

Narrative Inquiry

Experience and Story in Qualitative Research

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Chapter 5

Being in the Field: Walking into the Midst of Stories

As we worked within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, we learned to see ourselves as always in the midst-located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social. But we see ourselves in the midst in another sense as well; that is, we see ourselves as in the middle of a nested set of stories-ours and theirs.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we take a look at several researchers' experiences in the midst. We examine the complexities they must negotiate. Specifically, we explore key areas that researchers must learn to work through in their fieldwork-negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating transitions, and negotiating ways to be useful.

BEGINNING IN THE MIDST

As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which they live and work, their classrooms, their schools, and their communities, are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories.

Geertz (1995) felt this way about his anthropological work in Sefrou. He wrote: "*Entry of this sort into an entr'acte where all the really critical things seemed just to have happened yesterday and just about to happen tomorrow, induces an uncomfortable sense of having come too late and arrived too early, a sense which in my case never afterward left me ... it always seemed not the right time, but a pause between right times*" (p. 4).

Kerby (1991), though he had something else in mind, might have said that to enter the field of inquiry was to carry with us, and meet as we entered, prenarratives-lives in motion, structured narratively, the retelling still to come via the inquiry.

The stories we bring as researchers are also set within the institutions within which we work, the social narratives of which we are a part, the landscape on which we live.

BEGINNING IN THE MIDST AT BAY STREET SCHOOL

In Chapter One, we wrote of our work with two teachers, Stephanie and Aileen. Our work with them was part of a two-decade study of teacher knowledge. We worked in one school, Bay Street, for much of this time. Here is a sampling of the Bay Street School story as it began for us back then:

A school known around the board as one with racial problems. That's the school where they had some kind of fight in the yard a few years ago. Everyone thought it had some racial basis. There were stories about fighting in the hallways and on the playgrounds.

This was a tough school.

A school with declining standards. We heard that from some people in the community. We heard it from the staff at a neighboring school, and they told us that parents choose to send their children to that school because they have higher standards. After all, Bay Street was named a project school because there is such poor achievement. Lots of teachers want to transfer out of there.

A school where you can send kids who can't make it in other schools. We heard it is a place to send kids who are too troubled or not achieving or too much of a problem to keep in school.

Those were the stories that came flashing to mind as we first arrived at the nineteenth-century brick building in downtown inner-city Toronto on that first day when we arrived to meet the school principal and a number of teachers. We met in the school staff room, and we felt the oldness of the school and the ways the problems of the years of neglect hung in the air. The couches were old, the hallways dark, and there was little sign of student work. Still, we sensed, as people talked with us, possibility, feelings of hope for being able to change what had been to something else. It was after school hours when we arrived, and we thought the school was empty of children. However, after our meeting we went upstairs for tea with one of the special education teachers and met some students there. These students, we noted in our field texts, appeared to feel cared for by their teacher.

We walked away from the school with feelings of hope for being able to work with the school in the research project but also with feelings of apprehension. What kind of school were we becoming part of? Would we be able to work in that school with the intensity that our research called for? What were we, two people from rural Alberta, doing in trying to learn about the problems of inner-city children and teachers? But we sensed, even as we asked the questions, the imagination and hope of the principal and teachers who saw possibility for things to be otherwise.

We had two senses of being in the midst-being in the midst of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, and being in the midst of a temporal, storied flow. These two senses came together and helped create mixed feelings of apprehension and hopeful possibility. As we prepared to work in Bay Street School in that first meeting with the principal and teachers, our apprehension was not so much one of being in the right place at the wrong time but more a question of our appropriateness for the place. We sensed how different the lives of the children in this school must be from our own lives in our childhoods, growing up on vast unpopulated rural landscapes. Could we, with our journeys from there through academic halls in Chicago and Toronto, meaningfully connect with the students, teachers, and parents with whom we would work if this project were to go forward?

