2. Narrative Inquiry: a framework for writing and a methodology for inquiry.

Introduction

One of the many dilemmas I faced in producing this final written account of my research journey and findings, was to find a form which had a resonance with the experience of the research itself. As the research began to unfold I turned intuitively to a story-telling form in writing as a way of both representing my research experiences and also communicating them to colleagues and supervisors. I started by keeping field work notes, keeping a reflective diary, and writing about incidents within the research setting in a storied form. I found through this process that I became more explicitly aware of the implicit theoretical frameworks, values and assumptions which lay behind the practice I was inquiring into. Thus I learned first hand that story-telling in writing offered a form of inquiry in and of itself. This form complemented the action research methods I describe in later chapters in that it provided a means of reflecting upon and analysing the data generated 'in action' and therefore informing future action. The use of story form and the warrants I used to define a 'good' story , in terms of rigour and quality of knowing, were more implicit than explicit in the early stages.

Towards the end of my research, I was challenged in supervision to make these warrants more explicit. I re-crafted my research writing to do so, making explicit the various criteria I had used over the journey, taking from research theory and methodology as well as from clinical practice. However, I was not fully satisfied with this and read more widely to find a richer and more coherent framework. I discovered that Narrative Inquiry was such a framework, and I was excited to find that this model not only described explicitly many of the things I had been doing, but also named the processes and grounded them in a wider theoretical perspective. I found that it named a process I had been intuitively grasping toward and that it confirmed many of the 'truth warrants' for story writing I had developed for myself.

This gave rise to a second dilemma. In terms of the research journey, it was not a methodology I had explicitly sought out and used in a purposeful way at the outset, testing out its usefulness in informing action and making sense of experience. However , it did inform the final construction of this research account, particularly the last section, and I use it in the last chapter of this thesis in reflecting back over the research journey, in collecting together the different strands of learning. The dilemma arose about where to place a description of Narrative Inquiry for the reader and for myself. To leave it towards the end of the thesis honours its place as emerging in its more explicit form later in the temporal sense of the research journey, but it deprives the reader and myself as writer of a rich framework for rendering an account of that journey.

After much experimentation in writing, I decided to locate this chapter here. It feels risky in that it presumes much of the reader to be suddenly taken into a theoretical framework with little prior knowledge about my intentions as a researcher. It also moves away from traditional assumptions that a researcher only uses those theories and methodologies selected a priori before the research proper begins (a subject I will return to in more depth in later chapters). On the other hand, it feels a bold and satisfying beginning as a writer and gives more life to the production of this research account. It provides a theoretical grounding for relating a personal and professional journey which in some strong senses is as much autobiographical as it is an account of an inquiry into my professional practice and the organisation in which I work. I see its use here as being a framework for producing a final written account and as being distinct from an explicit methodology for gathering research data along the way. However, this distinction is not a clear one in that story-telling in writing was used by me in a partial and implicit form as a means of reflecting about action and informing further action. I will draw attention to how I do this as I proceed.

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I will firstly present the model and then comment on how I wish to use it as a frame for presenting the remainder of the research journey.

A Model for Narrative Inquiry.

The model I will use is taken largely from that developed by Clandinin and Connelly (1994) and I will present this first before embellishing briefly from other sources.

Clandinin and Connelly write from within their interest in personal experience methods in social science and develop a case for the study of narrative as a mode of inquiry. They start from the basis that social sciences are founded on the study of experience and therefore experience is the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry. However there are a range of viewpoints or frames about what constitutes an acceptable study of experience. They acknowledge two positions which they seek to navigate between. On the one hand there is the epistemological position that experience cannot speak for itself, that all we have is a representation of experience in the form of text. Meaning is embedded in texts and in the forms by which they are constructed, therefore the study of texts and their deconstruction is the proper focus for inquiry. The authors see this line of thinking as associated with a sociological and critical perspective, but they see it as risking the affirmation of social organisation and structures, rather than people and their experiences, as the appropriate starting points for inquiry. They refer to this approach as 'formalism'.

