NARRATIVE INQUIRY
IN A
MULTICULTURAL LANDSCAPE
MULTICULTURAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

by

JoAnn Phillion

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Narrative Inquiry in a Multicultural Landscape
Multicultural Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

In this school-based narrative inquiry, which took place over three years, I focused on a multicultural school, a teacher in the school, and the teacher’s understanding of her multicultural class. The purpose was to develop a narrative understanding of multicultural education by examining the teacher’s experiences in the context of the school and community. This builds on Connelly and Clandinin’s work on teacher knowledge as it develops in professional contexts (in press), and focuses on multiculturalism. I began the inquiry with immigrant teachers who were certified outside Canada and who were negotiating entry into the Ontario education system. I explored their experiences in the context of a university program that focused on the development of their skills. I continued the inquiry with an immigrant teacher working in an urban school for fifteen years. I examined this classroom from three perspectives: Place, the community landscape and school context; temporality, the history of the school and current programs; and interaction, my relationship with the school and the teacher, and the teacher's relationship with the school and students. Through long-term participant observation in the school and classroom, intensive on-going dialogue with my participant, and writing field texts and research texts I found that the literature and language of multiculturalism create ways of
thinking about classrooms such as mine, which, I discovered, miss the complexity. In writing the inquiry I developed various aesthetic devices in an attempt to make apparent my location as researcher, the impact of my experiences on the inquiry, and how my relationship with the school and teacher shaped my experiences in the school, inspired how I wrote about the inquiry, and impacted my views of multiculturalism. I came to see a narrative approach as offering a new perspective on multiculturalism; one I term narrative multiculturalism. Narrative multiculturalism begins with experience as it is shaped by the contexts in which people live and work, and by broader societal and global forces. This approach views multiculturalism as a fluid process, continually evolving, changing, transforming. Narrative multiculturalism looks at the potential of multiculturalism to enrich disciplines and lives in increasingly globalizing societies.
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I hope I have not forgotten anyone. This process would have been impossible without people, all those mentioned, and many left unmentioned. My heart is more filled with hope after this journey than before. My heart is more filled with love after this journey than before.
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Prologue

The Topography of the Inquiry Landscape

The Narrative Art of Writing the Inquiry

In this narrative inquiry I focus on a multicultural school, Bay Street School, a teacher in the school and the teacher’s knowledge of her multicultural class. The purpose of this inquiry is to develop a narrative understanding of multicultural education by examining the teacher’s experiences in the context of the school and community. This builds on Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin’s work on teacher knowledge (e.g. 1988, 1990, 1995), and emphasizes multicultural issues. In writing the inquiry I explore my relationship with the school and the teacher, and how this relationship affects my understanding of multicultural education.

The writing of this inquiry is an effort to bring to life, to render, a multicultural school, a teacher in the school, and her practice, and my experiences of the school, the teacher, and her practice. The rendering of this inquiry, what I see as the narrative art of writing, is a serious endeavor to fashion a text that explores the physical setting, temporal context, and relational circumstances of the inquiry; one that attempts to make apparent my location as person and as researcher, the specific conditions of the fieldwork, my relationship with my participant, Pam, and the construction of the written artifact; while recognizing the inherent impossibility of fully doing so. This endeavor required a strong commitment to the invention of
rhetorical techniques that displayed, and openly acknowledged, the partiality of meaning and interpretations made in the inquiry, and the limitations of the knowledge constructed of the inquiry (see Clifford, 1986, for an in-depth look at a somewhat similar perspective as related to ethnographic writing).

In my inquiry I experienced a complex world, reflected on it, and as I wrote about it, attempted to reconstruct the intricacy of this world. My goal was to create a life-like portrayal of my experiences in the school and with my participant. I rigorously kept field notes, theoretical memos, and journals of my experiences and developing understandings in the inquiry (see Appendix I). Using these field texts (see Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, for a discussion of both the term "field text", and the multiple types in use in narrative inquiry) as a foundation I employed multiple artistic and rhetorical devices in my writing to reconstruct an approximation of the complexity of this world. I created various dramatizations, some purposefully slightly elusive, of my participation in this complex world; they are purposely constructed to represent different aspects of the research experience, one that was not a smooth linear process. The idea was that the dramatizations and other devices used in the writing create a ground so that my experiences, through active engagement on the part of the reader, partially become a reader’s experience as well. At times my experiences felt fragmented, dislocated, chaotic in some senses; my writing is reflective of these aspects of research. At other times my experiences felt harmonious, rhythmical, synchronous; my writing is reflective of these aspects of research. Thus there is no one prevailing feel or xii
tone in this work, rather, different chapters seem to have
different tones (even one section, such as this preface, has
multiple tones).

Research, for me, is from the beginning an act of writing, writing
an act of translation of experience into text (see the work of
Geertz, e.g. 1995; Clifford, 1988; Marcus & Fisher, 1986; Van
Maanen, 1995, for an elaboration of a similar idea). Writing, for
me, is much more than “writing up” what was “found” in the
inquiry. Writing is a process of discovery as much as the research
itself, one filled with delight, surprise, and occasionally,
chagrin; one of inventiveness and creativity, one of joy, and
sometimes of pain. I feel that engaging in this inquiry was a
scientific and creative endeavor; I think of my writing as
expressions of both.

Much of my writing has a strong autobiographical flavour. This is
apparent even in sections of the work where it might, perhaps, be
less expected. My approach to theory, for example, has been to
weave it into the overall narrative of the inquiry. This method
also has a temporal dimension; literature is related to my
developing thinking at various stages of the inquiry. There is no
traditional “literature review” section; rather literature appears
and reappears in different guises and for different purposes
throughout the work. I read research and other literature as
though the authors were in direct dialogue with me about my work.
I have also somewhat blurred the boundaries of what is
traditionally used to theorize understandings in research; I use
novels, poetry, art, music and film. Some of these sources are not
directly alluded to in the written text, but were like fertile swamps to assist in developing understanding in this inquiry. It is my sense that in narrative inquiry sources of understanding come from all aspects of life experience.

Extending an Invitation

I invite you, the reader, to experience, by reading my writing, the multiple intricate contexts of the complex world in which my work is embedded: physical—from the world, to the community, to the classroom; temporal—from the historical, to the present, to the future; relational—from the personal, to the interpersonal, to the social and political (I have built on Clandinin and Connelly, in progress; specifically the term “three dimensional narrative inquiry space”). Multiple contexts are used not only to frame the inquiry, but also to interpret the experiences of those, myself included, in the inquiry. It is my hope that in reading this work you will not distance yourself, but, rather, you will join me in these experiences, share my passions and my puzzles, wonder with me, feel the dilemmas that I experienced in my research. I invite you, the reader, to travel with me through this work, to bring your experiences, your insights, your intuition, your imagination, to actively join with me in interpretation in this inquiry.

Throughout reading this work you will encounter me as a researcher and as a person, perhaps you will recognize me, perhaps you will see me as a stranger, perhaps you will be surprised by me, perhaps you will turn away from me, perhaps you will understand me. I
believe you will come to see that I am not alone in my work, that being in community is how I learn and how I live (see Phillion & He, 1999, for a brief discussion of my learning and living in community). You will learn about the project my work is embedded in, grows from, and flourishes with, some of the people I work with on the project, and the links this project and people have to projects in the past. You will learn about the impact of this inquiry on my future research program. You will perhaps recognize that, for me, being in community means acting on understandings developed together. You will perhaps also uncover some hidden, unarticulated aspects of community in my work.

Through reconstructing meaning of my writing by reading this work, and reflecting on people and places you yourself know, or have read about elsewhere, it is my desire that you, too, can become familiar (at least somewhat) with what I think of as the very special place where I engaged in my inquiry--Bay Street School. You will first experience my version/vision of the school through a tour of the community I re-created from field notes and interviews interspersed with interpretive comments and whispered asides, then a text/poetic/photographic portrait I created of the physical landscape of the multicultural community in which Bay Street School is embedded. My vision/version is further articulated through a reconstruction of the school's history in the form of an imaginative piece on the first principal, then its present through a recreation of conversations on school programs, and my storied depiction of the classroom where I spent two exhilarating years.
In reading, you will also meet some of the characters from Bay Street School. Some characters are fictional and semi-fictional creations. They appear, disappear, and reappear; they corroborate/contradict, agree/disagree with my thinking. The main character is my participant, Pam. Perhaps, after reading, you will come to feel that you, too, have experienced an encounter with Pam (albeit very fleeting), her diverse classroom, and her teaching, at least as told from my perspective, and hopefully partially from her perspective as well. Perhaps you will recognize her, perhaps you will see her as a stranger, perhaps you will be surprised by her, perhaps you will turn away from her, perhaps you will understand her.

In my attempt to capture the complexity of my relationship with Pam, and my attempt to capture the confluence and divergence of our thinking, I used alternative forms of representation (Eisner, 1997), and alternative means of expression including stories, dream fragments, imaginative and poetic forms, dialogic portrayals, and photographs (not included in the final text, but used to develop understanding during the process). My desire was to try to check an inexorable pull towards what might be seen as, and might be, an authoritative representation of our experiences together in her classroom. To do this I tried to maintain the strangeness of Pam’s voice (mine will become familiar to you) and to hold in direct view the specific contingencies (place, time, purpose, etc.) of our exchanges. There, and in other parts of the work, in reading, perhaps in the background you will hear soft echoes of our conversations, touch on some of the joy and some of
the pain of our experiences, feel some of the resonance/dissonance in our thinking. What you will not hear (perhaps I am wrong, and you will be able to imagine it) is what I hear as I write, the sound of Pam’s voice, the pattern of her intonation, the mingling of laughter and command, the repeated refrains that punctuated experience in the classroom.

Puzzles and Wonders

I wish to further extend the invitation to readers of this work. I invite you to inquire, puzzle and wonder about many things: one is the children in Pam’s classroom in Bay Street School. How is it that they have had experiences many of us would find difficult, yet they seem to have such hope? Here, and elsewhere in this work, I will use stories to illustrate experience, to present meaning, to invite interpretation. The first story I tell is about Aisha. She came from a “war-torn” country; she did not speak English when she arrived; she was living in crowded refugee housing. I observed her on her first day in class; she diligently copied from the board into her notebook when others copied from the board; she got in line when others got in line; she sat on the carpet when others sat on the carpet. One day we went to the zoo. She held my hand the whole time. It was hot and sticky, but we did not let go. At McDonalds, she stood in line with me, and nodded yes when I asked if she wanted something vegetarian. Did she know what I was saying? As she ate, she looked around the room. She saw someone remove wrappers and drinks from the table beside us. She immediately got up, went through the entire McDonalds, and cleared every table where a member of the class was sitting. When a
delegation from another country was visiting the school a week later, someone spoke to her in her native language. They told me that Aisha had never been to school before in her life. I was stunned. I had assumed that she was learning English, but she was learning to be a school girl. She was learning by watching, observing closely, and doing what others did. She was inquiring into what it means to be a student, and she was succeeding in ways I had not comprehended. My puzzles and my passions grow from Aisha, my interests emerge from Aisha and merge in Aisha, my hopes for multiculturalism lie in Aisha.

I invite you to share the puzzles with me, to share the passions and the hopes I have for the children in Pam’s classroom; although they are not featured, they are there in every paragraph, every line, every word. They are the faces I see in the fibers of every page. Passion and commitment fuel my inquiry: my passion, my commitment are with immigrant students, like Aisha and so many others, and her parents; those who come to us from all over the world, often not speaking English, sometimes not literate in their native languages, sometimes never having had the opportunity to attend school before coming to Bay Street School. Some are refugees from ravaged countries where war has chased hope into hiding. Some are refugees who have moved from country to country, from camp to camp, from language to language, desperately seeking a place to belong. Why is it that, like Aisha, they breathe such possibilities to me?

Some come from countries where political, religious, sexual oppression have made it impossible for them to be who they are.
Others come from countries where their lives were going well, but when they thought of the future, it seemed better to start anew in Canada, a country they associate with educational opportunities for all. Why is it that most of the children’s parents come with a belief that education is the key to the future, and most care desperately that their children learn, thrive, and be successful in this new country? (See some of the “new” ethnographic work [e.g. Valdés, 1996], what Soto, 1997, terms “newly evolving paradigms”, done by women researchers from the same ethnic communities in which they are doing their research that looks at immigrant and minority parents’ views of education and schooling, and their ideas of success). Why is it that most parents and children come to Bay Street School filled with hope for the future, fired by dreams of what could be possible in their lives?

_Hopes and Dreams_

I invite you to share, through reading this text, and through an active imaginative act on your part, the parents’ and students’ hopes and dreams, Pam’s hopes and dreams, and mine as well. I, too, came to Bay Street School filled with hope for the future, fired by dreams of what could be possible in my life and in narrative inquiry into multicultural education. I was not a refugee, nor an immigrant. I did not come as a student, nor as a parent, nor as a teacher. I came to Bay Street School as a researcher, an outsider to the community and the school, an outsider to the daily life of the children and teachers. What I had in common with new parents and new students, and new teachers, is that I, too, came as a stranger. I, too, did not know what to
expect. What I could not have dared to expect, or hope for, or even dream of, is what happened.

The doors to the school, the doors to the classroom, and the doors to Pam’s life and work, and her thinking about her life and work, were flung wide open to me. I do not take this lightly. Open doors make people and places vulnerable; being vulnerable means being open to being hurt, open to being wounded, open to being scarred, perhaps permanently, perhaps irrevocably. Open doors imply a hope that a bond of trust will develop. I reflect on the trust bestowed on me with a sense of awe, I act on it with a sense of responsibility, and I move forward on it with a sense of renewed, revitalized commitment.

The open doors profoundly affected my life. Walking through them I became caught up and drawn into the life of the school, the life and work of my participant, Pam. In reading this work, I hope you will come to understand the sense of incredible privilege that pervades my thinking about my relationship to Bay Street School, my relationship with teachers, community workers, and students, and particularly my relationship with Pam. The sense of privilege comes from how I was trusted to became part of the school, part of the life and work my participant.

I also cherish a hope that in reading this work you will join in the process of my awakening in Pam’s classroom, a process that had the power to broaden my perspectives, shake my views, turn my thinking upside down and around, and transform my life. In this inquiry not only were the fires of the passion I feel for
immigrant students, and multicultural education kept alive, indeed fanned to far higher heights, but also it was in Pam’s classroom that I began to have genuine respect for the inquiry process itself. I began to respect the process of not knowing, wondering, figuring things out. I began to see that inquiry was a valuable piece of work within multicultural education.

In participation in Bay Street School and in the life-work of my participant, I found not only material on which to write, but also inspiration on how to write. For me, participating in the life-work of Pam, and writing of this participation were equally scientific and artistic. As you will come to see as you read, the focus of my work shifts from much that is usually done in the social sciences, a dominant tendency to emphasize problems (Glazer, 1997), to something that is occasionally done in the arts, a focus on possibilities. In recent work Grant and Tate (1995) examined multicultural education through the multicultural education research literature. To conclude their article they discuss what they see as the future of multicultural education research:

... conducting multicultural education research must be demythicized. This scholarship is a social phenomenon that aids and illuminates. Multicultural education research involves committing your action as a scholar within the language of possibilities, a language that provides understanding and enlightenment and leads to the construction and/or reconstruction of hope and agency for all people. (p. 161)
In my reading of the literature, an attempt is being made in this direction, mainly in the work of women ethnographers from ethnic communities in which they are doing their research such as Guadalupe Valdés (e.g. 1996) and Lourdes Diaz Soto (e.g. 1997); also I see this move in the work of Maxine Greene (e.g. 1993), and Lisa Delpit (e.g. 1995). In their work I see inklings of hope. In my work in Bay Street School, I also see inklings of hope.

*Where You Belong*

Bay Street School is where the inquiry began. Bay Street School is a multicultural school located in Toronto, the city the United Nations has proclaimed to be the most diverse on the face of the earth. Bay Street School is located in a multicultural neighbourhood; home to many new immigrants, home to many who have experienced repression, home to many who have experienced poverty, home to many who are successful, or planning to be successful, in their new lives. Bay Street School, often cast as “inner-city school” or “low socio-economic school”, is a school embedded in a richly linguistically and culturally diverse community.

But Bay Street School means much more than that to me. *Bay Street School, where you belong ...* the school’s motto, has come to have deep personal meaning for me. I feel as though Bay Street School is a place that children like Aisha can belong, and a place that I can belong. I feel that Bay Street School is a place where the world walks in the door, where the world meets, where the world begins to understand that we can be together, we do belong.
together, we can grow together, and in the process we can flourish and thrive as a school, as a community, as a city, as a country.

*Writing My Life with Hope*

My writing reflects and mirrors the sense of belonging I experienced at Bay Street School. It is my hope that you will come to understand how this perspective infused my inquiry and dramatically affected my writing about this inquiry. I wrote in friendship with the community, the school, the people in the school, the parents, and especially Pam and students in her class. I wrote with respect for the community, the school, the people in the school, the parents, and Pam and students in her class. I wrote with compassion, with empathy, and with love. I wrote with, and continue to write with, hope. Engaging in this inquiry developed these emotions, shaped my responses to situations and interactions, shaped my writing, shaped me as a person, and will shape my future research and my future life.

I inscribe my life with a hopeful script because there are possibilities, there are schools, and people in schools, that, while not perfect, are trying, and succeeding in many, often unrecognized ways, to open up to immigrant children, refugee children, second language children, minority children, all children. Government and board policies are in place, but they are enacted in the school, in the classroom; the forces that produce change are the individual and the particular.
In this work, in every page, in every line, in every word, I am writing my life. Hope pervades my life as it pervades my writing, hope pervades my view of multiculturalism as it pervades my method of narrative inquiry. For me, multiculturalism is about hope. Multiculturalism is about the hope we have for children in our schools. Multiculturalism is about the hope we have for our schools, our cities, our country, our future. I inscribe my life with hope because I believe there are possibilities for making the world a better place now and in the future through multiculturalism.
I use the word “render” in the full sense of its meaning. In the *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (1976, p. 405) render has multiple layers of meanings: to submit, as for approval; to give in return; to cause to be; to give aid, or do a service; to depict; to play (music) or act (role); to translate; to melt down. I made a conscious effort to render (incorporating all these meanings) the school, my participant, and our relationship in my writing.

Most of the names of characters and places in this work are pseudonyms. Some are actual names. Aisha (who appears later in the prologue), and George (who appears in chapter eight), Annette and Tara (who appear in later chapters) and other students throughout this work are composite characters; that is they are based on real students, but various aspects of their backgrounds have been modified.

That is not to say that I (completely) romanticize my time in the field. I recognize that I was outside the life of the school. Indeed, even if I had chosen to try to think otherwise, I could not have carried that fantasy too far. My “outsideness” was pointed out to me on many occasions: by my participant (e.g. field notes, May 15, 1997); other teachers (e.g. field notes, January 29, 1997); and, one particularly memorable time, rather vehemently, by a former teacher (field notes, June 24, 1998). What I am saying is that I felt caught up in the flow of the school and my participant’s work life.

The feeling I have is echoed by James Clifford (1988) in the *Predicament of Culture: Literature, Art and Ethnography in the Twentieth Century*. In the introduction (p. 6) he uses a poem by William Carlos Williams to show how Williams, as a doctor and a poet, is like an ethnographer. He is in his patients’ lives and words (and in my case, work), and through this kind of privileged participant observation, one that is both scientific and poetic, he finds material for his writing. Clifford does not allude to what I also see in Williams’ poetry, which is that he also finds the very inspiration to write poetry in his work as doctor, in the lives of those he treats.
Part One: A Narrative of the Archeology of the Inquiry Landscape

Chapter I
Excavating the Autobiographical Roots of the Inquiry Landscape

A narrative inquiry almost always seems to have strong autobiographical roots; mine is no exception. I hesitate to say what these roots are because then it may seem as though there is a causal link between my past and my inquiry: because I grew up in an immigrant neighbourhood, because I taught English as a second language (ESL) students, I am interested in multicultural education. It is not that. For me, I think of it as less causal, as more tangled than that. Imagine a tree, under the ground the roots are interwoven, interconnected, and over-lapping; untangling them would be impossible. That is more the way I think of the roots of my inquiry. They are interconnected, woven together, entangled. The autobiographical roots on which the inquiry is founded spread throughout the inquiry, nourishing it.

Archeology, the exploration of the past, often leads to a reclaiming of the past, and to developing new understandings of the past in light of the present, and the present in light of the past. In a sense, that is what happened in writing parts of this chapter. Archeology also relies on interpretations made from fragments of information illuminated by contextual knowledge. In this chapter I dig into connections between my autobiography and
my inquiry; some are obvious, some are subtle, some are puzzling; some I explore, some I follow, some I do not. In this chapter I explore these connections as they relate to the phenomena of the inquiry, the underlying philosophy of the inquiry, the methodology used in the inquiry, and the writing done about the inquiry. I also alert the reader to issues that permeate the inquiry.

Early Years

I grew up in an immigrant neighbourhood in Montréal. I attended a Catholic grade school with many immigrant and many poor students. As a teenager I questioned the Catholic Church, threw off what I felt to be its yoke, and, through reading literature, explored, and felt as though I experienced, other ways of living, other ways of being in the world. As a young adult I questioned the implications of aspiring to an ever-spiraling upward path to the upper-middle class, a path to which my family was devoted. Throughout my life I have studied three languages other than my own, and learned none of them well (see Roberge & Phillion, 1997, for an elaboration of autobiographical aspects of learning/not learning second and third languages). I experienced the social movements of the sixties; I worked with Vietnam War draft resistors of which there were many who lived near McGill University where I was a student. My philosophical beliefs and my actions, were, and still are, dramatically shaped by the politics, the perfidies, and the people; and by the music, the movies, and the mores I encountered during that era.
Travel

A major connection between my autobiography and my inquiry that I attempt to unravel in this chapter relates to travel. Travel and moving have been part of my life from earliest childhood. In Canada I have lived in many different areas of five provinces. In my elementary and junior high grades I changed schools often; I have moved house over 20 times. I have also traveled a great deal, and spent long periods of time in countries other than Canada. When I was 17 I moved to New York with a friend (I only lasted a short time); when I was 18 I hitchhiked to Mexico; at 20 I spent a year traveling and working in Europe, much of it in North Africa. In my thirties I lived in Japan for six years. I have traveled extensively, in India, Nepal, Thailand, and Tibet (and many more countries). Recently I traveled in Central America; in 1998 I taught a summer course in Hong Kong.

Every extended stay in another place, every encounter with another person in another place, puts my values, my beliefs, my ways of thinking, and my every-day way of engaging in life under scrutiny and throws them into question. Encounters with other cultures raise issues of who I am, and what it means to be wife, mother, woman, teacher, learner, Canadian, World Citizen. Encounters with other cultures melt down artificially solid images of what these might mean, and enable me to reconstruct understanding of my positioning in the world. Encounters with other cultures are, for me, more than simply learning experiences at the time they take place. They are learning experiences to be reflected on to understand other experiences, often vastly different experiences,
in vastly different times and places (see Bateson, 1994, for a well thought out notion on this topic, what she terms “peripheral vision”, derived from her experiences of living, researching, and teaching in other cultures).

For me, there is a strong connection, a metaphorical relationship, between being a traveler and being a researcher. I am not alone in seeing this connection. Early travel writing has come to be seen as the beginnings of, and roots of, ethnographic work (see Clifford, 1988, chapters five and six, for an examination of this idea from an historical anthropological perspective, particularly in terms of relationships between travel writing and ethnographic writing). For me, I have come to believe that there are strong connections between learning in another culture and learning in a research site. There are strong connections between how I learn as a traveler, and how I learn as a researcher. As a traveler, as a researcher, I see fragments of the lives of those I visit, or those I study. I appear in the landscape at a particular moment in the flow of time; life has gone on before, and continues after. I may be welcome, I may not be welcome. I change as a result of these encounters, and I, and others, impact persons and places I encounter. In travel writing, as done by the early “ethnographers”, in research writing, they try, I try, to make sense of selected parts of what has happened, much of the meaning making done in the writing, in effect making sense of experiences “after the fact” (Geertz, 1995).

There is a symbolic connection between my traveling to many different parts of the world, and my researching in Bay Street
School where many different parts of the world seem to be in one place. For me, experiences of being in other cultures resonate with experiences of doing research in the school; only in the school, in that one place, I encountered what I recognized as multiple cultures, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple ways of being (in travel to unfamiliar cultures, I may not initially recognize the multiplicity within the cultures). As in encounters with other cultures, in Bay Street School my values, my beliefs, my ways of thinking, and my every-day way of engaging in life came under scrutiny, and were thrown into question. My certainties became uncertain; I initially experienced this as a dilemma, a predicament. I felt a sense of chaos, confusion, tension. Feeling tense, unsure and confused made me feel vulnerable. I have come to believe that in travel, as in research, I learn from and within this vulnerability. However, in Bay Street School I also experienced what felt like, to me, often, an overall sense of being in harmony, as I, and others, went about our shared activities. I puzzle over the meaning this has for teaching and learning, for schooling and education, and for multicultural identities in our diversifying societies.

Travel to other cultures, research in Bay Street School, the experiences and meanings of each echo and resonate in my understandings of narrative inquiry. In travel, as in research in the school, I am thrown into situations where I do not know the language (literally and figuratively), do not know the people, do not know the customs. I have to learn how to “be” in the new landscape. I learn to be in the new landscape by being an inquirer—immersing myself in daily life, observing, listening,
falling into the rhythms, absorbing the patterns² (I feel a sense of connection to Aisha from the preface).

Edward T. Hall (1994), in West of the Thirties: Discoveries Among the Navajo and Hopi wrote of his experiences with Natives prior to being educated as an anthropologist. Hall discusses what he calls, simply, "watching and listening". He writes of adjusting his life tempo to that of the Natives, he gradually learned to walk across the land like the Natives, sit under a tree for hours waiting for a Native elder to join him, blend into established conversational patterns. Hall did this by immersing himself in their daily life, by watching and listening, by being with the people, rather than by asking questions.

This struck a strong reverberating chord with me, because, like Hall with the Hopi and Navajo, to learn how to "be" in the new school landscape I feel I had to immerse myself in the atmosphere of the school, absorb the patterns and rhythms of Pam’s class, watch and listen, pay attention, be receptive, become part of the life of the class. Like Hall, I found that long periods of not talking, just being, accompanies this kind of research. Like Hall, I feel I learned from, and within, this kind of connected silence. Hall writes, again simply, yet eloquently, again striking an echoing chord with me, that he did this because he was genuinely interested in the people.

In her book Other People’s Children (1995), Lisa Delpit also discusses learning about research by being in another culture. Delpit tells a story of going to see a mountain in Alaska with a
Native person who referred to the mountain as "grandfather". The lesson that Delpit learned from this is one that I also have found to be important in my research.

This lesson was only one of many I received on learning to be part of the world rather than trying to dominate it—on learning to see rather than merely to look, to feel rather than touch, to hear rather than listen: to learn, in short, about the world by being still and opening myself to experiencing it. If I realize that I am an organic part of all that is, and learn to adopt a receptive, connected stance, then I need not take an active, dominant role to understand; the universe will include me in understanding. (p. 92)

Many have written about learning while immersed in cultures other than their own in addition to Bateson, Hall and Delpit (who is not well-known, nor often cited for this aspect of her remarkable work). I still puzzle as to why there seems to be such an intensification of learning while I am in other cultures, while I am with people from other cultures, and also while I am in Bay Street School. In travel, in encounters with other cultures, in research in Bay Street School, I experience a stronger than usual sense of being within the world, a sense of opening to the world, a sense of engaging with the world, a sense of involvement in the world. In travel, as in narrative inquiry in the school, I experience a feeling of being captivated, attentive, of being wide-eyed, wide-eared, wide-awake; at times, almost so much so that I feel overwhelmed, at times almost abraded. In other cultures, in the school, I feel I am in the midst of life, mingling with life, meshed with life. Throughout this work, I wonder at why it is that in narrative inquiry in the school, as in travel, that I feel so much more tuned into life in all its diversity, all its complexity?
Connections between learning from travel overlap and are entangled with connections from learning from teaching and learning from research. I have come to believe that there are strong connections between being the kind of teacher I was able to be because of the circumstances of my life and career, and the way I felt I had to go about engaging in inquiry.

After obtaining teaching certification in British Columbia, I taught ESL outside Tokyo from 1983 to 1989. I worked with different age groups; the experiences I remember most vividly are those working for Monbusho, the Ministry of Education, as an itinerant teacher in junior high schools. My son attended local schools, became fluent in Japanese, and developed what I think of as a bi-cultural outlook on life. While I did not learn to speak Japanese well, I began to feel comfortable as a “foreign” teacher in the Japanese education system. I understood my position, I understood what was expected of me. However, I did not feel comfortable as a parent in the education system. I could not talk to my son’s teachers; I could not read report cards; I could not help him with his homework. I wonder, now, did I seem like a parent who did not care about my son’s education?

When I returned from teaching in Japan I taught “visa students”, students who come to Canada to study. The visa students were junior high school and high school students from Asia who were the children of what the Canadian government termed “investment immigrants”, people encouraged to immigrate to Canada because they
could contribute to the economy, initially in the form of a $250,000 investment in business. I taught ESL, and "sheltered language" courses (subjects taught using modified English vocabulary, with language learning integrated into the process of learning content --see Mohan, 1990, for a research based justification for this approach) in literature and social studies. I worked with agents who, for a fee, arranged for students to come to the school, with "homestay" parents, who, for a fee, provided homes for the students, and with parents when they came for infrequent visits to Canada. I recruited students in Japan and Taiwan. This involved making contact with the British Columbia education officers in those countries.

I had a unique opportunity in that school (somewhat like Bateson, 1994, did in her experiences teaching and researching in other countries, and Hall, 1994, did in his early years working with Natives in road construction on reserves, and Delpit, 1995, living and learning in Alaska). The teaching, administrative, and other work I was able to do immersed me in my students' daily activities, and brought me into the midst of their lives. However, I felt compelled to know more, to do more, so that I could be a "good" teacher. But, what could I do to be a good teacher for these students?

I thought the best way to be a good teacher would be to learn more about teaching ESL, and to learn to "do" curriculum for ESL students. I decided to do a Masters degree at OISE to accomplish these two goals. While I learned of no magical formula for teaching ESL or writing curriculum for ESL students, there was
much I learned of value. I developed a broad theoretical understanding of the education of immigrant students from different perspectives: e.g. historical immigration factors affecting different cultural groups (e.g. Ogbu, 1978), cultural diversity and identity (e.g. Cummins, 1989), linguistic diversity (e.g. Wong-Filmore & Meyer, 1992), cultural forms of knowledge (e.g. Banks, 1993), the relationship between culture and power in society (e.g. Darder, 1991), the socio-political context of immigrant education (e.g. Nieto, 1992), and, the politics of teaching immigrants (e.g. Giroux, 1992). I learned about effective ESL teaching methods (e.g. Krashen, 1982, whose communicative approach is currently in dispute), cooperative learning (e.g. Kagan, 1986), and working in Zones of Proximal Development (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978). I learned about phases of adaptation, and modes of acculturation (e.g. Berry, 1980). I also learned about the education of Asian students, and the particular problems they encountered in learning English and adjusting to new ways of teaching (e.g. Baruth & Manning, 1992). Reflected in this literature I could see a genuine attempt by researchers, academics and school officials to deal with many of the problems facing immigrant students in North America.