Right now as we write this book, what do we make of these different narrative trajectories? Does one have to be one of "them" to do the research? Can we reach across a narrative space to work meaningfully with participants? What do we narrative inquirers do with our diverse backgrounds? Had we been asked these questions directly following our meeting in the school, we probably would have answered with the doubts that appeared in our notes on the visit.

But as our stories of Chapter Four with Ming Fang He, Michael, and Long Him show, reaching across autobiographically storied boundaries is possible, perhaps even necessary, for the creation of narrative insight. Bateson (1994) wrote that quite apart

from the researcher's wishes on the matter, participants sometimes draw one in and sometimes hold one at a distance. It is like this as we explore this question of different narrative histories coming together in the inquiry field. Sometimes there is sensitive observation and sometimes intimate coparticipation in the intermingling of narratives. Over the years, we have experienced some of both, at different times, with different people, at Bay Street School.

Curiously, perhaps we feel a kind of intimacy with the school building and its institutional narrative. People have come and gone, and we have observed, and merged, narrative histories with them. But the school building remains and so does its neighborhood, though both go on and have their own stories.

In the cartoon strip, "For Better Or For Worse," a grandmother sometimes appears with the ghostly outlines of a deceased grandfather hovering over her and a grandchild asking, "Why are you talking to yourself grandma?" Perhaps the intimacy we experience toward the building and its community is partially like that of the grandmother. It is impossible for us to talk of Bay Street School without a cascade of ghostly memories of people and happenings flooding into our consciousness. This too is perhaps one of the things that narrative inquirers do, at least those in it for the long haul. Their places-for us Bay Street School, its classrooms, halls, grounds, and community-become memory boxes in which the people and events of today are retold and written into the research texts of tomorrow. Once this narrative process takes hold, the narrative inquiry space pulsates with movements back and forth through time and along a continuum of personal and social considerations. The school and community, and the people that come in and out of them, take on a dynamic interactive sense. The community is experienced as infusing the school and the school as infusing the community. Histories too have this sense. The opening date, bricked in relief on the school tower, is not merely something to be photographed, but like the hovering grandfather in the cartoon is something that speaks to the school in its present conditions.

The school and the community, the landscape in its broadest sense, have taught us that they too have narrative histories. We entered the school in the midst of a series of inquiries on teacher knowledge, and in so doing were tuned to individual persons' narrative histories. But the financial support that brought us to the school was a U.S. National Institute of Education (NIE) grant on school reform. Our topic was institutional, and our focus was people. The institutional focus hovered in the background and eventually asserted itself as we began to dig into the history of the school and community. On the one hand, Bay Street School's immediate history, the stories of Bay Street School, were much in our minds. We heard stories of it as a school with "racial problems," with "declining standards," a place to "send kids who were too troubled." We heard stories of the principal, new to the school, in which he was featured as innovative and community oriented. The school, with its newly appointed principal, was ideal for the purposes of our research grant. It was history, at least immediate history, that let us know this was the case. Later, we found narrative threads for these stories of school that reached back into the previous century, close to the time of Canadian Confederation. Since its opening in 1877, commentaries on Bay Street School have referred to its immigrant population mix. As we stepped into the principal's office to begin our fieldwork, we knew we were stepping into institutional narratives, but it was only later that we fully sensed the continuity and sweep of this history.

Perhaps a note is in order on how that sense developed. Had we been "inners" and "outers," in and out of the field in what Ray Rist (1980) called (in his title) "blitzkrieg ethnography," this history would never have surfaced except perhaps as interesting anecdotal material needed to dress up research texts. It was being in the field, day after day, year after year, that brought forth a compelling sense of the long-term landscape

narratives at work. This too is one of the things that narrative inquirers do in the field: they settle in, live and work alongside participants, and come to experience not only what can be seen and talked about directly but also the things not said and not done that shape the narrative structure of their observations and their talking.