As an aside, the authors do not define what they mean by text, but my understanding of the term 'text' as used across interpretive and narrative inquiry approaches to research, refers to more than just written representation of experience. Parker (1992) defines text as " delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given an interpretive gloss" (p6). Within this definition he sees speech, writing, non-verbal behaviour, Braille, Morse-code, advertisements, architecture, and bus-tickets as examples of texts. They may not have an author and they contain and elaborate meanings that are trans-individual.

Returning to Clandinin and Connelly, the other position they refer to is one they call 'reductionism', one that is advocated by those whom Schön (1983, 1991) calls 'technical rationalists'. Schön uses this latter term to describe the model underlying traditional professional practice. This is a position embedded in the epistemology underlying traditional science (positivism) which sees professional knowledge as instrumental problem-solving made rigorous by the application of traditional scientific theory and technique. From within this position there is a dichotomy between knowledge and its application, between the knower and the known, and professional practice is reduced to skills and abilities in applying firmly bounded and standardised scientific knowledge. This frame of reference argues that experience is too complex, holistic and next to meaningless on its own, and therefore insufficiently analytic to permit useful analytic inquiry.

Clandinin and Connelly seek a position between these alternatives - one which avoids the extremes of formalism on the one hand which remove the particulars of experience, and the extremes of reductionism on the other which reduces the study of experience to the use of skills, techniques and tactics. They propose narrative and story telling as an alternative mode of inquiry, one which places them as centrally involved in the study of experience and at the same time recognising the truths in the above objections. They make assumptions that experience is both temporal and storied and follow Carr (1986) in arguing that when individuals note something of their experience, either to themselves or others, they do so in story form. Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience, and they have a sense of being full and of coming out of a personal and a social history. Clandinin and Connelly's standpoint is that story is neither raw sensation, nor cultural form, it is both and neither. They seem to agree with Bruner (1986) who says that experiences structure expressions, but expressions also structure experiences.

This is the authors' point of reference in imagining what experience is and how it might be studied and represented in researcher's texts. For them, experience is the stories people live.

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People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones. These elements interact reflexively with each other.

They see 'inquiry into narrative' as interchangeable with 'narrative inquiry', arguing that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied and it names the patterns of inquiry for study. To preserve this distinction they retain the device of calling the phenomenon 'story' and the inquiry 'narrative'. For them, people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, and narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience.

Narrative terms used in their work include *temporality, scene,* and *plot,* where these work together to create the experiential quality of the narrative and describe where the action occurs and where *characters* are formed and live out their stories. Cultural and social context play a role in narratives, playing constraining and enabling roles for the characters and the action. They borrow from Carr (1986) in structuring time within narrative into past, present and future, relating these dimensions to three critical dimensions of human experience, 'significance, value and intention.'

They do not elaborate on the meaning of or connection between these dimensions. My speculations (within the metaphor of 'story and narrative') are that past experience gives *significance* to current experience as past stories are elaborated upon or new stories created; that present experience allows both the assigning of *value* to events and also for the values inherent in experience of the individual to emerge through the telling of story; and that the concept of future allows for and structures the notion of *intentionality* or purpose, both implicitly containing a sense of temporality or movement within and over time.

I believe it is important to be aware of the degree to which these concepts of time are culture-bound. For example, the NZ Maori people talk of the past being their future, of carrying their past 'ahead' of them. I do not experientially understand what this means for myself, but know that my sense of time became distorted and confused when working with them and accommodating to their social processes. So while I could intellectually grasp different concepts of time I had much difficulty grasping what this meant at the level of experience, knowing only at this level that there was a difference.

Clandinin and Connelly deal with the issue of the researcher's presence in narrative inquiry through the metaphor of 'voice', and use the concept of *multiple "I"s.* Attention is drawn to which "I" the researcher is using at any one time, the "I"who speaks as researcher, teacher, individual man or woman, participant , narrative critic, theory builder and so on.

In drawing distinctions between different levels of experience, Clandinin and Connelly refer to Dewey's (1938) theory of experience in which experience, life and education are seen as inextricably intertwined. The study of experience is the study of life, for example the study of epiphanies (moments of revelation in a person's life - Denzin, 1989), rituals, routines, metaphors, and everyday actions. Dewey views individuals, organisations and communities as being organisms which have life, with both individual and social aspects, and with inner and (outer) existential dimensions. Although what is studied is a function of the observer's interests, it is these dimensions of experience which are of ultimate interest to narrative researchers.