I was learning much about the education of immigrants from this research literature; indeed there was more to know than I had anticipated. But with this knowledge came little sense of satisfaction that I would be better able to work with these students. I felt frustrated because much of the research isolated language learning, at that time still my major area of interest, and the educational process, from the total context of an
immigrant student’s life and experience. I began to feel that doing research was like looking at one part of a mosaic through a magnifying glass. I could see only what I felt to be a small piece at a time. I could understand this piece, but only in isolation from the other pieces.

I was unable to achieve the more holistic understanding I craved, and felt I had learned from teaching (and from living abroad). In working in the school for visa students I had had the opportunity to know the students in ways that allowed me to connect language learning to their lives. As liaison for homestay families, I heard the struggles of the students in trying to assimilate what they thought of as “Canadian” ways of life, but having to close the doors to their rooms so they did not have to experience the tension of speaking a foreign language. I heard the struggles of the homestay parents as they described reaching out to the “foreign” students, and being rebuffed and excluded. I heard the struggles of the students, not so much in learning English for academic purposes (see Cummins, 1989, for a discussion of academic and communicative competence), although that was an issue, but in learning how to talk to Canadian teens, and not knowing what to say, of going too far in what they thought seemed like “Canadian” banter to them. I heard the struggles of my fellow teachers, concerned that students were not learning enough content to support them in high school because the demands of teaching language could not be fit into the 60-40 ration prescribed by school policy. I heard the struggles of parents who were filled with concern for their children, and who wanted them to learn and be successful, but who could not stay in Canada because of
business reasons, and so, some left their children, often unattended, often in beautiful family homes bought in expensive residential areas of the city.

From living, teaching, and being a parent in Japan, from being a teacher and administrator in the school, I had been privileged to be able to see my students from a more whole-life, life-like perspective than I found in research literature. I desperately wanted to pursue this kind of knowledge in my studies and research. A shift in this direction came about in one of Grace Feuerverger’s classes where we looked at immigrant education from the broader perspective of the interconnectedness of language, culture and identity; and from an entirely different source, literature written by immigrants about their personal experiences of living and learning in a second culture (from the course, e.g. Rodriguez, 1983; Hoffman, 1989; since then I have read more of this literature, e.g. Chamoiseau, 1994; Choy, 1995; Kingston, 1975; Maharaj, 1997; Verdelle, 1996) and the impact it originally had increased). The fragmented mosaic of immigrant life that I had attempted to piece together from research literature came to life in the literature written by immigrants about their personal experiences, as it had come to life in my living and teaching experiences. But what did this have to do with research? What could I do in my own research?

**Inquiry**

In Grace Feuerverger’s class I was also exposed to narrative inquiry for the first time, particularly the work of Connelly and
Clandinin (1988, 1990). I was intrigued by the approach, by the idea that people would share stories of their experiences as research. After all, wasn’t this what it was like for me as a teacher in the school? Students told me stories of their life in Canada. We developed relationships through this sharing, and I certainly learned from this sharing. I began to see that I could explore the experiences of immigrant students from this perspective, one I had not yet found in the research literature. I was excited at the possibility of doing a narrative inquiry that focused on an understanding of Asian visa students’ experiences of learning in a second culture.

I obtained a grant from the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers and returned to Vancouver to interview some of my former students. They told me stories of what life was like for them in their second language (Phillion, 1995). They talked about parents, teachers, and friends. They talked about living and learning. They talked about how their lack of proficiency in English was a barrier to making friends with Canadians. They talked about how their lack of proficiency in English embarrassed them into silence in the classroom. They told me that a good relationship with a teacher, particularly when they first came to the country, helped ease the transition from one environment to another. They told me that teachers who treated them as individuals, who understood their culture, or tried to understand their culture, who brought culture into the classroom, created an environment of trust that built good relationships. They told me that a good relationship with a teacher could make a difference in
their lives. I puzzle over what they told me, did they say what I hoped to hear, or did I only hear what I hoped they would say?

I had been excited at the start of the project, thrilled to obtain funding to go to Vancouver, which made me feel like a "real" researcher, and exhilarated during the time I spent doing the research. The "writing up" was less satisfactory; I felt that the meaning of what the students told me was not reflected in my writing. As the project came to completion, I had a feeling of incompletion. I felt that this was a step in the direction I wanted to go in research, but, the brief interviews I conducted once with each participant did not allow me to burrow as deeply into their lives as I wanted. Interviewing them was not like being with them in their lives.

I decided to pursue a doctorate (that would do it, wouldn't it?). I found out that the Connelly part of the Connelly and Clandinin that I was reading was a professor at OISE. In fact he was down the hall from where I was taking my classes, and was director of the Centre for Teacher Development. My Masters degree had been a lonely experience and I welcomed the opportunity to become part of something; I began to attend events sponsored at the Centre. I found that there was a diverse group of people, mainly women, in the Centre who engaged in narrative inquiries. In this group I began to realize that I learned best, and worked best, in the company of others. The importance of these relationships unfolds gradually during the reading of this work; and, as you shall come to see, they are an important part of the archeology of the inquiry. Digging in this section reveals something like shards of
pottery, fragments you painstakingly put together over the reading of this work, yet, also, never truly complete.

Shortly after I joined the Centre I started to work on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) project with Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin. In this project the relationship between personal and professional knowledge and context was examined. We looked at the shaping influence of context on the knowledge and identity of the people living and working in the landscape, and these peoples’ influence in shaping the landscapes in which they lived and worked. In particular, I looked at the experiences of ESL teachers and adult immigrant ESL learners (He, Phillion & Beach, 1999), and foreign-trained immigrant nurses (Quan, Phillion & He, 1999). I worked closely with, and continue to work with, project team member Ming Fang He. While much of our research consisted of interviewing administrators and examining the changing policy context of ESL, towards the end we participated in a class with an adult ESL instructor, Norman Beach. I began to know him and his students. Through these relationships I began to be aware of issues, not only from the policy context with which I had, by then, become somewhat familiar, but from the perspectives of teachers and students. I was pleased with the research, happy in my relationships with the team, and thrilled to be invited to write about these experiences. However, I still did not feel as though I was part of the lives of my participants. I still craved the more whole understanding I felt I obtained from teaching and from reading autobiographical immigrant literature.
My interests gradually shifted and grew to encompass teacher education and pre-service teacher education. In 1995 I conducted a pilot study at a Faculty of Education with four female immigrant pre-service teachers from Mauritius, Ethiopia, the Ukraine and the Czech Republic. My participants told me what it was like to live, learn, and teach in a second language and culture. Language issues were prominent in that work, but, again, they related to real-life issues: how the pre-service teachers experienced their university classes and their practica, and their anxiety that their accents would be a barrier to obtaining a teaching position. The next year I attempted to find minority immigrant pre-service participants to work with for my dissertation research. I was unsuccessful at both universities in the area. I was discouraged, but still determined to pursue the same topic.

I puzzle over why my approach to immigrant pre-service teachers did not work, why I was unable to interest anyone in doing research with me. I wonder if it was because what I asked them to do was outside of their lives, outside of their classes, outside of their school experiences. Digging into the archeology of the inquiry, as I explore the autobiographical roots of travel and teaching experiences, I see that while they nourish the present inquiry, perhaps at that time I was not taking my travel lessons and my teaching lessons to heart. Perhaps I not only attempted to do research that was outside the lives of my potential participants, but also I saw research as separate from my life. I was busy running around asking people questions. I was not becoming part of anything. I was not using my "peripheral vision"
(Bateson, 1994) to help me understand the situations I was in now. It was in my next research project that I began to see hints of what I now think of as what narrative inquiry could be like.

At the same time as I was attempting to find research immigrant pre-service teacher participants, I worked as a graduate assistant on an evaluation project of a pilot two-year pre-service program. This project was conducted under the supervision of Dennis Thiessen. In the first year we examined the experiences of various stakeholders in the program; my particular concentration was on the experiences of the pre-service teachers. In the second year, we focused on the learning of pre-service teachers in their school settings within the context of school-university partnerships. These research experiences proved to be a valuable part of the internal dialogue with my future research experiences.

Narrative Inquiry

For my own research I decided to look at a new group of immigrant teachers: out-of-country certified teachers. The Ministry of Education and Training had granted letters of eligibility to over 8,000 of these teachers from 1990-1994. There were thousands in the city, surely I could find participants. I did. In January 1996 I began to do a narrative inquiry at a different Faculty of Education in a pilot program designed to “upgrade” (the term used by the university at that time, later discarded) the teaching and English language skills of teachers certified outside Canada (see Appendix I A for summary of field texts collected during this research). The 22 program participants were trying to obtain
positions in the Ontario education system. The first step in this long process was to obtain a second qualification, for example, if they had a primary qualification, they needed a junior qualification. In addition to offering the second qualification the program also provided an orientation to the history of the Ontario education system, and to classroom practices, for example, the whole language approach and process writing.

My participants, five women from Somalia, Jamaica, and India, told me stories of what it was like for them to learn to teach in the Canadian education system. In this research I feel as though I reached closer into the lives of the participants. I attended all their classes, met them for meals, went to their homes, and they came to mine. I heard about their past experiences, their current struggles, and their hopes for the future, for themselves, and for their children. I was more in their lives, but still not with them in their schools.

For my dissertation I had hoped to follow one or two of the five participant immigrant teachers as they became part of a teaching staff (see Thiessen, Bascia & Goodson, 1997, for an exploration of the experiences of immigrant teachers in the education system in Ontario and British Columbia). However, the teachers I worked with were unable to obtain full-time positions in schools during the time period when I was doing research with them. In the following section I explore some of the reasons for this (portions of the next section are part of an article I have submitted for publication to the Canadian Journal of Education). The tone
shifts, rather dramatically, to a less personal one, a more dispassionate one, than in previous and later sections.

*Out-of-Country Certified Teachers*

There were many difficulties these out-of-country certified teachers experienced in their attempts to negotiate entry to the education system: evaluation of qualifications, completing requirements of the Ministry of Education, obtaining teaching certificates, obtaining Canadian teaching experience, pressure to act as role models, language issues, past experiences, and lack of teaching opportunities are some I explore in the following section.

*Evaluation of qualifications* In Ontario the process of having qualifications evaluated by the Ministry of Education and Training is lengthily; in cases where translations of documents are required, it can also be costly, and in cases where there is war in their native countries it can be impossible to obtain documents (Chandra Ramkelawan [Ministry of Education document evaluator], personal communication, July 30, 1996). The newly established College of Teachers has recently taken over this responsibility. Indications are that the process has become more difficult. There is also a charge of $225 for the service. The Somali participants had to wait for over a year to have their qualifications evaluated while relatives gathered the necessary documents in their native country.
Completing requirements of the Ministry of Education After
documents are evaluated out-of-country certified teachers receive
a letter that indicates what they are required to do in order to
receive a Letter of Eligibility which entitles them to begin to
teach in the system. The two Somali participants were required to
take a series of general courses at universities. All of the
participants needed certification in another teaching area as in
Ontario two areas of specialization are required, for example
certification in primary and junior, or junior and intermediate.
The course offered to out-of-country certified teachers at the
university where I did the study was expensive. Several of the
participants had to juggle current work obligations with the
course and practicum responsibilities with a resulting loss in
income that was difficult to manage.

Obtaining a teaching certificate Once these immigrant teachers had
obtained a Letter of Eligibility, it was difficult to obtain a
temporary or supply teaching position. To obtain an Ontario
Teaching Certificate (OTC) you must teach for two hundred days.
Without an OTC, it is not possible to take Additional
Qualification courses beyond those needed to obtain a Letter of
Eligibility. Yet, it is often teachers who have specialized
Additional Qualifications, for example in teaching English or
French as a Second Language, or Special Education, who have
opportunities to be hired (John Doherty [Toronto School Board
trustee], personal communication, July 30, 1996).
Obtaining Canadian teaching experience  

Canadian teaching experience is necessary to obtain employment. In order to obtain an interview with a Board of Education, it is often necessary to have a letter of reference from a principal. Therefore these out-of-country certified teachers actively searched for volunteer positions in schools. One was able to volunteer in her children’s school. Two spoke Somali, a language skill that was in demand, and were able to obtain volunteer positions. Two initially had difficulty in obtaining volunteer positions as there is increased competition from university students, and even high school students, who volunteer in order to increase their chances of acceptance to a faculty of education. All the immigrant teacher participants in the study volunteered full time in schools for up to one year.

Pressure to act as role models  
The lack of minority teachers in the system to act as role models and advocates for students resulted in their feeling pressure to fulfill those roles. One of the Somali teachers was placed in a school with a 93% Somali student population. She was the only person on staff in the school who could speak the language. She often met with parents and translated documents. She sometimes felt as though she was not having the opportunity to teach, but was spending her time running around the school. The difficulties experienced by linguistic and cultural minority immigrant students and their families (see Cummins, 1989, 1996, for an elaboration on the situation of immigrant families) was also a source of concern for all participants.
Language issues The participants identified many other impediments to becoming a teacher in Canada. They felt the ability to speak what they viewed as "standard Canadian" English was essential in order to obtain a position. The Somali participants felt that a major difficulty in obtaining employment was their lack of fluency in English; two participants who spoke English as a first language felt that their accents were problems in interview situations. As no Somali teacher had ever been hired by the several Boards of Education in the large urban area where the research was conducted, those participants felt that being from that country added to their difficulties. (At the end of the course, however, one of the Somali participants was hired by a board.)

Past experiences Several of the participants had non-traditional teaching positions in their native countries and found that those experiences were not valued in interviews. In particular, one had worked with adults and one who had worked with young children felt that their past experiences were not regarded as worthwhile. Most felt that in general, teaching experience in their native countries was not highly regarded. However, they did feel that their university course instructor respected their previous experiences, as did their practicum supervisor, a retired principal. Three participants also expressed concern that working as a security guard, a telephone solicitor, and a clerk in a store in Canada created the impression that they were not seriously seeking employment as teachers. One felt that her community work was a benefit.
Lack of teaching opportunities For the women who had successfully negotiated the above obstacles, the path to employment was still difficult. In the economic climate in Ontario, there were few teaching positions. Two of the women successfully negotiated the path from evaluation of documents to teaching employment. One was the Somali woman previously mentioned who was employed as a regular classroom teacher, however it was on a one year contract. It should also be noted that she had a Masters degree from an American university. One teacher from India obtained a supply teaching position. At the time of writing she has been employed in that capacity for two years. One participant returned to her native country of Jamaica in order to secure a position. She felt she could not wait for employment, and could not hazard the chance that a position would open up later. Another participant returned to her past employment as a security guard as she contributed to the finances of her family, and could not rely on supply teaching, which in all likelihood would not have been available. The third became an international language teacher, a teacher of languages other than English or French (see Feuerverger, 1997, for a discussion of international language teachers, many of whom are out-of-country certified teachers).

The International Teachers Network

While I could not continue the inquiry in a way that made for what I thought, at the time, could be a dissertation, I did continue to work with these participants in ways that have informed my overall inquiry and informed my thinking about multiculturalism; also this
work has helped me see that my scholarship and community work are integral to each other. As our relationships grew, as we shared more, the need to move beyond our personal understandings developed within the group. I did not enter into the research with a critical ethnographic approach (e.g. Thomas, 1991), nor with an explicitly feminist orientation (e.g. c.f. Nielson, 1990), both of which have social action as the pre-established framework and goal of the inquiry. Rather, the need for some form of action was a natural outgrowth of our interactions; the action arose, almost organically, from the process of being together as part of the continuity of our past experiences, our current experiences, and as an expression of our developing understandings in the inquiry.

Here I return to the theme of learning with others, learning from being in relationship, learning from working purposefully together in community. I also link this to themes mentioned in my early years. In the narrative inquiry with the out-of-country certified teachers I began to awaken to my past experiences. My sixties experiences, while never far from the surface of my understanding, were somewhat submerged during my years in Japan. I woke up to my past to a certain extent when I taught in the school for visa students and in the previous inquiries I engaged in with ESL teachers and ESL immigrant adult learners. In the research with out-of-country certified teachers, I, in a sense, re-discovered the social consciousness that had been somewhat dormant since my work with Vietnam War resistors. Understandings that grew out of my sixties activist experiences, filtered through my travel and teaching experiences, merged with my nineties researcher
experiences when a group of out-of-country certified teachers from the program and I formed The International Teachers Network.

The International Teachers Network is not as active as I would like it to be, but it does continue to function two years after its inception. We have an ambitious mandate which has a number of objectives—from doing research that will influence education policies, to active engagement with boards of education to influence hiring policies. What we actually do may be somewhat less grand by comparison, though, for me, more immediately rewarding. We go to community centres and speak to immigrant teachers about the process of becoming certified and gaining employment in Ontario. We publish small pieces of information in community newsletters. We mainly work individually with immigrant teachers (usually women) on how to prepare resumes and job applications. Sometimes we simply meet someone for a talk and tea. We share practical solutions based on what we have learned together; for example new immigrant teachers may not know that it is important to do volunteer work, and they may not realize that is one of the possible “keys” to unlock the doors to this education system. A member of the Network serves on the Board of Directors of Skills for Change, an Ontario organization funded by federal, provincial, and local governments, as well as private donations, that is dedicated to assisting immigrants to Canada. We worked together on a project, funded by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Status for Women-Canada, that examined the experiences of immigrant women in teaching, engineering and accounting as they attempted to gain access to their professions in metro Toronto.
We also have a telephone service, actually it is my telephone number circulated through Skills for Change. I answer the sometimes very desperate questions of immigrant teachers, or listen to people who need to tell their stories. Some stories sadden me, like the story of a young woman from Serbia, with no family in Toronto, who can not find work, and cries every time she calls. I try to find solutions. For example, through people I have met, I can find out when positions are posted for ESL teachers, or International Language teachers. Some of the stories puzzle me, like the story of a teacher from India who had been living in Nigeria. Immigration Services told her that there was a demand for engineers, her husband’s profession, and available teaching positions for her. Then there were no positions for either. They used up all their savings and did not know where to turn. As well as being sad and puzzled, I am angry and feel at a loss when I hear these stories. This particular story, unlike many I hear, had a classic happy ending, of sorts, when they both obtained positions related to their professions.

The situation is so complex. To be able to do this kind of community work has increased my understanding of this complexity in many ways. What I was learning in the narrative inquiry with out-of-country certified teachers and community work arising from the inquiry was what I had craved to know in my education in OISE, and in my other research projects. I was learning about what felt like the “whole picture” I had learned about from life and teaching. The fragmented mosaic was coming together. I became committed to a narrative approach.
However, I still felt discouraged, dejected in fact, about what I thought of as my “real” dissertation research. What was I going to do? I had the passion, the energy, the drive, and even the funding, but no participants! I decided that if the out-of-country immigrant teachers I knew were unable to obtain employment, I would do research with other immigrant teachers to continue to explore the experiences of immigrant and internationally trained teachers, only this time, in school settings. I heard about a principal I thought would be perfect to approach. The principal was Black, from the Caribbean, an immigrant himself, worked voluntarily with immigrant organizations, and had hired teachers of diverse backgrounds for his school. However, progress in negotiating entry was slow. After three months I was able to obtain an interview. It ended up being a telephoned response to faxed questions. My unease grew as he indicated that this method would be “a good way for us to do research”. I knew that was not the way for me. Why was nothing working out?

*The Juncture of Learning*
*from Travel, Teaching, Inquiry and Community*

Just as the situation looked darkest, just as it looked as though I was not going to be able to do an inquiry with an immigrant teacher (or any inquiry at all for that matter), a serendipitous thing happened, as so often happens in life, and in research, or is that how we construct it when we look back? This bleak moment was when Mick and Jean were doing a SSHRC proposal to return to a school where they had done research for years. The school was Bay
Street School, a mythical place I knew from conversations with Mick, and from reading articles he and Jean had written. I had never seen the school. I did not know its real name. I did not know where it was. Filled with apprehension, for many reasons, I agreed it might be a place where I could find a participant. Mick had conversations with Bay Street School’s principal. Mick and I had conversations with the principal, vice principals and community liaison worker. The “project” negotiated entry into the school, and I negotiated entry into my participant, Pam’s, life. I was in a school, I was working with an immigrant teacher, I was on my way. On my way to where, and what, I did not know, nor could I have imagined. I was ecstatic. I was going to do my “real” research. I was in Bay Street School.

A Thumbnail Sketch

After all the false starts, all the crushed hopes, all the twists and turns, all the learning, all the renewed commitments, and all the time, I came to Bay Street School in November 1996. Bay Street School is located in Toronto, a city the United Nations has declared the most diverse in the world; a city with over 160 ethnic groups, and over 100 language groups (Drainie, 1998). Bay Street School has students that belong to over thirty of these languages (Toronto Board of Education, 1996-97). The community in which the school is embedded is diverse. The neighbourhood is often referred to as “inner-city”, but, for me, it is more a multicultural neighbourhood, home to many immigrants, home to many refugees, home to many people from all over the world. Bay Street School is often referred to as an “inner city school” but, for me,
it is a school for immigrants, a school for refugees, a school for children from all over the world.

In archival research I found the demographics of Bay Street School had shifted and changed over the years, but a constant is that it has always been a school for immigrant students, a school for refugee students, a school for students from all over the world. The different populations of students that have come and gone through the years in the school, from the early Europeans, to the Portuguese, to the later ones from Vietnam and now from Somalia, mirror changes in Canadian immigration laws and patterns, global strife and its consequences, and world economic situations. My personal experiences are also mirrored in the shifting cultures in the school. Many of the different populations of students reflect cultures in which I have traveled at different times of my life, home towns of students I have taught in different places, research participants I have had throughout my inquiries, and out-of-country teachers and project members with whom I have worked.

I believe that all the false starts, all the set-backs, all the learning, all the minor triumphs, were preparing me for Bay Street School, preparing me for my participant, and preparing me for becoming a narrative inquirer. Lessons from life and education in Canada and Japan; from travel in many parts of the world; from teaching immigrant students and ESL students; from learning in community at the Centre and with the out-of-country certified teachers; and from all the inquiries I had engaged in came together in Bay Street School. But, as you shall see in one of the following chapters, learning from these lessons did not neatly
fall into place. I struggled with those lessons, I fought with those lessons, I refused to listen to those lessons. I had gained a sense of the importance of learning from being in the midst of life from my experiences of travel, teaching and community work. I had a sense of this from the inquiries I had engaged in up to going to Bay Street School. But I had no sense of what it would mean to think about all these issues in the context of a school, in working closely with a participant for two years.

Experiences in the past and present connect me to Bay Street School, and Bay Street School connects me to my experiences, to my past, to my present, and to my future. Bay Street School connects me to my travels, to my teaching, to my community work, and to my research. Bay Street School connects me to the world, and the world connects me to Bay Street School. But, for me, Bay Street School is still much more than that. Bay Street School is more than a physical place in a neighbourhood, more than an inner city school, more than a school for immigrants and refugees, more than a school filled with cultures with which I have had some contact, and more than a geographical location in an inquiry space. Bay Street School is the physical/emotional/intellectual juncture of the inquiry landscape, the place where learning from my experiences merges and converges with my interests and passions, concerns and commitments, coalesces, swells, and gains momentum, changes and transforms, and moves forward.
This point came home to me very strongly teaching in Hong Kong in the summer of 1998. The class participants, faculty on staff at a teachers' college, became enthusiastic about narrative and a personal experience approach to curriculum. I was pleased by their receptive attitude to what they had indicated were very new ideas. However, I realized things had gone somewhat awry when, during class presentations, class members were being asked to relate some aspect of their teaching to some specific childhood incident. In fact, at times, the discussion period seemed to be more of an interrogation.

I was not always a traveler such as I view myself to be now. In the past, as a younger traveler, I was less concerned with observing and absorbing, and more concerned with being who I thought I was (e.g. I wore inappropriate clothing in Morocco. Shorts and a halter top were who I was, never mind that women there were covered from head to toe).

I realize that there are certain problems in this kind of research. I used interview data, and took the students words as the "truth". Donald Freeman (1997) has discussed this problem in narrative inquiry. Also, the unequal power relations, me, their former teacher, as researcher, them, my former students, as participants were not addressed.

I have struggled in this dissertation with the use of terms that are in the literature, yet do not fit the way I have come to see things. "Inner city school" is a common term, we can find this term in everything from movies, to newspapers, to research articles. It is a term in common use by the public.

"Inner city school", a term drawn from sociological literature, has strong representations in people's minds. The term conjures up images of run-down, broken-windowed, garbage-strewn, graffiti-laced areas such as I have seen in some areas of the United States; Flint, Michigan, is an example of an American city where I have seen these kinds of neighbourhoods, and these kinds of schools. The term does not fit the image I have of Bay Street School. It is precisely the use of terms like "inner-city school", loosely and sometimes inappropriately applied, that I have battled throughout the dissertation, battled with myself mostly!

However, this is not only a personal issue, but relates to a broader concern within narrative inquiry. Language, and terms used within language, are not neutral objects to be filled with
meaning. Terms come with meanings embedded in them, meanings we may not wish to ascribe to the situation or phenomena we are describing. Following Schwab (1978) who worked on a suitable language for curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1994, in progress) are working on creating a language reflective of the new research paradigms that aim at understanding individual experience within a broader social context. In the creation of new terms is implicit the understanding that some terms in use in the research literature are, at best, inappropriate, or, at worst, misrepresentative.
Chapter II
Excavating the Theoretical Roots of the Inquiry Landscape

Narrative inquiries almost always are about peoples’ lives, their interests, concerns, and passions; mine is no exception. As could be seen in the previous chapter I am interested in the education of English as a second language (ESL) students, the education of immigrant students, the relationship between immigrant parents and schools, and immigrant and minority teachers, and contributions they make to our education system. I am particularly interested in teachers’ knowledge of working in multicultural classrooms. These are aspects of what I think of as my overall interest in multiculturalism.

I am especially interested in schools where multicultural education takes place, the communities which these schools serve, and multicultural education as it is lived by students and teachers in these communities and schools. My inquiry has arisen from these broad interests in multiculturalism. As an educator, my interests are situated in the discipline of education; at the same time I recognize that these interests extend beyond the realm of education, and reach out to be touched by, and to touch, issues of multiculturalism that permeate all disciplines, all societies, and all lives today. In a later part of this work I connect multiculturalism to other disciplines.
Like many multicultural educators (e.g. Banks, e.g. 1996; Feuerverger, e.g. 1994; Gay, e.g. 1998; Greene, e.g. 1993; Giroux, e.g. 1992; Nieto, e.g. 1992) I see multiculturalism as rooted in social justice, and, as such, a way of thinking about, and a philosophical orientation to, education and educational activities such as research, practice and school reform, as well as an orientation to other disciplines. I see multiculturalism as a process, continually evolving, changing, transforming. I also see multiculturalism as a goal towards which many educators, and others in other disciplines, are striving. As such, rather than supplying a fixed definition of multiculturalism, compatible with the above ideas of multiculturalism as a process and a goal, my entire work (and my future research and thinking that will build on this work) could be viewed as an evolving narrative of multiculturalism. In my work there is no strong sense of certainty about multiculturalism, nor did I wish for that. Rather there is a sense of uncertainty, tentativeness, reflective of the fact that my ideas on multiculturalism are under exploration, as they are in disciplines and societies today. As such, there are sections of my writing in this chapter that move from tones of “knowing”, to tones of “wondering”.

Unlike some writing in multiculturalism (e.g. Glazer, 1997) my multicultural perspective is not derived from an abstract theoretical orientation to multiculturalism, but primarily from my life and research experiences. In my work I primarily focus on what seems to be working in multiculturalism (see Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, for a discussion of the value of taking this perspective, one they term a focus on “goodness”). Like James
Banks' more recent work (e.g. 1996) I see my future work taking on more of a historical aspect, the past shedding light on the present, context informing phenomena. Like some of the "new" ethnographies (e.g. Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996) in the future I see my work as developing more from and within a multicultural community in which I hope to live and do my research. I am seeking more of an immersion experience, one where my whole life, including my every-day experiences, feeds into my inquiry.

In the previous chapter I explored my personal experiences and beginning research experiences. In later chapters I explore my experiences and my participant’s experiences in Bay Street School. In this chapter I briefly explore the place of theory in this inquiry. I dig down directly to the theoretical roots that uphold, sustain, and nourish particular aspects of my inquiry. These roots are primarily in narrative and conceptions of multiculturalism derived from philosophy. As in any archeological investigation, as I dig I only uncover fragments of these deeply penetrating theoretical roots; they continue to grow in other chapters. I also hint at the potential significance, explored at greater length in chapter eleven, of the coalescence of narrative and particular philosophical conceptions of multiculturalism.

In the last section of this chapter I take a fleeting look at some specific research literature on immigrant and visible minority teachers that validated my way of thinking about multicultural education, and framed my experiences with my participant, Pam, particularly in the initial stages of this inquiry. In chapter six, I again discuss this literature in the context of my
relationship with Pam. The tone changes, rather dramatically, in this section of the chapter. This change in tone is reflective of the change in structure of my writing and hints at a rigidity, and, at the same time, a questioning of this rigidity, that I have not attempted to remove. Throughout this chapter, and others, I have attempted to use tone to convey meaning. In other parts of this work, I explore additional "theoretical" influences on my thinking, mainly novels and art.

In the next sections I explore a personal understanding of multiculturalism that is fueled by reading narrative and philosophy and by engaging in narrative inquiry.

*Narrative Orientations to Multiculturalism*

I ask myself where do I place my interests in this swirl of multiculturalism? First, I write from and within a Canadian context, with a strong interest in international aspects of multiculturalism. I write from and within the discipline of education, with an interest in philosophy, psychology and anthropology. I write from an experiential perspective; from my experiences as teacher and parent in a foreign country, as educator of immigrant students, as traveler to many countries. I write from my experiences of a long term inquiry in a multicultural school and from my relationship with an immigrant teacher in the school, Pam, and other immigrant teachers I work with in a community context.
I am particularly interested in a narrative way of understanding multiculturalism. By a narrative way of understanding multiculturalism, I mean first, and foremost, I am interested in the experiences of people. I am interested in the experiences of teachers and students as they go about their lives in multicultural educational settings. I am not however only interested in individual experience. I am also interested in the contexts in which experience takes place. It is in the dialectic tension between individual experience and temporal, physical, and relational contexts that meaning is made in a narrative inquiry (see Clandinin & Connelly, in progress, for an in-depth discussion of the three dimensional narrative inquiry space). As this work progresses, I move back and forth between experience and context, context and experience, foregrounding one or the other, backgrounding one or the other, each informing the other.

Narrative as a form of inquiry, and as a method of representing understandings of inquiry, has an established history in many disciplines in the social sciences: education, psychology, psychotherapy, history, literature and anthropology (e.g. Bruner, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990; Mishler, 1986; see Polkinghorne, 1988). In the field of education, in their work from 1983 to the present, Connelly and Clandinin have developed and refined narrative as a collaborative method of understanding teachers’ knowledge in practice (e.g. 1988, 1990), and teachers’ knowledge as it develops in their professional knowledge contexts (e.g. 1995; in press). In the work of many of Connelly’s graduate students (e.g. Bell, 1991; Conle, 1993; Enns-Connolly, 1986; He, 1998; Li, 1998), narrative is also being developed as a means of
understanding experience and knowledge across linguistic, cultural, educational, and social boundaries.