BEING IN THE MIDST IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE

Twenty years later, JoAnn Phillion, introduced in Chapter Three, wrote, as she entered Bay Street School to begin her doctoral studies fieldwork:

This first visit I feel so apprehensive about the school and my participant. I remember that a social worker told me that Alexandra Park is a dangerous area. Getting off the subway Mick and I walk down a street littered with pieces of paper and other debris. The stores in this part of Chinatown haven't opened yet. People are sleeping over a grate in piles of clothes, mountains of plastic bags beside them. In the freezing late-November air, several people, coughing and wheezing, hold their hands out for change. As we walk along I see people sweeping the streets, pushing paper, fruit peels, and cigarette butts into the gutter. Children with backpacks, holding their mothers' hands, are on their way to school. We walk by the Day Care Centre. A small Black child is holding hands with an Asian child as they play a game together.

Bay Street School is nestled in one of the most multicultural neighborhoods I have ever experienced. We walk down one of the major streets near the school. Both sides have a large number of stores and businesses, art galleries and curio shops reflective of the complexity and diversity of Toronto. There are signs in Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, English and more. There are advertisements for restaurants from almost every culture I have heard of and ones that I have not. There is a lively, exhilarating atmosphere.

All this makes me very nostalgic for the culture of the 60s which seems to be preserved, in small part, in this neighborhood. What residue of hippie culture do I cherish to this day? I think of myself as really open, accepting of differences, willing to listen to all sides, hear all perspectives. I think this will serve me in good stead as I engage in this research.

Mick is reminiscing about the way the school looked in the years that he and Jean were doing research here. He mentions that the parking lot has been relocated; the large, broad walkway where we are walking took its place. He points to the community centre where the students went for their swimming lessons. I am aware of a sense of history and continuity: This is Bay Street School where Mick and Jean have spent years of their lives and have done much of their writing. I have a sense of belonging to something that is more than simply my project.

I am nervous and apprehensive about being in a school that means so much to Mick and Jean. Maybe I should have chosen a site that had no particular attachment for them.
[1999, p. 55]

JoAnn's account of her moments of entry into her field of inquiry show again how much one is already in the midst when one arrives. She feels the force (perhaps weight is a better term to characterize the passages here) of the long-term inquiry that she is now on the edges of joining. For us, Bay Street's history crept slowly, and for a time unnoticed, into our own awareness. JoAnn does not have the luxury of holding at a distance, perhaps not even noticing, the ongoing narratives at work. With one of us walking beside her, commenting on parking lots, people, and places as they had changed, a version of the narrative history preceded her into her meeting with the principal. Moreover, JoAnn

had read our work on Bay Street School, and had spoken to both of us about it long before the morning described above. She too had apprehensions, of a different sort than Geertz and different again than ours. No doubt, in some complicated way she wondered if she could sustain the fieldwork and write research texts that would eventually contribute to the Bay Street School narrative. A strong sense of narrative history brings with it narrative apprehensions brought on by the need to mark a place in that narrative in the future.

But JoAnn's personal narrative was neither Jean's nor Michael's. She was born in an urban setting, chose certain forms of alternative living, taught abroad, and became interested in multiculturalism. She is someone whose personal and academic life is built around matters of equity and equality. Her observations on the neighborhood as she walked along the street are observations born of this narrative. She felt these strongly and was meeting the principal that morning more for reasons of that narrative interest than for Bay Street School stories. In many ways, any number of school settings would have worked. Her apprehensions are partly a matter of recognizing a narrative history of which she is a part and wondering if that might not somehow or other swamp her main interest. At the same time, there is tension because she senses that being part of, and contributing to, that narrative history can strengthen her inquiries. The depth and context made possible by the Bay Street narrative would add a dimension and would take her a lifetime to achieve in other ways.

Our reflections on JoAnn's narrative highlights the importance of acknowledging the centrality of the researcher's own experience—the researcher's own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings. One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative of experience, the researcher's autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry. We refer to this as composing narrative beginnings as a researcher begins his or her inquiries. For example, in our introduction to this book, we each told something of our narrative beginnings that framed our early work on teacher knowledge. As we compose our narrative beginnings, we also work within the three-dimensional space, telling stories of our past that frame our present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in place. We see a glimmer of these narrative beginnings in JoAnn's field texts, as she tried to gain experience of her experience by constructing a narrative of that experience. These narrative beginnings of our own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings help us deal with questions of who we are in the field and who we are in the texts that we write on our experience of the field experience.