In writing on interpretive biography as a means of studying individual's lives, Denzin (1989) suggests that it may not be possible to draw such clear-cut distinctions between the different selves, and between the past, present and future as Clandinin and Connelly have drawn them. Denzin comments that in any story told, multiple selves speak, and that these selves are temporal productions residing in both the present and a re-constructed past. "These multiple selves merge, double back, laminate and build on one another, and provide the context and occasion for the larger story that is told. The boundaries and borders between the multiple stories is never clear-cut, for the meanings of every given story is only given in the difference that separates its beginnings and endings from the story that follows. As one story

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ends, another begins, but then the earlier story overlaps with the one that is now being told." (p72), To this extent, past, present and future as contained in stories can be seen as productions or creations which may intersect and overlap in non-linear ways.

Despite this caveat, Clandinin and Connelly's conceptualising of the different dimensions was helpful to me methodologically, and it is to this that I return.

Methodological guidelines.

In contemplating the messy complexity of experience, the authors suggest some guidelines for the researcher in navigating their way through. First is the notion that the researcher must constantly attend to the purpose or "the why of the work" (p416) from beginning to end, recognising that this may change according to new stories which emerge, leading to unexpected changes in direction. They comment that in collaborative work this is most likely to become painfully apparent. It is this strand which (paradoxically) defines the starting and stopping points and holds and connects both the expected and the unexpected, the relevant and seemingly irrelevant, and what may appear to be a seemingly endless array of possibilities.

Secondly, inquiry into personal experience is simultaneously focused in four directions: *Inward*, in the sense of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions and so on (internal conditions); *Outward*, in the sense of paying attention to the wider environment, the world of social roles and relationship and the kinds of lives people live (existential conditions); and *Backwards* and *forwards* , referring to the temporality of experience which acknowledges the sense of history and the intentionality of the organism undergoing the experience. "To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way." (P416). For researchers there will be an autobiographical quality to their experiences. The stories heard and the texts read will invoke the researchers' own experiential memories with their own temporality, which in turn will influence the meaning made of the events referred to in the texts and stories. The same is true of readers of research texts. In this way, the 'experience of experience' will be multifaceted.

Finally, they offer three sets of methodological questions to help researchers structure the complexity of experience as they find themselves in a "forest of stories" pointing in different directions. One has to do with the field of research experience, another has to do with the texts written and told about the field experience, and the third is to do with the research account. Field, text and research account, and the relations between them and with the participants, name primary kinds of decisions to be made by those undertaking study of experience. I will summarise each respectively and at the same time take what is relevant for my own use.

• The Field (or, 'experience of experience').

Following Dewey, the authors' principal interest in experience is the growth and transformation in the life stories the inquiry participants author. Therefore, no matter how difficult it is to tell a story, the more difficult but important task in narrative is to retell stories that allow for growth and change. I would add here that this is a presumption that may not be shared by all researchers, and could be seen as screening out certain stories which may be vital for the researcher to hear, and important for the story-teller to relate. Such stories may be ones of pain and oppression, for example, which need to be given voice so that an awareness can be created in others about how they might be participating, however inadvertently, in oppressive practices.

Here, the nature of the relationship between researcher and the field of experience may vary, from being a so-called neutral observer to being a full participant. Whatever the relationship, researchers, as do the other participants, come with stories of their own, already engaged in narrative processes. Together, all partake in the authoring of new stories. All live, tell, and modify through re-telling and re-living, stories which interact reflexively with each other. "We

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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." (p418).

This interactive process constitutes the inquiry. These new stories emerge from the prior stories or narrative processes which all participants bring into the field as they collaborate together. Therefore it is important to be sensitive to these prior stories as they will form the basis of the inquiry and will have varying degrees of influence. One of the starting points for Clandinin and Connelly is for the initiating researchers to be aware of the stories they are living as they enter the inquiry.

• Field Texts.

