

9-1-2005

# Amish Teacher Dialogues with Teacher Educators: Research, Culture, and Voices of Critique

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## Recommended APA Citation

Zehr, H., Moss, G., & Nichols, J. (2005). Amish Teacher Dialogues with Teacher Educators: Research, Culture, and Voices of Critique. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(3), 593-620. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol10/iss3/9>

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### Abstract

This dialogical project is framed with in critical inquiry methods to bring an Amish teacher's voice to the fore front. Henry, an Amish middle school teacher, and two university teacher educators in northeastern Indiana collaboratively critiqued educational literature written about the Amish culture from the past 15 years. Building on critical ethnography and narrative methods, the authors used dialogue as a medium for inquiry. The intersubjective, collaborative project democratized the university researchers' research role and allowed an Amish voice to gain a place in the academic field of research.

### Keywords

Amish, Narrative, Qualitative, Culture, Critical Inquiry, Intersubjective, Dialogue, Voice, Context, Contextualize, Community, Story, Trustworthiness, Ethnography, and Narrative Analysis

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## **Amish Teacher Dialogues with Teacher Educators: Research, Culture, and Voices of Critique**

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### **Contextualizing the Story: Voice of an Amish Teacher**

Why conduct a research study about research literature written about the Amish? This project was designed to allow two university professors and me (Henry), an Amish middle school teacher, an opportunity to use critical narrative research methods to read research written by English<sup>1</sup> researchers about the Amish culture; compare the research to my personal experiences growing up Amish, living as an Amish adult, and teaching in an Amish school; and situate my voice in the academy as a voice of critique.

My experience as a researcher and co-author begins with my story of becoming a middle school teacher in an Amish school in the community in which I was raised. While harvesting wheat at my father's place in 1988, I overheard a discussion between my sister and her husband about the discipline problems in the Amish school that their children attended. I said, "I think I could teach." From doing this research project with co-authors, Glenda and Joe, I understand that what happened next cannot happen in English schools. The next night, the Amish school board came over to ask if I would consider teaching seventh and eighth grade students. I said, "Yes," and that is how I became a teacher in my community.

Today, I reflect back and realize this was a calling and a gift that I did not know I had. With teaching came the desire to learn how to effectively help and bring out the best

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<sup>1</sup> In the Amish community where Henry lives, non-Amish Whites are referred to as English.

in children. I was always reaching out to other educators, who I got to know, to learn of strategies that I could use in teaching children. My first introduction to a university professor came from Indiana University--Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), a dental hygienist who came to our school every year to do a presentation about taking care of our teeth. This was very beneficial to our community.

We also had connections with the local public school corporation as they sent professionals to our school each year to conduct eye exams and hearing tests. Now and then, educators came to our school to make health presentations about smoking and tobacco products, and how they could affect the heart and lungs. The local fire department came annually to instruct students in fire prevention. A speech therapist from the local school corporation also screened all of our first grade students, provided weekly speech therapy for those students, and any of the older students who still had speech problems. I was a strong advocate of promoting and welcoming these types of available and free educational programs into our Amish school for the benefit of the community.

My next contact with educators from the English educational culture involved a retired vocational agriculture teacher from Purdue University. He had an ongoing research project creating hybrid corn. This retired professor drove up to my house in 1998 and asked me if I would be interested in letting him rent some of my land to test a different variety of seeds than what is usually grown in Northeastern Indiana. I sent him to my neighbor who participated in the research. Though I did not participate in the project, the retired professor dropped by my house occasionally to talk about the project. While I was not interested in my land being used for the project, I was interested in learning more about the techniques it takes to grow corn and develop new and better varieties. For me, this was practical science for this area, which is known for its agricultural concentration on corn crop.

Separate but connected for me and our school, a local corn research center contacted one of the parents from our school, who contacted me about doing a school fundraiser by hand-harvesting their seed plots. This gave me the opportunity to see first hand what the retired professor had been describing in his research project. While fundraising was central to the two-day harvesting field trip, this was a real hands-on science experience for the seventh and eighth grade boys and girls from our Amish school, six parents, and myself as we engaged in many conversations with the research center's field workers. We learned many things in the field and continued classroom discussions of what we learned for several days and weeks to come.

A couple of years later, in 2001, the retired professor asked for my help in his corn research project. He explained how it takes many hands to conduct the research he was doing and thought my students and I could help him and learn in the process. Because of my past experiences with the corn research center, I was ready to embrace the retired professor's project. The professor came into the school with charts and presentation panels to explain to our students the process of selective corn breeding, which is taught in our science textbooks. He helped us create our own corn plot along the school yard fence, which met his research needs of isolating the corn from stray pollen of other field corn. This experience introduced selective breeding reproduction to my seventh and eighth grade classes in plain and simple form, as the professor taught us how to harvest pollen from the male corn and transfer it onto the female silk to produce a

hybrid corn. This hands-on experience helped the students to understand the textbook teaching of selective livestock and plant breeding.

A year later, in April 2002, the retired professor who had met Glenda, one of the co-authors of this project, at his church, brought Glenda out to meet me when he was coming to my house to bring me seeds for planting at our school. She and the retired professor had been waiting at my store, next to my house, for two hours so that she could meet me. That was an indication to me that she thought there was an importance of making a connection to our Amish culture. As soon as she was introduced to me as a university professor at IPFW and former middle school teacher like myself, the wheels started turning in my head. I was already thinking here was another opportunity to benefit for myself and the children at school in some way.

In that first conversation, it did not take long to find that we had a kindred spirit of wanting to promote and advance education in all walks of life, even though there was a great difference in our own education, her as a university professor and my eighth grade education. Glenda was interested in visiting my school so I told her she'd better come the next Monday because we only had one more week of the semester before summer break.

Glenda came that following Monday and spent the day at our school. She made herself at home in my classroom and with the students by answering questions and playing softball at recess. Her interactions eliminated what could have been barriers. I did not feel like she was imposing on our Amish culture. During our conversation at the end of the day, Glenda asked me if I had ever read any research articles on the Amish. I had not. She told me that she had 17 articles. I told her I would like to read them, and she said she would make copies for me. Glenda brought me copies of the articles the following Friday. I was cooking hamburgers out on the grill when she arrived, and my wife Rose asked her to stay for supper. By the time she left, at 10:00 that night, it seemed like we were friends and had known each other a long time. She called the next week to see if I had started reading the articles. I had, and she asked me if I would be interested in working together with her and another professor on a research project using these articles.

I was open to the idea and met with Glenda and Joe, co-authors, at my house the next week, to learn about what Glenda called narrative research. When she introduced me to Joe Nichols, I began thinking; again, here is an opportunity to learn. The idea of doing research in a narrative way of dialoguing, in a conversational manner, sounded interesting because we could all share with each other our experiences versus other kinds of research methods, where a university researcher comes in and interviews and gathers facts and then writes from his or her perspective only. I was very open to this type of study (narrative research). It fit with my ongoing goal of building a relationship between our Amish schools and the local university. Before I became a teacher, I had the mindset that I could not relate to professors in higher education. I did not think people at the university would want to converse with a person with only an eighth grade education. During my years as a middle school teacher, that thought changed as I interacted with educational professionals. I was ready for a professional relationship with Glenda and Joe.

