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and
improve their own classroom practices" (p. 2). After all, understanding
teaching calls for *in*sight. The conviction of "fidelity to persons," as
Noddings (1986) proposes, urges "genuine research *for* teaching instead of
simply research *on* teaching" (p. 506). Storytelling, applied to teacher
education, thus holds great potential in facilitating both personal and
professional growth for prospective teachers and practicing teachers as well.

Bridging theory and practice. The value narrative inquiry has for teacher
education is in its power to break the beautiful mystery of the "ivory tower"
so as to bridge theory and practice. It is not uncommon to hear teachers, both
new and experienced, comment, "What they teach in school is one thing;
what you really do out here in the everyday classroom is another."
Questioning the relationship of theory and practice in teacher education,
Russel (1988) did a series of case studies of teachers with varying levels of

experience. He discovered that theory is often meaningless to teachers until they have mastered practice. In the class of experienced teachers, he found that it is only after they have become competent in the classroom that they are able to criticize and question their performance and start to relate theory to their own actions. Russel argues that the typical "theory into practice" perspective might generate considerable confusion and dissatisfaction among student teachers. He suggests, therefore, that student teachers might be more profitably encouraged to understand theory through experience.

However, teachers' experience, the "wisdom of practice" (Shulman, 1987) or "praxis" (Freire, 1970) has been traditionally ignored. Sternberg and Caruso (1985) gave three reasons why practical knowledge has received so little attention and respect. First, the philosophy of many schools almost precludes serious consideration and transmission of practical knowledge. Second, many feel that practical knowledge does not train one to think or prepare for the leadership roles that are so important to society. Third, practical knowledge is procedural and often tacit. It is thus harder to teach and even to identify. All too often, we are not even aware of the practical knowledge we have. And this is where the inquiry into teachers' narratives comes to play. This process of "pedagogical reasoning" (Shulman, 1987, p. 12) requires teachers to think about what they are doing as well as an adequate base of facts, principles, and experiences from which to reason.

As a result, theory and practice are no longer two separate entities. Theory is implicit in practice, and the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education is not one of implementation—theory being translated into practice—but a continuously interactive one (Calderhead, 1988). Couched in terms like "Learning to teach, Teaching to learn," researchers, such as Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard (1993), have

attempted to systematize teachers' knowledge as represented through teaching practices. Clandinin (1993) proposes teacher education as narrative inquiry where they "tried to construct and live out a new story of teacher education, through a collaborative experimental program" (p. 3).

Building a learning community. The value of storytelling in teacher education has been increasingly recognized. Since two decades ago, a teacher-as-researcher movement has sprung up. More and more teaching practitioners, adopting an autobiographical approach, tell and write stories about themselves (e.g., Brookfield, 1990; Apps, 1991; Hollingsworth, 1991; Diamond, 1993; Shaafsma, 1993; Starkey, 1994; Vella, 1994; Samaras, 2002; just to name a few). Studying one's own professional practice promotes ongoing improvement of those practices and associated contexts for learning and teaching. Through autobiographical narratives, individuals construct, organize, and express meaning. Diamond (1993), exploring the development of his own thinking in terms of voices that express an expanding community of selves, contends:

> Narrative provides autobiographical opportunities for us each
> to gain a distinctively thoughtful presence or series of
> registers within which we can explore the bipolarity of our
> first and third person voices, that is, of our private and public,
> fictions and factual selves…. Literary discourse offers
> research on teacher thinking a powerful paradigm. (p. 312)

This kind of self-inquiry has given rise to the terms "reflective practitioner" and "reflection-on-practice (or on-action)" and "reflection-in-practice (or in-action)" (Schon, 1983, 1987) as part of the teacher education vernacular. Some forms of valued autobiographical

narratives include: personal teaching or working philosophy, personal or life history accounts, journal keeping, explorations of personal metaphors or images, reflective accounts of practice or professional development summaries and records.

Other teacher-researchers or educators have chosen instead to capture the multiple realities of teaching through biographical narratives (e.g., Schubert & Ayers, 1992; Knowles, Cole & Presswood, 1994; Gomez & Tabachnick, 1992; Gomez & Abt-Perkins, 1995; Gomez, 1996; just to name a few). This approach of life history emphasizes the processes of learning and constructing meaning together as a group. Such a collaborative inquiry can be accomplished through what Gomez and Tabachnick (1992) call "the power of telling teaching stories" (p. 137). In the telling and sharing of stories, teacher educators and prospective teachers together try to

> … understand how, as teachers, we become captured, or what Shotter (1989) refers to as "entrapped," in "a 'text,' a culturally developed resource—the text of possessive individualism—to which we must (morally) turn, when faced with the task of describing the nature of our experiences of our relations with each other and to ourselves" (p. 136). Through our conversation, we engaged in joint action… we created a new and different set of cultural resources… [which] enabled us to "cross social borders" (Dyson, 1993) and to speak not only in ways in which we were expected to speak and with which we were comfortable, but to try on new habits of thinking and new voices for our utterances—to speak in a new genre. (Gomez, 1996, p. 8)

Examining the contributions of story to the understanding of teaching, Carter (1993) points out that stories have been used as 1) data for the analysis of teaching to advance knowledge in the field, and as 2) instruments of educating novice teachers for the profession. Storytelling has been increasingly used as the main approach in teacher education programs "to provide places and ways that prospective teachers could support and question one another's thinking and practice" (Gomez & Abt-Perkins, 1995, p. 40) so as "to transgress" (hooks, 1994) the boundaries of our corporeality and of our imaginations (cited in Gomez, 1996, p. 10).

The ultimate goal of using storytelling as a vehicle in teacher education is to develop inquiring teachers who engage in critical reflection, by themselves and with others, so as to seek their ongoing personal and professional growth.

Conclusion

If you want to know something about a person,
why not ask him or her, he or she may tell you.
~Kelly's First Principle~

Narrative, like other qualitative methods, relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability (in a traditional sense), insist Clandinin and Connelly (1990, 2000, 2007). For decades, they have pointed out that it is important not to "squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (1990, p. 7) and gone further to contend that "each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work" (p. 7). A development of the rationales for using

narrative inquiry, I believe, initiates such criteria search and gives the researcher confidence in conducting good quality narrative research.

Through the development of a theoretical framework supported by Constructivist Theory, Humanist Theory, Feminist Theory, and Hermeneutist Theory, narrative researchers see how such methodology aims to produce knowledge of the human experience "both that [are] present in and that [are] hidden from awareness" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 159), and while putting narrative inquiry into practice, researchers see how essential it is to make narrative research a collaborative process attending to Truths, Voices, Dialogues, and Interpretations.

To conclude, narrative inquiry is a valuable research method because it alone acknowledges the inseparability of knowing and telling in human experience as well as the necessity for a continuous search for meaning. Applied specifically to teaching and teacher education, narrative inquiry can contribute to storytelling as curriculum in which how we teach is what we teach, and to storytelling as a vehicle for critical reflection in which stories bridge theory and practice and build a learning community.

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