The authors use the term 'field text' to refer to what is usually called data - that is, journal entries, field notes, photographs and so on. They are texts created by the participants and researcher which represent aspects of field experience. They may have been formed prior to the inquiry or during the inquiry, but become field texts when they become relevant to the inquiry.

The relations between the researcher and field texts involve complex questions of the representation of experience, the interpretation and reconstruction of experience, and appropriate text forms. Researchers try to gain experience of their experience through constructing narratives. It is here that researchers deal with questions of who they are in the field and who they are in the texts they write about their experience of being in the field. "Questions of telling, that is, of the research account, come down to matters of autobiographical presence and the significance of this presence for the text and for the field. Matters of signature (Geertz, 1988) and voice are important" (p418).

Getting from field to text is a critical matter and an important factor in this is the nature of the relationship between researcher and participants as this establishes the epistemological status of the field texts. What is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the relationship. The authors assume that a relationship embeds meaning in the text and imposes form on the research texts ultimately developed. The field text created may be more or less collaboratively constructed, may be more or less interpretive, may be more or less researcher influenced. The authors believe serious deceptions can occur unless the relationship between researcher and participants is clear and unless the method for moving from field experience to field text is clearly explicated.

Field texts can take various forms, each with their own methodology and body of literature. Clandinin and Connelly list some as follows:

> • *Oral History, Annals and Chronicles*. These are methods in which the researchers' intentions are uppermost and represent a range of strategies for having participants re-collect their experiences. Within this range the researcher can shift the focus from information gathering, in other words asking the right questions, to interaction where the focus is on the process. The account obtained is but one of many possible representations of the participant's life.

> • *Family stories.* These are related to the above, where the focus is on family stories handed down through the generations. These have both internal and external or existential conditions, relating to experience within the family or to how the family engages with the wider world respectively.

> • *Photographs, Memory boxes, Personal/family artefacts.* Each item marks a particular time, place or event around which a story is told.

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•	*Research Interviews.* These can be turned into field texts through transcriptions, note taking and/or the selective use of segments of the interview.. The way the interviewer behaves within the interview, selects and structures the questions and provides a frame within which participants shape their accounts of their experience. Culture and gender differences influence the way participants experience research interviews.

•	*Journals.* This form of text within research are records of practices and reflections on those practices, weaving together the private and the professional, capturing fragments of experiences in attempts by the authors to "sort themselves out" (p421).

•	*Autobiographical writing.* An extension of the above form, autobiographical writing moves from the fragmentary day to day experiences to a wider life context in which the individual captures the tension between self and others. Again this is a telling of one of a range of reconstructions, and the autobiography can be seen as a 're-telling' as life (within the narrative metaphor) is already a kind of narrative construct (Molloy, 1991).

•	*Letters.* Unlike journals, letters are written to a specific 'other' with the expectation of a response. "In letters we try to give an account of ourselves, make meaning of our experiences, and attempt to establish and maintain relationships among ourselves, our experience, and the experience of another." (p421). One of the merits of this form, suggest the authors, is the equality established, the give and take of conversation.

•	*Conversations.* This is a more generic form of activity, representing a less constraining and more equal and flexible form of encounter between participants where a fuller co-authoring of the form and topics of conversation is possible. Again, the nature of the relationship between researcher and participants creates one of the contexts in which meaning is constructed.

•	*Field notes and other stories from the field.* These are considered to be the mainstay of ethnographic data collection methods and may be written by researchers and participants, in more or less detail with more or less descriptive content. Providing the nature of the relationship between researcher and participants is made clear, Clandinin and Connelly advocate bolder use of field records. As all field texts are constructed representations of experience, there is no reason, they argue, why field notes cannot capture experience as adequately as tape or video recordings which give rise to penalties in transcription at a later stage.

• Research Texts.

Although field texts may be rich and interesting in their own right, they need to be reconstructed as research texts because the task is to discover the meaning and social significance contained therein. Research texts are at a distance from field texts and grow out of the repeated questions concerning meaning and significance. A research account looks for patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes either across individuals or within individuals' personal experience.