Recall the question from Chapter Four: What do narrative inquirers do? They make themselves as aware as possible of the many, layered narratives at work in their inquiry space. They imagine narrative intersections, and they anticipate possible narrative threads emerging. There is apprehension in this process, as Geertz's entry to Sefrou, our entry, and later JoAnn's entry to Bay Street School show. But there is also hope and anticipation for the narrative inquiry future.

However cast—as a sense of being in the right place at the wrong time, as being in the midst of untold stories, as being in a prenarrative—there is for the narrative inquirer the inevitable sense of the merging of temporal flows, as researchers and participants meet in their inquiry field. The moment of arrival, as a careful reading of our own and later JoAnn's arrival at Bay Street School show, is filled not only with anticipation of what is to come but also with a sense of history. Narrative threads coalesce out of a past and emerge in the specific three-dimensional space we call our inquiry field.

LIVING, TELLING, RETELLING, AND RELIVING STORIES

Elsewhere (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), we have written that as we begin work on a research project, we are beginning a new story. Thinking about an inquiry in narrative terms allows us to conceptualize the inquiry experience as a storied one on several levels. Following Dewey, our principal interest in experience is the growth and transformation in the life story that we as researchers and our participants author. Therefore, difficult as it may be to tell a story, the more difficult but important task is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change. We imagine, therefore, that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story. As we emphasized in the preceding examples of our work at Bay Street School, we as researchers were already engaged in living and telling our stories-of ourselves, of the participants, and of our shared inquiries. As we began work with our participants at Bay Street, we began to tell and live new stories. Within the inquiry field, we lived out stories, told stories of those experiences, and modified them by retelling them and reliving them. The research participants at Bay Street School also lived, told, retold, and relived their stories.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW THAT WE ARE IN THE FIELD?

When researchers enter the field, they experience shifts and changes, constantly negotiating, constantly reevaluating, and maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever-changing landscape.

Negotiating Relationships

Shortly after our meeting with the principal and teachers, we found ourselves coming to Bay Street School for three days a week, Michael to work with Susan, a teacher-librarian, in the library, and Jean to work with Stephanie, a grade-one teacher, in her classroom. We "settled in for the long haul," working alongside our participants, making ourselves useful in whatever ways we could, and trying to maintain the momentum that brought us together. At first, the forces of collaboration are weak and the arrangements feel tenuous. Sometimes, this does not change throughout the inquiry, and one can feel on the edge almost as an uninvited guest throughout the fieldwork. For us, the early days felt a bit like it does when one is trying to start a car on a cold morning, and there is just enough power to turn the motor. Maybe it will catch and maybe it will not.

There have been times when the gap between a researcher's and a participant's narratives of experience have seemed to be too great. In his dissertation, Siaka Kroma (Kroma, 1983) wrote of beginning a narrative inquiry with one participant. They did not connect. To use our metaphor, the motor did not catch, and the participant and Siaka agreed not to work together.

For us, at Bay Street, the motor did catch. Throughout the inquiry, in our experience of being in the field, the researcher-participant relationship is a tenuous one, always in the midst of being negotiated. After Jean had been working in Stephanie's classroom for three months, the school year ended in June. Jean and Stephanie parted, agreeing that Jean would return in late August to help Stephanie set up her classroom for the beginning of school. When Jean arrived, Stephanie hesitantly told her that she had almost called to tell Jean not to come. She said that it was going to be hard to have Jean there for those early September days. After hours of conversation, Jean and Stephanie renegotiated their working relationship, and a sense of tentative ease returned. Though frequently not as dramatic as this instance was for Jean and Stephanie, the negotiation of a research relationship is ongoing throughout the inquiry.

Furthermore, though one may develop an intimate relationship with people and places on the landscape, there is always the recognition that the intermingling of narrative threads has loose ends off the landscape: we work in different places, have different purposes,

and have different ways to account for ourselves as researchers and participants.