My narrative research is further positioned within the developing tradition of educational research on teacher knowledge (see Fenstermacher, 1994a for a discussion of the three major research programs on teacher knowledge, one of which is Connelly & Clandinin’s program). My inquiry is situated within the context of the Connelly and Clandinin research program on teacher knowledge that began with teachers’ personal practical knowledge studies (1986, 1988, 1990), and continued with teachers’ professional knowledge landscapes (1995, in press). Originally, they pursued their research by looking at teachers’ personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986), that is knowledge derived from personal experience. This view of teachers as knowledgeable, knowing persons is integral to my inquiry. The concept of personal practical knowledge is important in my understanding the experiences of my participant, Pam, as will be seen in chapters eight and nine. Personal practical knowledge encompasses experience, action and intention. Personal practical knowledge is:

a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher’s practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25).
In my work I explore multiculturalism from a narrative perspective. Perhaps, after reading the above piece, you might still ask "why narrative?". After all, there are multiple ways to approach multiculturalism (see Banks & Banks, 1995, for some of the ways it can be studied), many of which have gained currency recently (e.g. critical Black feminist analysis, Collins, 1990, as used by Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1994). There are many reasons why I chose narrative, some of these were explored in the previous chapter and above. Most importantly, for me, narrative has at its heart an awareness of humanity, a sensitivity to uniqueness, a philosophical compatibility with multiculturalism, that makes them ideal to pair together in an inquiry. Narrative is about how people experience their lives, how they interact, how they shape, and are shaped by, the contexts in which they live and work.

Building on the work of John Dewey (e.g. 1938), Joseph Schwab (e.g. 1970; in Westbury & Wilcoff, 1978) and Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (e.g. in press), among others, as well as my own research, narrative has, for me, a close-to-life, intimate quality, a reflective, reflexive quality, a flexible, fluid quality, and a contextualized, historicized quality, that enables inquirers to explore and portray the shifting, evolving, often paradoxical nature of experience. Narrative is about understanding the complexities of experience, honouring the subtleties of experience, and understanding the dynamics between individual experience and contexts that shape experience. Narrative reaches out to the past, is rooted in the present, and turns an eye to the future; narrative evolves with changes and shifts in time, place and interactions. Narrative, as both phenomenon and form of
inquiry, is a perspective that provides illuminating ways of viewing the world.

*Philosophical Orientations to Multiculturalism*

Multiculturalism, as I study it, research it, and mainly as I experience it, extends beyond much of what I read in educational literature. For me, multiculturalism is about the world as we live it today; it is about human interactions and human relationships, and about the history of human interactions and human relationships, it is about the possibilities of how we might interact and relate now, and our intentions in the future. Multiculturalism is about understanding that there are multiple ways to interact and relate, there are multiple ways to view the world; it is about respecting, honouring, and learning from these differences. Multiculturalism aims at the heart of understanding questions that perplex us in education (and other disciplines) today, questions about truth, and telling or not telling, questions of morality, and doing or not doing, questions of knowledge, and knowing and not knowing.

Multiculturalism is about questions of diversity, and how to respond to diversity, and whose obligation it is to respond. Multiculturalism rings with a hollow sound to some, many of whom are loathe to change established ways in education (e.g. Glazer, 1997); multiculturalism also rings with the sound of hope, possibility and agency (as called for by Grant & Tate, 1995, p. 161), and with the sound of joy and learning with, and from, diversity (e.g. Delpit, 1995; Paley, 1978).
Building on work done in multiculturalism by philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum (1997), Charles Taylor (1994), Maxine Greene (e.g. 1969, 1988, 1993, 1995), and Martin Buber (1958) among others, as well as my own research, multiculturalism, for me, is about how we experience our lives in today’s increasingly complex societies. In my work I incorporate ideas from Martha Nussbaum (1997), in particular her notion that a multicultural orientation is one that encourages learning from diversity which promotes the development of all humans, what she calls the development of “world citizens”. Her term “the narrative imagination”, meaning the ability to imagine ourselves in the shoes of others, an important notion in cultivating future world citizens, has helped me think about the role of literature, art, and poetry in multicultural education.

Charles Taylor (1994) contributes to my understanding of the debate on multiculturalism by relating it directly to the Canadian context, in particular to Québec. He opens up the discussion on multiculturalism to an examination of the implications of recognizing collective over individual rights. These ideas were useful in helping me think about Bay Street School’s story of multiculturalism and my participant’s practice of multiculturalism.

Maxine Greene’s work (1993) opens up possibilities of new ways to think of multiculturalism. For her, multiculturalism is about human relationships, and ways of expanding community to incorporate diversity. This can be done through genuine human interactions. “It seems clear that the more continuous and
authentic personal encounters can be, the less likely it will be that categorizing and distancing will take place” (p. 13). This categorizing also relates to placing people within defined cultural categories; we can not know someone solely by their cultural background. For Greene, authentic encounters can also take place through active acts of imagination. This relates to Nussbaum’s work as well (1997). Through genuine encounters and active acts of imagination we can begin to understand others and broaden and deepen our notions of community.

I also incorporate insights growing out of the work of philosopher Martin Buber. In particular, using an expanded sense of Buber’s term “community of otherness” (1958), a narrative approach to multiculturalism is, for me, about relationship, a certain kind of relationship; at the heart of this relationship is the ability to empathize, the capacity to attend to another person, and to feel related to that person, in spite of what might be great differences.

In my work I incorporate ideas borrowed from anthropology, in particular the work of Mary Catherine Bateson. Her term "peripheral vision" (1994) has helped me to understand the idea of learning from experience of other cultures, and across cultures, and how we can use difference to facilitate new ways of knowing (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996, also examine this idea). Bateson says that we can use past and present encounters with other cultures to help develop the ability to see things from more than one perspective. Work done by other anthropologists (e.g. Geertz, 1995; Hall, 1994) has helped me understand
multicultural methods and the role of writing in research (also, Clifford, 1988).

Multiculturalism is about the world we live in, it is of the world, it is about how this world is changing as diversity shapes the countries and cities in which we live, the places in which we live and learn. Multiculturalism is about how we are shaped by this changing world, and it is about our responses to these changes now and in the future. Multiculturalism, for me, is a perspective that provides an illuminating way to understand these changes and view our world.

**Narrative Multiculturalism**

In my work I build on work in narrative (e.g. Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), work in philosophy (e.g. Nussbaum, 1997), and work in anthropology (e.g. Bateson, 1994). Building on work done in narrative, in philosophy, in anthropology, and in education (see e.g. Delpit, 1995; Hampton, 1997; Paley, 1979) for culturally based educational research and writing), and incorporating insights from my own research, I have developed a notion of inquiry with a narrative approach to understanding multicultural phenomena: narrative multiculturalism.

Narrative multiculturalism is my term for an inquiry with a narrative approach to understanding multicultural phenomena. For me, a narrative approach to multiculturalism is one that acknowledges the continuity and history of experience of participants and researchers, one that looks at the contexts in
which people live and work, one that aims towards understanding people in a rapidly changing, modernizing world. Narrative is philosophically compatible with multiculturalism. A narrative approach, one that develops understandings from an experiential perspective, evolves from an on-going, negotiated construction of understanding between researcher and participants, honours the histories of participants and the communities in which they live and work, and is philosophically compatible with multiculturalism (see the work of Ming Fang He, 1998, for a recent example).

Narrative multiculturalism is more than understanding from a scientific point of view. It is more than understanding from an established, often pre-established, theoretical position. It is more than "data" collected by a detached researcher. Narrative multiculturalism is more than being certain about what I know. It is about not knowing, purposefully making myself vulnerable to not knowing; it is about surprise, bewilderment, and dilemmas, and learning with and from them. Puzzles and strangeness, concerns and tensions, unanswered questions and wonders fueled my inquiry.

In my research with Pam there were moments of bliss, a sense of dissolving of boundaries and borders, a blurring of personal space that was sensuous. Narrative multiculturalism is about bliss, it is about understanding from feelings and emotions, it is about love, joy, intuition. Narrative multiculturalism is about the passionate participation of a committed inquirer in the act of knowing. It is about understanding from literature, art, music, film. It is about understanding from every-day experiences, from dreams, from reflections. Passion, ardor, and desire, imagination,
aesthetics and creativity, empathy, compassion and commitment, infuse my inquiry. Narrative multiculturalism is about cultivating intuitive, empathetic, compassionate ways of being in relationship with others, attempting to understand this relationship, and expressing this relationship. Narrative multiculturalism is about community, learning with and from it, acting on issues raised within it. Commitment to social justice and equity fan the flames of passion in my inquiry, and propel my inquiry forward.

In my research I think of multicultural phenomena in narrative terms, and adopt narrative methods to study this phenomena. In short, narrative multiculturalism is both phenomena and method. In looking at multiculturalism narratively there is a coalescence of experiential, relational, contextual, and cultural aspects of the inquiry, that, I believe, has potential to provide new perspectives on understanding multicultural phenomena.

*Multicultural Education Research Literature: Immigrant and Minority Teachers*

My interests in multicultural education arise from my experiences, and are informed by the literature in narrative and multiculturalism I have used to develop understanding in this inquiry. These interests are also framed by my reading of the multicultural education research literature, some of which I referred to above and some I referred to in the previous chapter. In this inquiry I feel that I not only developed a more in-depth understanding of multiculturalism, but that I also gained a better understanding of the role of theory in research (see chapter six
"Becoming a Narrative Inquirer in a Multicultural Landscape", and chapter eleven "Narrative Multiculturalism" for an in-depth exploration of this topic) after engaging in inquiry in Bay Street School, and in writing in, and on, the inquiry.

When I began this inquiry I had notions that came partially from my experiences of teaching, travel and living abroad, and partially from reading the research literature on multicultural education, particularly the literature on why there is the need for more immigrant teachers in the school system. In retrospect I realize I must have thought I knew what was needed to teach immigrant students, even though that was an overall purpose of the inquiry in which I was supposedly engaged. Now I find I am more puzzled than I was when the inquiry began, less certain, less sure of the answers to my questions.

As there is a dialectic tension between experience and context that informed the inquiry, there is a similar dialectic tension between the philosophical theories and the multicultural educational theories that informed the inquiry. At first I did not view it as a tension; I saw the philosophical and multicultural educational research theoretical positions as separate, and of different realms of understanding. Then they came into collision in Pam’s classroom in Bay Street School. I was shaken, disturbed, provoked. Eventually the tension became productive for engaging in thinking about multiculturalism. This tension never entirely disappeared, and at the moment of writing this chapter, remains unresolved. Perhaps, as in experience and context informing each
other, the philosophical perspectives and the multicultural educational research perspectives provoke and inform each other.

In the following section I “list” some of the literature that framed, corralled, my thinking, as I came into Bay Street School and met Pam.

A “Good” Teacher of Immigrant and ESL Students Teaches Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Doesn’t She?

- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students teaches culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), doesn’t she?
- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students puts culture at the forefront of her teaching (Su, 1996a), doesn’t she?
- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students is more willing to embrace multicultural education (Su, 1996a), isn’t she?
- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students can be a good role model for immigrant students (Graham, 1987), can’t she?
- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students has had the experience of being an immigrant, or is a minority, or, if not, then like me, she has had the experience of living in another culture or other cultures, learning other languages, and this makes her more empathetic to minority and immigrant students (Su, 1996a), doesn’t it?
- A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students is very loving towards immigrant children, and is a community activist (Phillion & Singh, 1997), isn’t she?
• A “good” teacher of immigrant and ESL students can help minority students adapt to Canadian culture (Beynon & Toohey, 1995), can’t she?

• All students benefit from exposure to minority teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 1989; Graham, 1987; NEA Report, 1996; Shapson, personal communication, June 19, 1996), don’t they?

• Minority teachers can help prepare all students for the multicultural workplace and global economy of the present and future (Searles, personal communication, June 19, 1996), can’t they?

• Minority teachers can benefit the education system as a whole by opening up the discourse in teacher education to diverse views (Su, 1996b), can’t they?

When I began to do research in Bay Street School in Pam’s classroom I knew the answer to all those questions on the list. The answer was a resounding, unequivocal, very loudly shouted, “Yes!”. I had these questions in my mind, prepared, like a script, for Pam to follow. After all, it worked for me as a teacher. I was a “good” teacher, wasn’t I? It was what I personally and professionally believed in, and perhaps, at that time, even more importantly, a yes answer to all those questions was supported by a strong research base. I had built up to this for a good part of my life, and explored these issues in most of my research.

Can you imagine my shock when I began to realize that Pam did not follow my script? Perhaps you could say to yourself that when you
engage in an inquiry you do not bring a script with you for your participants to "read", "memorize", and "act". But, as I reflected on my relationship with Pam, as you will see in chapter six, I did just that. As the literature fenced in my thinking, I attempted to fence in Pam. Pam was a "visible minority", Black, immigrant. Surely she would follow the visible minority, immigrant teacher script. I and others have been crafting? The answer to that question was a resounding No. This is when the struggles began, this is when the dilemmas surfaced. This is when I put my values, my beliefs, my ways of thinking, and my every-day way of engaging in life under scrutiny and threw them into question. This is when issues of what it means to be teacher, learner, researcher, world citizen surfaced. This is when I began to question established ideas of multicultural education.

This is when the inquiry began.
Anthony Appiah (1994) has a most enlightening discussion of the notion of scripts, what he describes as “narratives that people can follow in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories” (p. 160). He argues that “it matters to people that their lives have a certain narrative unity” (p. 160), but that these can also be disabling to people when they are not treated with dignity (as Blacks, homosexuals, Catholics and so on might be) because of these collective scripts. He continues to say that in those cases it is important to take these scripts and reshape them, to construct positive life scripts (as I see homosexuals doing for example).

What Appiah questions is what happens with these more positive life scripts. Do they become tightly scripted identities people are conscripted into? This is a puzzle for me as it relates to the literature on minority and immigrant teachers. Are their identities, even within these positive scripts, too tightly scripted? As Appiah says of himself, he does not wish to organize his life around his “race” or his sexuality. Nor did Pam want her life organized around race, gender, ethnicity, or immigrant status. What a learning experience for someone like me!
Part Two: The Multicultural Landscape of Bay Street School

Chapter III

The Contours of the Physical Landscape of Bay Street School

Inquiry Terms: Place

Place is a term used in narrative inquiry “which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, in progress). You might ask yourself, as I did, how does attending to the physical landscape contribute to understanding in educational inquiry? I initially thought that in creating a setting for the writing that follows that you, the reader, would have a vivid sense of place, the stage would be set for understanding life in the school and the classroom. As I wrote I also imagined that you, too, would be drawn into the inquiry as I was drawn into the school, seduced by the contours of the landscape.

I believed that there was much to be learned from up-close, intensive observations; I wanted complete immersion in the landscape, so much so that for several months I tried to rent an apartment there. I visited the school two or three times a week for the first year, in the second year I visited once a week as well as attending special events. I also visited the community at night and on weekends, had dinner, went shopping, walked the
perimeters of the draw area of the school, read books in the park, and took photographs. In immersion in this landscape, in thinking and writing about and photographing this landscape, I discovered, as I hope you do, that the qualities of the physical landscape resonated in the school, my participant Pam, her practice, and students in the class.

The physical landscape, and the attributes of the landscape, are one dimension of a narrative inquiry. Place denotes the specific boundaries of the inquiry landscape and sets the stage of the inquiry. As such it is one context I explore to make meaning in this inquiry. Consider the definition of the word context: [Latin, contextus, woven together], those parts of a discourse, book, written or printed article etc., which are closely connected with any special sentence or word, and which should be taken into consideration in determining its meaning. (Winston dictionary, my emphasis). Continue the search for understanding the meaning of context and look at the etymology of the word (Dictionary of Word Origins, 1955) that is, its root, history, and growth, and you will have a sense of the implications of my use of this word. The root of context is “text”: the printed word used as a basis for discussion, the tissue or web stitched together to make meaning.

Field texts created in the physical landscape are the basis for determination of meaning, the context for enabling me, and also you, to understand the situatedness of what I have to say, what my participant has to say, and what school people have to say. In other words I weave together place and other dimensions of
narrative inquiry, time and interaction, as the fabric of the inquiry and the basis for my interpretations.

In describing the physical landscape, as well as creating a context (in the complexity of its meanings) for the inquiry, I foreshadow events that become integral to the plot of the story, and introduce you to some of the characters that appear and reappear in the following pages. Some do not have speaking roles but are present in the shadows, some have minor parts to play, some have major roles; all contribute to the evolving story and all contribute to understanding. You will learn more about these characters, and meet new ones, as the story develops. I also begin a narrative of the inquiry itself, and touch upon some of the puzzles and perplexities that emerged and continue to emerge. In addition, methods used in the inquiry become apparent.

The Community Landscape

One way to bring the physical landscape alive is to invite you, the reader, to travel with me by imaginatively participating in an excursion to Bay Street School and the surrounding neighbourhood. This excursion is a composite based primarily on my first visit to the school on November 27, 1996, with Michael Connelly (Mick throughout most of this writing), and a two hour tour that one of the community workers, Jeanette, did with our project team on September 18, 1997. Although at the time of her tour I had already been at the school for ten months, it was a vivid experience.
To create this research text I edited the field notes I wrote of the initial visit and tour, supplemented with field texts written at other times during the research (see Appendix IB for field visit dates, journal entries, theoretical memos, and other writing on Bay Street School), and used material from interviews with long-time teachers in the school (also see Appendix IB for interview dates). An additional source, one that allowed for a more playful, imaginative, and ultimately more provocative exploration, was the photography that I did in the community and around the school, much of it done in non-school hours. As in travel experiences, these photographs became important memory records for me. As I reflected on the photographs and slides I took of the community landscape I became aware of sharp contrasts, even contradictions, present in the landscape. A poem created from that perspective is included at the end of this account. The contrasts and contradictions of the landscape hinted at in the poem echoed within my experiences in the school and in my participant, Pam’s, class.

To enable you to feel as though you are along on the excursion I have situated it, whenever possible, in the narrative present; however, the text is interspersed with reflections from multiple time periods, including interpretive comments from field notes of the first visit. These are addressed as asides to the text using a different font. These asides reflect my innermost thoughts, some are difficult, even painful to reveal, some are filled with dilemmas that appear and reappear, some are contradictory to other parts of the text. As asides they are to be read in a whisper, (some thoughts can not be articulated, even in the softest of
whispers). They often do not reflect well on me; however, they provide glimpses into the heart and mind of a researcher you will come to know well, one who is brimming with assumptions, who is judgmental, who struggles every step of the way. The asides intentionally disrupt the smooth flow of the piece, and hint at the fragmented nature of research and the predicament of writing.

A Tour of the Community

On this first visit I feel so apprehensive about the school and my participant. I remember that a social worker told me that Victoria 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 men, some of them Native, coughing and wheezing, hold their hands out for change. As we walk along I see people sweeping the streets outside of stores, 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 Oriental child as they play a game together.

It is hard to imagine that a few blocks away the financial district is also waking up. Only the people arriving there will not necessarily look like, act like, or smell like those in this part of town. I am surprised that there is so much litter, aren’t people willing to place the refuse in cans? Then again, why are there so few cans? I feel so sick to my stomach, what will the school be like? Will I be able to find an immigrant participant? I really hope I can work with a woman of colour. (interpretive comments, November 27, 1996)
Other than the lack of cleanliness the area doesn’t look that rough. It doesn’t look like any place that I wouldn’t live, and it doesn’t look like many other places I have been. In fact I am really attracted to the neighbourhood. I am attracted to the mixture of businesses, restaurants, coffee shops, drugstores, and hairdressers. As I look down side streets I see beautifully kept houses with lacquered doors and stained glass windows interspersed with run down, neglected houses. People around me are speaking many different languages. I absolutely love it. We continue walking towards the school.

The place is chaotic. I am overwhelmed by noise, confusion, a barrage of languages I don’t understand. It is hard to walk fast, why are people taking up the whole sidewalk? Some of the smells make me feel a little ill. I do not recognize a lot of the food on display. (reflective writing on photographs, August 18, 1997)

Bay Street School is nestled in one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods 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 had never heard of also. There is a lively, exhilarating atmosphere.

This is the kind of area I want to do research in, diverse in every way. I hope my participant is like this, too. I hope she (?) will be from one of the Asian countries, I really want a participant who had to learn ESL. I also hope she is a strong proponent of programs that feature culture. If the kids are anything like the ones I see on the street, she will be a real role model for them. I think it is important for
teachers to be really involved in the community as well. I hope mine is. (interpretive comments, November 27, 1996)

Off to one side of the school there is a large market, this market has changed as the neighbourhood demographics have changed. It used to be reflective mainly of Jewish culture, now it is a very multi-ethnic market. It also has a strong feel of being located sometime in the sixties. There are clothing stores selling vintage apparel, record stores selling old albums, health food restaurants with psychedelic signs. All this makes me very nostalgic for the culture of the sixties which seems to be preserved in small part in this neighbourhood.

What residue of hippie culture do I cherish to this day? I am 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. (reflective writing on photographs, August 18, 1997)

Closer to the school the area suddenly opens up, I feel like I am moving from the bottom of a funnel. It is large and very clean. It is surrounded by a park with huge old trees, benches, squirrels and birds, adjacent to a community center. We are early, so we make a full circle around the school. The windows are decorated; Mick comments that in the past this caused the vice principal to be concerned that it was not very “professional” to look like that. I can see the windows filled with children’s art, coloured plastic tubs, and crawling plants.

Several weeks later my participant, Pam, still has the same display in her window. Why isn’t it changed more often? Actually, as I look at this side of the school, all the windows look in need of a face-lift. (field notes, February 27, 1997)
Mick is reminiscing about the way the school looked in the years that he and Jean were doing research there. 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 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. (interpretive comments, November 27, 1996)

We go to the parenting centre to meet our "guide", Jeanette, and are introduced to another community worker. We walk out of the school and head towards the Community Centre. When we arrive at the corner Jeanette points out the boundaries of the school. I have paced those boundaries many times and still feel wonder at how diverse it is. We ask about kids who might want to come to the school from outside of the district. She says you are supposed to only come from inside the district, however they don’t refuse parents who ask to have their children attend the school.

With the declining enrollment, no wonder there are kids allowed into the school from outside the area. When the Catholic school was built, it took so many kids away. I wonder why? I doubt there were that many Catholic kids. What is the reputation of Bay Street School in the community? (reflection on interview of April 15, 1997)

An ESL teacher who works with adults teaches in the school. He told a person on my project that the school has a reputation of being one for troubled kids. Many of the parents he teaches would not want to send their children there.
Pam told me the school used to be more influenced by drugs. (field notes, February 20, 1997) I see a display of "No needles" paintings opposite a Grade one-two class. (field notes, April 9, 1997)

We stop and look at a medical clinic on the corner. There is a program in this clinic that has doctors going into the community rather than staying where they are. Some of the community people either don’t know where the clinic is, or don’t feel comfortable going there, so doctors go out into the community. Bay Street School has developed curriculum for cross-cultural training of doctors. Jeanette tells us about a doctor who came to the school sometimes and had a clinic. It wasn’t really all that successful, it wasn’t a productive use of the doctor’s time because she would just see one or two patients during the day. They are working on medical outreach from the school to the doctors, from the doctors to the school, and both of them into the community.

Who is the "they" who worked on that curriculum? I thought schools taught children. This school attempts to reach out to all people in the community. They have newsletters in different languages, school notices are translated, and interpreters are provided for the parents. At one curriculum night I noticed that interpreters were holding up signs. The principal instructed parents to join their language group. None one moved. (field notes, October 9, 1997)

The next stop on the tour is the Community Centre. Before we go inside the community centre Jeanette points out the garden off to one side with large sunflowers growing up a wall. They also grow vegetables, herbs and flowers that they dry and sell. There are plans to expand and develop a rooftop garden. This is part of the fundraising initiative.
Government cutbacks are forcing people to grow herbs to sell for fundraising. I wonder what other initiatives they have in place? (reflections on tour of September 18, 1997)

During the tour of the inside we see the auditorium where community meetings are held, and outside the auditorium a stage where some school performances take place. We see an area where Bay Street and other schools in the district display their art work. The snack bar is privately run by somebody who is conscious of the amount of money that people in the community have and keeps the prices down. We go to the library where ESL classes are held. Through closed doors we see classrooms where two alternative schools run programs: One is an alternative school run without the help of Bay Street which is for street kids, the other is a chronic non-attendance program held in conjunction with Bay Street. Jeanette refers to being able to count the non-attendance program students as part of Bay Street’s attendance as a "perk".

Much later I visit the "chronic non-attendees" program. Ironically, it is with a tour of Egyptians who want to see an example of a "small school". The children look ordinary. The teachers, there are two of them and eight students, look tired. The room is hot, a couch is spilling stuffing. (field notes, May 26, 1998)

We also see the beautiful swimming pool that is 15 to 20 years old and in need of major repairs. There is an emergency child-care centre at one end of the building. If parents can’t cope they can bring their kids there. If parents suddenly have to go out and look for a job they can leave the child there but it isn’t a regular daycare. It costs $5 a day.
Jeanette speaks about the staff that works at the community centre. While they are trying to do their normal jobs they also have to give help to the transient population, a lot of whom are made up of psychiatric cases. The staff has been “trained”. They have been given various workshops to help them deal with this situation. Jeanette knows so many people. She says hi to all the staff. She runs over and lets a woman in the door. She talks to another woman in the hallway. I get a sense of Jeanette being within an interconnected web of community, school, people, kids, activities, programs, all being played out within her own life.

More evidence of government cutbacks. I wonder if many of them come and see the results of what these cutbacks mean. I think of my husband, who was in school for years to learn how to deal with psychiatric populations, whereas the staff here have been given a few workshops.

I am really puzzled by Jeanette’s role in the school. Does she bring the school programs to the community, or does she bring the community to the school? Who does she work for? Why does the principal take so much of her time when she is obviously valued in the community? (reflections on tour of September 18, 1997)

Pam questions what Jeanette does in the school. (field notes, June 25, 1997)

It looks like a multipurpose, multi-use community centre. It fulfills a function in having classes, sports, a place for people to sit and talk, and the emergency daycare. The people are reflective of the diversity outside the centre. Jeanette gestures towards a room and says it was her office at one time but the principal took up so much of her time she didn’t spend that much time there. The fees are about $15 for a family to join for the year, individual courses are about $20. As we walk out the door there is a notice about anti-racist policy: protect your rights
and inform people about infractions based on culture or race or religion. Mick says to Jeanette that before there seemed to be more of a multicultural focus, now there seems to be more of an anti-racist focus.

I wonder how this will work in my research. I have such a "soft" multicultural focus, so much criticized by friends who are anti-racist educators.

We leave the community centre and come into an alleyway of immaculately kept little homes with no grass around them whatsoever, neither a front yard, a back yard, nor a side yard, fronting directly onto the street. Jeanette says that some of the students come from this area; these areas are, for her, examples of some of the dilemmas that we have in our practice. She says we tell students to go home and find a quiet place and a good light to do their homework. In these tiny homes there are no quiet spaces for students to do their homework. Bay Street School is developing after-school programs to address this issue.

Bay Street School has so many programs, yet how can it meet all the needs of the kids? Pam feels stretched a little further each time the principal establishes a new program to meet the needs of the community. She says, "What about the needs of the teachers?" (field notes, June 25, 1997)

There is a long walkway between the community centre and the school where one time the parking lot used to be. Jeanette tells us that there had been huge trees there a few years ago. There had been a lot of drug dealing and partying under the trees so they had cut them down and put bright lights in there. I ask her where the drug dealers have gone. She gestures vaguely and says, "Over there". I wonder, where is over there, still in the neighbourhood?
Before we went to a drug awareness puppet play, D____ talked about the need for this kind of a program in this kind of a school. He said that there were some cases where this would not be so but the kids here were very much aware of drugs and alcohol. Several years ago there had been a lot of needles on the playground, there were often used condoms, and wine bottles. The kids would find needles in the school yard at recess. They would see people selling drugs. They would probably even know people that were selling drugs. He said that this had changed recently. I think back to one staff meeting where there was a heated debate about the problem of the banana peels thrown on the ground by students from the continental breakfast program. (field notes, February 20, 1997)

Jeanette tells us about Stuart. Stuart was a Black immigrant from the West Indies in the 50’s. There was a story about him trying to go skating on the rink that is part of the complex beside the pool, he had been refused permission. Stuart’s descendants did get to skate on that rink. The rink and the building beside the rink are being renamed in his honour.

I have never heard Pam mention this man, or anything else to do with Black history.

Straight ahead is a building that I have noticed many times. Jeanette refers to it as the “Bay Street Hotel”. This is actually a hotel but the owner of the hotel has been persuaded to take in, for emergency periods of time only, families that need shelter. Beside that is the cooperative housing where the community worker who is very active in the PTA lives.

One of the students told me she lived in that building. In a letter to a pen-pal, she wrote that she is Black, she hoped that was OK, because it was not OK with some people. (field notes, May 28, 1997)

We continue walking around the school to the portables. At one time there had been many of them, as the neighbourhood changed and more schools were built the enrollment declined to the extent that
the portables were no longer necessary. Jeanette tells us the playground had all been concrete at one time, but they ripped up the concrete and put in grass and a very soft track for the kids to run on, too.

A teacher who has been at the school for a long time said that the demographics were changing, and people were having less children so enrollment was down. He said that the learning disabilities classes used to be held in the portables. I wondered, why are they always off somewhere else, in the basement, outside, at the end of the hall. I wondered if the ESL classes used to be there as well. (interview, April 15, 1997)

We walk further away from the school and go into the Metro Toronto Housing Authority. The day of the tour the complex is deserted. The parts that we walk by are attractive. I see some vegetable and flower gardens in the back and front. A small child on a bicycle, wearing a helmet and knee pads, careens by.

I went to a play with the students and on the return trip we took a back route to the school. We walked through some of the Public Housing that I hadn’t seen before. It was depressing. There were no trees, no plants, no flowers, it was all concrete. The curtains were half off in some windows. There was garbage outside, papers littered around. A woman was swearing and repeatedly calling someone’s name. (field notes, April 30, 1997)

We also go to the Victoria Park Community Centre, a small, quiet, at that time, community centre. There are notices on the bulletin board that there are ballroom dancing, international cooking classes and other activities available. A few years ago there had been a community medical centre there but it is no longer functioning. We are told it had outgrown itself and moved. We leave the area and go back into the school.
An Alternative Perspective on the Community: Photographing the Inner-City School Landscape

Now I would like you to experience the community landscape during after-school and weekend hours. This poem is a composite created from many trips to the school in the summer and fall of 1997. I wrote it September 25, 1997, but revised it, played with it, many other times. I noticed that by going in the evening rather than during the daytime, and going on weekends rather than weekdays, I had contrasting and often contradictory experiences.

Poetry seemed a medium able to capture the discordant notes of the landscape, the fragmented sense of time, space and place, and the experiencing of this landscape as more an unevenly pasted together collage than smooth, seamless text. I hope the reader will keep in mind I am not a poet, yet felt compelled, driven, to other forms of expression.
The Inner-City School Landscape

Outside the community centre, Homeless Women
  Black/White,
  mumbling,
  counting bags at their feet.
  Framing them
  sunflowers are leaning against painted wooden walls.
Children, shouting, are climbing bleached timber apparatus
  while a father, smoking, silently watches.
  Across the street, a temple,
  through a doorway three golden Buddhas.
  Spire towering, a Ukrainian church and supply store,
  next door, psychic readings “no appointment necessary”.
  A family having a picnic on the “inner-city school” grounds,
  soft strains of Vietnamese music, voices, laughter.
  Slow pitch on the field, basketball on the court,
  glowing turquoise pool, empty.