### **Contextualizing the Story: Voice of a Teacher Educator and Qualitative Researcher**

My (Glenda) theoretical grounding in narrative inquiry and critical ethnography further contextualize this study. I had used critical narrative ethnography for my

dissertation study (Moss, 2001b) less than a year before I met Henry. I had also read a critical ethnography about the Amish (Waite & Crockett, 1997) while working as a research assistant, during my doctoral studies, in a Scholar-Practitioner Leadership<sup>2</sup> model in East Texas. I was interested in Waite's contribution to critical leadership theory, but was puzzled when I ran across his co-authored article about the Amish. While the title, *Whose education? Reform, culture, and the Amish* definitely sounded critical, I could not conceptualize how conducting a study on this minority cultural group could inform educational leadership theory for public schools in North America.

It was not until I traveled to northeastern Indiana, to interview for a university teaching position in July of 2001, that I understood why an educational leader might want to conduct research among the Amish. When Joe (co-author), chair of the search committee, drove me on a sight-seeing tour of the local community, I was awed by the sight of automobiles and horse-drawn buggies sharing space on streets less than 15 minutes northeast of the university. With a sense that I would be offered the teaching position and move to northeastern Indiana, I returned to Texas and completed a search for peer-reviewed research literature on the Amish, and found the 17 articles<sup>3</sup> that became the texts we used in this project.

The day I went to visit Henry's school, in May 2002, I wore a black skirt and white blouse, thinking I needed to dress as close to my perception of Amish dress as I could. I felt very comfortable in Henry's school, but realized it was more because of my childhood experience in parochial schools, with Catholic nuns as teachers. It was not hard to understand the role that cultural values, such as dress, played in the community. I had grown up with cultural values, including school uniforms and having to cover my head for worship until the Catholic Church changed the practice in the early 1960s.

A dialogical relationship<sup>4</sup> had already begun, and the following week when I delivered the articles to Henry's home, I was invited to eat supper and visit with the Zehrs and another family who was coming over at 7:00 p.m. Henry constantly asked me questions about my role as a university teacher and shared his knowledge and experience as a teacher. He specifically asked me about my prior experiences working with students who had trouble learning.

I left Henry's home appreciating the opportunity to get to know Henry and his friends within the Amish community. There was the potential to gain educational insights from Henry, learn about another culture, contribute to Henry's professional development, and grow personally and professionally myself. The next week I called Henry to see how the reading was going and to ask if he would be interested in doing a research project

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<sup>2</sup> See Stephen F. Austin State University webpage, <http://www.education.sfasu.edu/sed/Doctoral/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> I was also very interested in multicultural education and had just finished my dissertation, a critical cultural study of a bilingual education program in East Texas. I had also just completed a study on multicultural education (Moss, 2001a). I wanted to learn about this cultural group that was a part of the broader community that I would be joining.

<sup>4</sup> My grounding in the use of dialogue is the work of Isaacs (1993), Burbules (1993), Jenlink and Carr (1996), and Freire (1998/1970). I use the term dialogue to refer to a type of talk between people that builds relationships based on a desire to understand one another's point of view and promote reciprocal learning. While I am conscious that the kind of learning community that develops from this kind of conversing has the potential for change among participants, my goal was not intentional to change Henry or Joe. At the same time, I did not try to resist changing myself as I engaged the texts and learned from our dialogue sessions.

with me and another professor (Joe Nichols). Henry had already read several of the articles and was very interested in talking with me and Joe about the proposed project. We set a time and went to Henry's house, where I introduced him to Joe and described a narrative, dialogical process that was similar to a process that I was using as pedagogy in the classroom and to research teaching and learning with my students<sup>5</sup>.

### **Contextualizing the Story: Voice of a Teacher Educator and Quantitative Researcher**

Growing up on the wheat-tossed plains of Oklahoma, I (Joe) was raised to be well-grounded, believing in traditional values of hard work, family, God, and country. My educational experiences as a child were mostly positive, and school was always a welcomed experience for me. As I began my high school career in the 1970s in a poor, inner-city, dilapidated building, mandatory integration and cross-town bussing of students, for diversity purposes in the Oklahoma City Public Schools, became an opportunity for me to observe and experience prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination on a daily basis.

Throughout my tumultuous high school days, riots, bomb threats, and violent student confrontations became, in essence, part of our daily curricular studies. Every day became a lesson in survival and "forced" interactions with diverse cultures. My initial experience with diversity and multiculturalism took on a jaded perspective, one that has clearly influenced my development over the years.

After graduating from high school and eventually obtaining a bachelors degree in mathematics education, my next 15 years were spent in suburban middle and high school classrooms in a very quantitative "right or wrong" environment. Teaching mathematics was a welcomed respite for me, leaving little space for what one of my co-authors (Glenda) might call qualitative or narrative inquiry. For me, mathematics and statistics (hint: quantitative focus) was the most pure and unbiased exploration of fact that anyone could pursue. As I advanced in my doctoral studies at the University of Oklahoma, it left me well-groomed in quantitative methodology, and this type of research seemed like a perfect match for my background and interests.

As I completed my doctorate in the spring of 1994, IPFW granted me an interview for a tenure-track position. When my father learned of my impending visit, he was less than impressed, remembering a brief visit in his younger days that suggested Fort Wayne to be an old industrial town, too close to both Chicago and Detroit for his liking. Arriving in Fort Wayne for my interview, I was pleasantly surprised. Almost immediately, I was taken by my university tour guide to the outskirts of town where I realized the community's vast agricultural base was not unlike that of Oklahoma. On this tour, I was also introduced to the Amish community as I saw farms and buggies a mere 5 to 10 miles from the university campus.

I was immediately intrigued by the Amish community and lifestyle that on the surface, seemed to share many of my same values. Their constancy of family, school, and

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<sup>5</sup> I have since presented and/or published some of those projects (Beeler, Hayes, Lewis, Russell, with Moss, 2004; Moss, 2003, 2004a, 2004c; Moss, Bender, Sorg, Duckworth, Sistrunk, Burkernbeul, & Smith, J. 2003; Stephens & Sadler with Moss, 2002).

religion appeared to be inseparable. As my family moved to Fort Wayne that summer, the first place I showed my wife and children when we arrived was the university, and then we headed east of town for a tour of the Amish community. As a new assistant professor in the School of Education, my life was busy the first few years on campus. Trying to establish a research agenda, and assisting my children in their transition to a new community and school consumed most of my time. Amidst a series of quantitative research projects and making professional connections in the local schools, life was hectic and my driving visits to the Amish community provided me with a sense of yearning for a more casual and relaxed pace.

Thinking about conducting a research project within the Amish community and schools was always on my mind, but the desire seemed to be littered with potential limitations. My initial perceptions and stereotypes of the Amish were that of a cold, closed community, unwelcoming of their “English” neighbors, and their habits and culture. I also was hesitant to pursue personal contact or dialogue with the Amish, fearing rejection or the negative impact that I might have on their community. My training, using traditional quantitative methodology, taught me that the researcher was a data collector and analyst, who was buffered by limited “opinion,” who was not influenced by the subject or data, and therefore, in theory, did not influence the subject or data being explored. My traditional training, experience, and my hesitation to potentially influence the Amish community kept me from pursuing the topic further.