Good narrative working relationships carry with them a sad and wistful sense born of the possibility of temporariness. Jean experienced this when she moved to western Canada, and Michael a few years later when a research grant ended. JoAnn senses the sadness now as she writes her dissertation, not knowing where she will be a year from the time of writing, perhaps in another city or another country far from Bay Street School.

Negotiating Purposes

As we suggested above, one of the things narrative inquirers do is continually negotiate their relationships. Research lore would have it that negotiation of entry is a step completed at the beginning of an inquiry and over with once the researcher is ensconced in the field. This is not the way it is for narrative inquirers, as the example with Jean and Stephanie makes clear. In today's popular language, relationships need to be "worked at."

Part of the negotiation is explaining ourselves. We found ourselves continually explaining what we were trying to do. This was especially true for Michael as Susan continually asked if he was getting what he wanted and "was it okay." One soon discovers (if one pays close attention to these explainings) that one is never too clear on what one is up to. One of the important lessons to be learned for narrative inquirers from this is that they need to find many places, not only in the field, to explain to others what they are doing. We encourage narrative inquirers to establish response communities, ongoing places where they can give accounts of their developing work over time. As the explaining takes place, clarification and shaping of purpose occurs.

One of the methodological principles we were taught in quantitative analysis courses was to specify hypotheses to be tested in research. It does not work like that in narrative inquiry. The purposes, and what one is exploring and finds puzzling, change as the research progresses. This happens from day to day and week to week, and it happens over the long haul as narratives are retold, puzzles shift, and purposes change. Our NIE grant that took us to Bay Street School was framed in terms of the implementation of a race relations policy. However, as we worked at Bay Street School, our puzzle shifted as we became interested in the intersection of the board of education's race relations policy with its inner-city and language policies. An illustration of what happens over the long haul is our current project of returning to Bay Street School with a new set of school reform eyes and of thinking through different narratives than the ones embedded in our writing on the school.

What becomes apparent from the above examples is that not only does explaining ourselves to others help us get clear but also working with participants shapes what is interesting and possible under the field circumstances. Jean began her work with Stephanie thinking in terms of images as an expression of teachers' personal practical knowledge. She did not anticipate at the outset that she would sense the rhythms and cycles at work in Stephanie's life and teaching and that these would be important to thinking through dimensions of personal practical knowledge. As Jean and Stephanie worked together in Stephanie's classroom, Jean sensed the rhythms of life being lived out in the classroom. Being with Stephanie long enough to sense the rhythms, and being open to engaging in conversation with her as they mutually explained themselves, are part of what made the difference.

Over the course of the research, Stephanie developed a new sense of herself; she retold her story. In part, this had to do with the retold story of school that the reform-oriented principal, Phil, was working toward; and partly it had to do with the collaborative retelling of Stephanie's teaching found in Jean's narrative accounts, accounts that

Stephanie read and commented on.

Negotiating Transitions

Perhaps the most dramatic transitions are the beginnings and endings of narrative inquiries. Above, we described negotiating the beginnings. But as we move from field to field texts to research texts, we need to negotiate many transitions in the midst of our narrative inquiries. JoAnn, currently in her Bay Street School work, is struggling over how many days to spend in the school and how to negotiate this with her participant as she makes the transition from field texts to research texts.

Though highly variable from person to person and place to place, narrative inquiries do end, at least in a formal sense. Reports are written, dissertations written, people move, funding stops. Negotiating this final transition is also part of what a narrative inquirer does in the field relationship. It is critical to the trust and integrity of the work that researchers do not simply walk away when "their time has come." Of course, when intimacy has been established, this kind of rupture is difficult to imagine; the researcher pulls away reluctantly.

It is not only field participants who run the risk of feelings of abandonment. During Phil's last year at Bay Street School, Michael worked with Phil and the staff to prepare a report on the school's Integrated Learning Centre and to produce three booklets for staff on school philosophy and computer use in the school. The materials were drafted over the summer and delivered to the school in the fall. Michael pretty much lost touch with the school that fall but does know that the booklets received little attention. This caused Michael some discomfort. But in retrospect, a new story of school was already being lived as a new principal came in. There was no working relationship between Michael and the new principal and no reason to think the booklets would be used. Indeed, they might well have run counter to new narrative threads.