  Opposite side of the street, a crumbling hotel,
  Short, short white shorts, long jacket, high heeled Hooker
  marching, pacing with pinched lined face
  over papers bunched and crumbled.
  Broken windows, violent graffiti
  framing a man huddling on the steps
  of the scarred building
  bent elbows shading his face from my intrusive lens.
Outside/inside the market, houses with red lacquered wooden doors, 
stained glass windows and decorative iron fences. 
Light shading in parallel tapestry of 
teal sky, streaks of gray, mauve. 
Synagogue, barred-doored cathedral on the perimeter. 
Laotian, Thai, Caribbean, Indian restaurants. 
In the market, spices, prickly fruit, 
mounds of apples glowing, dragon eyes twisting on branches. 

Through the trees, the “inner-city school”, 
Parking lot moved, oak trees cut down, bright lights illuminating walkways. 
Drug dealers gathering on other corners, banana peels replacing needles. 
Bottles and a condom on the grass, 
nearby children are playing; alone on a bench, a man is reading comics. 
A stuffed bear, approaching, saying hello, 
asking me why I have a camera, and, who is that guy with me. 
The ventriloquist, a familiar face, peering from behind, grinning. 

Inside the community centre, an orchestra, 
South American music, the flag of Chile waving as people dance. 
Speeches, applause echoing from the Portuguese graduation party in a classroom 
filled with cakes, food, drinks. 
Outside the Homeless Women 
White/Black 
sighing in the shadows, picking up the bags at their feet, 
in darkening light, I put my camera away, leaving the inner city school landscape.
Echoes and Reverberations

The diversity, the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-economic, multi-era, multi-possibility, multi-layered aspects of the community echo inside and reverberate throughout the school. In turn this school and this neighbourhood echo the diversity of Toronto and Canada. It is as though the school were a microcosm of the community, the city, the country. The interactional flow is not one way, it is more dynamic than that. Programs stemming from inside the school also reach out and echo in the community and the city; this interaction bounces back into the school.

Playing with the notion of echoes and the fact that the outside landscape is echoed inside the halls of the school, I recognize that there are obvious differences, also. The outside landscape around the school can be cluttered, littered, fast moving, fast paced, filled with noise, seemingly filled with chaos and confusion. This happens less often inside the walls of the school. The school is a softer, gentler, quieter place, cocooned within this bustling neighbourhood. In fact, the school is one of the quietest places I have experienced in the neighbourhood other than some of the empty churches, synagogues and temples that I have seen. I wonder about the impact of this on the students and their lives and their understandings as they develop inside this school.
Inquiry Terms: Place Revisited

Let us now return to the term “place” in narrative inquiry. Place is not a uni-dimensional “thing”, it is not an “object”, it is a multi-dimensional living landscape, filled with diverse people, events, and interactions. The landscape can be constructed in different ways, depending on perspective, position, and purpose. I have tried to capture this sense in writing the chapter, and in creating the poem.

I would like to introduce some thoughts on a more expanded notion of its meaning that evolved as I read, and as I wrote. I hope that in reading the previous pages you will have come to feel, as I have come to feel, that the physical landscape is a presence in my inquiry. O’Donohue (1994) writes that without landscape there would be no whereness, and whereness is crucial to human identity. “Landscape is then a condition of the possibility of everything. Without landscape there would be no where. Without a where, there would be no thing (p. 2).”

A focus on place “which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, in progress) is a focus on a bounded landscape; for example, you have experienced an excursion around the boundaries of an inquiry landscape, Bay Street School. However, just as the walls of the school are permeated by the community, these boundaries are permeated by the outside culture. People move back and forth across the borders in their daily lives. Students in the
school take trips to their native countries, they share journals of their experiences with teachers and classmates (and researchers), and new students, from all over the world, arrive almost daily. Teachers of diverse backgrounds are recruited to the school. Literature, music and art from around the globe are explored in classes. Sailor Moon stickers, Hello Kitty pencil cases, Tomadachi, a craze in Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan one day, are sought after items in Bay Street School the next day.

Not only do people and artifacts cross the boundaries, so do ideas. Debates about immigration and multiculturalism seep into conversations in the school, and policies in the Board. On a grand scale journalists/writers/historians such as Gwynn Dyer (1997) write of the globalization of cultures. Kenneth Gergen (1991) makes the point that who we are nowadays has less to do with us as individuals and more to do with us as who we are in interaction with others; our interactions have become more complex, varied, and international than ever before. We are immersed in a social milieu that is fast becoming saturated. The borders between self and other are blurred as we are inundated with information and ideas. On a small scale, looking at Tara and Annette quarreling over Sailor Moon Stickers, I see global culture permeating the walls of the school, and the lives of students in Pam's class.
Chapter IV
Bay Street School History

Inquiry Terms: Temporality

A narrative inquiry has temporal dimensions and “addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future” (Connelly & Clandinin, in progress). When I began this inquiry, I assumed, as you might also have assumed, that I would look at temporality in terms of my participant’s life history, and as stages in the inquiry itself. Little did I know that in being drawn into the physical landscape of the community and the school in the present, I would also be drawn into the past, and come to care deeply about the future. Little did I know that in engaging in this inquiry I would be swept into, and become part of, an on-going temporal flow of multiple, converging narratives of the community, the school, Pam and her students, my own life, and also the narrative of the long-term project begun by Mick and Jean in 1981. I came to feel the meaning of Clifford Geertz’s (1995) words that in an inquiry “it is not history we are faced with, nor biography, but a confusion of histories, a swarm of biographies” (p. 2).

Temporality is a presence throughout the written account of the inquiry, as is the dimension of place (as both were during the research). Bay Street School, nested physically in the community landscape described in the previous section, is also nested temporally in the community. Bay Street School is part of the flow
of places, people and events that make up the history of the community, the city and the country. Bay Street School is part of the future of the community, city and country. From archival research I have come to see Bay Street School as an important part of the narrative of the history of education in the city.

Archival Research

I created the following research text to temporally situate Bay Street School. I hoped that a brief glimpse of the past would draw you, the reader, into the inquiry. To create this research text I used material from Board archives--excerpts from the diary of the first principal, a document created to mark the board’s centennial (Cochrane, 1950), and a document created to celebrate the school’s centennial that contained letters from former students and staff (Webster and Burton, 1977), excerpts from board meetings that dealt with the school and program implementation in the school, newspaper clippings, and newsletters about new policies in the school. Board archives also contain blueprints of the original school building, photographs of the school, mainly from its earlier days, photographs of former principals, teachers and students, and other memorabilia (See Appendix II for a list of board archival documents). In addition to Board archival material I used the extensive project archival material gathered over the years as background material (see Appendix III for a list of project archival material). Interviews with long time teachers in the school (see Appendix IB for interview dates) and conversations with teachers, staff, and parents supplemented archival material.
Louis B. Smith (1994, p. 290-291) writes about the process of constructing and using an archive in biographical research. He discusses the “pools of data” (p. 291) that he found in different places, including the many archives of Margaret Mead. As he read through the letters Nora Barlow, grand-daughter of Charles Darwin, and subject of his study, had written to Mead, he found no mention of the work that Barlow was doing. In this absence he found the driving question of his inquiry: who had Barlow shared her intellectual life with if not with Mead? He spent years answering that question, and in many ways it also structured the writing of his book. For Smith, archival activity, creating an overview of a life, began the construction of the life.

A related process occurred in my inquiry. At the time of researching the history of Bay Street School and writing my dissertation, my research team members and I were in the process of creating an archive of the project. There is a massive amount of material in the project archives, some the same as I found in the board archives, some created specifically for the school and board, much in the form of field texts and research texts. In creating the project archive, it felt as though we were not only doing an overview of the life of the project but also of Bay Street School. I also found that the life of the project and the life of the school were more inter-connected than I had imagined.

Like Smith (1994), our project team found questions in the creation of this archive that became the focal point of research conversations and drove our further inquiry, questions that we may be pursuing for years. Also like Smith (1994) in his research, we
found "pools of data" existed physically in many different places, the Board archives, cupboards in the Bay Street School library where the librarian had gathered documents and artifacts of school life, in Jean's possession in Edmonton, and also, literally, in an unbelievable number of places in the department where the project materials are housed. However, what I find particularly fascinating, and what Smith did not allude to in his chapter, was the "pools of data" that exist in the memories of people.

In creating the project archive, in the many conversations, email exchanges, and shared writing with Mick and Jean, "pools of data" were discovered in their memories, as they were discovered in the memories of long time teachers in the school. At the time I was writing my dissertation, Mick and Jean were writing their book Narrative Inquiry (in progress), and beginning to think about their next book on Bay Street School. There was a great deal of memory swapping going on at the time. Jean and her research assistant found stories in the archived field texts, and shared these electronically with our research team. I related these stories to my present experiences in the school, which made for further reverberations with their experiences and so on.

When Mick resumed research in the school, he, in turn, felt reverberations with his past experiences. Jointly Mick and I constructed some field texts that reflected the intermingling of the present and the past. The echoes and reverberations affected other members of the team as well, not only the other researcher in Bay Street School, but those at different sites, in different fields such as nursing and community college teaching. Other
members of Jean’s team, many of them practicing teachers and administrators, joined in these on-line conversations, and the dialogue continued to grow. The intermingling of past and present experiences, the weaving together of texts of different people from different time periods, made for a rich source of field texts, and enriched research texts.

I also spent time in the board archives. These archives are a treasure trove of materials for an educational researcher, or anyone with an interest in history. The material is easily accessible, well maintained and carefully annotated. More than that, I feel that the Board archivist is a person who has passion for his inquiry. He will always take time to talk, he has even offered me tea! I experienced a sense of excitement as I went through documents, letters and photographs in the archives. There was a feeling of blurring of temporal boundaries as issues alive in talk in Bay Street School today, came alive in letters and journals about the past.

A journal entry I wrote after my first visit to the Board archives begins to capture my sense of excitement.

There is such a sense of history that pervades the archives. As I walked into the dark, wood-paneled room I felt I had entered a very special atmosphere. A quartet of student musicians played in the museum next door. I could hear the soft strains of music interspersed with laughter as I sat at the scarred oak table peering at documents under the shade of a very old-fashioned green tinted lamp. The music, the table, the lamp, the documents, the smell of the cracked leather chairs, transported me back in time.

There is such a wealth of information in the archives that if you were doing any research about the school, or other schools, on any topic, you could find something
useful there. I settled down with the folders from Bay Street School. There are two large folders filled with various documents. There is also a document produced for the centennial of the board. We also have a copy in our project archives. One very interesting document contained excerpts from the journal of the first principal, Mr. Maclean.

As I read through the documents I came to believe that the first principal was a man who affected the course of education in the province. Board documents indicate that many new programs were implemented there first. Many letters written by former teachers talked about doing teacher training there with “critic teachers”. I felt quite excited as I began to sense the place of Bay Street School in the history of education in the province.

Talk about connections--I was surprised to run across a letter written years ago by a researcher on Mick and Jean’s project carefully preserved in a folder. The project is a part of the history of the school! (journal entry, January 21, 1998)

You might still wonder why I wrote the history of Bay Street School. You might ask yourself what the past had to do with my inquiry which took place from 1996 to 1999. The world is a different place now than then, schools are not the same, it is only a building after all. Why was I looking backward? That question will be part of this account throughout, sometimes in the foreground as in this section, sometimes more in the background.

*Pulling Back the Veil: Glimpses into an Imagined Future.*

Looking backward in the inquiry was instrumental in pulling a veil back from the now, and allowing glimpses into an imagined future. As I read the archival material and wrote the history of the school there were continual reverberations with my present research experiences in the school, and with my past experiences, as I hope there are with your experiences. These reverberations
were encountered with many different kinds of emotions: laughter, surprise, chagrin, sadness, and puzzlement. They are indicated in the text in an italicized font.

One of the major reverberations I felt was with multicultural issues. Perhaps due to my personal interests, or perhaps because of the demographics of the community, perhaps because this is Toronto, a city of immigrants, and this is Canada, a land of immigrants, multiculturalism in its various words, guises and expressions appeared and reappeared in documents and letters. Another echo I could hear from over the years was that of the number of students in the school. This piqued my already aroused curiosity. I had not realized that the number of students was of such significance in a public school. If I were to have used a gender lens I would have found loud reverberations there as well. As it is, gender is only lightly touched upon in this account.

In writing the history of the school I pondered using different approaches. I could have written a paragraph with a timeline of significant dates in the school history, or a dry chronology, for example, school opened in this year, additions built in that year, such and such a principal appointed in this year, such and such a program implemented in that year. However, this approach would not have reflected the growing sense I felt that there are continuities and discontinuities in the life of a school, as there are in the life of a person.

I wanted to construct an image of the school with historical accuracy, yet I also wanted an approach to writing this section
that would reflect my experience of investigating the history of the school. I wanted to construct an account that reflected my feeling that Bay Street School is a presence in the educational landscape of the city; in my reading and analysis of the archival material I came to feel that Bay Street School was considered to be a place of value, importance, and substance. I think these huge, old, brick schools were powerful and beautiful symbols of stability, like churches and other religious buildings, financial institutions, hospitals, post offices, and libraries were as well. They were symbols that we are here now, this is who we are. We are going somewhere in the future. We are educating the future.

The material in the board archives and the project archives is so filled with peoples' lives and peoples' experiences that I also felt compelled to try to keep a life-like quality in my writing. In order to keep this piece alive, I used different devices. I created a composite history based on my reading of letters and documents. As I mentioned before I used a different font to indicate echoes and reverberations between the past and the present. Some of these echoes reflect a sense of continuities in the school, some are more reflective of growth and change over the years. Rather than including a source for each line or paragraph, at the end of each section I refer to all the sources¹.

To keep the history alive for you and to be as true to my feelings about the material as to the "facts", I crafted an imaginative, playful text based on my reading of the first principal's diary and the centennial document of the school. I ascribed to the first principal, Robert Maclean, feelings, emotions and thoughts not
directly articulated in his diary, but that I imagined were in his character. There were subtle comments embedded in his writing, not directly articulated, that hinted at his character. After all, he was required by law to keep this diary. It was then, as it is now, a public document. I find myself wondering what he would have said if it had been a private piece of writing. This section follows directly and is indented.

A Journey Back in Time

I'd like to take you on another journey, this one begins over one hundred twenty years ago. Can you imagine this period of time? Canada had been a country for only ten years. Toronto, already a flourishing city, had immigrants from all over the world. New schools were being built, one of the largest was Bay Street School. Robert Maclean, later to be referred to by Toronto World (July 1, 1907) as the "father" of the Toronto Public School System, had recently been appointed as the first principal.

As I read about Robert Maclean's position in the educational landscape, I thought about what a long time teacher in the school told me (with a hint of nostalgia in his voice). He talked about all the people who had moved from that school into important administrative careers in the board and other boards. Another long time teacher said that the school is always "jumping on the bandwagon". Pam said that Bay Street School often has Board policies in place long before others do. (interviews, April 15, 1997, & April 23, 1997; field notes, November 27, 1998)
Let's join Robert Maclean on his way to the opening of Bay Street School, an opening that had been delayed until long after the first term started. He was preoccupied with the dedication he had prepared. He wanted exactly the right tone, he felt that the tone of his inaugural speech would set the direction for the school in the years ahead. Perhaps, at that time, as I believe many men in his position also did, he realized that his influence would extend far beyond the parameters of the school to affect education in the city, and the province. He may have seen himself as a figure in history, someone whose life, work, and writing would be examined. He prepared a speech that hinted at his imagined place in history, and that also suggested the significance of Bay Street School in history. He repeated to himself the first words of the speech he had written so carefully and thoughtfully the night before:

...that this school may under the blessing of the Almighty and Beneficent God prove a nursing Mother to all scholars who seek an education within its walls, so that our City - our Country - the World - may be advanced by the training imparted here is the earnest and devout wish of its first Head Master Robert Maclean.

As the first day of school was about to begin there were over six hundred students enrolled. Bay Street School was one of only two schools in the city where High School Entrance could be obtained. He thought about the young scholars he was going to meet that day. He imagined that many of these students would go on to become important figures in the city, doctors, lawyers, teachers, business people.
I was amazed when I read about the number of students enrolled the first year. It almost exactly matched the number of students in the school when I began my research in 1996. I had heard stories of it being a large school, the largest in Canada at one time. I had heard stories of a huge staff of over eighty. It seemed strange that the school had taken over one hundred twenty years to come full circle in numbers. I wondered at the changes that happened between time periods. Later I came to realize the importance of numbers in the school story. I wondered if they had been as important during the first principal’s time. (interview, April 15, 1997)

I also wondered about the kinds of jobs current graduates from the school take up in their futures. Do the teachers there now feel the students are “scholars”? When did the school change from educating scholars to educating “low socio-economic” children? What kind of changes came about because of education being compulsory until the age of 15 now?

Whispered aside: There is an undated, framed photograph in the library of the school. It is a photo of young men posed in some type of sports outfits, perhaps cricket, very old-fashioned looking. The young men in the photo look very self-assured, almost arrogant. I say this because of their posture and their facial expressions. All of them are White. If I look at class lists from different time periods it appears that the student body has always been diverse, so I am puzzled as to why the young men are all White. I am also frustrated that there is no date on this photograph. (reflection on field notes of June 22, 1998)

As Robert Maclean approached the school, he could hear the ringing of the bell that ushered in the first day. He felt pride at the sight of the new brick building with the high tower overlooking the broad tree lined street. He had gone over the plans with the architect who was reputed to be the best there was. Bay Street School was modern in every way. It had a heating system, running water, washrooms in the basement, cloakrooms, blackboards, and individual desks. As he thought of the heating system his mind drifted from his speech to supervising the delivery of 56 cords of wood. He had been told that the heating system was the most modern
available, so he was perplexed that over the last few days the school had been so cold. They would have to use the little wood heaters to keep the classrooms warm after all. The students were required by law to be sent home if the classrooms were below 40 degrees. He did not want that to happen, particularly on the first day. More than that, he was worried about the sharp tongue of the head of the female department housed on the first floor, she would surely complain if her room was too cold. Little did he know how often he would have to face her wrath.

Over 120 years later there were still problems with the heating system. The heaters sputtered and popped, then hissed loudly. Pam and I loved the sound as it was indicative that warmth would soon follow. In 1997 the heating system was replaced at great expense. The principal announced in a staff meeting that this would eliminate cold temperatures. Immediately a vocal female member of the staff spoke about the heat in the summer. I wondered if Robert Maclean would chuckle over this.

I also wondered if the washrooms were the same ones as the girls used so long ago! They appear to be ancient enough to be an artifact from Robert Maclean's time. (field notes, January 8, 1997; March 3, 1997)

Whispered aside: The girls' washrooms are awful. There are no paper towels, and no soap, the stall doors have no locks. As I have no keys, I am unable to use the teachers' washrooms, so I use the girls' washrooms. I felt taken back to the days when I went to Catholic school.

Some students told me when there are paper towels they are often wet then thrown all over the floor. There is graffiti on the door that says “fuck you”. (field notes, January 8, 1997; June 22, 1998)

I have only seen the bell tower in photographs. I read that someone fell from it and died. Is that why it is gone?

Robert Maclean was also concerned that the janitor would not have cleared the walks of snow which would make it difficult
for the invited dignitaries to enter the school. The janitor seemed to be so recalcitrant. If he could see into the future, he would know that he had to eventually fire the janitor for repeatedly refusing to clear the walks, and for swearing at him when he requested the work be done.

I laughed when I read diary entries that referred to problems with the janitors at the school. The janitors in the school today seem to wield so much power, too. They have told me their views on educational policies and teaching methods in the school. They also shared their thoughts on the principal, report cards, supply teachers, and fighting between students in the school. (field notes, February 27, 1997)

While Robert Maclean was preoccupied in thinking about these details he was also thinking about programs in the school, particularly for the immigrant students. In later years the school would be the first to implement many new programs, including the first Manual Training Program. It also grew to have a long association with the Teachers College, and became famous for its “critic teachers” who trained pre-service teachers. Bay Street School was on its way to becoming a part of the history of education in the province.

In the chapter on the school in the present time you will notice that many of the programs still reflect the fact that there are many immigrant students in the school, and many students in need of language and other support. I hadn’t realized that programs such as that would stretch so far back.

In the following section I continue the composite history of the school. In writing this I focused on an analysis of newspaper articles, and letters from the document prepared to celebrate the school’s centennial (Webster and Burton, 1977). Reverberations with my present experiences again appear in italicized font.
In Robert Maclean's day, and afterward, teachers signed on for life. Until 1919 girls were not eligible to receive academic achievement and attendance awards, as boys were. Female teachers who married either lied about it, or had to resign from their positions. One female teacher was discovered to be married. In order to keep her record clean, they made her resignation effective the day she married. The only problem was that meant she had worked for several weeks without pay!

Students at Bay Street School continued to be thought of as scholars into the 1940s. They were required to pray, learned to bow and curtsey, and recite poetry (one principal instigated a policy of having all the students in the school come to his office to recite). They were punished for what was called “unscholarly behaviour” which was misbehaving, being late, or having messy homework. Three to six strokes on each hand with a leather strap was usual. Scholars sat in rows according to the grades received on their last exams.

(Toronto Star, May 2, 1977 featuring an article written by a former student who attended the school from 1939 to 1948; letters from centennial document)

Some of the students in Pam’s class said she was tough on them for the same infractions. I wondered what would they think of the strap? Then one day I sat in the hall with some students who were reminiscing about their past experiences. They told me stories of schools in their native countries. They regularly received the strap and other forms of corporal punishment. (field notes, December 12, 1996, March 6, 1997, and April 28, 1997)

Much as in Robert Maclean’s day, Pam requires her students to memorize and recite poetry. Occasionally they perform recitations at assemblies. (field notes, December 12, 1996, & January 15, 1997)
In the Catholic school I attended as a child, I, too, sat in a desk determined by the grades on my last exams. In my memories, I finger a gold wreath pinned to my tunic. I sit in the second desk of the first row, a boy sits in the first desk. The wreath and the position indicate that I am the second best student in the class, or that I am the best female student in the class. I am not sure which it is. As I glance to the back of the room, I see Maria, a new student from Italy, in the very last seat. My cheeks burn with imagined humiliation. How would I feel if that were me? I am also regularly nauseated in the morning because I fold my toast and try to eat it quickly so as not to be late for school and receive the strap.

As I read the newspaper article and letters and reflected on my experiences in grade two I felt tears in my eyes. I realized that those experiences may have been the seeds for developing a life long empathy for immigrant ESL students.

Over the years immigration to Toronto has been reflected in the changing composition of the school population. In the early years when Robert Maclean was the principal, and up to the 1940s, attendance records, and other school records, reveal that the population was mainly Jewish, with many Russian refugees. In later years other groups came, Vietnamese, Chinese, Portuguese. Recently there have been increased numbers of Arabic speaking students.

(board records: School Attendance Records)

I thought about the immigrants and refugees that have come through the doors of the school. The debate about whether or not we should continue our immigration policies rages in Canada today. However, when I read about these issues, or hear reports on the news, or talk to family or friends, it is not abstract policies or numbers that come to mind. Rather, I see the children in Bay Street School. I see the face of a little girl from Somalia. In a few words of English, mixed with hand, eye, and body gestures, she told me about how she ran from gunfire during the civil war. As her family fled her baby brother was killed. Tears filled my eyes. (field notes, February 27, 1997)

In 1962 one teacher being transferred to the school was told that he would be going to a school with children who had "knives and leather jackets" (centennial document, p. 51). He said that what
he found were young children eager to learn. There were also hints in a letter written by a Vice-Principal of the school from 1966 to 1970 that the school was experiencing problems with students. He refers to Bay Street School as "the most potentially inflammatory school in the system" (centennial document, p. 56).

One teacher said that parents did not want to send their children to Bay Street School as it was tough and filled with problem children. I heard comments on the tough nature of the school. It was usually, but not always, referred to in the past tense. How did the school story evolve and change over the years? Why do some people have a new school story and some the old story of problems? (field notes, April 28, 1997)

In October, 1965 there were 700 students in the school. A newspaper reporter speculated that over half of them were hungry. Between 1965 and 1969 the population of the school exploded, many of the new students were learning English as their second language. In May 1969 there were 1100 students in the school. Five hundred of them were housed in 16 portables. There were eight special education classes and ten reception ESL classes. The reception ESL classes were designed to meet the needs of newcomers who needed to learn the fundamentals of English. These classes were mainly for Portuguese, Chinese and Italian students. However, in total there were 28 nationalities represented in the school. By 1971, a peak attendance period in the history of the school, there were over 1600 students in the school. Robert Maclean may or may not have been surprised that Bay Street School was reputed to be the largest school in Metro, perhaps the largest in Canada at this time. (Toronto Star, October 16, 1965; Globe and Mail, May 5, 1969; letters in centennial document; interview April 15, 1997)

In 1996 the numbers were significantly down. There were approximately 600 students in the school. Most of the
portables were long gone. Over the years additions had been built, now some of the school had a feel of emptiness, particularly the upper floor with its empty classrooms. The portables were replaced by an enlarged playground with a baseball field, and a soft track for running.

ESL classes were mainly for Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic speaking students.

There were many supplemental nutrition programs available in the school. A "continental breakfast" program begun in 1996 sparked a debate in the school over whether or not the children were really hungry, and whose responsibility it was to feed them. (field notes, February 3, 1997)

In the 1970s heritage language classes, designed to assist students in maintaining their native languages and cultures, were held outside regular school hours. They took place on Saturdays from 9:30 to 12:00. Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish were offered in response to changing community needs. (Bay Street School annual report, 1978)

The programs are now called International Language Programs. There are three additional languages taught, Vietnamese, Arabic and Black culture and language. The classes are now integrated into the regular day.

Pam has said that the international language classes break up the day and make it difficult to have the long blocks of time she feels are necessary for effective teaching. (field notes, December 4, 1996)

Not only did the Arabic International Language program meet an already existing need in the community, it also attracted other Arabic speaking families to the area. This was an aspect of these programs I had not realized prior to my research. (field notes, November 26, 1996)

We have come to February 1980. This brings us forward to the time when Bay Street School was designated one of four "project schools", and was given increased funding (project records, 1986). Project schools were created with a view to improving the academic achievement of students in the inner city.
The four basic goals of project schools were:

1. Overall goal: A functional, community-oriented and unified school, which will support and promote successful academic, social, and emotional growth and experience for all participants.

2. Cognitive goal: Through the use of children's own language as a base, develop and implement classroom and school-wide programs, activities and processes which will enable the children to develop their ability to see relationships.

3. Affective goal: To facilitate learning experiences which recognize the vast array of human needs, the uniqueness of each person, and which are based on the premise that people learn the most and the best through those things that are current and which involve personal experience.

4. Environmental goal: To create a school environment which will promote confidence, trust, appreciation, recognition, responsibility and growth, and which through its creation and maintenance will strive to be warm, interesting, active, calm, orderly and receptive.

A new principal, Phil Bingham, who had a reputation for being community oriented, was appointed. A project team was selected, and teachers were requested to commit to the goals of the project schools. At this time Mick and Jean began their Bay Street School work. In reflecting on their first meeting with the principal in 1981, they wrote (Connelly & Clandinin, in progress)

We met in the school staffroom and we felt the oldness of the school and the ways the problems of the years of neglect hung in the air. Still, we sensed, as people talked to us, possibility, feelings of hope for being able to change what had been to something else.

There were many continuities with my lived experiences in the school in the present that I experienced in my archival research of the past. However, there were also many discontinuities. From
the most modern school to run down and neglected, from showpiece school to project school, from educating scholars to educating students with problems, from high enrollment to low enrollment, the years had dramatically changed Bay Street School. But, as Mick and Jean arrived in the midst of this evolving story there was a hint of hope in what might have seemed to be a low point in the school story. As I experienced Bay Street School, I felt the somewhat run down conditions, but I also felt the hope there as well. Perhaps the spirit of Robert Maclean remained alive.

Inquiry Terms: Temporality Revisited

At the beginning of this chapter I wrote that a narrative inquiry has temporal dimensions and “addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future” (Connelly & Clandinin, in progress). I had not realized that addressing temporal issues would fan the strong desire to "know" that I felt in the inquiry. I felt compelled to gobble up whatever I could about the school. (I alluded to that feeling in the previous section. I spent hours photographing the landscape. I wanted to live in the area.) To consume it, I had to know it. To know it, I had to look beyond the present to the past.

As I investigated the history of the school, read the Board archives and project archives, looked at documents, and pored over photographs, I felt peoples’ lives beneath my fingers. As I participated in conversations based on my current experiences and the memories in people’s minds I felt pulled into streams of rushing narratives. Pulled by these currents I sailed into eddies,
and drifted into quiet, reflective pools. As I wrote in the first section of this chapter, I felt as though I was swept into, and become part of, the on-going temporal flow of multiple, converging narratives of the community, the school, Pam and her students, my own life, and also the narrative of the long-term project begun by Mick and Jean in 1981. As I said earlier, narrative research is like travel in a foreign culture. In the archival research I engaged I felt as though I walked the halls of the school in the past, talked to teachers and principals in the past. I felt as though I were dropped into the midst of lives in the past. I felt like a time traveler.

In this chapter I began the focus on temporality by looking at the history of the school. I now discuss how my sense of temporality evolved with the inquiry. My experiences in the school, on-going discussions about my work, much of it with Mick as he was writing, my project team members, and electronic conversations with Jean and her researcher, archival research, and the reading and writing I was doing, moved me beyond thinking of temporality in terms of stages of life, and stages in an inquiry. My understanding of temporality (and other aspects of the inquiry) was also influenced by readings that managed to come my way when I needed them to help me puzzle through my thinking on this topic. (Throughout this inquiry there was a serendipitous feel to my reading more so than the organized, systematic approach I associated with doing a dissertation and a standard review of the literature.)

A few months into my research I began to read the work of several anthropologists. Among them, in terms of understanding
temporality, Clifford Geertz most inspired me, particularly *After the Fact* (1995), a retrospective look at his anthropological research, his career, and the discipline of anthropology itself, spanning four decades and two countries. I felt a strong connection to Geertz’s idea that as inquirers we step in and out of places and times, we dip into a flow of events that are not orderly in a linear way, but rather are more like the order of a street market3 (p. 2). As I applied this notion to the inquiry into the past history of the Bay Street School, I had a sense I had stepped into an on-going flow of events that were not orderly. Photographs jumped from one time to another, documents moved from the distant past to the present, teachers wrote letters of their days as students in the school, then of administrative positions they held, then of departures they experienced. There was a swirl of life and memory, not an orderly flow.

By engaging in an inquiry in Pam’s classroom I was dipping into the flowing stream of an on-going story that was connected to the history of the school. As I moved beyond looking backward and applied this notion of temporality to my inquiry in the present I felt the same vivid sense of the chaos of a day in the school. Hurried stops in different places, snatched conversations in corridors and stairwells, children coming and going, papers brought from the office and returned to it, are all part of the swirl of life in a school.