A few years later when I took Glenda (co-author) on a guided tour of Fort Wayne and the Amish community, as she interviewed for a position at our institution, I casually mentioned my interest in the Amish culture and their educational philosophy and structure. After Glenda arrived on campus the following school year, I began to learn about qualitative methods, particularly narrative, from her. During her second semester, we conducted a dialogical project with one of my students (Moore, Nichols, & Moss, 2002). This prepared me to think of Henry as a co-contributor with each of us sharing information and opinions, and learning from the experience rather than thinking of the Amish as data to explore, observe, and interpret. Glenda was fortunate to be introduced to Henry (co-researcher and co-author), and in turn, I eventually met Henry, who at the time was teaching in an Amish school. I was pleasantly surprised by his openness and our common interests in the local community and the teaching profession.

My initial reservations with the project centered on my limited qualitative research background; I was not sure if I would have the patience and skill to be an active and academically sound participant in this process. Second, given Henry’s limited formal educational background, I was concerned that he may not have the skills necessary to write and express himself in a format that would be accepted by the research community. Third, would the discussions that Glenda and I had with Henry have any potential negative influence on him, his family, or the Amish community as a whole? In addition, given my previous negative experiences with diverse populations as a high school student, how might this influence my perceptions of the Amish and their culture?

In the end, I trusted Glenda and her previous experience and training in qualitative methodology and narrative inquiry to guide us through the process. In retrospect, Henry had as much training as I had with qualitative research, and each of us entered the project open to any results that might help us develop both personally and professionally. To address my hesitancy and worry about a negative influence on Henry or his family, he



assured us that if he began to feel uncomfortable or anticipated negative repercussions from the community, he would tell us and the project would immediately be stopped. With this reassurance, I welcomed this project as an opportunity to expand my own research skills and redefine diversity and culture that I might better understand and appreciate my colleagues at the university and my neighbors in the Amish community.

### **Critical Frame, Methodology Design, and Analysis: Glenda's Perspective**

I brought together critical ethnography (Anderson, 1989) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1995) for the present study. Critical ethnography as research is designed to problematize a policy or practice within a public social system (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995; Simon & Dippo, 1986). Critical ethnography applies social critique in the examination of educational policies and practices with the ultimate goal of encouraging social change (Anderson, 1989). Critical ethnography uses a critical lens by design and purpose to analyze patterns of behavior within a culture and to expose the ways social structures of racism, class, and patriarchy maintain dominant social norms. This method is used in educational research to examine "the role that school plays in the social and cultural classes, gender roles, and racial and ethnic prejudice" (p. 251).

When looking for peer-reviewed journal articles about the Amish before I moved to Indiana, I had not purposely looked for articles void of Amish authorship. I had found the articles by conducting a search for all peer-reviewed articles concerning the Amish. The 17 articles used in this project are the ones I found and was able to access during the summer of 2001, before moving to Indiana. When I met Henry (Amish middle school teacher), I thought critically about the fact that the articles were all authored by non-Amish scholars and framed this project within critical narrative ethnography to create space for Henry's voice as an Amish teacher, to be more fully included in the discourse about what it means to be Amish.

In framing this project, I thought about how the academic arena functions like a school and plays a role in establishing cultural identities through ethnographic studies and, therefore, designed this study to critique academic studies that have interpreted the social, cultural, and educational identity of the Amish. I designed the project as critical in the way that Anderson (1998) problematized the lack of authentic participation in educational reform. The void of peer-reviewed literature in the academy that is authored by Amish scholars, and the scarcity of narratives by Amish participants, indicates a lack of participation on the academic level in establishing the cultural and educational patterns of the Amish.

While I am not using dialogue as performative (Austin, 1975; Bourdieu, 1991; Lee, 1997), to suggest that Henry's Amish voice has distinctive authority to establish a single truth about Amish culture and education: I am suggesting that Henry's experience, growing up Amish and teaching in an Amish school since 1988, is valid and can contribute to broadening the understanding of the Amish culture and educational practices. How can that knowledge of experience be researched and contribute to the academy's knowledge base? I turned to narrative methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 1996) and critical storytelling (Barone, 1992a, 1992b, 1994) as a beginning place to ground our project.

Narrative stories as a resource for contributing to the knowledge base of learning and teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1996) are distinguished from critical stories (Barone, 1992a, 1992b, 1994) that raise the moral consciousness of readers and work for the transformation of thinking and practice. Clandinin and Connelly (1986, 1988) have used narrative inquiry as research methodology to examine teachers' personal knowledge of classrooms. They identified the relationship between the inquiry process and the resultant product noting, "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" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). They explain that "narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study" (p. 2). Thus, in this project, Henry would have the opportunity to tell his narrative of experience, of living and teaching Amish; and Joe and I would use narrative methods to study Henry's narrative.

Unlike Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) use of narrative inquiry to gain insights into the practice of teaching, by analyzing teachers' stories of experience as a data set, Henry, Joe, and I used narrative inquiry to critically analyze published literature about the Amish through Henry's stories of experience that emerged during our dialogue sessions and subsequent analysis, and to position Henry's voice in the academy as a co-author rather than a narrative subject. While Clandinin and Connelly (1991) understand that the narrative researcher joins the characters, or subjects in their experience, and the product is integrally connected to the inquiry process, Henry, Joe, and I joined in an intersubjective, Freirian (1998/1970) relationship in which dialogue became the medium of our inquiry into one another's culture and teaching practices, while analyzing published literature about the Amish. Thus, our transcribed dialogues became the product of our inquiry method of dialogue.

Henry and Joe trusted my experience with narrative methods<sup>6</sup> and viewed the process as a learning experience, in the middle of conducting the research project. When the three of us began the project, I was researching critical narrative methodology in teaching and research, using dialogue in teaching and using research as critical pedagogy. I was in the process of conducting critical narrative ethnography projects among teachers in various contexts and framing my teacher education classes within the scholar-practitioner teacher<sup>7</sup> construct (Moss, 2004a). In this project, with Henry and Joe, the goal was to critically analyze published literature about the Amish and position Henry's voice in the academy among other researchers of the Amish.

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<sup>6</sup> I (Glenda) had completed my dissertation (Moss, 2001b) using narrative methods the year before and was engaged in a narrative analysis of experiences using the method, had published a narrative inquiry project on multicultural education (Moss, 2001a), had written a narrative analysis of resegregation (Moss, 2002), was collecting data for a narrative analysis of portfolio assessment (Moss, 2003), had engaged in a dialogue study with Joe and one of his students (Moore et al., 2002), was writing a narrative analysis of scholar-practitioner teacher leadership (Moss, 2004a), and was researching dialogue in teaching for critical thinking (Moss, 2004c).

<sup>7</sup> I (Glenda) am using scholar-practitioner teacher within a critical theory frame to refer to teachers taking a critical perspective and acting within their role as teacher to engage in the political relations that make up the educational system and address political issues that affect them and their teaching practice.

