

The Rationality of Narrative Inquiry in Research and Professional Development

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SUMMARY *As researchers follow the hermeneutic turn to narrative, are they also obliged to join what Richard Bernstein calls the ‘rage against reason’? Taking criteria from Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action and his concept of communicative rationality, I propose that narrative inquiry can indeed be a rational enterprise. Habermas recreates a standpoint from which critiques are possible, for he detects and analyses the implicit rationality built into everyday communicative practices in which conversation partners orient themselves toward understanding rather than the success of their own points of view. In these practices, as in narrative inquiry, participants claim that each could challenge the other’s implicit claims to truth, sincerity and social appropriateness. I give examples to illustrate how such challenges can be met in one specific line of narrative research.*

RÉSUMÉ *Suivant la transformation de l’herméneutique en récit, les chercheurs se voient-ils obligés de partager ce que Richard Bernstein appelle ‘la fureur contre la raison’? Prenant de critères de la théorie de l’action communicative développée par Habermas, et son concept de rationalité communicative, je suggère que l’enquête narrative peut être une entreprise rationnelle. En détectant et analysant la rationalité implicite ancrée dans les pratiques communicatives de la vie quotidienne, Habermas établit un point de vue qui rend possible les critiques si, dans leurs échanges, les partenaires s’efforcent de s’orienter vers la compréhension plutôt que faire gagner leurs propres points de vue. Dans ce genre de pratique, tout comme dans l’enquête narrative, les participants proclament que chacun est capable de défier les garanties de vérité, sincérité et correction sociale impliquées dans les affirmations de l’autre. Je présente des exemples pour illustrer comment de tels défis peuvent être surmontés dans une ligne particulière de recherche narrative.*

RESUMEN *¿Cuando investigadores siguen la transformación de la hermenéutica en narrativa, se verán también forzados a aceptar lo que Richard Bernstein llama ‘la furia contra la razón’? Tomando los criterios de la ‘Teoría de Acción Comunicativa’ de Habermas y su concepto de racionalidad comunicativa propongo que la investigación narrativa de hecho sí puede ser un proyecto racional. Habermas crea un punto de vista desde donde la crítica es posible, porque detecta y analiza la implícita racionalidad de las prácticas comunicativas diarias en las cuales los participantes de una conversación*

se orientan a la comprensión mutua y no a buscar de hacer prevalecer sus propios puntos de vista. En estas prácticas así como en la investigación narrativa, los participantes pretenden que cada cual puede desafiar las suposiciones implícitas de veracidad, sinceridad y corrección social del otro. Doy ejemplos para mostrar como los desafíos pueden ser satisfechos en una tradición específica de la investigación narrativa.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG *Sind Forscher in einer hermeneutischen Wende zur Erzählung auch gezwungen jegliche Rationalität aufzugeben? Zurückgreifend auf Kriterien aus Habermases 'Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns' und sein Konzept der kommunikativen Rationalität, schlage ich vor, dass narrative Forschung doch ein rationales Unternehmen sein kann. Habermas erschafft einen Standpunkt, der Kritik ermöglicht, indem er die implizite Rationalität aufdeckt und analysiert, die alltäglicher kommunikativen Praxis innewohnt, wenn Gesprächspartner auf gegenseitiges Verstehen anstatt auf den Erfolg der eigenen Ziele aus sind. In solcher Praxis wie auch in narrativer Forschung, erheben Kommunikationsteilnehmer vier, gegenseitig unterstellte Geltungsansprüche, Verständlichkeit, Wahrheit, Wahrhaftigkeit und normative Richtigkeit; Ansprüche die jederzeit auch in einer bestimmten Tradition der narrativen Forschung einlösbar sind.*

Narrative Inquiry in Teacher Education

Narrative inquiry is a method of inquiry as well as a means of personal, professional development. It is this dual function of narrative that has facilitated its use in educational research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1994), in graduate teacher development (Conle, 2000a) and in teacher preparation (Conle, 1996, 1997a,b; Conle *et al.*, 2000) [1]. A look at North American conference proposals and presentations in recent years affirms that narrative methods of inquiry and narrative representations of results are proliferating. In this work, narrative is used both for the gathering and the representation of data which are usually created and revised collaboratively between researchers and their 'subjects'. These methods vary and they are beginning to be categorized and criticized (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Fenstermacher, 1994; Phillips, 1994). Much criticism hinges on questions of legitimacy connected to the issues of truth and rationality. From which vantage points can educational narratives be judged or challenged? In a world where globalization brings different cultures face to face, the issue arises whether one story is as legitimate and important as another. Are there ways of describing that legitimacy? Are there ways of challenging it?