As we engaged in conversations about Pam’s life and life in her classroom she spoke in what I think of as “narrative time”. This is not chronological time, but the personal time she developed to
make meaning of present situations in relation to her memories. As Pam talked to me, many years of teaching and life flowed in and out of her conversations. There were different schools, different programs, different principals, different classrooms, different students, different parents. As she talked to me her own children were small, they were teenagers, they were grown, then they were babies again. She was in Canada, she was in the United States, then she was in Trinidad. Temporally, I experienced Pam’s story in her “narrative time”, that is the personal meaning time had for her based on her experiences and the relationships she saw among her experiences. Similarly to Edward T. Hall’s theory (1973) that we visualize space, and the relationships between spaces, through personal experiences, so, I think, do we visualize time, and the relationship between time periods, through personal experiences.

I also resonated with Geertz’s (1995) thinking that as an anthropologist in Morocco and Indonesia he felt "... an uncomfortable sense of having come too late and arrived too early.... (I)t always seemed not the right time, but a pause between right times.... Change, apparently, is not a parade that can be watched as it passes” (p. 4). I, too, thought that it would be important to go into Pam’s classroom at the right time, a certain day, like the first day in September, or the first day of the new term, in order to capture “something” from “the beginning” to “the end”. But, like Geertz realized in doing research in foreign countries, and I realized in doing research in the archives and in the classroom, there is never really “a beginning” or "an end" of anything. The right time is the time I went, the time I stayed, the experience I had of the time I spent there.
As Geertz (1995) reflected on his work, he felt that the story that one tells in research naturally takes on a beginning, middle and end, "a form of coincidence less with the inner direction of things than with one's parenthetic experience of them" (p. 11). We insert ourselves into an on-going situation. For Geertz, there is an appreciation, if not at the moment, "then in belatedly appreciated commotion and muddle, the value there is in coming too late and leaving too early, in drifting along" (p. 63). In my research I came to recognize the value of being in the inquiry, caught up in the stream of events. I was swept along in a flow of events that was shaped by and was shaping the temporal contours of the landscape. In being caught up in the flow I came to feel attached to the school.

This attachment fueled the inquiry.
I struggled with how to write this piece. I wanted to show that I was what I thought of as a "good" researcher, thorough, careful, someone who knew the material, someone who knew the dates. But I also wanted to stay closer to my experience of actually doing archival research. I wanted to reflect the sense that I was engaged in an inquiry that opened up questions that began to shape the construction of my writing (Smith, 1994).

This piece was crafted for meaning, from "fact", but using my imagination. The purpose was to fill in the emotions/thoughts/feelings I felt the first principal had. Toni Morrison (1987) writes on the issue of imagination in her writing. "But memories and recollections won't give me total access to the unwritten interior life of these people. Only the act of imagination can help me" (p. 111). In the same way, "facts" of the diary did not give me access to the principal's interior life, but as I read I imagined what was not written.

I can relate to what Geertz (1995) indicates of his experiences of street markets as I recall my experiences of street markets all over the world, particularly the souks of Morocco. There was a sense of clarity from a distance (as I sat in the afternoon drinking tea on the roof of my hotel looking at the market), chaos up close (as I walked in 120 degree heat through twisting alleyways seemingly without end). As a stranger, I initially had difficulty perceiving any order when I was actually in the market.

The notion of "narrative time" has implications for the on-going discussions around interviewing in qualitative research (e.g. Sideman, 1992) and in oral history (e.g. Yow, 1994). In the narrative approach I used there was less a sense of discourse unfolding in an ordered pattern of time, such as a gradual unfolding of childhood experiences, education, early teaching experiences etc., but rather a sense that there was almost simultaneous reflection on past life experiences as a whole. With a focus on the experience in the present, the past is brought up in different ways.
Chapter V

A Glimpse of Bay Street School in the Present

In the chapter on community I explored the context of place, the physical landscape where Bay Street School is nested geographically. In the chapter on the history of Bay Street School I explored the temporal context of the school as it is nested in time, events, and change that occurred from the building of the school up to 1999. In this chapter I share a glimpse of Bay Street School at the present time by looking at school programs. This piece of writing also continues to build on the physical description, but focuses on the school. Later, I focus on my participant’s classroom.

As you begin to peek into the life of Bay Street School imagine the landscape of the community and the area surrounding the school. Imagine drawing concentric circles with the school positioned in the middle of the inner circle, much the same as it is metaphorically positioned in the heart of the community. Approach from certain locations and there is a calm feeling of the school being nestled in the midst of a park-like setting with green, open spaces, huge oak trees, and trails leading to the school. Approach from another position and there is a bustling feeling of markets, busy streets, crowds of people of all nationalities. Approach from another location, move very close to the school, and there is a sad, neglected feeling as a crumbling hotel demands attention, while the eye is drawn to a turquoise pool across the street. Another place on the inner-most circle
delights with immaculate homes with colourful doors, and gardens that overflow with flowers in the spring and summer. Move ten degrees on the same circle, sweep your gaze across forty five degrees, and absorb the feeling of Ontario Public Housing, a mixture of strewn garbage and tended gardens, raised voices of women calling the names of children and grandmothers murmuring over carriages, dirty naked windows and lace curtains. A theater and “The Bay Street Hotel” dot the periphery of the circle. Position yourself on any part of the circle, allow your eyes to move upward and the spires of churches, tops of temples and synagogues, and a hospital stand out; community centers, libraries, and stores are in the background. Buildings in the financial district loom on the horizon. In the far distance, the CN Tower pierces the sky. This furthest circle has a very different feeling. It is tinged with the shouts of excitement of the children in my participant’s class as they see the outskirts of the city from a bus donated for a field trip to the zoo (field notes, May 14, 1998).

As you glimpse Bay Street School in the present and hold a picture of the community landscape in your mind, try also to see the school filtered through a temporal lens. Imagine the life of the school in Robert Maclean’s time, the teachers, the students, the programs. Imagine the philosophy that drove the thinking about the school, and the purpose of schooling. Picture the gracious, somewhat majestic, brick building. Imagine changes that took place over the years. Over a long history Bay Street School underwent additions and renovations, survived recommendations for demolishing, added portables then gradually took them away,
modified the recreational fields, cut down trees where drug dealers congregated, and moved the parking lot. Through the physical changes the school experienced on-going demographic changes, and ups and downs in enrollments; the spirit of the school has been filled with high hopes, low expectations, and renewed vitality. Now, one of the oldest public schools in the city, a little worn from the passage of time and tens of thousands of students, Bay Street School remains.

Bay Street School dwells in the midst of the complexity and diversity of the community landscape and the temporal landscape. Outside places and other times permeate the walls of the school, flow through, and impact teachers’ and students’ lives. In this chapter I tap into a moment of the flow of time and place to situate my research life and Pam’s classroom life in the school from 1996 to 1998. I travel with you from the past to the present. Through all the changes and upheavals in the life of the school it continued to thrive. As I reflect and write, listen to news, and read newspaper accounts reporting that schools are to be closed, I wonder if, in the educational climate of cutbacks in the late 1990s, Bay Street School will continue to survive. If Bay Street School continues to thrive in the future, why is that?

Not everyone would be as fascinated with Bay Street School as I am. Why am I? If I told you that I felt welcomed to the school from my first visit, would that mean anything? If I told you that every visit people have time to talk to me, that when I go I am remembered by name, that the children throw their arms around me, that I feel the school and the people in the school are part of my
life, would that mean anything? If I told you that people have shared private stories with me, and others have hinted at stories they can not or will not share, would that mean anything? If I told you that I feel always on the brink of understanding something about the school, but never grasping that understanding, would that mean anything? Not everyone would be interested in what might seem to be my emotional responses to the school. If I imagine what a person would like to know about Bay Street School, I would have to consider the multiple perspectives of people on the landscape. Parents might wonder about programs, students might wonder about teachers, teachers might wonder about the philosophy of the school. Depending on whom I spoke to the concerns would be different, yet they would overlap as well.

If you heard the school described as "inner city school" you might imagine the crumbling hotel, the public housing of the poetic collage you read in an earlier chapter. But, would you necessarily imagine the oak-treed park, or the beautifully painted doors of some homes? If you heard the school was "low socio-economic status" would you imagine the hospital, library, skating rink, or shimmering turquoise pool? Would you see scattered garbage or tended gardens? Would you hear the shouting or the singing? Would you ignore or heed warnings not to walk there at night? If you heard the school described as one for "problem students" would you picture Aisha in your mind? Would you have a hopeful or despairing picture of the school?

The story of Bay Street School that follows is my construction, done from my perspective, shaped by my experiences, created for my
purposes, but then again, so is all writing. I do a brief physical
description of the school. I then discuss the programs,
philosophy, and values of Bay Street School as I heard about them,
in a conversation Mick and I had with the principal on our first
visit together to the school (field notes, November 27, 1996). Up
to then, I knew about Bay Street School from Mick and Jean, from
conversations, from reading published writing, and from reading
field texts they made over the years. During my first visit I
heard the school story from the principal.

The principal’s story of Bay Street School is his construction,
done from his perspective, shaped by his experiences, created to
fulfill his purpose. The preliminary conversation with the
principal is supplemented with additional field notes, interview
material, and documents gathered in the school. Woven periodically
into the text are comments that contextualize school programs and
policies within the literature, and within a broader policy
context of the Board.

As I had more exposure to Board policies during the course of the
research, it became more difficult to separate school philosophy
from Board philosophy. I recognize that the school philosophy will
evolve in the rapidly changing educational milieu of the
amalgamated boards in 1998-1999. (Previously, the board Bay Street
School is in was separate from the other four boards it was
amalgamated with in 1998.) Included also, in a smaller font, are
some of my interpretations. The tone of the writing moves from
intimate to distant depending on the context.
Coming to Bay Street School

Mick and I made arrangements to meet with the principal, Steve, to discuss our research project. Two weeks before, in mid-November, 1996, in a series of telephone calls, Mick had told him about his previous connections to the school, and discussed the possibility of resuming project work in the school. Mick also discussed my research interest in multiculturalism and immigrant teachers. The principal said he knew of the previous project, and was interested in the continuation of the project in the school. He also indicated that he would be willing to discuss my research.

Mick and I arrived at Bay Street School that first day, November 26, 1996, walked around the outside, and looked at classroom windows decorated with children’s art and overflowing with plants. I peered at windows and wondered if I was looking at a classroom that would be “mine”. I felt a level of anxiety and excitement I had not anticipated (but sometimes feel when I arrive in a new place). We walked around the school, unsure of which door to enter, until we saw a sign that read “Community Access”. That was us, wasn’t it? We were about to become part of the life of Bay Street School. Mick was renewing old ties, reliving old memories, connecting his previous research with Jean in the school to his present research with Jean and the school. I was building new relationships, creating new memories, planting the seed for a research program that would grow rooted in their work, but branch out to encompass my passions and commitments. My “school-based
narrative inquiry” was about to begin; I had no idea what would follow, or the depth of engagement that would develop.

We followed a sign “All visitors must report to the office”. The hall floors were polished and shiny, the walls clean and cream coloured. A wood-trimmed display case was filled with trophies and pictures, another one had a sign saying that someone could do sewing. A long table was piled high with used clothing. We looked at the bulletin boards outside the office. Mick commented on the many notices in different languages. He told me that this had also been the case when the project research was done in the eighties. Particular languages that stood out were Chinese, Vietnamese, and Portuguese. Mick said that in the past there had been an issue about the cost of translating notices. As we walked further down the hall there was a plaque with an inscription of the names of honour role students for 1996. We both commented that the majority of the names were Vietnamese or Chinese; there were few Anglo-Saxon names on the list.

I had an opportunity to hear a former Director of Education of the Toronto Board, speak about programs and policies of the Board. He said that it is policy to have most Board documents translated into the eight to ten main languages of the parents in the schools. This meets the language needs of over 80% of the parents. However, he noted there are 76 different languages represented in the schools. (field notes, May 26b, 1998). Over seventy percent of Bay Street School students speak a language other than English as their home language. (Toronto Board of Education, 1996-97 Profile).

As I wrote this piece, I recalled the names of students who received awards in Robert Maclean’s time. Some of the awards, like the award for good attendance in the 1870’s had only been only for boys! I wondered if this was because girls were expected to stay home if their parents needed them.
Further down the hall there was another plaque that had a list of what subsequently proved to be the various community connections that Bay Street School has with different organizations and clubs. These organizations sponsor programs in the school, such as the nutrition programs. I had a very hard time reading the names because of the way they were inscribed and the colour of the plaques.

Bay Street School has 41 community partnerships. In addition, there are collaborative programs with community/social agencies, including health services and recreation (Toronto Board of Education, 1996-97 Profile).

Only much later did I begin to understand the effort that goes into obtaining and maintaining all these partnerships. Steve spends a great deal of time on these activities. Steve even joked one day that he had been out "with his dog and pony show" making connections with an insurance company (field notes, September 11, 1997). I later found out than an insurance company had donated $20,000 to the school. I wondered if that was the same company. That money was used for different things, mainly computers, books, etc. (field notes, June 8, 1998).

Through a glass window and an open door I could see into the school office. There were three secretaries lined up in a row, all seemed to be busy. There was a white board display with a list of two weeks worth of activities on it. I noticed that a delegation from Sweden had come the previous week. As the superintendt said: "It is one of the delights, you do get to work with the world in this city." (field notes, May 26b, 1998)

On May 26, 1998, a group of Egyptian educators on a UNICEF project came to the school as part of an orientation to the Ontario school system. They were welcomed by the acting principal with the words; "Bay Street School prides itself on being a community school. The community can be nearby, or as far away as Egypt." (field notes, May 26, 1998)
We went into the office and were met by one of the vice principals who thought we were part of a parent organization. However, as soon as he heard Mick’s name he realized that we were there to meet the principal. He introduced himself. He is originally from Hong Kong. The principal had said in a telephone conversation with Mick that a vice principal had been a teacher in Hong Kong.

Mick asked him “Where are you from?”. I wondered if the vice principal was offended by this. I find that since I have come to Toronto, my sensitivity to immigrants’ sensitivity to this question has been heightened.

The vice principal told us that the principal would be a couple of minutes. We spoke to one of the secretaries who has been working at the school for 22 years. She remembered Mick and Jean’s participation in the school, and the research in the past. She had been working in the library at that time, and jokingly told us that she had “worked her way down to the office”.

At 9:30 Steve, the principal, brought us into his office. It was not as large as I had expected of an old school, and in comparison to other schools I have visited. Mick and I sat on a couch, a coffee table in front of us. Steve sat in a leather wing chair and offered us coffee. While he got the coffee, I had a chance to look around his office. I noticed an air conditioner, or heater. There were two teddy bears at my feet, a pile of books on the desk, photos and plaques on the walls, a framed diploma from OISE, and books on his shelf that looked like manuals. The blinds were tightly drawn, and it was very quiet.

The outlines of children were barely visible through the drawn vertical blinds. I could hear voices, but not see them.
Later, as we left the school, I also did not see children. I peeked into the library and it was empty.

In my field notes of that day I wrote that it felt like a “Ghost School”.

On other occasions, the halls have been so filled with children, parents, grandparents, that I could hardly move (field notes, December 17, 1997).

The Principal’s Story of School Programs

Steve talked to us about Bay Street School for about 45 minutes. He discussed the school’s connections with York University, particularly in teacher based research and a teacher inquiry project. His staff was actively involved in teacher research in “work groups”. They were also involved in an international project with Swedish teachers. He told us how different the school system was in Sweden. An inner school in Sweden means a wealthy school with many resources, because only the wealthier people can afford to live in the inner city, and that this was the reverse here in Toronto.

I found myself wondering if the teachers were really into teacher research or if it was imposed from above. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) question if it is not another duty piled on an already overworked classroom teacher, rather than a form of professional development.

Although the principal stressed the significance of teacher research groups, Pam seldom spoke to me about her group.

Steve spoke about Bay Street School’s International Languages Program. It is one of the largest available anywhere. They offer Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Black cultural language, and recently, Arabic. The Arabic language program was instituted to meet the needs of the changing community in the area. Since the Arabic program was offered at Bay Street the percentage of Arabic speaking people in the community had increased. Steve said the International Language Program plays a vital part in the school “because of the importance of reconnecting children to their culture and history”. The superintendent spoke about
what he termed "first language programs" for students and parents. He said, "We want our parents and students to keep their first languages as we see it as important linguistic stock.... We are also interested in helping parents who are not literate in their first language. Literacy in their first language will help develop literacy in a second language." (field notes, May 26b, 1998)

Strike a blow for Jim Cummins research (1989) which seems to have affected Board policy! While many educators and policy makers in the United States are refusing to recognize the interconnectedness of literacy in first and second languages (Soto, 1997), the Toronto Board has made that line of thinking integral to development of language policies.

At the time of writing this section, on June 2, 1998, California had adopted Proposition 227 which will effectively eliminate bilingual programs. In other parts of the US successful bilingual programs are being terminated (Soto, 1997). I wonder if the present government will maintain the language policies that promote the learning of and retention of first languages? As I look at some of the new curriculum guidelines (Ontario, 1998) I have a feeling it will not be as important an issue as it was to the previous government. Then what happens to these programs that have been so carefully nurtured at Bay Street School?

Unlike some schools which offer international languages on Saturdays, or after school, Bay Street School, at the present time, has integrated the International Language Program into the school timetable by extending the day half an hour (Toronto Board of Education, 1996-97 Profile). Also, unlike many schools, Bay Street has enough room to enable the international language teachers to have their own rooms. Over 75% of the international language teachers in the school were certified teachers in their native countries. In Pam's class, international languages are scheduled in morning hours. Some of the regular classroom teachers feel that timetable decisions are made that reflect too much consideration of these language programs and not enough about other areas of the curriculum (field notes, January 8, 1997; January 20, 1997).
I was surprised that in this school space seemed to be available for all international languages teachers to have their own rooms. I later learned that the enrollment had been as high as 1,800 students at one time, and was now around 600 (interview, April 15, 1997). No wonder there was space!

Grace Feuerverger (1997) explored the marginalization of international languages teachers. One particular way Feuerverger constructed marginalization was physically, in terms of space. International languages teachers seldom have their own rooms. They usually have to go from room to room with tubs in their hands. The classroom teachers who share their rooms often object to them being there, and leave notes to them about leaving the room clean.

A similar situation exists with ESL teachers who use teachers’ classrooms on Saturdays and evenings. When I did research at an adult ESL site (He, Phillion, & Beach, 1999) I noticed signs to clean up the room left for the ESL teacher. Pam also feels the ESL teachers who use her classroom do not clean up properly, and touch material they should not touch. She has reported these problems to the principal, but they persist (field notes, April 23, 1997).

At one staff meeting, the principal discussed International Language programs and teachers. He said those teachers are paid by the hour, not paid for prep, not paid for sick days or holidays, and (at that time) had no contract. He objected to this situation as he sees International Languages Programs as “important to the integrity of the school, the way the school sees itself, the vision the school has of itself” (field notes, March 19, 1997).

Now this is in direct contrast to Pam’s belief. She does not feel the need for international languages programs as they are structured now (field notes, January 8, 1997). She feels all children should be exposed to all cultures, not only their native cultures (field notes, May 20, 1998).

Is this what Jean and her students were saying at AERA (1997) about “counter stories” (Nelson, 1995)? Are Pam’s story and the school story in opposition, or counter, to each other?

Steve spoke about the clash of cultures that occurs between parents and children as children become more Canadianized and parents maintain their traditional values. In 1995 some students from the East Asian community who attended Bay Street School were leaving home; this was becoming a major problem. The school brought in the parents to discuss the situation. Steve said that
"the conference room was filled to overflowing with parents". There was a certain reluctance to talk about the problems that these parents were having with their children, particularly with people in authority, meaning the people in the school. At the same time they had opened up a dialogue. From this dialogue the "Community Homes Project" had developed. The Community Homes Project set up a home in the neighbourhood with a Caribbean woman, a single parent who had a daughter in the school. She had a bedroom available for children who needed a place to stay. This space was available if the parents, the student, and the woman who had the home, agreed that that was the thing to do. The student could stay there until the situation was resolved. They had originally thought of having a variety of different cultures’ homes. Then they thought they could not do that, so they made one home available. Steve felt this was a proactive approach. People had to be working on their problems. Even if they did not use the home, having this space available made it so that the parents and the students could begin to talk together.

I could see Steve prided himself on this proactive stance towards problems in the school. I felt he had his finger on the pulse of the community, and had the resources, know how, and connections to get things done.

Steve said that children who were having problems at home still came to school. He stressed that there is a very high attendance rate at the school. He used this as an example of the school philosophy: Bay Street School, Where You Belong. This orientation towards the community was something that the former principal had intended to do, but Steve said that "it had not stuck". With him as the principal for the past four years the programs were
beginning to stick. He saw one of the differences being that the teachers were no longer the ones who had to do everything. Teachers did not have to be social workers. The teachers main obligation was to teach. The extensive community network that he and others developed as partnerships provided support for parents, students and teachers.

*The counter stories continue. Pam feels that there is too much community connection. She said "We have to do so much with the community it is not like a school." (field notes, June 5, 1998)*

Steve said that the strong community orientation could cause some problems for students who moved from the middle school to high school. The students were in a middle school of about 250 students (of over 600 in total in Bay Street School). After graduation they moved to a school like Central Tech with 2,500 students. In the large, impersonal high school students could become lost, they sometimes could not figure out the relevancy of school to their lives. Bay Street is attempting to make more connections with the high school. They are also trying to find other schools for their students to go to for their secondary schooling.

Steve discussed two different approaches to the community service middle school students are required to do. One is career based and one is issues based. In Bay Street School the focus is more on issues based work. Students might work at a shelter, a food bank, a clothing bank, or an old folks home. He is less inclined to have students work in businesses, for example a garage. They had on-going debates about this in the school, but for now students were
involved in more issues based community work. Steve wants students to have a recognition of what is going on around them.

I wonder how parents feel about the community work? Some literature stresses that some newly immigrated families have a vocational orientation towards school (Vald és, 1996).

Pam is concerned about the ever-growing school-business links fostered in education (field notes, September 16, 1997).

In a staff meeting, a teacher raised the question of how to evaluate the community service that the school requires. The person said this was a legitimate concern shared by other teachers in the school. How do they evaluate the community work? How do they communicate this evaluation to parents? How does it fit with students’ academic profiles? Another teacher told me it was a legitimate academic concern but because it had something to do with the community the school didn’t want to deal with it. (field notes, October 7, 1997)

At the end of this part of the meeting, Steve discussed “The Wrap Around Project” a project developed to support families and family members. He also mentioned new projects that a committee was planning. The committee was planning an integration of services in which they would have child care, after school care, nutrition programs and recreation programs all serviced from the school. He also mentioned that he is involved in the Principals Association and regularly gives feedback to them about these different programs.

I am feeling overwhelmed. I am trying to think about everything that happened today. It was like a barrage of events. Steve portrayed an incredible complexity of the school. Sorting through what he brought up today will take a long time. Mick pointed out in the conversation that we had afterwards that I won’t ever be able to sort through it all (interpretive comments from field notes, November 27, 1996).
Additional School Programs

Steve had told us about some of the programs in the school, particularly those related to community involvement. He had presented an image of Bay Street School as being a bridge to the various cultures, as being a mediator between parents and students, and as being proactive in connecting to the community. As I thought on what Steve had said, I realized that he had told us about programs that reflected particular aspects of the Bay Street School story--connected to the community, working with the community needs and interests, facilitating and developing community programs--not about general school programs.

The following list of programs is from a Board document. "Bay Street School offers the following programs and services to implement the curriculum and meet the needs of its students and local community": (Toronto Board of Education, 1996-97 Profile).

Literacy and Numeracy

- Reading Corner (Gr. 1-3)
- Reading Buddies (K-Gr. 8)
- Borrow-a-Book (K-Gr. 6)
- Summer Connections: Summer literacy program (Gr. 1-6)
- Math Science Investigations (Gr. 1-8)

English as a Second Language Support

- Team Teaching with ESL staff
- First language tutor/mentors for the newly arrived ESL students
- Bilingual co-op students support in After-4 programs
- New Immigrant Kids support program
Arts Programs/Activities

- Music: Special Instrumental Music for all Junior students twice a week, special staff for programming through grants for arts appreciation (K-Gr. 8)
- Integrated Arts: (K-Gr. 8)

Food and Nutrition

- Breakfast Program
- Snack Program
- Lunch Program
- Lunch Activities Program

Open to all students and community members, mothers with toddlers, pregnant women. Supported by grants and donations.

After-4 Programs

- Primary French classes
- Clubs: Homework, Chess, Creative Drama, Cooking, Table Tennis, New Immigrant Kids, Cultural Dance
- Community Tutoring
- Supports/games/swimming in conjunction with _______West Children’s Services

Co-and Extra-Curricular Activities

- Team sports: house league and intramural all year
- Evening Student Programs to age 16, supported by _______West Children’s Services

Other Programs and Services

- School Safety: Anti-Bullying, Peer Mediation
- Equity Initiatives: Equity Conferences, Inclusive School Curriculum
- Mentoring program
- In-class paraprofessional support
- Secondary school co-op students
- Clothing exchange
- Community Cooking
- Parent Centre

Staff Development

In 1996-97 Bay Street staff received specific in-service in Computer Literacy.
Summary: Autobiography, Theory, and Experience

In Part One (chapters one and two) I focused on the autobiographical and theoretical roots of my inquiry. In order to contextualize my work I brought forward understandings of the impact of my personal narrative on my inquiry, and the way the literature had shaped my thinking about multicultural education prior to my research in Bay Street School.

In Part Two (chapters three, four, and five) I focused on place, the community landscape, and temporality, the history of the school and the programs presently in the school. Place and time, two dimensions of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, in progress) were essential to explore in order to contextualize my work, and to provide a ground for developing understanding in the inquiry.

In Part Three (chapters six and seven), which follows, I focus on the third dimension of a narrative inquiry, interaction. In chapter six I describe entering Bay Street School to do research, and my beginning relationship with Pam. In chapter seven I describe sharing a research text with Pam. In both these chapters there is an intimate quality reflective of the way I feel about Pam. As the work continues later in Part Four (chapters eight, nine, and ten) I focus directly on Pam, and her teaching. In Part Five (chapter eleven) I focus on my new understandings of multicultural education and future plans for narrative research in multiculturalism.
When I first wrote this section I said that the school was positioned "in the heart of the neighbourhood". In reading this, Mick questioned the positioning of the school in that way. He felt it was not an accurate way of denoting where it was in the neighbourhood. I subsequently changed it to "metaphorically positioned in the heart of the community". Later, I read the work of Edward T. Hall, The silent language (1973). In this book Hall discusses how time and space are perceived differently in different cultures. I was aware of this notion prior to reading the book. However, another point he made helped me understand why I position Bay Street School in the middle, or in the heart of, the community. Hall says that we tend to visualize space, and the relationship between spaces in terms of personal relationships (theoretical memo, June 20, 1998).

For me, the community is the people in the school, and the school is the heart of the community. All distances are calculated in those terms, all reference points are made in those terms. All my "markers" of the area are from personal relationships. Where we had tea and cake is "a five minute walk down the street beside the school". Where we have had lunch with other teachers several times is "from the school door turn right, then walk a block". The area nearby is "where we walked on our field trip to the Pan Festival". The hotel is "across the school grounds where the new little girl lives".

A small point, but interesting to me in thinking about time and space.

The students in the school speak both Mandarin and Cantonese. The written form of the language is the same. I refer to the written form as Chinese.
Part Three: Narrative Inquiry in a Multicultural Landscape

Chapter VI
One Story I Can Tell of Becoming a Narrative Inquirer in a Multicultural Landscape

Inquiry Terms: Interaction

In previous chapters I delved into the narrative inquiry terms of "place" and "temporality". You traveled with me to Bay Street School, and explored the physical landscape in which it is nested, the sweep of history in which it is embedded, and the programs that currently express the school philosophy. In previous chapters you briefly met some of the characters on the school landscape (both past and present, real and "fictional"), and some of the characters off the school landscape, that impact the life of my inquiry. You have had fleeting glimpses of my participant, Pam. You have learned a little, perhaps more than a little, about me, the inquirer. You have probably asked yourself questions about what I am doing in the inquiry and in the writing.

In this chapter I focus on the third term of a narrative inquiry, "interaction", the personal and social dimensions of a narrative inquiry. Although this term permeates other parts of this work, it is foregrounded in this chapter where I begin to narrate selected stories from Pam’s classroom, and in chapters eight and nine where I share more classroom stories.
Clandinin and Connelly (1994) following Dewey’s notion of interaction (1938) focused on what they called four directions in any inquiry: inward and outward, backward and forward. In their book entitled Narrative Inquiry (in progress) they further discuss the term interaction: by inward they mean towards internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions. By outward they mean towards the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward they refer to temporality, past, present and future. Keeping this term in mind not only helped me select which stories to tell, but how to analyze them as well. For Clandinin and Connelly, to do narrative inquiry:

is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. The researcher asks questions, collects field notes, derives interpretations, and writes a research text that addresses both personal and social issues, by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future (chapter 4).

In this chapter I exercise a writers’ prerogative and change the focus of my writing. I turn inward in the inquiry, inward in time, to multiple time periods, inward in place, to behind the doors of my participant’s classroom, inward in reflecting, to who I am as an inquirer, inward in understanding, to how I see (saw) my participant, and inward in reflecting on interactions between time, place, myself and my participant.

A photographer’s close up focus on something in the foreground means the background seemingly blurs. At the same time a focus on one particular thing can illuminate the surrounding landscape. In
this section I take a close-up look, and zoom in on the beginning of my relationship with my participant. In zooming in on myself and my participant, I reveal much of the school landscape as well, and interactions on the school landscape. To do this, I do not show you a series of photographs, but I do tell you a series of stories. These stories are about becoming a narrative inquirer. There are multiple stories I could tell of becoming and being a narrative inquirer. This is the one I choose to construct at this time, for this purpose.

In this story/paper/chapter (story for me to share with Pam, paper written for AERA 1998, and chapter of my dissertation) I share field texts, the raw material from my experiences in the field in the form of field notes, journals, etc., and research texts, various pieces crafted from reflecting on and writing about the field texts compiled during different time periods of the research. Included in the overall story are small nested stories that contain further smaller nested stories (see Lyons, 1990, for a discussion of nested stories). The field texts and research texts shed light on the beliefs I held to, clung to, as I entered the research, and the development of the relationship between myself and my participant. These beliefs had been somewhat reinforced in my work with out-of-country certified teachers. In some ways that research had set the stage for what I expected of Pam. Looked at from a different angle, these beliefs also shed light on some of the multicultural literature I have read.

This story is also the beginning of my attempt to communicate the profound effect that this relationship had on my evolving beliefs,
beliefs about research, beliefs about teaching and learning, and particularly, beliefs about multiculturalism. The story creates a context for understanding some aspects of my process of becoming a narrative inquirer, and brings forward some themes that I will return to in other sections.

Roller Coaster Ride

At the beginning of this inquiry I experienced a situation that I later described to Pam as a “roller coaster ride, like being turned upside down and shaken” (journal entry, January 20, 1997). In the initial phase of this inquiry I struggled to understand Pam’s practice, to make meaning of her views. I compared and contrasted what I imagined I would do in the classroom, and how I would interact with the students, with what I saw her doing. I felt Pam was hard on the students, she did not encourage me to be with them in their groups, or to talk with them individually. However, towards me, Pam had what I thought of as an “open door” policy; I was invited to come to her classroom at any time, and warmly welcomed whenever I did. The contrasts between my feelings about Pam as a teacher and Pam as a person puzzled me. The contrasts between my feelings now, and my feelings then, are explored in this chapter.