Dialogue was used in the project as a multicultural narrative inquiry method,<sup>8</sup> and multicultural narrative inquiry became critical pedagogy as Joe and I recognized our misconceptions about the Amish culture, and Henry recognized his misconceptions about the university culture and professors. Thus, critical ethnography and narrative methods in this project are about legitimizing Henry's voice in the academy as one more voice, moving the discourse in the direction of dialogue that includes multiple voices (Freire, 1998/1970).

Using critical ethnography to establish space for the voices of marginalized groups has been documented by Quantz and O'Connor (1988). Drawing on Bakhtin's use of "carnival," Quantz and O'Connor described the writing of critical ethnography as an event in which multiple voices, especially marginalized voices, participate in dialogue that moves towards the inclusion of all voices. Rather than Joe and I taking the traditional role of researcher and Henry taking the role of anonymous subject, the three of us engaged in a "carnival" of three co-researchers, as a way to situate Henry's voice in the academy among the researchers speaking about Amish culture and education.

Patti Lather (1986b) argued for, "a more collaborative approach to critical inquiry...to empower the researched, to build emancipatory theory, and to move toward the establishment of data credibility within praxis-oriented, advocacy research" (p. 272). Connecting to Freirian (1998/1970) "conscientization," Lather explored "*catalytic validity*" (1986a, 1986b) as a measure of validity in critical research. She explained,

catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it. . . Efforts to produce social knowledge that will advance the struggle for a more equitable world must pursue rigor as well as relevance. (1986b, p. 272)

The blind reviewers and journal editors emerged as critical, possibly intersubjective participants, with us (co-authors) in this critical project to bring a minority voice into the academic discourse. All (editors and authors) recognized the complexity of this project that was designed with the intent of positioning Henry's voice of experience living Amish in the academy with the voices of non-Amish researchers who have spoken about the Amish, and the role of the review process to ensure research rigor and credibility. Simply publishing Henry's stories would be action on the side of democratizing the academy, but publishing his stories without rigorous grounding in methodology would "not improve the chances for the increased legitimacy of the knowledge they produce" (Lather, 1986a, p. 78), since accepting voices of experience, as the academy has done for John Dewey, is not acceptable in the present age.

Lather (1986a) argues that critical ethnographers must build the following four rigorous research measures of accountability as a minimum standard:

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<sup>8</sup> I (Glenda) named our method here "multicultural narrative inquiry method," when I had an insight that connected dialogue in teaching, multicultural education theory, narrative methods, critical storytelling, and critical ethnography. I realized that we had brought our various cultures with us into this project and engaged in dialogue to critically analyze research about the Amish. The very process was a kind of critical multicultural education process because we used Freirian dialogue through which we could grow in relationship to each others' cultural identity and into an intersubjective identity as critical researchers acting to include Henry's minority voice among the dominant voice in the academy.

1. triangulation of *methods, data sources, and theories*
2. reflexive subjectivity (some documentation of how the researcher's assumptions have been affected by the logic of the data)
3. face validity (established by recycling categories, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a sub-sample of respondents)
4. catalytic validity (some documentation that the research process has led to insight and, ideally, activism on the part of the respondents) (p. 78)

In the present project, the dialogical methodology design was intended to facilitate reflexive subjectivity among each of the three co-researchers. Henry agreed to use the journal articles about the Amish as a way to reflexively examine his own experience and share stories that either supported the research information or refuted the information. Joe and I agreed to read the articles and reflexively examine our experiences living English (White, non-Amish) and teaching in English schools as well as our presuppositions about the Amish. More importantly, Joe and I agreed to listen to Henry's stories of experience and openly dialogue about what we read, what we thought before the project, and what we thought as a result of Henry's stories. The revision process has been critical in the research project to ensure academic rigor.

In this way, one step will be made towards a "carnival" of voices in the academy in a critical, inclusive way that I understand its use to be by Quantz and O'Connor (1988). Thus, there are two dialogical layers to this project. On one level, the project was a dialogical method of analyzing among the three authors, which led to an intersubjective relationship (Buber, 1988/1965; Eisenstadt, 1992) joined by a mutual interest in learning about one another's cultural and educational experiences. On another level, the project was intended to facilitate Henry's voice being situated in the academy among those talking about Amish culture and education.

While it was not the intent for any one of us to be socialized into the other's culture, I was constantly aware of the intersubjective nature of using dialogue (Eisenstadt, 1992) and the potential influence of reading educational research articles written from the non-Amish point of view. Using the principles of dialogue that foster authentic learning and teaching (Burbules, 1993), Henry, Joe, and I attempted to suspend our opinions and judgments of each other's culture in an effort to genuinely understand one another's perspectives on the research texts and the resultant stories of experience that flowed from the dialogue.

Henry, Joe, and I agreed to read two or three articles before each dialogue session and meet once every two or three weeks at Henry's house to dialogue for 90 minutes. Henry agreed that I could record<sup>9</sup> the conversations and transcribe them for later analysis. I explained the Institutional Review Board and that approval of the project was not necessary since we were all three co-authors. I also explained first authorship and its value in the academy, and the three of us agreed that Henry would be first author on anything we presented at conferences or for publication. I told Henry and Joe about the Annual Meeting of the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing held in Columbus, Ohio, each

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<sup>9</sup> Because Joe and I thought that the Amish could not be photographed, we were not sure if the conversations could be recorded. Henry chuckled when we shared our concern and told us it would be fine to record the conversations. Henry had a cell phone (another surprise to Glenda and Joe) which transmits his voice in a similar way as recording.

October, and we agreed that we would apply to present the research paper there. I explained that one of my goals in transitioning from middle school teaching to higher education was to build a relationship between the university and classroom teachers by co-authoring with them so their voices could be heard in the academy. Since Henry did not have experience in formal research methods, he agreed that Joe and I could use our research skills to analyze the transcribed data for his critical stories of experience that either questioned the published literature or supported prior research findings.

During the dialogue sessions, Henry, Joe, and I examined the content, methodologies, and conclusions of the articles for accuracy. Central to the dialogues was Henry's reflective-reflexive critique as he focused on the content and conclusions about the Amish. Joe and I commented on the methodologies or lack of methodology in the articles.

We met seven times to discuss two or three articles each time. We began by reading the four most recent articles for the first session, but were not able to talk about all four in the 90-minute session. We read the articles in reverse chronological order beginning with the most current. Henry began each session by sharing personal stories of experience that illustrated similarities and differences with what was reported in the articles.

I recorded the conversations, Joe transcribed more than half of the taped conversations, and I transcribed the rest. I gave Henry copies of the transcriptions as Joe and I finished them. Because Joe and I were linguistically deficient in the local Amish dialect, Henry's first reading of the transcribed data was important in terms of correcting inaccurate transcriptions. It also served as a stimulus for Henry to expand his story of experience by adding and clarifying what he already told.

First, Henry reviewed the transcriptions and wrote corrections on the pages. I then went to Henry's home to review his corrections. I did not record these sessions, but think it would have been a valuable addition to the process. Instead of audio-recording these sessions, I hand-wrote, within my copy of the transcribed text, as Henry clarified his words and stories. As I read through the dialogue and engaged in further discussions with Henry, I was especially interested in hearing Henry's Amish teacher voice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1985, 1994) in order to clarify how his experiences supported the conclusions reported about Amish culture and education, and other ways that indicated his experiences living Amish were different.