The search for meaning is created by the researcher's experience, and this has both internal and existential conditions. Just as the researcher's relationship to participants shapes the field text, so too does the researcher's relationship to the participants and the inquiry shape the research text. The authors take the position that who the researchers are makes a difference at all levels of the research and that their "voice" and the "signature" they put on their work comes out of the stories they live and tell. The researcher's "internal conditions of experience" (p423) therefore are of as much relevance and importance as the "existential conditions"

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which occupy so much of the space in traditional research. These then are two further sets of methodological questions for the researcher to consider.

• Internal conditions

The metaphors of voice and signature are two significant ways in which the researcher is present in the research text. The authors acknowledge the developing literature on voice and describe voice as an acknowledgement by the researcher that they have something to say. The beginning researcher may move from a position of silence, from merely summarising and rewriting others work, to a position of independently having something to say on their own behalf.

For the experienced researcher there are dilemmas about voice in moving from field to research texts, balancing their own voice with those of the various participants. They must also balance that which is said with that which is not said, the implicit versus the explicit, and to be aware that as researchers they can have multiple voices as well. The other side of voice is silence, some of which is present in an aware and chosen form, some of which is present in an unaware form. Temporality is another issue of voice which needs to be made apparent. Is the voice a current voice, speaking about how things seem from the present, or an historical voice, speaking about how things seemed at some point in the past?

How the researcher expresses voice in their own unique way constitutes a closely related metaphor of signature. Clandinin and Connelly refer to Geertz's (1988) concept of "being there in the text" as signature, denoting the particular forms the researcher has found among the many available for signing his or her presence. There are also dilemmas around signature as there are around voice. If a signature is too flimsy or thin then the ensuing text risks being signed by other texts such as those coming from theory. If it is too vivid then it risks the charge of being overly subjective and not conversing enough with other texts, thus obscuring the field and other participants.

The text which follows from the signature has a recognisable cadence, rhythm and expression which mark it as coming from a certain author or group of collaborators. Geertz calls this expression of signature "discourse". The signature and its expression in discourse creates an author identity.

• Existential conditions.

Clandinin and Connelly consider three existential conditions to be of importance to personal experience methods in moving from field text to research text. They are *inquiry purposes, narrative forms,* and *audience* and the researcher's imagined relationships to them.

> • *Inquiry purpose* - or the question 'what are we doing here?' - comes to the fore in writing the research text. Here the researcher is writing not only for the self but also for others in the hope of influencing discourse and practice in a wider arena. Personal experience methods have the potential to transcend the specialities of research in a particular subject, to connect with fundamental qualities of human experience, and to relate to wider life communities.
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> • Differing *narrative forms* are increasingly being used to relate findings in research texts, including visual, poetic and dramatic forms. Borrowing from and adapting of signature of favourite authors is warranted in finding one's own unique form.
>
> • In writing for a wider *audience*, texts may be descriptive, expositional, argumentative or narrative. All of these texts can be used, depending on the imagined relationship the researcher wishes to enter into with audiences. Clandinin and Connelly advise researchers to imagine themselves in

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conversation with an audience and ask, 'what kind of voice and signature shall I adopt - what kind of conversation do I imagine will ensue?' The authors advocate that in this way personal experience methods offer the opportunity to enter into conversations, through texts, with the wider social world in such a way that transformation and growth can occur.

These methodological guidelines lead on to questions of validity, or quality and rigour of knowing - in Narrative Inquiry terms, what constitutes a 'good story'. Before gathering some validity criteria for my own purposes, I wish to pause briefly to consider the nature of experience as implicitly framed by Narrative Inquiry.

Is there more to Experience?

Clandinin and Connelly do not elaborate about the domains in which 'experience is experienced', but their frameworks too easily suggest it will largely be that of language. Whilst I agree that we mostly resort to linguistic domains when we come to name experiences and communicate about them, I feel it is important to leave the wider field of experience open to include non-verbal dimensions of experience. Otherwise there is a risk that dominant ways of knowing will inadvertently be allowed to prevail at the expense of others. I will refer briefly to several sources to illustrate.