These are valid questions generally and in my own work specifically. Below I attempt clarification by focusing on the line of narrative inquiry in which I am engaged [2] by examining how it can be considered a rational endeavour, capable of withstanding questions and challenges. I am not proposing a new model, nor do I suggest that lines of inquiry that I do not examine are irrational or not legitimate [3]. Space does not allow me to engage more than one narrative tradition here or to reach out to other arguments that could be made about them with similar intent.

I develop my ideas through an excerpt from autobiographical research. Much of teacher development work at my institution is either completely autobiographical or has strong autobiographical dimensions. This seems appropriate if one considers good teaching not primarily as an accomplishment in appropriate planning, excellent techniques and thoughtful pedagogical moves, but as a lived accomplishment that is intimately linked to the way one lives one's life and that relates to people and deals with

patterns of teaching and learning that were acquired earlier in life. I offer an example of autobiographical inquiry to view it as a rational enterprise.

I propose that 'narrative inquiry' as described by Connelly & Clandinin (1990, 1994) and Conle (1996, 1999, 2000a) can indeed be a rational enterprise and can be challenged when its activities are considered through the lenses of the attempt by Jürgen Habermas to newly ground rationality in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981a,b). I propose that the communicative rationality that he detects in everyday actions can also serve as a rational anchor in narrative inquiry, provided the aim is not strategizing, but mutual understanding. I suggest that challenges to truth claims, sincerity claims, and social appropriateness claims can be issued in narrative inquiry, but will prompt not argumentative, but narrative discourse, when inquirers move to redeem such claims. The redemption of any such claims is never final, but can only yield continually revised outcomes in open-ended, dialectical processes (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994, p. 76).

Habermas reminds us that in everyday life we can aim at talking to one another in ways that avoid influencing each other through power and strategizing in order to win others over to our own position. An interaction that instead aims at mutual understanding he calls 'communicative action' and differentiates it from 'strategic action' that aims at success, that is to say, at successfully realizing one's own purposes *vis-à-vis* the person to whom one is speaking. With the concept of communicative action, Habermas's road takes him away from the ideal of efficiency, and away from power relations, toward ways of being with one another that aim primarily at mutual understanding [4].

To come to his theory of communicative action, Habermas needed to lift the cover of everyday discourse, so to speak, to inspect its hitherto ignored subconscious underpinnings. What he found were unavoidable claims that each of us make, and assume our partners make, when we aim at mutual understanding. For example, even when we intend to lie, we assume that everyone claims that what he or she is saying is true, otherwise a lie would be pointless. When we talk to one another with the aim of understanding, we assume that each of us acts rationally (making claims of truth, sincerity and social appropriateness), or else we would not bother talking. The road that comes into view here is one that relies on rational interaction built right into everyday communicative practice. I propose that this rational interaction also characterizes narrative inquiry and makes possible certain challenges.

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What challenges are possible within communicative action and, I suggest, within narrative inquiry? When I, in communicating with you, orient myself towards understanding, I assume that we both have the right to challenge one another in three ways: whether the things we tell are true [5], whether we truthfully express our own feelings, wishes, etc., and whether what we say is socially/morally appropriate. In addition, of course, we can also challenge one another on whether what we say is clear enough to be understood. Without these assumptions, communication breaks down. We need to assume the rationality of the discourse in these four ways, otherwise we need not even attempt to try to understand each other. Such an assumption of rationality, according to Habermas's theory, is universally warranted and offers a standpoint from which to make judgements and issue critiques. Narrative inquiry, I propose, also falls into this type of communicative action.