Negotiating a Way to Be Useful

During the early going, when the motor is perhaps turning slowly, finding a place in the place is important. One can be "there" and feel like one does not quite belong. One of the hobbies of the critics of narrative inquiry often seems to be making the claim of co-optation of voice. The argument may run either that voices are heard, stolen, and published as the researcher's own or that the researcher's voice drowns out the participants' voices, so that when participants do appear to speak it is, after all, nothing more than the researcher's voice code. These are, of course, important matters to which narrative inquirers need to attend.

But the experience of being in the field sometimes feels quite the opposite. Sometimes-when the inquiry tends more to sensitive observation than to the intermingling of narratives and coparticipation-the narrative inquirer may feel silenced and voiceless on matters about which he or she feels passionate. A few years ago, Hedy Bach, a master's student, and Jean were engaged in a series of monthly conversations with eleven- and twelve-year-old girls. Jean met each girl for about forty-five to sixty minutes of conversation, just the two of them, each month. Frequently, one of the girls told a story of home or school that resonated with one of Jean's. Jean wanted to burst in with stories of her own experience of herself as a teacher, as a mother, as a girl. And yet she held back, partly because she felt her inquiry task was to faithfully record what her participants said. Although she realized in the writing of the research text that her voice could be present, in the field she felt silenced and voiceless.

There are variations on this theme of narrative inquirers' feeling silenced. Karen Whelan and Janice Huber are two teacher-researchers engaged in a narrative inquiry with a group

of administrators. They frequently commented that at first they stayed silent, feeling they could not engage fully in the conversations because they understood so little of the administrators' narratives of experience. Now, as they write their research texts, they see the gradual mingling of voices, theirs and the participants, as a kind of border crossing, where there is an intermingling of narratives of experience.

Vicki Fenton joined Bay Street School in fall 1997 for her dissertation studies. Vicki's early field notes give a sense of her feeling that there is much to learn about the school, community, and classroom landscape. In one of her notes, she writes, "The school still feels like a maze to me and my mind is on information overload" (field notes, September 18, 1997). Everything, it seems to her, needs sorting out. And who is she in this maze? Following an introduction to another teacher by Vicki's participant, Vicki wrote in the margin of her field notes, "I am left with an uncomfortable feeling of being part of people's stories but not really writing any of it myself (field notes, September 23, 1997). Later, in a project meeting, Vicki reported to the group that she felt good on one of her visits to the school the past week because her participant asked her to work with a group of children. Vicki said that she had been feeling uncomfortable and useless, as she sat on a chair while her participant taught the classes. Michael recalls his experiences with Susan as being somewhat like Vicki's. He always felt, somehow, a bit of a visitor.

Getting a Feel for It

The sense of not belonging is related to Vicki's maze and information overload. In the extremes of hypothesis-testing inquiry, researchers lay out experimental plots, create their own inquiry fields, and manipulate variables according to the working hypotheses. The researcher is in charge. Various degrees of being in charge are at work in many forms of inquiry, quantitative and qualitative. But in narrative inquiry, the researcher tends to be at the other end of the continuum from the controlled-plot hypothesis tester. Here, the researcher enters a landscape and joins an ongoing professional life. One thing that narrative inquirers do is quickly learn that even if they are familiar with the kind of landscape—perhaps even members of that landscape, as teachers on sabbatical doing a thesis might be—there is a great deal of taken-for-grantedness at work in the moment-by-moment relationships and happenings on the landscape. Imagine for a moment that one was unfamiliar with schools. How strange the bells, the bursting forth at recess, the troops of students heading for the library or gym, the hanging around the principal's office, and the interrupting announcements that everyone stops for, must all seem. But for someone who knows the particular life in that school, none of this is surprising. These happenings are built into the very fabric of daily school life. The outsider is always asking, What is that? in reference to a name that might be a community center, a teacher, or a board policy for all the researcher knows, and Who is that? when a chuckle is elicited as one teacher talks to another and mentions a happening a year ago. There really is a sense, as Geertz said, of arriving too late because everything people notice and talk about has already happened and is in their doings and conversations. In Vicki's September 18 field notes, she wrote: "Feeling completely lost, I lose the names of the streets. I will have to ask her about that later. My mind is on information overload. There is so much to see and hear and to remember."