As I began to tune into the possibilities of this particular inquiry, in this particular time and place, I began to question who I was in the inquiry, and to purposefully reflect on where my ideas had come from, and how they were contributing to the tension I was experiencing. For me, the process of becoming a narrative
inquirer was (is) not a smooth process. It was (is) akin to being on a roller coaster, a long, slow, uphill ride, the expanding horizon as you climb towards the peak, the exhilaration of moving quickly towards an opening vista, the feeling of euphoria as you reach the peak, whoosh down, and begin the climb again, accompanied by feeling nervous, apprehensive, and excited at the same time.

There were times I felt stretched between what felt like opposing forces pulling against each other while I was on this roller coaster ride. The opposing views created a tension¹ that became the driving force of the early stage of my inquiry. This tension caused distress, but it propelled me to become deeply involved in trying to understand my participant and to figure out the dilemma I was experiencing. I had many conversations with people, particularly Mick, my supervisor, read everything I could², and wrote copious field notes, journals, theoretical memos, reflections and imaginative pieces where I explored the tension I was feeling.

The conversations, reading, and writing contributed, but it was primarily my relationship with Pam that allowed my attitude to soften, my defenses to crumble, and my heart to open. This relationship developed through spending long periods of time in the school and engaging in a “running dialogue” with her that began the first moment I set foot in her classroom, and continues to this day. We discussed students, parents, curriculum, teaching, learning, and education. Aspects of our personal lives were gradually interwoven into conversations about our professional
lives. Hand in hand with beginning to know Pam as a person, I began to know Pam as a teacher. I came to deeply respect her practice and her knowledge. I came to trust Pam and appreciate what she had to offer students, parents, school and community. In this process Pam was teaching me about becoming a more open, more flexible, more inquiry oriented researcher. In this process I came to trust narrative inquiry and appreciate how this approach contributed to understanding my participant, life in her class, the school and the community, and multicultural education.

In the following section I share a story I crafted based on field notes written after my fourth time in the school, my third classroom visit. This story begins to reveal the ups and downs which led me to think of the inquiry as a roller coaster ride.

Seven Minutes of Silence

Pam moved from her desk at the back of the room and sat down in what the children call “the teacher’s chair”. The children were gathered cross-legged on the scrap of faded blue carpet. Pam said she was going to read them a poem. The name of the poem was A Song by the Hearth. She wrote the word hearth on the board in careful cursive script. She asked the students to tell her what the word meant. There were a few puzzled looks and then various children shouted out answers: a song writer, somebody who makes things, a musical instrument, somebody who makes musical instruments. None of the answers were correct. Pam told them “Think! I don’t want you to just say anything. I want you to use your brains!”. They sat there. I looked at the clock. I noticed many children were beginning to fidget. Some shifted their legs. I heard coughing and sighing. No one said a word. I looked at the clock again. I felt the squirming increase. Seven minutes went by with total silence in the classroom.

A little boy suddenly stood up and got a dictionary from a large rack of dictionaries of different sizes and types behind where Pam sat. Pam said, “Well that is good, Jaumaal, at least you are thinking”. Slowly, the rest of the children got up, went to the rack, and took down dictionaries. Individually and in pairs they
thumbed through them and discussed various meanings. Some read the meanings aloud, stumbling over the pronunciation of words. Some appeared to have looked up a different word. Many continued to look puzzled.

Pam read the poem. The students listened. She opened the book to the picture and asked the students, "What is this?", and pointed to the fireplace. The students shouted "fireplace". Then she asked "What is this?", and pointed to the area in front of the fireplace. Not one of the students responded with the word hearth, the word which was written on the board, which they had looked up in the dictionary, and which they had discussed with other students. Eventually one child whispered "hearth".

(field notes of class observation, December 12, 1996)

The following is a slightly edited journal entry written one day after I wrote the field notes on which the above story is based.

Emerging Tensions

I have been with Pam three times now and I feel that there is a discrepancy between the things she believes in, and the way she acts with the students, and the things I believe in, and the way I would act with the students. This has created tension which is internal with me (I can not tell if Pam feels any of this). I don’t know if the tension I feel is apparent to her.

An example of this happened yesterday in the school. The students had to sit there for seven minutes as she told them to "think about the meaning of hearth". I have never experienced that as a teacher. I calculated that I would last about thirty seconds before I would start giving them some hints about the word. I kept looking at the clock and my watch. I could not believe how long one minute, two minutes, three minutes felt. Seven minutes was an eternity! I alternated between feeling really worried about doing research with Pam, to feeling this is research and not everybody is going to be the same as me, to worrying about the students, getting a knot in my stomach.

I had a meeting, if you can call running into Mick’s office and throwing myself in a chair a meeting, about my feelings after the seven minutes of silence. Mick suggested that I explore my emotions around this issue. I feel strongly for children. I feel strongly for children from other cultures, especially the ones who are struggling with the language. My feeling is that it is important to love the children, and care for them, and learning will come from that.
I also felt a sense of being imprisoned as a researcher/teacher. As a researcher I feel there is a certain way I have to be in the class. I have to fit in with the teacher's way of doing things, do things as she sees that I should be doing them, and at a pace with which she is comfortable. As a teacher I would be more going out to the students, asking them questions about their work, and doing things with them. I would be dropping hints about difficult vocabulary, drawing a hearth on the board! So there is a tension. I hope it is a productive tension, not an unproductive tension. (journal entry, December 13, 1996)

As I later reflected on the story "Seven Minutes of Silence" and the journal entry "Emerging Tensions" from the vantage point of, amongst many things, more time in the school and a strong relationship with Pam, I began to realize that even before the inquiry had begun, before I was critical and judgmental, I had thoughts of what it would be like to work with someone, "my participant". I had expectations, hopes and deeply embedded desires about the kind of participant I would have, and how I would engage in the inquiry.

In the following section I share a piece of dream-like/reflective/imaginative writing which begins to shed light on what I secretly, deeply, desired in my participant. On May 15, 1997, I went to a pan (the traditional drum music of the Caribbean) festival with Pam and her students. It was the first time I had heard pan live and it made a strong impression on me. I wrote field notes after the event, but later felt compelled to express something that had happened because I had been to the festival. In reflecting on the festival I became aware of my thoughts about "my participant". I originally wrote this piece three weeks after the festival,
however I have returned to it, reflected on it, and revised it many different times.

*Koto to Pan*

*As you read this text imagine a darkened stage, very softly in the background Koto (classical Japanese) music is playing.*

Faintly in the darkened corner of the stage the silhouette of a woman begins to form, taking shape from wisps of shadow. She emerges in profile, small, with long dark hair. Her silhouette is curved as in a supplicant’s position; passive, quiet, pliant. She appears to be Asian. Koto music continues to play. It is becoming stronger and beginning to change slightly. As the strumming of the koto slowly changes, the dim shadowed figure of the woman flows forward. Her silhouette begins to change form and becomes more distinct. She becomes taller, broad shouldered. It is a very fluid process taking place in rhythm to the music. The stage begins to lighten, we begin to see the facial features of the woman. Slowly her features are changing from Asian to Black. Her long dark hair is becoming shorter and curlier. Her posture is erect, her shoulders are becoming straighter; her legs are becoming longer, more muscular. The entire stance of the woman is changing as the music is changing tone and tempo. She no longer looks like a supplicant, she looks confident, resilient, demanding. The music has changed from koto to pan. One hand on her hip, she stares at the audience. Pan fills the room, louder and louder and louder.

*(reflective writing, June 8, 1997)*

*Koto to Pan* is a private story, somewhat difficult to acknowledge personally, certainly difficult to tell others. I am not sure why, but it speaks to me in some profound way, perhaps because this piece of writing comes from somewhere deep inside. Insights gained from writing and reflecting on this piece have been hard-won, and often filled with anguish. Dreams, or day-dreams, are seldom revealed in a public forum, they are not often used as research texts. I feel consternation and embarrassment as I imagine what
someone reading this text might think about my relationship with Pam, and the women I worked with before in my project with out-of-country certified teachers, and women I work with now. Some might be offended by what might be construed as a racist depiction of women of colour. Some might be shocked at my naiveté. Some might wonder what kind of researcher I am, and what kind of research I am doing. Most might wonder why the piece of writing was included. How I story audience reception of this reflective writing depends on the level of relationship I imagine I have with them.

As I reflected on Koto to Pan I saw that I originally wanted a participant who embodied characteristics of other women that I worked with from other countries. I imagined the woman I would work with; the Koto Woman I yearned for, someone I was comfortable with, someone who was familiar, perhaps someone from Asia, perhaps someone who spoke English as a second language, perhaps someone new to the country. Pam was a different character than the one I had yearned for/dreamed of/envisioned. Pam was Black, larger, bolder and more confident, more questioning, more disturbing, more perplexing. Pam had been in Canada for many years, came from an English speaking country, and had strong opinions on the education of children.

When I began the inquiry, I wanted to study the topic of immigrant teachers from a particular vantage point. The starting point of the inquiry grew out of my life experiences: growing up in an immigrant neighbourhood in Montréal, multiple moves throughout my life, a commitment to issues of social justice that evolved during the 1960s, teaching English as a foreign language in Japan and
parenting my son through five years of education there in a language I could not understand, teaching immigrant Asian children in Vancouver, research experiences with immigrant teachers who had recently arrived in Canada, and strong personal and professional relationships with women of diverse backgrounds. This starting point shaped my views on who I was and could be, what I was able to see and to hear in the inquiry, and subsequently, who my participant was able to be. Without being fully conscious of this initially, I later came to realize that my way of looking at the world, my way of being in the world, circumscribed the horizon of my understanding of multicultural education. Through my developing relationship with Pam, I was thrown into a reflective state. I became sensitive to the nuances of difference indicated in the piece, able to gradually expand my horizon of understanding.

There is much left to be unraveled in Koto to Pan. The more I reflected on it the more I came to believe it revealed something of importance about who I was in the inquiry, and how who I was in the inquiry shaped what I wanted to see and could see. The aura of shadowing that pervades this dream sequence reflected the sense of mystery, and the darkness reflected the puzzlement that I was feeling in my research. In the use of music it hinted at my growing realization of the need to be silent, to listen closely, and truly, deeply, attend to my participant. The transition from koto to pan is significant. The slow, languid, fluid change from koto to pan indicated the need to be sensitive to Pam's unique qualities, mindful of the nature of difference. Koto to Pan begins to capture the complex sense of tension I experienced in the
initial stages of the inquiry and also points to a significant transition.

The Quest for Ms. Multicultural

The tension I experienced in the initial stages of the inquiry contributed to questioning myself about the expectations I had brought into the inquiry, and prompted me to consciously reflect on where my ideas had originated. I came to realize I was on a quest for “Ms. Multicultural”. Ms. Multicultural is a personification of my interpretation of a sacred story (see Crites, 1971, and Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, for a discussion of sacred stories) in the research literature on multicultural education. Ms. Multicultural is a wonderful example of the distillation of everything there is in the literature that affirms the need for more minority teachers in our school systems. Ms. Multicultural uses culturally relevant pedagogy, acts as a role model, empathizes with minority students because she has often undergone similar experiences, validates students’ home cultures and languages, assists minority students to adapt to their new culture, and advocates for immigrant students and parents (see Beynon & Toohey, 1995; Graham, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 1994; and Su, 1996a, 1996b for discussions of the characteristics). All students benefit from exposure to teachers like the Ms. Multicultural for whom I was on a quest.

Ms. Multicultural not only personified the sacred story from the literature, she also embodied my ideology, my beliefs, and perhaps most importantly, my desires. My Ms. Multicultural manifested many
of the characteristics of Koto Woman in the Koto to Pan piece. She was gentle, quiet, spoke English as a second language. Ms. Multicultural had all the attributes I believed were necessary to teach immigrant students, attributes I thought I had, also. Yes, I, too, was Ms. Multicultural (except I was not a woman of colour, not an immigrant, and did not speak English as a second language). I was on a quest for a participant who was Ms. Multicultural. Can you imagine Pam being handed that score to play out in life, that script to act out, that stage to perform on in a school with students?

Bay Street School Story

The situation became more complicated as I began to know the Bay Street School story (see Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, for a discussion of school stories). In my understanding the school lived a story very much like the one I had scripted for Ms. Multicultural from my experiences and from the literature. I found that my personal story of multiculturalism moved to the same rhythm as the Bay Street School story. I saw my story ratified everywhere in the school, from art on the walls, to music in the halls, to books in the library; from the diverse teaching and support staff, to international language programs, to celebratory connections to the community like the Multicultural Festival.

Comfortable with the school story, I was initially confused and puzzled by Pam’s multicultural views. She thought there was no need for children to take international language classes. She did not think students should be taught a culture, that was something
that belonged at home. My views on multiculturalism, language maintenance and bilingualism, in sync with the school, collided with hers (see Denzin, 1997, preface, for a discussion on how, in individual encounters, our larger cultural/gender/racial assumptions can disintegrate). Pam did not espouse the virtues of multiculturalism as I interpreted them, or as the literature dictated them. Rather, she espoused something else, some quality that I could not define, initially resisted, and struggled to understand.

Pam’s story of multiculturalism ran counter to the story of multiculturalism I brought to the school, my understandings of the sacred story from the literature, the school story, and the school’s story of the community (see specifically chapter five for the school’s story of community). In retrospect I realize I had inklings of this on my first visit to her classroom. The following is a re-creation of an excerpt of Pam’s conversation from our first “running dialogue”.

I am not really sure what the school’s multicultural philosophy is. I know it is different than mine. I have gone to talk to the principal about this several times. I have many Black children in my class, and there are many in the school. I don’t believe in coddling them. I don’t believe in pampering them. I don’t believe in being namby pamby with them. The principal has different views on this, you know. I am very, very strict. I have really, really high expectations. I think that to treat them as different, or make special considerations for them, is not the way to relate to the Black children. It doesn’t matter that they are Black or whatever they are, they have to do the work.

(field notes of first class observation, Dec. 4, 1996)

Pam’s story of multiculturalism was, I believe, viewed as different not only by Pam herself, but also by some people in the
school. I heard people in the school speak of Pam’s views on multiculturalism as being "different", "interesting", and "may not be the same as the views of other members of the Caribbean community". I was told "this has sometimes caused problems or conflicts in the school", and "some people had difficulty understanding Pam’s practice". (field notes, November 27, 1996; field notes, September 16, 1997)

As I got to know Pam she told me she was reluctant to speak up on some school policies, such as the scheduling of the international languages programs (in her case, mid-morning, i.e. the prime time for teaching), as she had not been listened to in the past. Pam mainly voiced her concerns in conversations with a small group of colleagues who did listen. Some members of this group shared similar concerns with me, as well as the view that their whispered voices would not be heard in the loud din of the sacred school story. In my experience, forums for incorporating Pam’s and other’s dissenting voices in the dialogue on education are not readily available within existing structures in Bay Street School (see Fenstermacher, 1994, for a discussion of this notion as related to the media).

Contentious Stories

In the following slightly edited journal entry I tried to make meaning of Pam’s story. Pam’s story was not a “contending story”, it did not carry much weight in the school (or initially with me). I feel it was a “contentious story”, one that brushed up against and irritated the sacred school story. In this brushing up it
illuminated the school story more clearly. It also challenged the school story, the school’s story of the community, and my story of multicultural education.

Interacting with Pam, being in her classroom, is challenging my beliefs about teaching, learning, and the meaning of multicultural education. Bay Street School’s story of multiculturalism and my personal story of multiculturalism are in sympathetic coexistence. The school story of a place that meets the needs of diverse populations is in sync with my story of good teaching: bring culture to the forefront, make culture the curriculum, let the joys of multiculturalism pervade the atmosphere. Pam’s story is in opposition (although I much prefer the notion of her story brushing up against my story) to my story of teaching as much as it is in opposition to the school story. While these contentious stories coexist on the same landscape, Pam feels that her story is stifled. This may be because it is so much in opposition to the prevailing school story. It may also be because the school story is a strong one and Pam seems to have given up in some ways. I wonder, if we were to examine these contentious stories, couldn't we learn about alternative ways of thinking about important issues facing teachers and students today? (Journal entry, April 10, 1997)

Similar to Bay Street School, in sync with the school, initially I could not hear Pam’s voice through the din of my ideology, the pounding rhythm of the beat I was marching to, and expected her to march with as well. I could not hear her voice because my story of multicultural education and what is good education for immigrant students was frozen, an artifact, inflexible, unable to grow, change, and transform. There was no space for Pam’s story of multicultural teaching in my story of multicultural teaching. (I wonder now, was there space for Pam in my heart?)

I gradually learned to listen to the tones of Pam’s unique music, to hear the beat of a different tune. I gradually came to recognize that respecting diversity could mean respecting marching
to a different rhythm. Later I also came to realize that there is an area of intersection between Pam’s story and Bay Street School’s story (and my story as well). There is an overlap of interest in children; they put the welfare of the child at the centre. Pam has a different way of thinking about what is important for children to be learning in the school than the school does. The school values the children learning in their heritage language classes about their culture and their language. Pam values the children learning life-long skills of self-reliance, responsibility, and decision making. Pam and the school care about the children. Pam and the school are trying to do their best for the children; they have different approaches to it.

In Search of the Holy Grail

As I reflect on the early journal entry I shared at the beginning of this story/paper/chapter I perceive myself as, then, engaged in a “stable inquiry”. I see a person on a quest for something she had decided she wanted to find before the inquiry began, her Holy Grail. My Holy Grail was Ms. Multicultural.

It was not a smooth linear process moving from being a “stable inquirer” to becoming a more “fluid inquirer” (see Schwab, 1978, for a discussion of this phenomenon). To become a more fluid narrative inquirer I had to open up to being truly present to Pam as a person, to hearing, seeing and understanding her. I had to learn to appreciate what this particular inquiry, in this particular time and place, with this particular participant, had to offer. I had to move from abstraction and objectification of
"my participant" as "immigrant teacher", "Black teacher", "minority teacher", "Ms. Multicultural", to a relationship with a person, Pam.

As I learned to be a more fluid, accepting, narrative inquirer I learned to hear seven minutes of silence in a new way. This is shown in an edited extract from a journal entry four months later.

I want to do some thinking about Pam’s teaching. A lot of the research literature on Black women educators indicates it is important to have these women in the system because they are educating children for good jobs for the future (see e.g. Collins, 1990, or Ladson-Billings, 1994). They are not educating them to work in "donut shops" (my term). I wonder what educating to work in a donut shop would look like, and I wonder how it would look different than what Pam does.

I have no sense that Pam is educating her students for donut shops. On one hand, though, she stresses some of the very small rules like lining up properly, being quiet in lines, that are some aspects of what might be donut shop preparation. However, she is not educating them to be unthinking, uncritical. I remember the seven minutes of silence story. In remaining quiet and patient Pam was leaving the initiative for solving the problem up to the students. She was encouraging them to be independent, to find the meaning of the word themselves.

What seems to be really important in Pam’s classroom is that the students are taught that they must recognize what the situation is, then devise a plan for how to begin to talk about the situation. They go from talking about the situation to planning how to deal with the situation. They devise strategies for how to implement decisions they have reached. They practice the various decisions, and see how they play out. They carry them out to the end. I think this is building skills in the students that they can use in the future in good jobs.

(journal entry, April 21, 1997)

New Understandings of Silence

Silence played a part in this story/paper/chapter, and in the nested stories within, as it did throughout the inquiry. In on-
going reflecting on the meaning of silence in the seven minutes in Pam’s class I began to see that silence played an even more vital role than I had realized. It also involved other meanings of my participant’s silence, and other teachers’ silence. It involved silence on my part. While I was not aware of this at first, I intuitively felt that it was important to suspend commentary on Pam’s practice while I puzzled through what I did not understand. Silence allowed for bonds of trust to grow, cultural boundaries to be negotiated, and friendship to develop and flower.

Virtues

I want to tell you that in my relationship with Pam, the roller coaster metaphor is pervasive. When I thought I had something figured out, I would share it with Pam. My thoughts would often take a sharp twist like a hairpin turn on a roller coaster after these talks. I will give you an example of this. I had come to think that Pam demonstrated patience in dealing with students (e.g. see above journal entry). I attributed this virtue to her on many occasions. (My Holy Grail would be virtuous, wouldn’t she?) One day Pam and I discussed what I thought of as the "patience" she had shown in another situation with a student, John. This research text is based on field notes of a conversation that took place one late afternoon.

You think that's patience? No, I don’t have patience. I have to grit my teeth and clench my hands in order to get through situations like what happened with John. It was a struggle. It was really hard for John, but he had to learn that he could do it. He had to learn that it wasn’t an adult who would be telling him what he had to do, but that he knew what he had to do, and that he could do it. He could read those words. I didn’t need to tell him.
Part of the problem was that the last two journal entries that he had to write I read to him because some of the words were difficult. He would have had a problem with them, but not this particular one. He is coming to rely on me when he shouldn’t. He should be relying on himself.

At this time last year the children (in a class Pam had taught for several years) would be doing what they had to do. If they had any questions they would be asking them. If I was asking them questions, they would be firing out answers. They would be asking for clarification. They would be saying, oops, I made a mistake! These children are still not getting it. (field notes, May 28, 1997)

Long periods of time spent in Pam’s classroom, and "running dialogues" allowed her narrative of teaching and learning to unfold naturally, accompanied by twists and turns and departures from the expected. There were also smooth, even stretches laced throughout; over the course of the inquiry I had many opportunities to see students in a variety of these smooth situations, such as the one I describe next.

One morning students in a reading group were faced with not understanding the meaning of “coordinating author”. One boy, who had been in Pam's class the year before, turned the page to read the acknowledgments to see if that held a clue. He figured out that a group of people had written the book, but was still unsure of the exact meaning of "coordinate". Without instructions from Pam, several students in the group went to the rack of dictionaries and brought them back to the table. They looked up the word and shared definitions. This was followed by an animated discussion of their developing understanding. As a group they brainstormed ways to come to terms with what it meant to “coordinate”. Pam joined the conversation, but the group spoke to
each other, not only to her. They could not come to an 
understanding that satisfied them, so they decided to contact the 
coordinating author directly. In a telephone conversation the 
following weekend Pam told me she was thrilled with the students. 
I, too, felt the thrill of students taking responsibility for 
their own learning. The roller coaster ride had it’s exhilarating 
moments! (field notes, September 23, 1997)

I wonder if in the beginning of the inquiry I would have been able 
to see and hear the students as I did in that field note (and many 
more you will read about in chapters eight and nine in 
particular). To be able to see and hear I had to recognize Pam as 
a teacher with something to offer her students. To be able to 
recognize Pam's unique qualities I had to move from 
objectification and categorization to authentic encounters with 
her as a person, not as representative of anything (Greene, 1993). 
She had to become Pam, not Ms. Multicultural.

I make this point so frequently and strongly because it speaks to 
me about learning how to do research, and learning about 
multiculturalism. For me, this is the vital part of becoming a 
narrative inquirer in a multicultural landscape. These learnings 
also relate to the kinds of learnings I experienced in travel and 
teaching; however, my experiences of being in the school, and my 
experiences with Pam were more intense and learning seemed to be 
more concentrated as a I made a disciplined effort to unravel this 
learning. Nussbaum (1997) and Delpit (1995), among many, write of 
the learning that occurs in cross-cultural situations. From 
encounters with other people and other cultures we can learn that
there are multiple ways of viewing the world. Cross-cultural inquiries "...may reveal that what we take to be natural and normal is merely parochial and habitual.... Habitual ways may not be the ways designed by nature for all times and persons." (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 53). That is something to learn about teaching, and something to learn about diversity. As Bateson (1994) states these encounters develop "peripheral vision", our ability to relate to others, and to use these encounters as a basis for understanding other experiences in life.

I was not initially taking my travel and teaching lessons to heart. (I wonder why?) I was unaware that the horizon of my understanding was circumscribed by who I was. During the course of the inquiry I attempted to unravel who I was, and how who I was impacted learning in the inquiry through reflective writing in my journals and memos, and in imaginative pieces such as Koto to Pan. For me, becoming a narrative inquirer has much to do with reflection and writing. Becoming a narrative inquirer also has to do with developing understanding from every aspect of life. It was not only travel and teaching experiences, or research with immigrant teachers, or a relationship with Pam, or reflecting on these experiences, however, that helped me understand in the inquiry.

Art and literature, music and film, what I think of as narrative aesthetics, also contributed to developing understanding of both the method in the inquiry, narrative, and the phenomenon of the inquiry, multiculturalism. In the following section I briefly explore understandings from an aesthetic realm.
Narrative Aesthetics

Through having a relationship with Pam, I gradually became more and more drawn into the inquiry, until the boundaries between my life and my inquiry were blurred. The inquiry was my life, my life was the inquiry. As I became more involved in the inquiry I did not rely solely on cognitive (research/scientific) understandings, but also began to trust emotional (imaginative/aesthetic) understandings. In the inquiry I explored intuitive, creative aspects of understanding from music, art, literature, poetry and films (see Greene, 1995, for an in-depth look at this approach), what I term "narrative aesthetics".

Art and literature, music and film, have always been a large part of my life; they feed and fuel my desire to experience, my desire to know, my desire to understand. Through the experience of art, literature, music, and film, the aesthetics of life, the horizon of my understanding of narrative inquiry and multiculturalism expanded. Aesthetics has contributed insights that I could not experience in any other way. These are understandings that I am unable to fully describe, understandings that reach into my heart and profoundly affect my emotions and contribute to other ways of understanding.

As with the term "narrative multiculturalism", "narrative aesthetics" is under exploration and development. Koto to Pan hinted at the potential significance of music in understanding my beliefs and desires in the inquiry. In the following section I
discuss a contribution art has made to my understanding method in narrative inquiry. I share a short excerpt from a long, detailed memo exploring a relationship between art and my developing, more fluid approach to the inquiry.

_Benevolent Eye_

I have always loved Renoir. The rich, vivid colours of Renoir’s paintings, and the very life-like quality he paints into them are incredible. The sensuousness and voluptuousness of the women and landscapes enthralls me. I marvel at his ability to capture this on canvas.

I recall seeing his famous painting _Dance at Bougival_ in a Tokyo art exhibit. It was the first painting I saw as I walked into the room, taking up an entire wall. The dancers were alive; he in love with her, her, unclear as to whom she loved, yet bathing in the glow of his ardor. How could he capture all that movement, all that passion, all that life?

According to one Renoir critic, when Renoir painted he cast a “benevolent eye” on his subjects. I was struck by this as an aspect of research, how my attitude, my stance towards Pam dictated what I could see of her. Rather than casting a critical eye on her as I did initially, or a judgmental eye as I certainly did in the beginning, I had gradually learned, like Renoir, to cast a benevolent eye on Pam.

Casting a benevolent eye has complex meanings. In one sense it could mean that I am constructing Pam in a way that will be favorable for other people to read, or even favorable for her to read about herself. But for me it means much more than this.

When I began to cast a benevolent eye on Pam was when the inquiry truly opened up. When I cast a benevolent eye on Pam I began to feel my way through the mists and shadows that had shrouded the inquiry. I could see more aspects of her character; I could hear her voice, and begin to understand what she was saying to students. When I cast a benevolent eye on Pam is when my heart and mind opened up. That is when I began to see Pam, see the classroom, and see the school.

(Memo on CBC documentary shown on July 2, 1997)

Reflecting on Renoir’s art encouraged me to develop a more open, flexible, loving perspective. I think that a loving perspective was missing in the beginning of my inquiry (although at the time I did not think so). Initially I had a critical, judgmental
perspective. Through my personal relationship with Pam, that critical edge began to dissolve, and I became a more loving inquirer. When I looked at things with a loving perspective or a benevolent eye, it was as though something opened up and I could understand more. I could see more, hear more. As I turned a benevolent eye on Pam I began to tune more into the possibilities of this inquiry, being in this school, with this teacher.

Engagement with literature, including fables and myths, have also helped me to understand my way of being in Pam’s classroom and multicultural issues. Since I was child I have had a book of Tolstoy’s Fables. (I regret that the cover is so blurred, the inside pages so torn, that I am unable to provide the usual reference.) In the following section I briefly summarize the fable, and hint at the understandings that grew from it.

*The Three Hermits*

An Archbishop is traveling in a boat. The boat pulls up beside a fishing boat. The fisherman in the boat is pointing to the horizon. People on the boat are straining their eyes to see, and the Archbishop, too, finds that he is straining his eyes to see. He asks the fisherman what everyone is looking for. The fisherman tells him that in the distance there is an island where there are three hermits who live who have devoted themselves to God. The Archbishop is interested in the hermits. He asks the captain of the boat to take him to the island. The captain says that it will delay him, and increase his costs. The Archbishop offers to pay extra to be taken to the island.

The boat arrives on the island. The hermits are there. They look quite peculiar. Their faces are almost hidden by long white beards. The archbishop asks them what they do. They say, “We are servants of God.” He asks them how they pray. They say, “Pray? What do you mean?” The archbishop tells them what prayer is. They say, “Dear God, we are your servant.” The archbishop tells them that is not praying. He tells them he is an archbishop; he will teach them how to pray.
The archbishop teaches them the Lord’s Prayer. It is a long, slow, agonizing, process. One has difficulty even mumbling the words. One seems not to be able to remember more than a few words at a time. One goes ahead of the others as the archbishop tries to have them recite in unison. The archbishop works on this all day. Slowly the hermits can recite a few words, then some phrases, then full sentences. By the end of the day each hermit can recite the entire Lord’s Prayer. The archbishop has to leave the island. The hermits thank him profusely. They are pleased that they have learned how to pray. The archbishop feels very good that he has taught them how to pray; after all that is his vocation.

The archbishop boards the boat. The boat leaves. The boat pulls out further and further. The Archbishop looks back towards the island. Something shining is coming towards the boat. It is silvery and moving very quickly. It is moving too quickly to be a boat. Gradually the shape becomes clearer. The archbishop sees the three hermits running on top of the water towards the boat. They run up beside the boat, and they say, “Please Archbishop, we have forgotten the words to the Lord’s Prayer”. The archbishop tells the three hermits, “Go back to your island. You are truly servants of God.”

(Theoretical memo, September 10, 1997)

Rediscovering this Tolstoy fable had a profound effect upon my thinking about research and multiculturalism. For me, this fable provides a moral, evocative lesson in multiculturalism. When I re-read this fable as an adult I thought about the prescriptive nature of some of the multicultural education literature, and some anti-racist education practices (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1992). Like the archbishop, people come in and give workshops to teachers telling them how to do anti-racist education. They may leave at the end of the day feeling that they have “instructed” these teachers in how to “behave” in the classroom. And yet how many of these teachers are actually like the three hermits, already doing something in their own quiet way that is far more profound, far more culturally relevant, (far more

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filled with love and genuine care) than anything that the workshop givers even imagine?

Narrative Imagination

Martha Nussbaum (1997, p. 85-112) refers to the cultivation of a “narrative imagination”, that is developing the ability to participate imaginatively in the lives of others through literature/art/music/film. Literature has a strong role to play because it has the ability to represent “the specific circumstances and problems of people of many different sorts” (p. 86). In The Bluest Eye Toni Morrison (1970) has the ability to make me feel what it might be like to be Pecola Breedlove--young, Black, invisible, wanting to be someone other than who she is. In School Days Patrick Chamoiseau (1994) brings me into the life of a little Black boy, his wonder at the mystery of writing and what it can communicate, and his loss of his Creole identity in the French language. There is no other way I could have these experiences except in my imagination. For Maxine Greene (1995) active engagements with literature and other art forms can open the door to understanding others by making us feel bound to each other, connected, not distant.