In what way can narrativist researchers see Habermas as a travel companion on their

own road of inquiry? I suggest that it is worthwhile to consider narrative inquiry as communicative action and therefore as subject to the same challenges that Habermas perceives in communicative action. I should be able to challenge a narrative researcher about the truth of the things she tells; about her capacity to truthfully represent the state of her own mind, feelings and motives about the social appropriateness of the narrative and the norms expressed through it; and about comprehensibility or well-formedness of the narratives she constructs. If I can issue these challenges, *if I can assume that she make these claims*, then we are engaged in a rational enterprise that can be differentiated from fiction, irrational babble, and power games. The rationality of the enterprise, however, does not mean that every narrative that is told in an inquiry situation must be totally true, easily understood, and socially appropriate; nor that every narrator must be totally truthful and lacking in self-deception. Habermas cautions that attempts to enforce the criteria, or make them necessary preconditions of life, or even entertain them as utopian ideals, would end in terrorism (1985a, p. 241). They are not reachable in fact, but are *always assumed* as preconditions for communicative understanding. Someone who purposefully constructs a fictional narrative would not qualify as a narrative inquirer in the sense suggested here. This restriction would apply to each of the three facets of narrative inquiry pointed out by Fenstermacher (1994): narrative fragments and fully developed experiential stories as they are used in the process of narrative inquiry; final narrative reports; and the use of personal, experiential narrative in teacher education.

Challenges may be issued, and should be issued, to improve the quality of the inquiry in all of these areas of experiential narrative. But the responses to challenges in narrative inquiry are different in kind from the responses expected in the discourse that Habermas has in mind. Habermas relies on argumentative exchanges to redeem a claim. Reasons must be given. I suggest that narrative inquirers respond mainly through more narrative, giving narrative reasons.

To understand this proposal in greater detail, let us consider the following segment from a narrative project that I conducted between 1989 and 1992 [6]. It was an investigation into acculturation processes, as they occur in teachers', immigrants', academics' and women's lives. Each one of these areas of narrative investigation was considered an important part of my personal and professional development as a teacher, but they also simultaneously contributed to my ongoing exploration of narrative as a method of inquiry. Narrative was both method and content of the inquiry. The part presented here is from an autobiographical chapter entitled 'At the crossroads of cultures: my personal inquiry as social phenomenon' and falls under the subheading 'Ambivalent identifications'. It does not feature my investigation into method nor the sections of my project that deal with the experiences of teachers or students, but it nevertheless illustrates the quality of narrative represented in such work.

As the project developed, I often presented sections of my work in graduate seminars. These meetings were known for a certain type of discourse, not prevalent in other, 'non-narrative' seminars. The questions I suggest after the excerpt are typical and do not distort my memory of those occasions. I have since then experienced many similar settings, both in graduate seminars and in pre-service courses I teach (Conle *et al.*, 2000).

I ask my reader/audience first to read and experience my story, before asking questions about it. I ask my teaching candidates to do the same when we listen to a presenter 'tell stories' about his or her prior schooling experiences, immigration experiences or last week's practicum events. As readers of the piece I present below, you will

subsequently consider the validity claims that I make as narrator and that readers can expect as audience.

As a small child I witnessed war and foreign occupation. I remember my mother holding me under the stairs in our basement during air attacks. I remember being in a neighbour's (apparently safer) basement with groups of others on those occasions when the sirens sounded early enough so there was time to run across the street. And I remember sleeping in the basement as a four-year-old child in my grandfather's house in Michelbach (8 km from Kahl), on a pile of potatoes, because we tried to avoid the artillery shots of the Americans, who were clearing the village of German soldiers in the last days of the war. An inhabitant of Michelbach wrote the following account of those events at Easter 1945. The ambivalence of hope and fear within existing and new allegiances shines through that account (The account is omitted here).