Another component of the analysis process was critical in nature in that Henry taught North American standard English in his school: While he speaks an Amish dialect, he recognizes the dialect in print as different from his knowledge of standard English that he instructed from books in school. Provisions of trustworthiness took on an expanded dimension. When Henry read the transcribed data for the first time, he wanted to correct what he recognized as incorrect grammar and writing conventions as used in the academy. Maintaining faithfulness to Henry's voice and the Amish community became complex. What constituted Henry's voice? Was it what he had to say, or how he said it? Joe and I struggled with questions such as: Are we influencing Henry? How much do we explain writing conventions to him? Is teaching Henry academic writing conventions during the research process altering Henry's story? Some of the revision dialogue sessions lasted as long as five hours in an effort to ensure what Henry wanted to communicate was captured in conventional English.

This internal revision process among the three of us, lead me to reflect on the intersubjective nature of narrative methods. While in part we were engaged in a revision process in terms of writing constructions, on another level I became aware that Henry and I were discussing in great length his experiences living Amish. These extended conversations added to the rigor of the analysis of the data as I engaged in ongoing dialogue to ensure that Henry's story was expressed.

Drawing on the narrative inquiry work of Polkinghorne (1995) and critical storytelling of Barone (1992a), I analyzed the data to find Henry's narrative stories of experience embedded in the dialogue transcripts and constructed his critical narrative analysis of the articles used in the study. Here, I am using critical narrative to describe those stories that problematize the generalizations about the Amish found in some of the research articles. I looked particularly for stories where Henry's experience differed from the published research or where his critique pointed out the influence of culture on the non-English researchers' interpretation of data.

Joe and I were conscious that we were working within the contradictory tension, created by the fact that we were English researchers analyzing Henry's stories to point out the ways that some of the non-Amish researchers' were influenced by their cultural lens. I talked about this with Henry and discussed that some readers might use the fact that Joe and I are English researchers to discount our work and his voice. This project is complex as is most critical projects that attempt to bring an alternative voice into the conversation. We (co-authors) can only share our story of experience in this project and leave it to the readers to determine its value for their understanding of Amish culture and education, and for reflexively analyzing the complexity of researchers' bias in any project, qualitative or quantitative.

Before knowing Henry and listening to his stories of experience, I was not able to see the limited perspective of the Amish that were presented in the research. Also, I did not realize that my view of the Amish was shaped by those presentations by non-Amish researchers. Including an Amish voice in this project provides another view. For the three of us, it was a dialogical process rather than the distant interpretation method that we (co-authors) noted in the 17 articles (see entire list in Appendix A), as none of the authors were Amish and most based their reports on observations. Henry's voice as an Amish researcher and teacher is brought to the forefront in the narrative analysis of research that is presented within this paper.

I explained to Henry about trustworthiness in research and the value of letting critical readers, in our case other Amish people, look at our paper. Henry invited six Amish adults, five males and one female, and one English friend in the community to serve as critical readers of the original 32 page (single spaced) manuscript in an effort to expand the authenticity of the Amish voice in this paper. Henry's wife, Rose, also read the manuscript and validated its accuracy from her point-of-view. The English reader, who is male, grew up near the Amish community, but had only two years close experience with the Amish. All of the readers confirmed the credibility of the narrative text from their experiential point of view, which is contextualized by their community relationships.

Henry, Joe, and I then presented the paper in Columbus, Ohio at the Annual Meeting of Journal of Curriculum Theorizing (Zehr, Moss, & Nichols, 2002). As we began to revise the paper to submit it for publication, the three of us had to make

decisions about which stories of Henry's to leave in and which to delete from the manuscript. I re-read the narrative analysis and eliminated pieces based on convenience. For example, the discussion of one article was three pages, so I eliminated it in order to keep several other pieces that prompted Henry to analyze literacy patterns among his children and the Amish children in his school. These articles included Jared (1999), Avenatti (1996), and Patton (1994). I kept Henry's reflections on the Fishman (1996) article because it addressed educational issues of memorization and plagiarism as well as some Amish views on pride. I thought Henry's stories would be of interest and value to teachers. I also tried to keep stories that presented diverse Amish experiences as compared to the ones reported. This was not to suggest that Henry's experience negates Amish patterns observed in other community settings, but rather to contribute alternative Amish experience as a way to broaden the understanding of Amish and to place Henry's voice in the academy as one more voice.

### **Narrative Analysis of Research on the Amish: Henry's Insider Perspective**

#### **Amish Culture: Through Whose Eyes?**

Harroff (1998) focused on the Amish culture. I (Henry) was familiar with the project in his article because he visited my school when he was researching the Amish. Harroff's own words showed that most of his article was based on three months of observations and visiting with the Amish. Most of what was reported about the Amish in the article was based on one school, where he spent seven weeks.

The content of this article derives largely from a sabbatical leave project that allowed me to spend over three months in seven Old Order Amish parochial schools in Indiana and in two public schools that teach relatively large numbers of Amish children. . . . The school in which I [Harroff] observed for seven weeks is the primary focus of specific descriptions in the paper.

By custom the girls hang their bonnets and coats on one side, and the boys hang their winter caps (Amish hats in warmer weather) and coats on the other side. This separation of boys and girls in the school cloakroom, which reflects the seating arrangement when the Amish meet to worship in their homes, is another emphasis on Amish values, on similarities between church and home and school. (Harroff, 1998, p. 245)

There is not any Amish school that I am aware of, where boys and girls are separated. We sit boy – girl and change the seating arrangements every six weeks. Academic grade levels are separated, but not by boys and girls. In worship services, males and females are pretty well separated. There would be some that would end up sitting together, according to how the seating arrangement comes out, but mostly the women would sit together and the men together. At a funeral, if it is held in a big shed, sometimes men and women sit together in families.

I'm not sure if the math curriculum that Harroff (1998) observed in his study can be generalized to all Amish classrooms. Harroff stated that in first grade children also learn to count pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, how to measure lengths of common items such as pencils and crayons, and how to work story problems (with a keen eye for first-grade humor): "Biff caught 5 bugs. He did not eat any. How many bugs did he have left? (*Learning More Numbers with Spunky*, 1995, p. 14)" (Harroff, p. 246).

I can't go back and verify how much money is taught in first grade, in my school, but it definitely is a continuation. I would tend to think it is probably introduced in first grade but not mastered. What is more important to notice about the Amish curriculum is that we see learning as a continuous process.

### **Literacy among the Amish**

Jared (1999) drew conclusions about literacy among the Amish that is different from my experiences.

In my search for children's literature about the Amish culture, I found a surprisingly small number of books. . . .The Amish are unique from other cultural groups in that those within the culture do not desire to read about themselves or their experiences in literature. (Jared, 1999, pp. 234-235)

When I was at home as an Amish child growing up, I don't remember that we ever had any books about Amish literature that were in print. With our family, we used the library a lot and we found that there were several books that portrayed the Amish in different areas, and showed the different styles of buggies they may have had in Kentucky versus Ohio or Wisconsin, Michigan. Our children find that interesting. Now, there are a lot of picture books. The children spend a lot of time looking at those books. I'm not sure if those books have just come into existence. They weren't around back when I was a child as they are now. Some of the books that were written about the Amish lifestyle were written by an author that was excommunicated or an ex-Amish. The authors just give a one-sided view of that and we're portrayed more or less as a cult. One book like that, by Beverly Lewis (1997), is called *The Shunning*.