Engagement with art/literature/film has parallel qualities to experiences of participant observation. In engagement with art/literature/film, and in engagement in the classroom, I have a strong sense of being present, a forgetting--albeit momentary and fleeting--of myself to immerse myself in another world, a letting go of myself as located in a specific time and place, and entering
into interaction, becoming involved and connected, with characters in other times and places. In engagement with art/literature/film, in participant observation in Pam's classroom, I have a sense of heightened awareness of the nuances of experiences, and the ambiguity of situations.

Inquiry Terms: Interaction Revisited

In this story/paper/chapter I focused on the third term of narrative inquiry, “interaction”, the personal and the social dimensions of the inquiry. I narrated selected stories from Pam’s classroom, stories that highlighted my development as a narrative inquirer, and, hopefully, opened windows onto Pam's practice. I discussed my moral dispositions, feelings, hopes, and aesthetic reactions, and Pam's, too, from my perspective. I began to discuss Pam, the environment of her teaching, and my relationship with her. It is my hope that in focusing on these particular stories you have also learned something about Bay Street School, multicultural literature, and multicultural education, the social and political context of the inquiry. I discussed how developing aesthetic and experiential ways of understanding encouraged me to have a more open, participatory perspective. I discussed how I began to move from a stable story of inquiry to a more flexible, fluid one that allowed for diversity of opinion, acceptance of the unique qualities Pam had, and a recognition that we did not all have to march to the same rhythm.

With long periods of time spent in the class, in the school, and in the community, with conversations both casual and professional
with Pam, other teachers, administrators, support staff and parents, with reflection and looking at aesthetic ways of understanding, I began to cast a less judgmental, more compassionate, benevolent eye on the inquiry. With this approach I began to appreciate how privileged I was to be part of the landscape, part of the class, part of the life of my participant and the children. I began to feel I belonged.

The sense of belonging I experienced created a sense of attachment to the place and to the people. Pam was no longer a subject in a research project, nor an object such as "my participant", "immigrant", "minority teacher", "Black", "Ms. Multicultural". Place and people became part of my life and developed their own identity, no longer caught up in an abstract social narrative. I was no longer a researcher on a quest (at least not totally), but a researcher trying (and definitely not always succeeding) to be a fluid inquirer with an educational and inquiry narrative that was evolving as I encountered new ideas, new situations, and new outlooks on life.

As I read my field texts, as I relive my memories, as I write, I realize that there are multiple ways I could construct a narrative account of learning in the inquiry. This story/paper/chapter is my construction of becoming a narrative inquirer in the multicultural landscape of Bay Street School at this particular time. This story is told purposefully, with particular intentions. Are you asking yourself (perhaps with a feeling of frustration), what did all this mean to Pam?
I believe that tension in an inquiry can be productive. A look at the origins of the word reveals layers of meaning that are helpful in understanding how it worked in this inquiry. Many meanings are derived from the root word "tennis": "to pretend, to stretch forth, to hold before - as a defense - as a claim"; "intentional, with the mind directed towards it, therefore purposeful"; and "stretched, as on tenterhooks" (Dictionary of Word Origins, 1955, p. 353). You will see various meanings played out in the paper.

I particularly want to thank Rosebud Elijah, of Hofstra University, for suggesting readings during the course of this research. I felt as though she recommended the right book at the right time. This is an important aspect of becoming a narrative inquirer. The inquiry is not separate from other life experiences and other relationships.

I worked in Japan for six years, and currently work with women from Asia in different projects and in community work. This reflective piece raises many issues not discussed in the paper. The koto women I know may appear to be pliant as the woman in the piece, but this may be a cultivated manner, not indicative of the strength that is there as well.

The word quest means to go on a search, to hunt for a specific object. It also connotes a mission, as in search of the Holy Grail (Winston Dictionary, College Edition, p. 792). These meanings capture the complexity of the point I want to make. I was looking for something I had objectified, not a real person. I was in search of my Holy Grail. The Dictionary of Word Origins (1955, p. 149) has related meanings, however, it also includes "to inquire", which captures more the sense of what I attempted to do later in my research.

Appiah (1994) discusses an interesting point that is integral to understanding the implications of my giving Pam a "script" to follow. For Appiah, scripts are "narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories" (p. 160). These scripts provide a kind of narrative unity, and enable people to tell a life story that makes sense. This notion of script relates to a larger collective identity to which one may subscribe (such as being Black), rather than to the more individual aspects of identity (such as being witty). In a sense I was giving Pam the script of the Black woman educator so much discussed in the literature (see Collins, 1990; Henry, 1996). Pam was not choosing this script, I was fitting it over her, her experiences, and her practice. In a sense, too, related to this notion, the literature is also a script.

Place was no longer an abstract part of a social narrative, an object such as "inner-city school", "level one school (in terms of funding allotment, indicating high need), "low socio-economic school", or "school for problem students". Place was Bay Street School, a living vibrant place.
Chapter VII

Sharing the Story/Paper/Chapter with Pam

In this chapter I share with you my experience of sharing with Mick and Ming Fang He, a researcher on the project, and a long time friend and colleague, the experience of sharing the previous story/paper/chapter with Pam. (There are several levels of sharing going on here!) Think back to reading the previous chapter. If you were the teacher in the story, how would you feel about being written about in this way?

The following research text has been crafted from a journal entry of April 2, 1998, the same day I shared the story/paper/chapter with Pam. I was preparing to present this writing as a paper at AERA (Phillion, 1998). On Mick's advice, I decided to share it with Pam by reading it aloud. Upon my return from the school, I sat in my office with Mick and Ming Fang and taped my reflections on the experience of reading the paper to Pam.

I modified the transcription of our conversation to focus on specific points, and edited conversation markers to allow for a smoother reading. I have italicized what are more or less remembered quotes from Pam. As this was a conversation with Pam, and later with Mick and Ming Fang, it appeared to meander. On reflection I saw that it spiraled like a moibus strip. I felt it was important to retain the immediacy of the experience of sharing with Pam so I attempted to retain much of the oral quality of a conversation. To do this I broke it in to stanzas (see Gee, 1985,
for an article that deals with this mode of representation). If it is read aloud, the feel of a conversations becomes more apparent.

For the reader, I first provide a snapshot of the physical space of the classroom. I provide this so you can picture the scene in your mind. Mick and Ming Fang have been to the school, seen the classroom, met my participant, and shared much of my work, so they did not hear this part.

A Snapshot of the Physical Space of the Conversation

I went to the office as usual to check in. I said I would be there for the day, or did I say a half day? I do not know if I heard or saw children in the hallways. Did I go to the classroom by the stairs near the office, or the ones near the library? Did I see anyone and say hello? I can not remember what kind of day it was. I am not sure if the sun was coming in the windows. It can be very bright in the morning, but Pam seldom pulls the curtains. The windows are usually open. If I look out long enough I can usually see squirrels, and once Pam and I saw a raccoon. I can usually hear streetcars, and sometimes the sounds of construction. I think that classical music was playing on the radio from behind the partially closed doors of the closet, but I may have imagined that. None of this is in the journal entry of that day. I was so focused on the reading and Pam’s response that everything except that is a blur. I know that I felt physically sick to my stomach.

Pam was there, as usual, in her desk at the back of the classroom. The classroom seemed so quiet. The desk was piled with papers, the
table beside it had students’ notebooks on it. (Or was this a memory from other times?) I sat at my usual place, or what has been my usual place since Pam rearranged the room. I was across from her, a little to her left. When I told Pam I wanted to read aloud to her, she gestured for me to come and sit beside her. She pulled the chair, a beat-up, weathered one on rollers, close to her. I’ve sat in that place, in that chair, many times. I have sat with children while they worked at the table. I have sat with reading groups, with ESL groups, with math groups. I have sat and observed the whole class, or taught one child English vocabulary. I have sat before school, and after school, and talked with children from other classes, with parents, with other teachers, with janitors. I have sat there and talked to Pam for a year and a half. But, this is the first time I have sat there to read to Pam what I have written about her, about us, about her teaching, about her knowledge, about our conversations, about my thinking, feelings and knowledge.
The conversation that I had with Pam, and am recreating here for you two, was from different time periods during the morning so I will probably skip all over the place.

As I started to go to school this morning, as I was thinking about showing the paper to Pam, imagining her reactions to it, I was so worried, so nervous.

When I got there, I couldn’t read it right away. Pam had to go to the office to make plans for meeting the mother of the boy on Ritalin, and the psychologist. She came back to the classroom and I started to read it to her.

There were no children in the room. They were at recess. It was so much quieter than usual. Later on, when the children came in, she said *Shh!* to me, and motioned to me to stop reading. I had only read the first seven pages. That took the twenty minutes at recess. I was concerned that there would not be enough time to read the whole thing to her. There is never enough time to talk at school!

We sat pretty much where we always sit. I moved my chair, one on rollers, even closer to hers than it usually is. I know I was in the classroom, but it felt so different, like I was detached from the space. I was so nervous.

I think Pam was nervous, too. She did something she never does. She played with everything on her desk. While I was reading she played with a few pencils, picked things up and put them down, moved things around, shifted notebooks. I could see by her body and by her face that she treated it very seriously.
At the end of the first seven pages
I said to Pam
I feel so nervous about how you are taking it.
I think it is absolutely beautiful.
You write beautifully.
I didn’t have any idea
that you would be writing like this.

She didn’t say I wrote beautifully
when I finished the whole paper,
only after the first seven pages.

What she said that really got to me was
you are so accurate.
It is amazing how accurate that is.
After seven pages she said
I just love this.
I can’t wait to come back and hear more about myself.

She liked the “seven minutes of silence” story.
You really got it with that story.
I have the name Jaumaal in it.
She tried to figure out who that was.
There is no Jaumaal in class.
I said to her it was J______.
Then there is one child
who whispers the word hearth,
remember at the end of the story only one child got it.
I said it is not in my fieldnotes who the child was.
I didn’t know all of the children’s names
because it was only my third time in the classroom.
I had learned J______’s name because he is one of the
children whose name you learn
the first minute you are in the class.
She couldn’t remember which child whispered the word either.

It’s an accurate portrayal.
I don’t care what people think.
I know what you are worried about.
You are worried that people are going to read this
and they are going to judge me in a certain way.
Maybe like I was doing
more in the beginning.

But I don’t care.
I know that what I am doing is right
because I have seen it over the years.
I have seen results.
I have seen what happens to these children.
I know that I am right.
I was telling the area superintendent
who used to teach my son years ago
that I am thinking about early retirement.
Just when I have it together,
when I feel like I know what I am doing in the classroom,
it is time for me to get out.
But, by the way she played with the stuff on her desk, by the look on her face, I think she was upset. I don’t know if upset is the right word, maybe, I don’t know. She didn’t say it in language. She didn’t say I am disturbed, I am upset. She just wanted clarification on this point and that point.

I learned a lot from this. I think we should have had more time, but we would never have more time. I am going to call her, we are going to talk on the phone, but it is not the same thing as being there.

Then Pam had to leave to meet the parent and the psychologist for a conference about the child who is on Ritalin, and three other medications as well. A supply teacher came in, you know the one I have told you about before, the one that they joke about having newspapers in his briefcase, and reading them in class.

He didn’t read newspapers, but he didn’t do much else. He sat there while the class went wild. I sat there, my face enfolded in my hands. I felt detached from the goings on in the classroom. He only moved when one boy took a yardstick and brandished it like a sword, and poked another boy in the eye. The boy cried. I don’t remember who it was, he is from G______’s class. Up to that point I had thought I should stay out of it. I kept thinking I don’t have Ontario teaching certification. He got up and separated the boys.

I felt like I was in limbo, waiting for Pam so I could read more. I was excited, but so nervous, almost nauseous. No one told me I would feel that way. It was so much more dramatic than I thought.

When Pam came back from meeting the parent, and psychologist, and all of the people who had tested the child, it was almost 12:00. The teacher from next door, D______, came to talk to us. I was so distracted I could hardly talk to him. I just wanted to read the paper to Pam.
Pam was getting a little bit antsy, too, because she knew that I had to read the paper before she had to go to another meeting at 1:00. We walked out the door to warm up her lunch. D_______ said that we hustled him out of the classroom. JoAnn has something that she has to do today. Pam was speaking quite seriously. Pam doesn't usually speak seriously to D_______.

I read the next fourteen pages at lunch time. It was strange, no children came in, no parents came to talk. No more teachers came, not even G_______. Or at least I never noticed anybody. Oh, Pam must have closed the door. She never closes the door. She says she does not like to feel shut inside the classroom.

What was different about reading it than I had thought it was going to be, was that it was so much about me, too. I knew it was about me becoming a narrative inquirer. But it was so much like I was laying bare my soul and at the same time I was constructing Pam.

As I read it aloud I began to feel that it was more about me than it was about her. I had not felt that so strongly when I wrote it. I kept wondering what she would think about how I had written about her class when I was writing it. When I read it to her, I kept wondering what she would think about me.

I asked her if there was anything she was uncomfortable with and wanted to change. I said it was a draft. We can make changes in it. She did want to change something I said about the principal's philosophy. I don't know if my views are different than his because I am not sure what his multicultural philosophy is. She said that when she had said principal she didn't mean the present principal. She meant the board embodied in various principals that she has had.
Then Pam told me a little story about why she thinks I was put in the classroom. The Board had requested that teachers not attend the play “Showboat” as they felt it did not reflect well on Blacks. She went and talked to Steve. They can’t dictate to people what they do in their social lives. She thinks that shortly after that he put me in the classroom so that she would be able to talk to me about these things instead of coming and bothering him. This was the first time we have had a major discussion about race, her being Black, and what it means to be a Black teacher.

This discussion opened up because of what I wrote. I wonder if I would have shared a narrative account with her shortly after being in the school, or if I would have talked more to her about being Black, if it would have guided her conversations from then on, changed it, shaped it, by what I was writing. This way she hasn’t talked very much about race or being Black. I am raising these issues, in some ways, more formally, for the first time.

In some ways sharing earlier would have made my research more focused on what I thought I was initially interested in, but less broad, and less interesting ultimately. We had more general kinds of conversations. I couldn’t help but think if you share early with your participant you are really going to shape it. I think it would have shaped our dialogue. I think it would have shaped our relationship. I think she would have watched herself a little bit more because part of what she was doing in the explaining things to me was explaining herself. Maybe she is even saying to herself now, I wish I would have monitored myself a little bit more. She didn’t say that.

She also felt that there was some misrepresenting in the paper where I wrote about her silence in large groups and my understanding of the small groups of people that she will share things with in the school.
She explained her views on her silence. As I wrote about her in that part, I say, in some ways it seems as though she has given up, because to me it does seem in some ways she has given up. Pam explained a little bit more about why she has done that.

*It is because conversations about issues around race and culture can’t be carried out in large groups. It is too emotional. People are labeled too quickly as being racist. She has preferred to carry out these kinds of conversations in smaller groups. It is not that she is silenced, which may have been the way I was making her out to be.*

She said something in a staff meeting about “Showboat” after Steve said something about the board policy. She stood up and said, *Why can’t we see “Showboat”?* Nobody else said a word. Later some teachers came to her and they said they agreed with her. They said they did not speak up because they were too afraid of being labeled racist. *I have less to worry about because I am Black.* She can talk about these things.

I have found that small groups of people, all over the school, whisper together about things that they don’t believe in, things that they feel are counter to the school, or union, or board. I have been part of these conversations in corridors, under the stairs, in the back of classrooms.

*Because I am Black sometimes people will come to me and share their views about multicultural or anti-racist policies that they will never express in a large group because they will be labeled racist.*

Pam won’t be labeling them racist because she is looking at them one to one, as people. She said *it is very different being Black.*
Because she is Black
she can say more things overtly.
If I was in the school, as a White person
I couldn’t say some of those things
without being labeled a certain way.

She feels there is a certain freedom to being Black
and being able to say things about how
they are treating the Black children.

This reminds me of a conversation
we had about earlier about anti-racist education.

I do not consider myself
to be first and foremost Black or woman.
Anti-racist educators look at me
as though I have to be “fixed”.
They say I have been colonized
and don’t know it.
They want to help liberate me.
I don’t want to be liberated.
I am not Black first and foremost.
I am not woman first and foremost.
I am first and foremost human.

Pam dislikes the notion
that she has to be “fixed”,
that there is “something wrong with her”
because she doesn’t put being Black woman in the forefront,
but puts being human in the forefront.
She said it used to annoy her
but now she just ignores things like that
and doesn’t bother with them.

I don’t know what she thought about the Koto to Pan piece.
She didn’t comment on it afterwards.
Maybe it didn’t work for her.
I don’t know.
When we got to the quest for Ms. Multicultural
we were talking about my multicultural views.
I was really more or less spelling them out there.
What I think of now as the hard part
wasn’t anything that I had anticipated.
I thought it was going to be hard
for her to hear about what she said,
and what I said about her.

But the reading of my journals,
I found that hard.
I realized that journals are private things.
It is difficult to read them to somebody else.
I was so worried,
I was so self-conscious.
This was a very self-conscious thing.
Reading this paper was more about me than I thought it was going to be. I felt like I had more of myself on the line than I thought there was going to be. I am glad I never did this earlier.

As I read the end of the paper to Pam I could hear the sounds of children in the hallways. The tempo of voices went up and down, faded in and out. But I was so caught up in the reading that they were background noises, like the radio so often is in the classroom. Everything in the room was like a stage set, unreal, there as props to my reading.

I don’t know why it feels like it was one of the scarier things I have ever done. When I started to read it I felt that other research, where you don’t show the writing to the participant, that sounds good. I like that idea. I don’t know why I felt that way. I felt so on the line. I know it is labeling myself, but I reek of being a White liberal, waving a flag let’s have more minority teachers in the school.

I told Pam that I could have explained everything as I read through the paper but that wouldn’t be fair. Because to have me explain things as I go through doesn’t give the full impact of what it is like to read the paper. So I tried not to explain too much.

I looked at her at that point and I said my views on the classroom have been modified. She said, oh she more than said, because it was the look on her face, I am really glad to hear that.

But it was so much more dramatic than I thought. I mean now it doesn’t seem so dramatic when I am putting it in words. But, it is unbelievable sharing with a participant. I realize I would need several hours of undivided time to thoroughly go through this, to read it, then go back through it section by section.
What do you think of this?
How do you feel about that?
Tell me more about this.
I don’t know if there would ever be a time
when I could get two or three hours of
Pam’s undivided time.
There is always something going on.
I have come to accept it and be comfortable with it.
Still a one read right through would have been nice.

When I left we walked down the hall to her meeting.
I had the same detached feeling.
I felt like I was not walking on the floor.
I did not see the art on the walls.
I don’t think I even saw anyone,
but there must have been someone there.

I felt euphoric.
I had gotten through this.
I did it.
I read the paper.
It did not end our relationship.
At the same time I felt sick.
Would Pam have second thoughts?

Pam put her arms around me.
She kissed me on both cheeks.
I said I was so nervous about it.
I can’t even talk to you two about it now
without getting tears in my eyes.
I really love you I said.
I respect you,
I respect your teaching
and I have learned so much from you.

I have a sense of privilege,
it is awesome
that Pam would let me into her classroom,
let me into her life,
talk to me the way she has talked to me
about children,
and parents,
and her thinking.

It is amazing.
It is very emotional
doing inquiry closely with somebody.
It is even more emotional sharing writing.

(journal entry, April 2, 1998)
I have since modified the chapter to reflect changes Pam wanted made.
Dear Ming Fang and Rosebud, I Want to Tell You Something Meaningful About Multicultural Education

As I thought of what I want to tell you about Pam and her grade four-five class my mind was deluged with memories of sights, sounds, and smells of my almost two years in Bay Street School. My experiences appear like pieces of a giant kaleidoscope; as I turn them around and around I can look at different facets of memories that I cherish, and put together different combinations of stories. There are so many stories I could tell you about the school, or about the teachers and students. I could tell you some funny stories, especially about Pam’s husband, who was a vice principal there, some sad stories, particularly about one little boy, George¹, or some puzzling stories.

I want to tell you about the school, and about Pam as a person and as a teacher, and about her class. I also want to tell you something meaningful about what I have learned about multicultural education from my time in the school and from my relationship with Pam and her students (chapter six tells what I learned about narrative inquiry from Pam). After all, you both teach multicultural education courses in your pre-service and graduate
classes. I want to tell you about how I learned to see Pam’s practice as one that is, in a sense, very narrative; how she seems to understand children as individuals, yet as connected to parents, siblings, friends, as connected to their communities, as connected to their pasts and, as she imagines their futures, futures that are not limited, but filled with possibilities. I want to tell you about how Pam works with the students individually and in groups, about the goals she has in mind as she works with them, and about why she has these particular goals. I want to tell you about how I have come to see Pam’s teacher knowledge as bound up in children.

Making Sense: From Field Text to Research Text

Remember how I told you that I had such a hard time beginning my writing? Harry Wolcott (1994) released me from that prison when I felt he gave me permission to begin my writing with a descriptive piece, the community landscape. At the same time, after writing this inquiry I realize that Wolcott is right, even highly descriptive pieces are reflective of analysis and interpretation. I hope that you can see that in my writing.

My letter to you is based on my time in the field, mainly from November 1996 to June 1997, although the inquiry continues at the time of writing this letter. I have crafted it from my field notes, memos, and journals. As I reread these field texts, twist the kaleidoscope around to find pieces to pull together to make sense of what I experienced and what I understood, I imagine you both sitting with me. Re-reading field texts, re-living
experiences, or, to be more precise, memories of experiences, and imagining you both reading it inspired me to write this letter. I needed real-life people, friends, as an audience; someone with whom I can share stories, understandings, puzzles. I also have a sense of other readers hovering near me. I will share this with Pam. She is visiting relatives in Trinidad as I write, but when she returns we will meet and discuss the letter. I still feel her presence. I see her face, and imagine her reactions; raised eyebrows, crinkled smiles, frowns. I am surprised by how memories are infused with sound. I hear Pam's voice, the rhythm, pattern, intonation; staccato refrains of comments to the students--"in your dreams"--the low, intimate hum as she works closely with students, blurred classical music in the background.

It was difficult to make sense of the pages and pages of field texts I have, to move from the experiential field material to a research text that reflects analysis and interpretation. As I think about how I did this it was more of an analysis of narratives, than a narrative analysis, remember Polkinghorne's (1995) distinction? It could be a lifetime of work to go through my field texts, each time with a slightly different twist of the kaleidoscope, each time with a slightly different purpose.

I know that returning to my field texts brings me back to life in the classroom; I want you both to feel the life of the school and the life of the class. I find that in trying to communicate life experiences, in trying to give a sense of the quality of those experiences, I tell stories, narratives of multicultural teaching
and learning. You will find a lot of stories in this letter, some nested like Russian dolls, one inside the other.

I have a feeling that I want to tell you everything, but I know I can not do that. In the first part of this letter (chapter eight) I will tell you a little about the community and Bay Street School. Next, I will tell you about some of the every-day activities in Pam’s class. For the second part of the letter (chapter nine) I share several more stories that further illustrate what I mean by Pam’s teacher knowledge as being bound up in children. They are The Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story, The Teapot, The Bankbook, and Swinging on a Star.

In a final section (chapter ten) I will discuss Pam’s teaching in light of the multicultural literature, and other perspectives. (In brackets like this one I have added asides to the main text of my letter. They are used to corroborate, contradict, or confound what came before, a representational mode reflective of my experiences in the school and class.) Ms. Multicultural also appears occasionally in the letter, she provides an explanation of some ideas, and a chorus of support for other ideas². Her responses are preceded by the acronym MM. (Asides and MM appear in the first part of the letter, that is chapter eight. I invite you to add asides of your own and comments from MM to chapter nine if you wish. Please do so, have some fun with the text.) I hope this is not too confusing. I have had to restrain myself to avoid over-using these devices. It seems as though most statements could be given a different twist, looked at from a different angle,
examined in a new light. Bear with me; I think both devices add a necessary element.

Threaded throughout all parts of the letter (chapters eight, nine, and ten) I bring up some of the puzzles I have had about Pam’s practice. You both must remember how I was so perplexed when I was first in the classroom (see chapters six and seven for more on this). I told you it was like being on a roller coaster, only I did not know if I was ever going to get off. I think some of that feeling had to do with what I wanted of Pam. (Was I looking for my Koto Woman?) So much of what I wanted was based on notions I had absorbed from the literature, from the immigrant teachers I had worked with before, from my desire that Pam be an icon of multiculturalism, a Ms. Multicultural (like me). I am so strongly in favour of more immigrant and minority teachers in the system, that I wanted to find proof that “they” were doing good things in the classroom. Only I had decided what the good things were. It took a long time to open up, be receptive to difference. I thought I was open to difference, but the difference had to be of a certain kind. I thought I was receptive, but the way I was going to be receptive was already defined. Sometimes I wonder how our relationship survived. I know it was Pam, the way she was with me, that helped me work through the barriers I had erected without knowing they were there. Relationships have a way of doing that.

Other people listened to me through all this. Mick must have grown tired of me, but he never complained (really), in fact, he encouraged me to tell him more and more; all that talking helped to make sense of things. Ming Fang, as you were doing your
dissertation on multicultural identity, you shared your developing understandings with me; they helped me see I was trying to slot Pam into a specific spot. Rosebud, you also helped me work through the distress I felt by listening to me (is E mail listening?), sharing your teaching struggles with me, and by suggesting books to read, in particular Gloria Ladson-Billings’ The Dreamkeepers (1994), and Lisa Delpit’s Other People’s Children (1995). Oh, those books came at the right time! Both helped me understand that I might see something different when I looked at Pam’s class than what I thought I saw when I reflected on my practice.

In this letter I want to share understandings I have developed of Pam’s practice, through long-term observations, intimate discussions, beneficial readings, and concentrated reflections. (It is not that all the puzzles are solved; far from it. It is just that now I am more comfortable with being puzzled, that I see a puzzle as a starting point of inquiry.) Come and join me in my travels to the school and to the classroom, immerse yourselves in the school and the classroom. I want you to experience, however vicariously, the every-day rhythm of Pam’s class, and also some extraordinary times. I want you to get to know Pam, and to see what you make of what I tell you, see what can be learned from intense time spent with one teacher, in one school.

A Snapshot of Bay Street School

Rosebud, I wish I could walk with you through the community which surrounds Bay Street School. (Ming Fang you have been there many times; now see it through my eyes.) I could show you some
photographs I have taken the next time we see each other. I am not sure if you went there when you lived in Toronto. I think you would be surprised; it is so diverse. Most cultures in Toronto are represented there, but, then again, you must be used to that in New York, too. We could walk to the school from the subway stop and wander in the market area near the school, or visit the small art galleries, or have a latte outside. MM Diversity, diversity, oh, the wonders of diversity!

Bay Street School might surprise you, too; it is often described as "inner-city", but that does not convey the complexity of the community, nor the way that complexity echoes inside the school. If we took the streetcar from the subway station rather than walking, when we got off, if you looked to the left you would see a park with huge, perfectly spaced trees, a community centre, and a pool beside the school. I wonder if that would fit your images of "inner city school"? Then again, if you looked straight ahead you would see the front of the dilapidated building with graffiti all over it. I am not sure what it is, a hotel, a boarding house, a place for prostitutes, all of those? I guess part of it does fit with the image of "inner-city school".

Pam has told me that Bay Street School is different than the one she worked in before, also described as an "inner-city" and "low socio-economic" school. (Pam has told me about teaching at that school. There were no greenery, or low rise buildings, or single-family houses like Bay Street School; only anonymous high rise buildings. Pam felt there was a violent atmosphere around the school that permeated the classroom, and that to her, Bay Street
School does not feel that way.) Pam feels Bay Street School is not that poor, and that there is an over emphasis on nutrition programs. When I see some of the students with Nike jackets, or hear about their trips to visit relatives in Germany or Vietnam, or look at their photographs of winter holidays in Florida, I wonder about that, too. Pam tells me that as a single parent of two young boys in Toronto she had to make it on her own. She struggled and had a hard time at first, but she made it. Pam feels that nutrition programs, and other ones in the school, particularly those that offer care from early morning until late evening, say to the parents either, “you can not look after your children, so we will”, or “you do not need to look after your children, because we will”. Either way she feels it is disempowering to parents. She would not use that term. I will have to ask her what she would say. MM Full-service schools are so important in communities, particularly those that have a high incidence of poverty.

This still puzzles me though. I know some of the children in the class were hungry. One little boy always took extra pieces of fruit or cheese from the “continental breakfast” and accepted any food I offered him. (He was the tiniest in the class, he looked like he belonged in grade one.) Was he hungry? One day when I asked Pam if she thought he was hungry, her face clouded over and changed. MM Hungry children, even one hungry child, make nutrition programs worthwhile. Nike jackets/trips abroad/hungry children, these are part of the complexity of working in a multicultural milieu. I have found that Bay Street School is no more homogeneous economically than it is ethnically, culturally, linguistically, or
academically. That is part of the complexity that Pam has to handle in her practice. That is part of the complexity of multicultural education; in the past I had looked at it is as more about cultural and linguistic diversity, keeping economic diversity more in the background.

The school is large, but the enrollment is under 700. (There was a concern in the school about "keeping up the numbers". When a student left Pam's class, the principal worried that the numbers were dropping, which would affect staffing for the next year.) The staff is diverse in all ways. MM Children need to see themselves reflected in the adults in the school. I wish you could meet “everyone” in the school. When I arrive I always go directly to the office to tell one of the secretaries that I am there for the day. Between this office staff, the International Languages Program teachers and other teachers, and the community workers, they speak many of the languages of the parents in the school. MM A multi-lingual, multi-ethnic teaching force is a necessity in urban areas today. (According to a Board survey of student profiles about seventy percent of the students in Bay Street School speak languages other than English at home.)

They have a sign-in book for visitors at the office, but they said since I was there so often I did not need to use the book, but should always tell them when I come to the school. (They like to know who is in the school. There seem to be many different visitors--local to international, board to government, business to media.) The office is filled with activity. Steve, the principal, has an entrance to his office opening onto this room. The
teachers’ mailboxes are here, too. Students have a table there with playground equipment that they sign out during recess and lunch. They often sold pizza for fundraising here. (I once won free tickets to a Blue Jays baseball game when I bought some pizza; I went with Pam, the principal, and the vice principals.)

I usually run into a student, or teacher, or parent that I know when I am in the office. I have seen police officers there, too. One day a policeman was casually talking to the secretaries, asking for one of the vice principals by name, and when told he was upstairs in his office, he said he could make his own way there. (I was so shocked that he knew the way, how often did he make that trip?) At my first Christmas concert in the school the police had to come to break up a fight between two parents. [The doors to the school had to be locked. I wondered what would happen if there was a fire.] Pam tells me a police presence is part of the children’s lives; they think nothing of it. (I was told by another teacher that drugs are also a part of the children’s lives; they find used needles on the playground. When Pam did a drug awareness class, only one child seemed to know anything about drugs. One day on a walk through the first floor, opposite a room filled with tiny children, there was a display of posters in shaky, childish lettering—"Needles, No!" "Don't touch needles!". They were illustrated with syringes.)