When the war was officially over, my mother and my aunt, with me and my cousin on their bicycles, rode the few kilometers back to our house in Kahl. When we got there we saw American soldiers all over the yard. They were cooking lunch in large boilers. We had to live in a neighbour's basement. Later the soldiers left and we were allowed back into our house, but we had to leave twice more in the next while, usually in the middle of the night, because that was when the troops arrived. We were not allowed to take anything out of our house each time we left. I was four years old at that time and had not started school.

Much later, (maybe around 1953 or 1954) I remember a day on the playing field near my high school in Aschaffenburg. I don't recall why our class was out there, only that it was for some physical activity. Suddenly a group of black children rushed out to play in an adjacent play yard. I was not surprised to see black people. For years I had seen black American soldiers everywhere. But these were children and they talked the way I did. The building they had emerged from was apparently an orphanage or some kind of government agency. I remember being totally stunned by what I saw: complete paradox, black skin and Franconian dialect. I knew they were probably offsprings of the kinds of relationships we had learned to despise: American soldiers and German women. Initially in 1945, 'fraternization' was illegal, but it still happened, usually, so we thought, for the sake of food, cigarettes, nylons and perfume. I remember being a part of a group of four- and five-year-olds who ran after a woman in our neighbourhood sniffing her perfume and whispering 'Amiweib' (American slut). She lived down the street and had an American boyfriend. I also remember her wedding day; she wore a white dress; he was in uniform. Pictures were taken on the front lawn while we kids watched from the sidewalk.

How had we four and five-year-olds come to this attitude? Ambivalent relationships had been the order of the day for some time. While my house was occupied by American soldiers, the neighbourhood kids and I still played on the street next to it in our usual space. But we kept an eye on the soldiers, and perhaps they on us, because every now and then we got some goodies from them. Once they asked a girlfriend and me into a neighbour's house and gave us a sweet fruit dish, which I now think was pineapple. I had never tasted

it before. All our interaction went on without language, except perhaps for some isolated words in the other tongue. In my ears rang my mother's concerned warning: 'Never say Neger' (the German word for Negro which sounded very much like the English 'nigger'). And 'Never say Nazi'. I knew that word only as a derogatory term, used by the boys in the neighbourhood to insult one another. For me it carried a vague sense of threat I did not understand.

The Americans seemed friendly, but I had heard stories of destruction. We were barred from entering the nicest pubs and other familiar areas and places of leisure, and then we heard that they had been totally wrecked by uncaring soldiers. An acquaintance of my mother, a woman of some means, found her previously nicely furnished house covered with human excrement when she was allowed to return after American requisitions. But refugees from the East said that the Americans, thank goodness, were not like the Russians who, they said, raped all the women and struck general terror among the population. To me, American soldiers all looked handsome in their uniforms and they all looked alike. Some were black of course, and some were white, but we had no clues to social position or regional background. Above all, the Americans were rich. They had chewing gum, cigarettes, chocolate, nylons, perfume. They were the only ones who could drive in the upholstered first-class in trains, while the *Holzklasse*, the sections with the wooden seats, were overcrowded by Germans. The soldiers' German girlfriends too looked very different from other women: they wore makeup and better clothing.

Customs differed. At Christmas, 1945, I remember shocked comments: 'Did you see what the Americans did to Frankfurt? They made it look like a carnival town with lots of gaudy lights'. This seemed sacrilegious. It was not Christmas to the German mind at all. There were other paradoxes. My uncle, a daring, rather opinionated fellow, had escaped from prison camp in France. He was the first man among our relatives to come back home. But the Americans imprisoned him as soon as he arrived—for having escaped from the French. A year later, however, he worked at the American army base in Hanau, and there he probably stole what was going to be a Christmas present for me. Everyone had gathered around the Christmas table excitedly to see my reaction, but I put it aside carelessly, not recognizing what it was: my first chocolate bar.

Germany's mixture of admiration and disgust with the American conquerors continued. Villagers had to go through the denazification program. All I remember about my grade one teacher is that she had been my father's teacher and had to go before a tribunal to prove that she was not a Nazi before she could become my teacher. In 1949, Germany got a constitution. I heard of it in school. Apparently it was something good. The Americans also provided us with hot meals in school, which to us often tasted so bad that we threw them into the brook on the way home. On the radio we heard of the Marshall Plan and American aid, and I listened to the strange American language. English to me seemed like talking with a mouth full of hot potatoes.