Jared (1999) refers to a series by Mary Bortrager (1988) that portrays the Pennsylvania Amish. I have read several of those books. She [Jared] says here, "in my search for children's literature in the Amish culture, I've found a surprising small number of books" (p. 235), which I think is probably still true today. There are books out there today but in small numbers. My children have checked out maybe up to half a dozen to ten books at the library so far. Jared (1999) explains this limitation of books in the following way,

There are several reasons for the limited number of children's books regarding Amish culture. The Old Order Amish do not encourage their own members to write children's literature. They are a private group of people who are not interested in sharing their beliefs and practices openly with those who are not a part of their community. The literature written



about the Amish is written for children and adults who are not of this culture. (p. 233)

As an Amish parent and teacher, I find it very unique that someone would not want to read about their own culture or their Amish neighbor. We seldom go to the library when we don't bring a book home that is about the Amish, because our children love to look at them and love to read about them. There is less need for us to write about our culture for ourselves because we live our culture together and pass it on orally and in practice. We know our culture, and do not have to write about it and teach it to our children out of a textbook. At the same time, I find it valuable to read about my culture and write about my culture as I am doing in this research project.

### **Amish Education: Different Points of View**

Fishman (1996) portrays Amish education as primarily based on memorization and recall, suggesting that direct recall and memorization and getting the exact black and white answer is most important. That would be the easiest way to teach if our reading comprehension was set up where every answer was cut and dry, black and white; but obviously they're not. We have at least three different reading workbooks composed by three different sets of people, and they're not nearly the same. There are a lot of variables.

Fishman (1996) says, "But consider this: plagiarism is only plagiarism if your culture says it is" (p. 368). He concludes that there are four beliefs held by the Amish.

Belief 1: Truth is immutable, unchanging, and found in books, starting with the Bible.

Belief 2: Right and wrong answers exist for every question (including the question "What is the truth about forget-me-nots?")

Belief 3: Time is valuable; it should never be wasted because there is too much work to be done and too little time in which to do it. It is a waste of time to restate something that is already perfectly well-stated.

Belief 4: Originality is prideful...no Amish person would ever want to claim that she or he writes as well as a published writer. Therefore, when they fail to use the baroque, academic citation system, Amish children are *not* saying about their copied work, 'Look at what I wrote.' Rather, they are saying, 'Here are the facts—here is the truth about the topic, presented as accurately and efficiently as I could present it. (pp. 368-369)

As an Amish teacher, I just visited a fifth-grade class over in another Amish school and topical reports were something that teacher had started this year. Each fifth grade student was supposed to choose something, take the encyclopedia, and write a report on it, and at the end of the report they got to ask five questions. Each student got out a blank piece of paper and wrote down the answers to those five questions on what they heard a particular student read. Now, they copied that right out of the encyclopedia.

When I was there that day, a student wrote about lions. He chose lions as a topic, and he read everything off: He said what the names of the cubs were called, how big they

are, and what they eat. And, then those were the questions he asked, and the students had to answer the five questions. I don't know if there was really a grade given out on that because it was just kind of fun when they did it. They took the encyclopedia and if there was a picture, they made a copy of it, a photo of it, and put it on the front of the report and they then put that up on the board. I think that student will remember his report for as long as he lives. He learned something from that. That's learning I guess.

Like Belief 2, where right and wrong answers exist for every question, well, I'm not sure there's a cut and dry answer for every answer and problem. I would never tell my students that. There are a lot of variables out there.

### **Amish Parochial Schools**

While it has been my experience as an Amish community member and teacher that most Amish prefer their children to attend Amish schools, there are not enough Amish parochial schools. This is partly because some church communities don't have enough money to support their own school. That's why in public schools where there are a lot of Amish children, changes have to be made for the Amish culture.

There are several things that the Amish would not want in their schools that are in public schools. Extra curricular activities would be one thing that we don't promote. We play sports in our own schools, but as far as making it into a career it would not be supported. A lot of your gym classes require students to wear shorts. Clothing change would be issues that we wouldn't support in the public schools.

Some Amish will send their children to the elementary grades through grade six, where changing into shorts and t-shirts for gym is not promoted. Just about all of them come to Amish schools in seventh and eighth. Very few finish out seventh and eighth grade in the public school system today. There's a school that is an exception. It has probably about three hundred, maybe five hundred students. It's a public school, and it's totally Amish. There are hardly any English children in that school, although it's a public school. There aren't any Amish teachers in it: It's taught by all English teachers.

The English school board listens to the Amish voice. Things that they don't want in their school, like evolution being taught in science, they won't teach. So school boards making policies and practices that support the Amish values when a large percentage of students in a public school are Amish do exist. I'm aware of it. We have the same things in our schools as Waite and Crockett (1997) talk about in public schools. In the first paragraph Waite and Crockett say,

American formal education seems to be lacking consensus and continuity. A system of different levels of bureaucratic control, for example, federal state, and local governing body, each with its own authority, nearly ensures, in and of itself, that conflict will ensue. Such is the American system of education. (p. 117)

When I read what Waite and Crockett (1997) wrote, I thought about how our schools are the same. I wrote on that the comment, "This also is among us on a smaller scale." It is. There is no question about it. When our school started in 1964, I know there were several families in the area that said, "You won't make it." "We're not going to

support it.” “You can’t do this on your own.” “The teachers aren’t educated.” They didn’t send any of their children to this school. There probably are a few of their grandchildren that still don’t come, but a majority of their grandchildren, after the second generation, have come to school and love it. They’re our big supporters. On page 119 (Waite & Crockett), in the left-hand column, about the third or fourth paragraph, the authors quote the principal of an Amish Mennonite school. In his view of science education it was the “intrinsic part of the entire education component.” That is the same as what I, as an Amish teacher, think. I agree with, “the need to understand the basic laws that govern our lives each day.” I agree with that. We didn’t have a science curriculum in our Amish school before I started teaching in the school down here. I put it in during the seventh grade and some of the parents said, “Why are you teaching science?” “Why are you talking about science?” “You got the students involved in it.” It’s basic science: It talks about nature, wildlife, fish, all kinds of animals, and things like that. They realized that it was important and the students really enjoyed it. However, I got “booed” on it because I decided to teach science. I said, “You live, you walk, you talk science all around you, wherever you look.”

### Literature and Reading

There was one thing in the Avenatti (1996) article that I (Henry) had highlighted, on page 162, where it says, “book farming, which involves the reading of farm journals and the following ideas therein to farm land and to take care of livestock, it’s frowned upon.” That must be, kind of, isolated because what I know of the Amish is that everybody reads as much literature as we can. We get *Indiana Dairy*. Our brother-in-law is getting into some of the produce: He gets all the produce magazines that are available. I learned a lot about intensive grazing from farm journals, and I don’t see that there is anything wrong in learning. That’s part of keeping up or staying on top of things financially, and to make the most out of your farm is by doing just that, reading those articles.