In order to join the narrative, to become part of the landscape, the researcher needs to be there long enough and to be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories, the many twisting and turning narrative threads that pulse through every moment and show up in what appears to the new and inexperienced eyes of the researcher as mysterious code. Intimacy, of the sort we feel toward Bay Street School, is partially tied to our having gained some measure of connection to the taken-for-grantedness in daily life. One might even say that intimacy for a narrative inquirer is being able to take with participants at least some of the same

things for granted.

LIVING LIFE ON THE LANDSCAPE

Narrative has become so identified with stories, and stories have such a particular unique sense about them—often treated as things to be picked up, listened to, told, and generally rolled around as one might roll marbles around—that narrative inquiry has, for some, become associated with story recording and telling. One of the criticisms of narrative has taken this notion a step further and, in holding that story is the unit of analysis in narrative inquiry, argues that narrative inquiry is essentially a linguistic form of inquiry. Narrative inquirers, according to this critique, record stories. If I am an inquiry-oriented nursing educator, then I might listen for intern stories of life on the ward. Tape recorders are important in this version of narrative inquiry because the stories are the target; we need to get them right; and if linguistic analysis can tell us about story construction, then getting the words right by using the tape recorder is important.

But the stories of the narrative inquirers described above show that narrative inquiry is much more than "look for and hear story." Narrative inquiry in the field is a form of living, a way of life. Of course, there have been well-known, well-publicized narrative inquiries where researcher-driven interviews supported by tape recorders have been the method. These may be appropriate for their purpose but should not be mistaken for the whole of narrative inquiry. Most important, they should not be mistaken for what narrative inquirers do when they are in for the long haul and when they are working toward intimacy of relationship. Narrative inquiry, from this point of view, is one of trying to make sense of life as lived. To begin with, it is trying to figure out the taken-for-grantedness. And when that taken-for-grantedness begins also to be taken for granted by the researcher, then the researcher can begin to participate in and see things that worked in, for example, the hospital ward, the classroom, the organization.

One may observe a teacher in a classroom and count the number of student utterances and the number of teacher utterances or any sophisticated version of kinds of utterances one might be interested in. But the narrative inquirer hardly knows what to make of this without knowing the narrative threads at work. Those narrative threads are complex and difficult to disentangle.

Consider again the rhythms and cycles in Jean's work with Stephanie. Without an understanding of the way Stephanie experienced the entire year, with its seasons and holidays, one could make very little meaning out of the daily events. Of course, any number of for-the-moment and on-the-spot studies might well be done and published: Stephanie's use of scientific-biological terms in a study done in September and October, religious-symbolic language used in December and the month preceding Easter, and so forth. But it is the rhythm of the entire year that helped make meaning of Jean's work with Stephanie and allowed Jean to write of images of home and the curriculum as a vehicle for celebrating cultural difference among children. Narrative inquirers also know that the taken-for-grantedness is never exhausted and that mystery is always just behind the latest taken-for-granted sense making. Stephanie is partially who she is as a teacher because of where she is in her career, her religious life, and her private life. These and other narrative threads important to making meaning are always one step behind where one is now knowledgeably working.

What this means for the narrative inquirer is that stories, at least specific stories one can catch hold of like nuggets, though not unimportant, can play a relatively minor role as the narrative inquirer writes field notes about life in its broadest sense on the landscape. The narrative inquirer may note stories but more often records actions, doings, and happenings, all of which are narrative expressions. This is the stuff of narrative inquiry

for the researcher in for the long haul and concerned with intimacy.