For example, Heron (1981,1992) develops an extended epistemology in which he proposes different forms of knowledge. I will draw upon this in more depth in later chapters, but will briefly introduce it here in order to make the case for extending the types of experience to be included in any experiential inquiry. Heron's 'propositional' knowledge domain is that of propositions, statements, laws and theory. This form of knowledge is the main kind of knowledge accepted in our culture and requires mastery of language to express its concepts. While this is an important domain, an over-reliance on it leads to isolation from other ways of knowing which are in the realm of the symbolic and the intuitive as well as the practical. These latter forms are tapped by Heron in his 'Presentational' knowing (occurring through perceptual imagery leading to awareness of metaphor and symbol), 'Experiential' knowing (knowing an entity through encounter, drawing on the tacit or intuitive), and 'Practical' knowing (knowing 'how', embodied in skills and proficiencies).

In considering biographical texts as narrative devices for the expression of an individual's life, Denzin (1989) describes experience as individuals meeting, confronting, passing through, and making sense of events in their lives. He cites Bruner (1986) in observing that experience refers to how the "realities of a life present themselves to consciousness" (p33). Denzin categorises experiences as either problematic, routine or ritual-like. Problematic experiences are termed epiphanies or moments of revelation in a person's life, where individual character is revealed as a crisis or significant event is confronted and experienced. He notes that the expression of experience can occur in many ways including rituals, song, literature and dramas performed. The various forms of expression are shaped by cultural conventions and are given life through performance. As experience is performed according to cultural and social texts, those texts come to constitute that experience. Expression of lives as performed texts become socially constructed structures of meaning (Bruner, 1986). However, this seems to me to begin to lead towards the formalism Clandinin and Connelly seek to avoid, whereby texts rather than people and their experience become the focus of inquiry.

Reason and Hawkins (1988) write about story telling as a qualitative method of inquiry which can potentially capture the liveliness, involvement and passion of researchers' lived experiences. They use story-telling as an explicit and creative metaphorical process among a group of researchers engaged in Cooperative Inquiry (a form of inquiry which I will describe in Chapter Four), but nonetheless their comments on the nature of experience are relevant to my purpose here. They see story-telling as one of many cultural forms available for the expression of experience, alongside myth, art, dance and poetry. They acknowledge many languages in which meaning can be expressed and communicated - the languages of words, actions, shapes, colours, silences and stillness as examples. They note that languages are analogic and symbolic and do not point out meaning directly but rather demonstrate it by re-

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creating pattern in metaphorical shape and form. They also note that story telling as they use it maps onto Heron's domain of Presentational knowledge.

My intention here is to signal the importance of multiple forms of knowing as necessary 'media' for experiential inquiry, allowing and enabling the participants to engage fully and holistically in those aspects of life they wish to investigate. I explore these epistemological issues and their relationship to various methodologies and associated criteria for validity in later chapters. However, while still resting with Narrative Inquiry I would like to derive some criteria for validity, or quality and rigour of knowing, from within this framework. In order to do so I need to introduce in summary form some of the major issues which arose for me in conducting the research - these will provide a 'frame' for guiding my selection of narrative quality criteria and how I see them as being useful for the production of this research thesis. While such a step here risks pre-empting the unfolding story of my development as a researcher, with its personal sense of being a journey, I feel it is necessary to give some idea of how the narrative inquiry method fitted my personal experience and hence gained much utility in informing the writing of this final research text.

Narrative Inquiry as a 'Framework' for writing.

One of the narrative themes in this account is the sense of personal and professional journey I experienced in undertaking research. Therefore I will be telling of my search for the key questions I wish to ask, of my search for theory and methodologies to carry these questions, and of my developing awareness of different ways of 'knowing' about experience. Part of this will be my growing awareness of the use of story and the various warrants I develop for its use.

As I began the research I became aware of many past experiences I was carrying with me which influenced the questions I was asking as well as my day to day practice. In Clandinin and Connelly's terms, these were the stories I was living as a researcher in entering the research. I also carried hopes, visions and aspirations for the future, partly based on the 'stories I was living' and so my experience had temporal dimensions. My personal experience of engaging with the research was one of becoming more highly aware in day to day practice of the theoretical and value assumptions I was carrying. Furthermore there were incongruities between my intentions as a researcher and my day to day experiences which gave rise to painful dilemmas. Writing about these experiences in storied form facilitated my growing awareness and helped with the eventual resolution of the dilemmas.