In another article, Patton (1994) quoted an Amish schoolteacher in Holmes County,

Kline says, “Learning to read is the most important subject I teach; if you can’t read you can’t do much of anything else.” He wants his kids to read books on natural history, geography, and world history, and biographies. Fiction should be read in moderation, and that should be clean fiction: “teaching good morals and no filthy language.” Kline doesn’t like fiction much because “it doesn’t teach children skills.” He wants his students to “read materials that stretch their minds so as they grow older, they can expand their interests.” Kline is totally in favor of the Holmes County bookmobile, “provided that the books can be screened.” (p. 33)

I guess they are going to get more skills about biographies and world history. Are they going to get more skills out of that as far as teaching a skill? In my school it’s the students’ own choice. Unless I was asking them to do a report on something, then they may need something on the famous people in history. We have a lot of biographies on

George Washington, Helen Keller, and that type of thing, and the students really like to read those books.

Teachers mostly choose the books in our school. We've received books from the County Library sales when they run it, for a quarter a piece or something like that. It's kind of hard to select, them as you go through them, when they say it's a dollar for a brown bag full. Or, you start piling on the books and if you don't recognize the title or author, you just look at it and think, "Well, this one is probably okay," and you throw it in the bag and come back to school, and we screen them a little more. We tell the parents we have a bunch of new books and if you find something that is offensive, that their child may be reading, we obviously can't read every page and every word, so get rid of it. If their child takes a book home and they see something offensive, we just tell them to pitch it. We don't really discuss it. I haven't really found that to be a problem. I don't know if that has ever happened. I don't know if I've ever had a parent who has told me, "I pitched a book."

At my school, we would leave it up to their parents to get rid of that book. I'm not saying that the parents wouldn't first talk about it with their students that were reading that and maybe let them know why they think it's not appropriate. They could have a discussion. It would almost have to be. If there is a book that Phillip, my 11-year-old son was reading, and I thought he should absolutely not read it, and I was going to throw it away, I'm sure I would have to give him a satisfactory answer.

The policy at school has been—and I'm not sure who made this policy, maybe the parents long before I got there—to not read certain book at school, like a *Hardy Boys* or a *Louis L'Amour* book. The policy was that students could not bring those books to school to trade with friends or to read them at school. Some parents think there may be too much killing and shooting, and things like that in these books. But, some families do have books like *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys*, which are teenage books. I do not think the books really have any killing in them. A guy gets hurt or tied up, but normally there isn't any bloodshed. I personally have probably read most of the *Louis L'Amour* books and *Hardy Boys* books, and I have always found something, like there is a hero and the author wants you to keep reading. And, I probably learned more about the West through reading these books than I have any other books, and pictured or visualized that area without actually going there, like the Badlands.

We don't have class sets of books at my school. We do have sets of books, where we have more than one, but not an entire classroom set. The curriculum does not require all students to read certain books. If I give them a book report or a book that they choose, they'll read it and then tell the class about it: They will give enough interesting points so that someone else may want to read it.

All of our children are book-lovers, and it's nothing to go to the library and come home with 20 books. They have an appetite for books, even down to James, my youngest child, age 5. He has an encyclopedia appetite. He will take the encyclopedia and just look at pictures as he goes through it. We go to the library maybe once a week, once every two weeks, or every 10 days, however it works out. Whenever our children are done, they go get more. Harlan, a town close by, has a branch. If there is a driver nearby, we make a bank deposit and go by the library. Debra, my daughter, may take the deposit and take one of the boys along to pick up some books. Or if Rose, my wife, wants to go herself, she'll take the horse and go anytime throughout the day, really. It's only a mile and a

half, really not far. Not all my students are readers. By far the majority of them are. They love to read. We have maybe close to 1,000 books in our school library.

We had a fundraiser for the school. Among other things we sold books. We took additional books out: some recent books that had just come out in recent years. I think I purchased three sets, and there are six or eight books in a set. And our students just went crazy over those books. The books just got passed around, and they all got read within that year because they were in a series.

### **Narrative Analysis of Research on the Amish: Glenda's and Joe's Outsider Perspective**

The narrative analysis of research on the Amish by Glenda and Joe is separated from that of Henry in an effort to remain consistent to the original goal of this project, to bring Henry's Amish voice to the forefront. In this section Glenda and Joe identified two main themes in response to the literature; Henry's narrative analysis and their experiences in the Amish community where this project took place.

#### **Contextualization and Stereotyping**

##### *Glenda*

One of the main lessons that I learned is how important it is in reading ethnographic research to stay conscious of the context. Even though Harroff (1998) contextualized his article to observations primarily in one school for seven weeks,

The school in which I observed for seven weeks is the primary focus of specific descriptions in the paper"—I lost sight of this since it was embedded in his observations "over three months in seven Old Order Amish parochial schools in Indiana and in two public schools that teach relatively large numbers of Amish children. (p. 245)

Descriptions of Amish cultural patterns follow immediately. Without descriptions of the diverse patterns in some of the other six Old Order Amish parochial schools, I was left with the impression that the cultural descriptions could be generalized across all Old Amish parochial schools and communities. That impression was challenged as I listened to Henry's experiences, visited in his school, and began to attend community activities; church, devotionals, fundraisers, and socials.

##### *Joe*

Particularly with qualitative or ethnographic research, I have learned that context is critical to interpretation. As we discussed the existing literature on the Amish, on a weekly basis, I became more dependent on Henry to process and contextualize the information for me, helping me to understand some of the limitations of the current literature. In essence, Henry helped me to discover some of my own stereotypes and opened my limited experience and knowledge base of the Amish culture. This interaction,

not only as we dialogued about the content of the literature but with Henry and his specific community, helped me to understand that the Amish, although similar, can be quite diverse with individual beliefs and experiences specific to the context of the community. Despite the best efforts of Harroff (1998) and others (Avenatti, 1996; Ediger, 1996) to provide accurate observational descriptions and interpretations of the Amish, our discussions with Henry helped to dispel rumors, myths, and stereotypes, ultimately providing a richer and more authentic description than what exists in the current literature.

## **Literacy Patterns**

### *Glenda*

I have been especially interested in the literacy patterns among the Amish families that I have come to know through my relationship with Henry. While the literature we examined focused more on those among children, what has struck me is how many adults among the Amish I have come in contact with are life-long readers. Henry's analysis of the literature written about the Amish attests to his literacy skills. His daughter, who was in eighth-grade when I first met Henry, is now eighteen. She does all of the bookkeeping and income taxes for Henry's store. Henry recently bought a computer to address ordering needs of his store. More than once, when I dropped by Henry's store, I caught a glimpse of Henry's daughter reading about the Amish online.

At one point during our project, Henry began another project to dispute research that stated that Amish have limited books in their homes. Henry asked his seventh and eighth grade students to list all of the books in their home. The task was too big of an assignment. One mother told me that she would have to pull down boxes of books from the attic to complete the task. Her youngest child was in seventh grade so she had stored most of the elementary books they had. She was saving them for their grandchildren to use.