Those stories and impressions have to be placed into the context of a German crisis of identity. It was a time when enemies had to be experienced as heroes,

and former heroes had to be thought of as villains. The past was unspeakable. No one wanted to discuss it. The present was dreary: nothing but hunger and destroyed cities. Yet human beings always long for beauty and something good with which to fill their imaginations. Hitler had glorified and ordered the glorification of everything German. That was now 'out'. What I remember about the post-war period were magazines full of stories about foreign royalty: I knew all about the British Royal family: Prince Charles was born two days before my first brother; our whole school went to see the film of Queen Elizabeth's wedding and also the one of her coronation. I also knew about the in's and out's of the love life of the Persian Shah and his European wife Soraya. Popular music on the radio was in the German language, but the themes and images were all from foreign countries: Italy, America, the Pacific islands ... a safe, sentimental haven for a guilty and ambivalent people. (Conle, 1993, pp. 22–27)

In this section, the narrator is the inquirer. The objects of inquiry are facets of the inquirer's own life and their social contexts. Data are constructed out of memories, documents, reflections on either, and interpretations of all of these. Narrative sections such as the above segment routinely find their way into graduate courses in North America, particularly at the Institute where I work. They are presented orally to colleagues; in written form they are approved by advisors, read by defence committees, published in conference papers and books. In each case, there is an audience that assumes that certain validity claims are made by the author and there are ways of challenging these claims in the various venues just mentioned. What may such a challenge consist of?

Admittedly, in relation to the above excerpt, challenges did not occur very often, certainly not in the form of provoking an argument. However, certain expectations were in place that, so I argue, made the whole practice a rational enterprise. Listeners were expected to, and did, ask questions to come to a better understanding of a narrative segment and to help the inquirer/narrator to understand her own narrative better, to clarify aspects of it for others or herself; to come to different or additional interpretations of what was said so far; and to expand, or diminish, certain story lines. The aim was definitely on mutual understanding, whether the partners in conversation were multiple or whether the inquirer, in dialogue with herself, tried to understand what she had put down as data so far. What kind of questions were asked in these contexts?

I have no taped data, but suggest the kind of questions that tended to be asked about truth, sincerity, rightness and comprehensibility in this piece. For example, there might have been certain incongruencies in a story line, especially since experiential narratives often do not follow a chronological order. Dates may not coincide, etc. In my case, I eventually added excerpts from an *Ortschronik* (village chronicle) to get some additional data that strengthened what I had to say. Someone might have said: 'I'm amazed that you can remember this detail! What else can you say about it?' Or: 'I'm confused about what you say happened here. Can you give that sequence again in more detail?' Such comments relate to 'truth claims'. They check out descriptive statements about events in a plot line, or they ascertain certain facts or characteristics of people or settings. They relate to something in the objective world and establish the existence of states of affairs [7].

On one occasion, I asked a visitor from Israel—a colleague who remembered living the Second World War as a Jew—to read the second chapter of my work, including the

above section and other war experiences from the perspectives of a German child. The Jewish visitor read the piece, but would not comment on it, speaking instead of her discomfort and resistance while reading the chapter. She was not ready to take in and accept a German narrative about something as painful as the Second World War was for her. This incident raises the issue of the 'rightness' or social acceptability of a communicative act. There may very well be occasions on which certain narratives are inappropriate and there may be normative contents that need to be challenged. It may become necessary to justify a statement within a narrative, or even a whole narrative inquiry, by explicating a given situation in light of legitimate expectations. Such challenges aim at normative rightness in a social world. A narrative inquirer implicitly guarantees, and may have to justify, that the communication is 'right with respect to an existing normative context or that the normative context that it is supposed to satisfy is itself legitimate' (Habermas, 1984, p. 99).