Philosophically I was drawn to action research methodologies with their preference for knowledge gained in and for action, and with the researcher as full participant. I was also drawn to constructivist and social constructionist epistemologies which place individuals as being fully involved in making sense of and constructing meaning about their worlds. In research terms both preferences place researchers and their own personal processes within the field of inquiry.

This focus on personal process constituted an inward looking dimension to the research, one which was facilitated by writing about my experiences in the field in storied form as I went along, This writing was a means of making explicit to myself my own personal processes as a researcher and how they informed and were informed by the research process. In turn they also became a means of communicating with others about the unfolding research process.

Additionally, these methodological and philosophical preferences required a rich description of the research setting and the individuals who people it. If knowledge is socially constructed, then an account of the relationships and the contexts within which meaning is ascribed is vital. This gave rise to questions for me about authentically representing others in my research accounts and honouring their views as I understood them to be. Furthermore, my research is partly an inquiry into organisational life and thus an appreciation of its history, its development over time and its relationships with its environment became important. In this way the research gained an outward (or in Clandinin and Connelly's terms, 'existential') dimension.

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Finally, the research process led to experiences of painful confusion and challenge, and eventually transition and growth. The process of writing about these experiences, as dialogues with myself, experience and theory, facilitated the transitions as much as did acting in the world and dialoguing with others. I came to see story telling as complementing action inquiry methodologies by providing a form of reflection-for-action, linking reflexively with the reflection-in-action required of and facilitated by action inquiry. I pursue this in Section Two.

It is against this background that I have selected the list of narrative criteria below for informing the presentation and construction of this thesis. In thinking about how I could use a Narrative Inquiry framework to inform the construction of a narrative about the research, I selected out what I thought to be those key characteristics of the framework which described my own experiences of finding a form of representation of experience in writing, and which mapped onto or intersected with my own set of quality criteria (developed in chapter five). I see these characteristics as addressing both validity considerations (the quality of the knowledge gained) and methodological considerations (the rigour with which the researcher goes about finding out). These criteria helped me create a narrative about the research which represented my experience as authentically as possible within the domain of writing.

Narrative criteria for quality.

- A well crafted story has plot, characters, a sense of temporality and has both inner and outer or existential dimensions.

- Stories are about moments or processes of challenge, growth and transition, and the meaning taken from them is presented in the research narrative.

- The purpose or the 'why' of the inquiry is present, either implicitly or explicitly, in or around the story.

- The relationships between participants and researcher is made explicit in the research text.

- The researcher pays attention to and makes clear the stories she/he is living as she/he comes into the inquiry.

- The author's presence is discernible in terms of voice and signature, and the framings from the different perspectives of the multiple "I "s are explicit.

- How the researcher and participants move from field to text to research account is available to the reader.

- There is a balance between the researcher's voice and the voice of others from the field of research, including other authors.

- The research text shows an aliveness to silences or absences or stories not told and the possible meaning to be taken from them.

The Narrative Inquiry framework I have sketched out will provide a position from which I can comment from time to time on this research journey as it unfolds. To the extent that this framework is 'embroidered on' to the beginning end of this thesis, the thread of commentary I make from within it will not always be easily woven into existing fabric. This is one of the ways in which it feels risky to structure the writing in this way and it feels proper to acknowledge this here. However, this risk is offset by the value for me contained in the recognition the framework gives to the complexity of experience, and the sometimes difficulty of recounting it and accounting for it. The metaphor of the researcher at times becoming lost in a 'forest of

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stories pointing in all directions' is most apt for my experience in conducting the research and making sense of it.

I will use the criteria above to guide myself and the reader through the remainder of this research 'narrative'. Sometimes my use of them will be implicit and the reader may be more aware of them than I as the writer. At other times I will refer to them explicitly when I wish to add a researcher's voice on issues of rigour and quality of knowing, or when I as writer wish to assist the reader as audience through complexities of my own experience. In the final section of the thesis, I will directly refer to how I used narrative inquiry to select 'which stories to tell' from the many I had collected as field texts.

In the next chapter I begin with telling stories which, in Clandinin and Connelly's terms, are some of the stories I am living as I enter the research.

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