## **Henry's Final Reflection**

Through this research project I learned there are different ways to do research. I have always thought of research as gathering statistics for the Dairy Herd Improvement Association, United States Department of Agriculture, or to count the number of students coming to school. I had never heard of talking to people to gather information. When a researcher came to my school several years ago, he sat in my class, collected data, and observed. He did not dialogue with me. He said he was writing a paper to use with his students in his class at the university.

Before this project with Glenda and Joe, which broke down a communication gap between the university and me, I did not think the Amish would be welcomed in the university. I thought that because of our eighth grade education, we could never take classes at the university. Joe and Glenda took my co-teachers and me on a tour of the university, and Glenda and I have talked about how the university could create non-credit classes through a continuing studies program to benefit us.

This project also gave me the opportunity to experience making a professional paper presentation with Glenda and Joe at the Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice in the fall of 2002. Because of the dialogical methodology we used, I was able to present the methodology and my critique of the articles. We used a similar style in the presentation as we allowed participants to engage us with questions and their own experiences.

I have started using different learning concepts, like collaborative groups and jigsaw for learning geography. I have tried new teaching practices. When students receive bad test scores, I put a strong learner with a weaker student to teach them what they missed on the test. Then, I retest the student to give credit for learning.

This research project created more opportunity for communication and connection to the university. That was not the initial purpose of this project. At the beginning, this project's purpose was to allow me to read articles written about the Amish and say what I thought about those articles, based on my experience as an Amish. As we worked on the project, I learned important information about how the public education system works and how our Amish children can be served by the public schools.

I made use of information Glenda and Joe shared, to ask for professional help from the local school corporation for students we thought were special education students. It was easier to talk to the people from the school corporation after talking with Joe and Glenda during the dialogues. There was more openness. I was able to provide a cushion between the psychologist and parents of students who needed special education. I told the parents they would have the final say after the psychologist came and tested their students.

I didn't realize that a professor's job had three parts—teaching, research, and service. I recognized the research, but not the service. Before this project, my view of professors was they were distant people in a class of their own, an elite group. Joe and Glenda blew that thought away, removed that perspective from me, and I asked Glenda to present *Alternative Ways of Teaching* at the state Amish teachers' meeting in August of 2002. Teachers were coming up to her wanting to talk.

Finally, this project has resulted in more conversations among some of us: Amish teachers and parents who want to provide our children with the education they need to be productive. As part of testing how accurate my stories of experience as an Amish were, I gave copies of the paper to friends and other Amish in the community to read. While this provided the kind of feedback we needed to test accuracy, it also allowed more Amish to become aware of how English people think about us and how we think about what it means to be Amish.

### **Glenda's Final Reflection**

While narrative methodology has been well-established by Barone (1992a, 1992b), Clandinin and Connelly (1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1996), Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1995), Blumenfeld-Jones (1995), Moss, (2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c), and Polkinghorne (1995), the use of dialogue among co-authors (Beeler, Hayes, Lewis, & Russell, with Moss, 2004; Moore et al., 2002; Stephens & Sadler with Moss, 2002) removes the distance that is often achieved by researchers who view the narratives of their subjects as data to be analyzed and interpreted by the researcher.

For me (Glenda), the narrative project with Henry and Joe represented practicing research as praxis. The critical reading and reflective-reflexive dialogical methodology was modeled after the same inquiry teaching methodology I use in my university classroom (Moss, 2003, 2004a). The inquiry method created a setting in which all three of us as teachers, researchers, and participants had an equal opportunity to reflect on scholarship, reflexively analyze our own teaching experiences, and express our perspectives in a supportive learning environment.

While this project was not intended for any one of us to be socialized into another's culture, I was constantly aware of the intersubjective nature of using dialogue (Eisenstadt, 1992) and considered how it related to fidelity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) as a measure of trustworthiness in our critical research project. Blumenfeld-Jones has explored fidelity as criteria for evaluating the quality of narrative inquiry, and noted how narrative inquiry involves the science of chronicling events and the art of storytelling. He defined fidelity as the act of faithfulness and integrity on the part of the researcher to preserve "the worth and dignity of the teller" (p. 27). Fidelity is moral trustworthiness that insures the truthfulness of the story within the context that it is told. I had to keep asking myself what fidelity means in a dialogical, intersubjective project, where Henry and Joe were learning about narrative inquiry while participating as co-authors in the study. In part, it meant maintaining a commitment to rigor in the scholarly research process to facilitate Henry telling critical stories that either questioned or supported aspects of the 17 research articles about the Amish. We had to consider fidelity in terms of Henry's stories and fidelity to the broader Amish community in which Henry was a member.

A more complex source of tension for me was a concern that the project would result in drawing Henry into the public as an authentic voice, only to later realize unforeseen detrimental effects to him or the Amish community. Henry reassured me during each work session that he wanted to move forward in the project. Ethical concerns were a constant source of internal struggle for me, as Henry trusted my leadership, which I have examined at length in an earlier article published in *The Qualitative Report* (Moss, 2004b). Maintaining a commitment to situate Henry's voice in the forefront resolved that issue for me and reinforced my perspective that critical pedagogy must include dialogue. I believe that the intersubjective nature of critical narrative research as a model for learning and teaching (Moss, 2003, 2004a, 2004c) in a diverse society, seeking to address social justice issues and build a participatory democratic community, is the real story, and one I will continue to explore in my teaching and research.

### **Joe's Final Reflection**

For me (Joe), as a quantitative researcher, I realized a renewed appreciation for qualitative research and the valuable, rich information that can result from the experience. Although my quantitative-rationalist approach to research encourages objective, controlled methodology, the value of rich and informative data experienced by this on-site, reflective dialogue cannot be ignored. I had shared Glenda's concerns about the potential positive or negative impact of this project on Henry, his family, and community. I would like to think that as a result of this project, stereotypes of the Amish culture will be questioned in the broader educational and societal community as has been Glenda's



experience and mine. Similarly, I hope that through Henry's critical work as a teacher-researcher and member of the local Amish community, the stereotypes of the non-Amish or English community will be questioned and examined in a mutual effort towards building a stronger society by building on our strength of diversity.

### Epilogue

As we conclude our story about reading research, dialoguing to grow personally and professionally, and writing to situate Henry's voice among other scholars in the academy, we offer a challenge to all who will read this paper to critically self-examine for stereotypical knowledge and seek out opportunities for multicultural development. We offer a special charge to cultural researchers to explore provisions of trustworthiness, to ensure monitoring of the ways cultural lenses are inadvertently imposed on the interpretation of data collected. Finally, we offer dialogical inquiry among diverse participants as a possibility for building trustworthiness, and democratizing classrooms, the academy, and society.

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## Appendix A

### Dialogue Session 1

- Harroff, S. B. (1998). Value-oriented teaching in a contemporary Indiana Amish parochial school: Preparation for adult life through faith, responsible behavior, and community interaction. *International Journal of educational reform*, 7(3), 243-254.
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### Dialogue Session 3

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**Article Citation**

Zehr, H., Moss, G., & Nichols J. (2005). Amish teacher dialogues with teacher educators: Research, culture, and voices of critique. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(3), 593-620. Retrieved [Insert date], from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-3/zehr.pdf>

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