Since my request to our Israeli visitor, years have passed. From my current perspective, I would say that my story fits into a category of stories that were typical in post-1945 Germany. They focus on German experience without sensitivity to the horrors of the Holocaust and without any significant awareness of German guilt in a war that was waged specifically to destroy. Those early German accounts exemplify a gap of narrative knowledge that urgently needed to be filled. As a Canadian who has lived outside of Germany since 1955, I told a story in 1992 that still fitted into that early post-war category. Since 1992, I have tried to fill my gap of narrative knowledge and vicarious experience by reading and listening to many accounts of Jewish experience (e.g. Améry, 1977; Klemperer, 1975; Langer, 1999; Mannheimer, 2000; Perel, 1993; Schneider, 2000; Semprun & Wiesel, 1997), of German resistance (Breloer, 1984; Dertinger, 1997; Fogelman, 1998), and of post-war efforts to cope with the horrors and lies of that war (Brum *et al.*, 1995; Brumlick, 1998; Deutschkron, 1997; Jürgens, 1997; Kleindienst, 1999; Mack, 1988). If I told my story again today, I would locate those episodes of my life within contexts expanded by the experience of that new narrative repertoire.

In addition to truth claims and appropriateness claims, I see narrative, more than other types of communicative action, as highlighting an inner world of subjectivity to which the inquirer has privileged access. I, as narrator in the above excerpt, expressed desires, conveyed emotions, described mood or simply told what was on my mind. My listeners had to assume that I was truthful about the contents of my inner world as I perceived them at the time of telling. Explicitly or implicitly, I had to claim to be truthful or sincere. My readers or listeners might have stopped me to ask, 'Are you sure you really believe this? Do you think you are perhaps spouting forth something you would like to believe, but you are really still convincing yourself and others?' Or they might say, 'I hear you saying something over here and something else over there. How can I interpret these two episodes in a way that they do not seem so contradictory?' It is important to note that such questions ask for more narrative rather than constitute the start of an argument. It seems silly to argue with someone's experience. But self-deception is always a possibility and probably never completely avoidable (Crites, 1979).

Furthermore, readers of the above segment might ask me if I really remembered some of those events or whether I am constructing them now because I perhaps read about them somewhere. It must be kept in mind that narrative by its very nature is constructed from two perspectives at once: the 'then' perspective and the 'now' perspective (Conle, 1997c, 1999; Crites, 1971; Polkinghorne, 1988). A certain degree

of mixing of the two is unavoidable. It would seem unwise for any narrator, or for his audience, to assume that experiential stories are 'the truth' about past events. Nevertheless, a narrator in narrative inquiry must be careful about labelling something a memory. Also, the stories about those memories change with a changed or more informed now-perspective (Conle, 1997c). I pointed to the likelihood of such a change with regard to the story cited earlier. One further comment about the sincerity issue: it is of course obvious that a narrating inquirer cannot do what may be perfectly acceptable in fiction, namely, to manipulate the feelings and impressions of her audience for certain purposes and to forego sincerity while pretending to have certain emotions or insights simply in order to create a powerful effect.

A claim to sincerity may be difficult to redeem when challenged. In Habermas's words:

The claim to sincerity connected with expressive utterances is not such that it could be directly redeemed through argument as can truth or rightness claims. At most, the speaker can show in the consistency of his actions whether he really means what he said. [...] Insincerity can be revealed by the lack of consistency between an utterance and the past or future actions internally connected with it. (Habermas, 1984, p. 41)

In my experience, asking for 'more narrative' is the ideal way to challenge a claim of truthfulness and to check out whether the 'manifest intention of the speaker is meant as it is expressed' (Habermas, 1984, p. 99).

Finally, as a fourth validity claim, a narrativist in education needs to claim that the stories she tells, or writes, are comprehensible in the sense that symbolic expectations have been produced correctly. We call a narrative inquirer rational 'if he is ready to come to an understanding and reacts to disturbances by reflecting on linguistic rules' (Habermas, 1984, p. 21). It may be useful to keep in mind here that developments in the literary arts have taken a turn toward no longer complying with this claim. It would be considered an insupportable imposition on artistic activity to comply with Habermas' fourth validity claim. There are many wonderful, masterfully written, literary narratives where linguistic rules and conventional, symbolic expectations have been violated. The narrative inquirer, however, who wants to be part of a social science enterprise that has a rational base does not have this option.

Narrative methods may have been welcomed by many who acknowledge the apparent demise of Enlightenment principles [8]. By some, this may be seen as an uneasy abandonment of the project of modernity; for others, profound philosophical reorientations may leave no alternative. As an educational researcher and as teacher educator, I hesitate to relinquish the gains we have come to value as children of the Enlightenment, such as relative independence from authority; personal autonomy; the rule of reason; etc., in my research work as well as in my teaching (Conle *et al.*, 2000). But I also acknowledge that gains from the Enlightenment were made possible, at least in part, through a reliance on the philosophy of consciousness that developed in the wake of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* and that this philosophy has been largely discredited [9].

It is not clear to me whether educational researchers who use narrative methods relate their inquiry to this dilemma in the philosophical foundations of their work or whether they see it as irrelevant. I believe the legitimacy of narrative methods in the social sciences hinges on the apparent impasse I just pointed out and the suggestion

that validity claims are made, and should be made, to safeguard the rationality of narrative inquiry in both research and teacher education.

NOTES

- [1] Narrative inquiry in graduate teacher education and pre-service teacher education has allowed researchers and teacher educators to work with personal experience without first objectifying it (Conle, 2000a). In that particular tradition, narrative methods are being used, not only for inquiry into the researcher's own experience (Bell, 1997; Mullen, 1994), but also for exploring the experiences of others (Conle, 1992), for researching institutional settings (Conle, 1997b), life in classrooms (Lees, 1993), policy effects (Dunne, 1998), immigration experiences (He, 1998; Li, 1991), and so forth.
- [2] In this paper 'narrative inquiry' refers to a practice where researchers, teacher educators, in-service or student teachers study their own experience or that of other people, explore institutions and places with the understanding that action and beliefs are grounded in personal, cultural histories and should not be inquired into without accounting for these as well. The inquirer and the objects of inquiry therefore intertwine in the inquiry process, in the data collection as well as in the examination of that data. Interview data are always supplemented by participant observation, about which notes are written in narrative style. From these notes, narrative accounts are constructed cooperatively with participants. These accounts become the final written texts. There is of course always some autobiographical content in a narrative inquiry of this sort (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1994; Conle, 1996) and often inquiries are primarily autobiographical (Conle, 1999, 2000b; Li, 1991). In this article I base my observations on the qualities and processes of 'narrative inquiry' introduced and developed in one institution during the period from 1986 to 2000.
- [3] Legitimation of the sort I envisage has to be undertaken by researchers within the particular tradition that is being examined. Only those who are thoroughly familiar with a form of inquiry through having personally engaged in that particular practice know the day-to-day methodological detail that constitutes the rationality of the process.
- [4] Habermas defines communicative action as 'the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement' (1984, p. 86).
- [5] In this context, Habermas defines truth as statements that are seen as corresponding to states of affairs in the world (1984, p. 87), that is to say, corresponding to situations in a shared life-world. This life-world is bounded by what its members recognize as shared background knowledge about it. McCarthy (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994, p. 76) clarifies that Habermas points to presuppositions here rather than absolutes and explains that 'partners in conversation have to suppose an objective world and must claim to have construed some truth about it.'
- [6] My work was supported for two years by a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Conle, 1993).
- [7] The sense in which the word 'objective world' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 120) is used here does not have any connotations of absoluteness or ahistorical definition. A

world gains in objectivity through counting as one and the same world for a community of speaking and acting subjects. An indefinite number of potential observers have something to contribute to this objectivity.

- [8] The philosophical developments are well known and have been described, among others, by MacIntyre (1981), Gadamer (1960), Habermas (1987b) and Honneth (1995).
- [9] Habermas (1987, 1993) raises these issues, also McCarthy (1994) and Honneth (1995).

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