A left turn at the office leads to the auditorium. I have been to concerts, musicals, plays, recitals, and assemblies there. They have assemblies every Monday morning (Pam loved to have swimming lessons then so she could miss them), and also special ones to
honour the “Student of the Month”. They give a certificate and a book to the winning students from each class and each international language class. MM Learning the languages of home are important for children’s cognitive and social development. When George won he told me it was the first time he had ever won an award in his life. He said now he was sure he was not adopted; he had thought he was because he was the only one in his family to never win an award. (Pam was pleased when George received the award; she held my hand and squeezed it when we talked about it at recess.)

The winners have their pictures taken with one of the Vice Principals. These pictures are posted on the walls outside the office. MM Children from all cultures are represented; this is so important for self-esteem. They have display cases in the halls, too. Some of them have pictures and other artifacts from long ago, one has a bust of the first principal, Robert Maclean. There are also old photographs and artifacts from early years stored in the library. Mick and I went through boxes and boxes of materials one day. (The early pictures puzzled me. There is one I remember vividly, a picture of a sports team. I could not identify what sport it was. The people in the photograph looked like men, not boys; they were all White. Were they students? Were these the “scholars” Robert Maclean taught? Where were the “other” children. So many of my puzzles, from small to large, have not been solved.)

A right turn at the office leads to the Parenting Centre. Rosebud, now that you have a baby and teach Early Childhood Education, I would especially like you to see this part of the school. It is
filled with grandparents, parents, and toddlers. Some parents work there as volunteers. MM Parental involvement, parental involvement!. Sometimes the enticing smell of home baked cookies would rise up from the Centre all the way to Pam’s classroom on the opposite end of the second floor corridor.

There are a lot of fun activities at the Centre for young children, many involving the whole family. These programs, and others in the school, are aimed at promoting family literacy. (They do not have a multicultural literacy program like Grace Feuerverger’s (1994) in the school.) They have a Family Math Program in the school, too. I’d like you to meet Jeanette, the community liaison person, that works out of the Centre. She has been in the school for years, first as a parent and teacher’s aid, then in the community liaison role. Pam has said she wonders why there is a position like that. This puzzles me, as links to community seem to be integral to the school philosophy and school programs. (Ms. Multicultural would believe in these links, wouldn’t she?) MM Community links, community links!

Leaving the Parenting Centre and walking through the corridor one of the first things you would see would be some tables piled with old clothing. There are notices above the tables in different languages that tell people to help themselves to what they need. MM Using parents’ languages makes them feel part of the school community. (When we were at Sears for a Christmas concert I had seen bags of clothing and was told that they had been collecting them for Bay Street School.) Pam tells me that the students in her
class will not wear those clothes; they are very fashion conscious at that age.

Further down the hall, opposite a staircase to the second floor, is the library. They have divisional and staff meetings and community meetings there, as well as computer classes and library periods. There is a room attached to the library where teachers show videos on an enormous television. I spent a great deal of time in the library as Pam was friends with the librarian, Cynthia. (Also because there was a phone and a washroom I could use.) I love the library; there are always displays of student work; science fair projects, creative writing, drawings. But mainly I love the library because Cynthia always had time to talk, and we became friends. (Like Pam, Cynthia has retired; so many people went for early retirement when it was offered.) I had a routine of stopping in the office, then the Parenting Centre, then the library, before going to Pam’s class.

"Down There": The First Floor/Second Floor Split

Ming Fang and Rosebud, as you read this section you need to keep in mind that I lived on the second floor. I experienced the second floor culture, and the stories I heard were stories told on the second floor, about the second floor, about the first floor, and about the differences. My account would no doubt be different had I lived, as well, on the first floor and heard stories there of the two floors and their relationship. It is a little like any situation where parties have stories of one another and we only hear one set of stories.
As I said, Pam’s class is on the second floor. When I say second floor, it has much more meaning than location. It is as though the school is split through the middle, like a layer cake. (There are other layers; another is on top, I never go there. The bottom layer is the basement, with the day-care centre and student cafeteria. I eat lunch in the cafeteria sometimes. The cook calls me “Teach” and gives me big portions. He is a former student. Pam tells me there are rats there.) Many of the students have free or subsidized meals in the cafeteria. These important programs are supported by business donations and government funding.

The second floor is the work place of the school. Pam and other teachers on the second floor say this in contrast to the first floor. The first floor, “down there”, is the layer where students are coddled, where they are given instructions on how to do everything, where they do not develop a sense of responsibility. “Down there” refers to teachers who emphasize play, and the child’s expression, rather than skills. (It is whispered that “down there” students are not being taught how to read or spell.) Pam says that the children who come from “down there” have a stunned look on their faces and it is very difficult to deal with them. The teacher next door to Pam laments first floor arrivals each year. (Pam has told me that some of the teachers on the first floor had not wanted their students to go to either her or the teacher next door, or another one on the second floor. The teachers on the first floor thought that those second floor teachers were too strict. They were worried about their students going to this stricter environment. Pam said it is not so much
that it is a stricter environment, but an environment where students have to think, and where students have to work independently. They are not used to that because "down there" they have been told everything to do.) (Oh, there are so many contentious stories in a school. In my inquiry I have learned that Bay Street School is no more homogeneous philosophically than it is culturally, linguistically, economically, or academically.)

The second floor is where the teachers have to remedy the problems associated with having children play and express themselves. The second floor is where teachers have to teach. (One day I arrived at Pam's class and found a first floor boy sitting at the back table. He was wearing a blue plastic painting smock. There was a large piece of construction paper in front of him, and pots of paint of different colors. He happily drew a picture and assured me that this was better than going to the classroom next door to Pam's where he would have had to work. He said that when the supply teacher had thrown him out of class, the vice principal had given him a choice of which room to go to; he had chosen this one even though he had heard that Miss M_____ was mean. He felt he had made a good choice, as all he had to do was draw a picture. As he told me this, he laughed. Later Pam told him to write a story to go with the picture he had drawn. He wrote one word, "rabbit". Then he threw himself on the floor, howled, and rolled around.)

The teachers on the second floor work as a team. (When one teacher left and a new one came, Pam was relieved that she seemed ready to become part of the second floor.) The first year I was there Pam and a grade two-three teacher did a "Reading Buddy" activity which
paired younger and older students to read to each other and do follow-up journal writing. MM Peer assisted learning, cooperative learning, are so important in multicultural, multi-lingual contexts. The second floor teachers also had a work group, developed curriculum, and planned student promotions, based on knowledge of the children and knowledge of the teachers.

Most of the team work was of a less formal nature, woven into the every-day fabric of daily interactions of second floor life. The children appeared to move effortlessly from room to room when needed. (I said this to Pam one day. Pam told me it only looked effortless because I had not been there at the beginning of the year to see how it was done. Pam always kept me aware of the fact that I only knew the school and her class in bits and pieces.) The teacher next door had a little girl in her class who was willing to tell a story, but not to write it. MM It is important for children to express themselves orally before having to write. She was sent to Pam’s room. Pam told the little girl to get a pencil and paper and write a story. She wrote one page. I asked her why she wrote a story in Pam’s class, but not in her class. She looked surprised, as the children so often did when I asked what I think they viewed as obvious questions, and said that if Ms. M ______ asked you to do something, you did it. (I wish I could name the student so she could be more real than “she”. A bulletin board outside her class had displays of students’ self-portraits. Each face was large, taking up most of the page, eyes looking straight ahead. Hers was of a tiny figure blown topsy-turvy by the wind, high in the air.)
Teachers on the second floor did not rely on "the office" to discipline their students, but sent them to different classrooms depending on the child and the infraction. The teachers seemed to take pride in being able to solve their problems in this way. They contrasted this with "down there" where there was not the same level of cooperation, where teachers relied on "the office" to take care of discipline problems. (Pam felt that the people in the office did not know the students as well as the teachers did, so it was better to take care of problems themselves. She also felt the principal valued this, and that was one reason why he did not frequently come to the second floor.)

Not all "visitors" were in Pam's class for disciplinary reasons. Pam's former students would drop by and reminisce about what it was like to be in her class. (One recurring comment--being in Pam's class was good preparation to handle anything that came their way.) One little boy from Trinidad came to visit her regularly. This had begun his first day in the school when he had run away and had been brought back by Pam's husband who took him to her room. Whenever he felt the need he would come to visit Pam. He would climb onto Pam's lap, give her a hug, whisper a few words, plant a kiss on her cheek, and leave. MM Children can relate to teachers from their own cultural backgrounds. We need a more diverse teaching force to reflect the diverse student population we have. (One day Pam told me a story about another little boy from the Caribbean. His teacher was worried because he was poking other children during circle time. Pam said that in the Caribbean he would have sat in a desk in a row. The only opportunity for misbehavior would be to poke the child in front of
him with a pencil; that child could not show any response or he would be in trouble with the teacher. No wonder he would act out when he was in a circle here. When I said to Pam that she showed sensitivity to children from other cultures, she laughed. She told me she had been annoyed with a new student who would not remove her snowsuit after recess. Pam's husband reminded her that this was the first time the child had seen snow. Pam asked me, "Who is sensitive?") MM Immigrant teachers can relate to immigrant students because they have often undergone similar experiences.

Pam's Classroom

Ming Fang and Rosebud, it is so hard to recreate the classroom where I spent those two years. As I describe it physically, it seems ordinary. Pam's classroom is at one end of a second floor hallway. If you were to peek into the room you would see round and rectangular tables and small plastic chairs arranged around a piece of blue carpet curled at the edges. The classroom is large. There are closets at the back, a sink on one side of the closets and Pam's cupboards on the other (Pam has a refrigerator and electric kettle in one cupboard), large curtained windows along an entire wall with shelves filled with toothpick geometric shapes in front of the windows, and boards at the front and side. Drawings decorate the upper portion of the walls, some too high to reach without a ladder, some there for years. More art is taped on the closets, and strung through the middle of the room is a line with art hanging from it. (Sometimes there would just be two or three forlorn items hanging from the line. I would wonder where all the rest were.) (Some of the paper mobiles hanging from the line are
wonderful. There are intricate ones of hockey players with sticks that move.) There are bins for students’ belongings, art supplies, math manipulatives and all the things a teacher would collect in 15 years in a school. Books are in more bins and on shelves. (What would teachers do without bins?) Chart paper covers a great deal of the wall space, some has instructions for activities on it, some has lessons on it. Perfect cursive script done in chalk is on the front board, and journal instructions are printed on chart paper and taped to the side board. There are two computers in the back of the room, near Pam's desk and table. Pam often works after school with two brothers on the computers; she has tutored them since I have been in the school. (There is a push for technology in the school; much funding is directed to the purchase of computers.) MM It is important for all children to have access to technology. (Unspoken school story. Several laptops were purchased for students to take home. There was whispered concern that some adults might take these computers and sell them for drugs.) This is where I sat, sometimes beside Pam, sometimes beside students, sometimes alone.

As you came into the room you would hear the muffled sound of a radio coming from behind a closet door, classical music softly playing, and the sound of children’s voices, like a hum or a buzz just a little louder than the radio. If it was near the beginning of the day, and if a child were late for school, you would hear them speak from the front of the room. “Good morning Miss M________. I am late because my mom said I had to wait for my sister”. Before tardy students can join the class activities they are required to state their reasons for being late in a loud,
clear voice, over the radio and the hum of other voices, over the sound of children reciting poetry or reading aloud, so Pam, seated in the back of the room, can hear them. (Does that sound simple? Some students struggled with having to explain themselves. One day a little boy wet his pants trying to explain the reason.) MM The poor boy. (One day the class was at a puppet show with grade four, five, and six students. At the end they were told to ask questions. Pam’s students did, in clear, loud, confident voices.) MM But, does it have to be so hard?

(Pam told me that when she arrived in New Orleans to begin university she was tongue tied. She had not been encouraged to talk in school or at home. She could not speak before groups; she could not formulate a thought for herself. She told me she does not want her students to be like that. She said if there is one thing that a student who leaves her grade four/five class will be able to do, it will be to talk in front of a group of people. Reciting poetry, reading aloud, doing activities in front of the whole group will make them feel comfortable presenting themselves to a group. Pam told me a story about one student who arrived in September, subdued and quiet, her body sunken in and curled up on itself, and her head down all the time. All the students were shy about reciting poetry and reading in front of the class, but she was the shyest. Pam tells students, "Shy ends at the door of the classroom. This is the place where you can take the risks. This is the place where it is okay not to be perfect speaking in front of a group. This is the place that you are going to experiment with these things." (The little girl volunteered to recite at an assembly.)
Pam has a routine with her students. (Maybe all teachers do.) It varied during the time I was there, but for long periods there would be a similar pattern to the class, then the pattern would change, and that would become the routine. Within the changing patterns there were consistencies. To give you an idea of what a routine looks like, I will describe one to you in detail. While it is distilled from months of observation, I use material from one particular day so you can see specifics. (Keep in mind that throughout this routine, unless I indicate otherwise, Pam is sitting at her table, busily marking homework, or working with students. The routine proceeds without interruption from Pam.)

Good morning Miss M__________, good morning Mrs. Phillion. The students jostle, push each other, and speak quietly to me as they put away their coats and book bags in the closet beside my chair. (They are not allowed back into the closet until lunch time. This puzzled me.) They gather cross-legged on the carpet facing the back of the room and listen to the radio program, Radio Bay Street, put on by a middle school teacher and Cynthia, the librarian, and broadcast daily over the intercom. This program features students giving information, and sometimes announcements from the principal. The program ends with the national anthem "Oh, Canada". Pam's students stand up and sing, many of them with gusto, the ESL students watching and listening. (Remember Aisha from the prologue? She stood straight, at attention, through the entire song.)
As soon as announcements are over (without any signal from Pam, without naming who is to lead the activity) a student climbs onto the table near the chalk board at the front of the room and does the date and weather. Students say out loud what they are going to write on the board. They say, and then write in cursive script “Today is Monday, January 20th, 1997, and spell it out as they write--TODAY. They put down the temperature--minus nine degrees Celsius. They write adjectives about the weather--cold, snowy, still. The students sitting on the carpet watch until the student at the board has finished. Then the large group corrects spelling and other errors. They correct penmanship. "Your j is too small, it has a big loop." (When the students come up to work with Pam, she tells them similar things about their handwriting.)

Pam sits at her table at the back of the room throughout this activity. When the students are finished, they tell Pam the activity is complete. Pam tells the class it is her turn to come up to the front and talk. (At this point Pam often does a mini-lesson, or reads poetry or a story to them; this is followed by a review of their responsibilities for the day.) Pam commented on the temperature. The student had written it was minus nine degrees Celsius. She pointed out that the student was "estimating" what the temperature was and asked them what estimating meant. Some students said it was guessing. Pam asked them what the difference was between estimating and guessing; there were several answers. Pam said, “That is the general idea but what I want to know is something specific.” One boy said it is like comparing when you go outside, you think about the weather and you compare it with the
weather of the day before. Pam said that from now on they were going to use a thermometer. The student doing the date and weather would be responsible for bringing in the thermometer and checking the temperature. They would no longer be estimating. She asked them how a thermometer worked. There were a few comments in the class and a lot of silence. She asked students "Who is in grade five? Who was in my grade four class last year?" She said anybody who was in her grade four class last year would know the purpose of a thermometer.

At 9:50 two children got up from the group and left the room. (Remember Pam does not say a word about this.) They returned with a tray of food, the "continental breakfast" they have in mid-morning. They placed the food on a table by the door and re-joined the group on the carpet. MM Nutrition programs, nutrition programs! Pam asked the group what the next activity was. They said it was "international words." MM Promoting the use of home language and culture is so important. Pam moved back to her table. First there was silence in the group. One student said they needed to talk about it. Little groups began to discuss it. The same student said they should talk about in a large group. The students all moved back into one large group. There was a long conversation while the students decided what the international word should be. They read the former words, which were developing as a kind of dialogue: "Hello”, “How are you?”, “I am fine.” “What is your name?” They discussed what should come next, some said, “My name is" was logical to follow, some wanted to deviate and say something else. Gradually the students came to three choices. One student asked how they should decide what word to use. Another
suggested they vote on it and wrote choices on the board. They raised their hands to vote. "My name is" had the most votes.

(Pam was in the back marking during this.) The students told Pam their choice and how they had come to it. Pam said that was fine, but they could deviate from the formula that was developing. Then they wrote "My name is" in the languages of students in the class on the board which took about fifteen minutes; there was consultation back and forth. Pam then read what they had written. Modifications were made, and then all of the students read it in the various different languages. (I was impressed with the decision making ability of the group. At first it had seemed that they did not know what to do. Then they began to talk, suggested choices, reached consensus, and finished with the writing of the words. I asked Pam if that was the kind of thing she wanted in the class. She said, "Yes, only I want more leaders, not just one".)

Pam asked them what was next on their list. They said poetry recitation and reading, and then journals. Pam gave instructions for journals. They would write about a nutritious breakfast, lunch or dinner. They could write it in the form of a story or in the form of a menu. (Later on in the day one of the students came up to her with a chart that had a menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Pam was not satisfied. I did not see the chart.) Pam asked the students how many were there when the nurse had talked about the different food groups; most students put up their hands. She said, good, they would have no problem doing journals. Then Pam said after this they would be doing their creative writing
about a winter adventure, and they should write something interesting, exciting, or surprising in the form of a story.

The instructions were also on chart paper; students were responsible for checking that list to be sure they completed their work for the day. At the bottom of the list were two items: math and science. When I arrived at the school in November, the students did not do math or science. In parent-teacher interviews in December, Pam said she was concentrating on language arts. I was shocked that math and science would be left out. (Pam later told me that the class viewed math and science as a reward, they could do them if they finished their “work”. I was puzzled by this. I had not experienced students who viewed math as a "reward".) The students also had to keep track of the time; it was up to them to realize when it was time to go to a different class. When I first came to the class I was amazed to see students put away books, place chairs against the tables, gather their coats and lunches, and line up at the front of the room ready for International Languages class or physical education, or library time; all without one word of instruction from Pam. (Pam said we underestimate children, they can do it if left on their own.)

The Rest of the Day Is Yours

After going over the work for the day, Pam would say, “The rest of the day is yours”. At this point Pam went back to her desk and students would stand up at the front of the room and recite poetry. The ESL students would also do this. After reciting poems, they read aloud. MM Multicultural literature is an important
component of a language arts program. They would ask each other questions, and time each student. When students finished both reciting and reading they returned to their tables and went through the list of things they had to do. (George would often say to me, “What I am I supposed to be doing?”) They had to copy the date and weather, and the international words, then do the nutrition journal and the creative writing. As they finished each item, they would show it to Pam. Pam sat in the back of the classroom with a small group of children checking their work. The rest of the children hunched over their tables chewing on the ends of their pencils erasing, erasing, erasing, writing in their journals. When the students finished the work, they would come to the section of the chart instructions labeled math. They would get a math book from Pam and work from where they had stopped the previous time. Some students appeared to do very little math. In the first couple of months in the school, I seldom saw any student do science. During interviews with parents Pam explained that she concentrated on language first. When they were comfortable with those activities, she moved onto math and science.

This is the normal rhythm of the morning portion of the class; it is punctuated with different students coming and going, some to ESL classes, some to special education classes. It is interrupted by whole class departures to International Languages classes, or to the gym. The rhythm is marked by classical music, and the hum of voices of children working at tables, or voices of small groups of students flowing up to Pam, staying for a period of time, and then returning to their tables. Pam always has students working
side by side with her, sometimes one on one side, one on the other. Usually there are also two or three others near by.

Pam speaks to the individual students and small groups in a low, subdued tone, a very intimate voice. As they work with her, she often has a personal conversation with them. She shows more of a smile, more of a sense of humour, more laughter, in the small group. (Through the use of her voice, the soft classical music playing in the background, the intimate atmosphere of work at the table, the students seem to be pulled into the work.) Pam works at the level where each individual child is in the subject area. MM Vygotsky! Vygotsky! The Zone of Proximal Development, and scaffolding are such important concepts in working with children from diverse backgrounds. She will often ask the whole group or individuals how they are working, what questions they have, where they are going with their work.

Summary

It is not an easy task to travel with someone to a place they have never seen, to spend time with someone they do not know. I hope that this part of the letter has provided a glimpse of Bay Street School, and a look at Pam’s class. I wanted you to feel, if only partially, what it was like to be in the class for those two years. In the next part of the letter I will share some specific stories with you that delve deeper into Pam’s practice.
George is a composite character based on several students in Pam’s class. As I was writing these two chapters I felt a sense of frustration that I could not name the children, could not even use pseudonyms for them, as I had not negotiated using students in my research approval process with the board. I found it difficult to use he and she when the children are real people to me and were so much a part of my experience in the school. To study a teacher’s practice is to be with children. Next time I will attempt to negotiate work with children, and “naming” them, into my research approvals.

The idea of a response was inspired by the book School Days (1994) by Patrick Chamoiseau. Chamoiseau’s chorus “Les Répondeurs” fill multiple roles in the text, as does Ms. Multicultural.
Chapter IX
Classroom Stories

Stories From the Classroom

Ming Fang and Rosebud, in the first part of this letter (chapter eight) I presented a glimpse of Pam’s daily classroom life. I told you that I would like to burrow deeper into Pam’s practice in this part of the letter. How could I accomplish that task? I could do it in many different ways; being a narrative inquirer, it seemed the best way to do it would be to tell you stories. I share four stories crafted from field texts, primarily field notes, journals, and theoretical memos. These stories, while nested in the routine of daily life in Pam’s classroom, feel extra-ordinary. Part of what I do in this letter is to explore that feeling. These stories are purposefully constructed and purposefully told--to focus on Pam’s experiences, to re-presents our time together, and to link my beginning understanding of multicultural teaching and learning, (explored in depth in chapter six) to my evolving, developing, understanding of multicultural teaching and learning (explored throughout this work). Meanings of the stories, the “telling events”, and connections to multiculturalism, are further developed in the last part of my letter (chapter ten).

It is my hope that these stories achieve more than that (a hope I hold for all my writing). I wish to convey a particular sense of multiculturalism that grew out of, and flourishes with, my experiences of the people and places of my inquiry. As such, I
have a compelling desire for you re-live my experiences. I want to travel with you through the community; to seduce you, as I was seduced, by the contours, contrasts, and complexities of the landscape. I want to take you to Bay Street School, to walk with you from the first floor to the second floor, to stop with you to look at the art on the walls, to pause with you to hear the music in the halls, to usher you through the door of Pam’s classroom, to introduce you into her life. I long for you to become familiar with the places and people that have meant so much to me, to experience what I have experienced, to feel what I have felt, to know what I have known.

I want to draw you into an intimate, connected realm of relationship and friendship that I experienced in my time in the school. I know that is impossible; the best I can do is try to breathe life into these stories so you can feel some of what I felt. (I think of Patrick Chamoiseau and Toni Morisson; they have a way of pulling me into their worlds that is incredible. How is it that certain every day words, put together in particular ways, can create such a feeling of connection?) I attempt to do that here, as elsewhere in my work, with a personal, intimate, close-up look at details of classroom interactions between Pam and her students. It is my hope that this attention to descriptive detail, mingled with active, imaginative acts on your part, will create a ground for sharing my experiences and my understandings, for joining in the connected circle of relationships. The meaning of multiculturalism, for me, is in being open to these experiences and these relationships.
As you know, you two are not the only ones with whom I am sharing this letter. Pam will read this letter, too (as will others). But, then again, Pam is always a presence in my writing; I see her face and hear her voice in every sentence I compose. Sometimes she is directly with me (as I attempted to portray in chapter seven), at other times it is as though she is hovering over my shoulder, thinking, questioning, provoking. (Koto Woman transformed!) And Pam is there even more than that, she is intimately connected to the re-presentation and meaning making done in this inquiry. In a telephone conversation I told Pam that I wanted to write four telling events from my time in the school for this chapter. I could only recall three. As I puzzled over what the fourth one might be, Pam asked, “Was it the Teapot?” I said it was. I asked Pam how she knew which story it was. She said that it had been a special time for her, too. The stories re-present not only my experiences, but also what Pam feels were her experiences. They also re-present the continuity of our experiences together, and the co-mingling of our narrative of understanding together.

I hope that as you read this part of the letter you will turn a “benevolent eye” (see chapter six) on the stories, on Pam, the main character in the stories, and on me, the writer of the stories. These stories, while highlighting Pam and her teaching, are constructed from my perspective; I am irrevocably present in them, indelibly imprinted on them (in other words I could not entirely write myself out of these stories). Sometimes the connection of the stories to multiculturalism may seem elusive. Please bear with me, as I said earlier this will be partially resolved in the next part of the letter (chapter ten). However,
there is no dénouement (sorry if that disappoints), as there might be if this were a mystery; nor is there a gradual unraveling climaxing in a neatly packaged (generally happy) ending, as there might be if this were the plot of a fifties American movie; it is my hope that understanding grows slowly in active engagement in inquiring with me, puzzling with me, wondering with me.

In the end, you may experience no sense of true satisfaction; indeed, you may feel frustration and dissatisfaction; you may cry out for more traditional plot lines, more traditional characterizations, more traditional findings. That is one of the risks I take in writing like this. None-the-less I feel compelled, driven, to write this way. I feel that my signature, my style of writing, was more shaped by my experiences of my inquiry, and the phenomenon of the inquiry, than is generally acknowledged in the literature. (See Clandinin & Connelly, in progress, for a discussion of voice and signature.)

As you read these stories I hope you will hear some of the refrains that are woven into the fabric of Pam’s talk with her students. These refrains, and others, some humorous, echo in my mind as I write. They appear to me to be markers that focus concentration and understanding in a particular way. These refrains, periodically appearing in the text, were woven throughout the overall time I spent in the classroom. Ms. Multicultural is also threaded throughout this part of the letter; in contrast to other parts of the letter, however, she is not identified in any particular way; perhaps she is only there in my imagination’. I invite you to invoke her as well.
The noisy period of time comes to an abrupt close. With no apparent instructions from Pam the children stand up from the carpet, go to the back of the room, and quickly remove things from the closet. They take their backpacks, coats, and lunch bags and line up in pairs at the front of the room. They push and shove each other; one girl says in a stage whisper "be quiet!" Gradually the line of students becomes quieter and quieter and quieter. When they are all quiet, when there is not a sound in the room, Pam tells them that they can go to physical education (PE) class.

Pam and I almost always eat our lunch during this PE period on Wednesday. We go downstairs to heat her lunch in the staffroom. We rarely spend much time on the first floor. We use the microwave in the kitchen of the staffroom, have a short chat with a few teachers, check the mailbox in the office, and stop to say hello to Cynthia in the library. In the staffroom, while Pam uses the micro-wave, I usually look at announcements on the bulletin board. I am surprised at some of the posted items. Someone is renting cottages. (I have heard that some teachers have businesses.) One poster is for a feminist lecture at OISE. There appear to be a lot of teachers retiring; posters advertising who, when, and where are layered on the board. Most of the parties seem to be rather expensive to attend. I wonder how teachers feel about
this. With so many retirements, so much money for each party, do they actually attend?

On our way to heat Pam’s lunch, we walk past the office. We glance through the glass walls of the room and see two of Pam’s students there. One is Tara, the other is Annette. Tara is crying, and Annette has her head down. Pam goes into the office and asks them what the problem is. They tell her that the PE teacher has sent them out of the gym. The reason that they have been sent out of the gym is that Tara has accused Annette of stealing her Sailor Moon Stickers.

Pam briskly tells the girls to come with her. She takes long strides down the hall towards the gym, the girls barely able to keep up. The door connecting the PE teacher’s office to the gym is locked. We leave and go down another hallway, through the boys’ gym, through a connecting door in the wall to the girls’ side of the gym. In the girls’ gym Pam walks up to the gym teacher. All the girls immediately stop dancing and stare. Pam and the PE teacher have a hurried conversation. I stand awkwardly off to the side, part of it, but not part of all of it, hearing what is said, yet not hearing all that is said. I hear the names of the two girls. I hear the word steal, and I hear the word sticker. The PE teacher tells Pam that when she took the sticker book from Annette the remnants of Tara’s name was in it. She says the erased first name was covered with the name Annette. Annette stands
accused of stealing stickers by the PE teacher and by Tara. Annette has said she did not steal them. The PE teacher sent them both to the office where we found them.

Pam says, “Come with me”. Somehow I am also swept up in this command. We leave the gym and go into the attached cramped, windowless, airless, office of the PE teacher. Pam closes the door. Pam, myself, and the two little girls stand in the centre of the dimly lit room. My heart pounds. I feel uncomfortable when children are accused of stealing. I feel awkward; should I be involved in this conversation? The room smells strongly of what I associate with PE class—old sweat, unwashed clothes, new rubber balls. There does not seem to be any air circulating; my heart seems to be beating faster and faster and faster. At the same time that I feel apprehensive I am also curious about what is happening in the room.

Pam turns to Annette. She says simply and calmly, “We are going to get to the bottom of this”. She talks to Annette and never once accuses her of stealing the stickers. “We are going to get to the bottom of this,” punctuates the conversation. Annette stands in the centre of the room, her arms loosely at her sides, her head down. I think her head has been down since she has been in the office. She looks up only when she speaks to Pam. There is a strong sense of emotion building in the room, inexorably building higher and higher. I am unable to figure out
exactly why this emotion is building. This emotion does not feel bad. It feels concentrated. We are all concentrating on the moment. I have seldom in my experiences in the school felt so present in a situation, so little distracted by other things around me. I again notice the pungent smell of sweat in the room, yet this time it does not seem to be old sweat; rather it has the sharp, acrid odor of new sweat. For a moment I wonder if it is me, then I wonder if it is the girls. Yet probably it is all of us because the tension is palpable.

Pam turns to Tara and uses the same tone of voice, calm, gentle, yet forceful. Her words are evenly spaced. “We are going to get to the bottom of this.” Pam asks Tara why she brought the Sailor Moon Stickers to school. Tara cries while she talks. Annette’s head is still down. Tara says she does not have any friends. She says she tries to make friends by showing them stickers. Tara stops crying; she stands straighter. She says that she had shown Annette the stickers the day before. Several children told her that Annette had taken the stickers while they were changing and put them in her bag. Tara says that she asked Annette to look in her bag, but Annette refused.

The conversation continues. Pam repeats, firmly, yet with a tone of reassurance, “We are going to get to the bottom of this”. Pam calmly discusses friendship and how to interact in groups. She tells Tara she will help her, not with things like the stickers which they will deal
with later, but with things like how to get along with a group. Tara again says she has never had any friends in the school, and she has been there since grade one. She says she does not have any friends anywhere. She says her mother has told her she can change schools next year. Annette looks up. Pam tells Tara that instead of trying to buy friends with stickers, she should see how she can be a friend. She says that instead of worrying about having a friend, she should try being a friend.

Pam is standing talking to Tara. Annette is standing, her head down. I am standing a little back from the circle of three in the dimly lit room. I again feel uncomfortable, but at the same time curious. Later Pam tells me she was not uncomfortable at all. It is fine that I was there. She does not think Tara or Annette were uncomfortable. She said they both accepted my presence there as natural.

There is no apparent resolution at this time. Annette and Tara are sent to join the remaining portion of the PE class. The accusation of the PE teacher and Tara that Annette has stolen the Sailor Moon Stickers hangs in the air. Yet, that was not the focus of Pam’s conversation with the two girls. The focus was not on naming names, laying blame, deciding fates. The focus was on friendship and the meaning of friendship. The focus was on getting to the bottom of things.
The Teapot

I walk upstairs to Pam’s classroom. It is lunch time. The door is open, and there are two girls in the front of the room. They have paints, rulers, scissors, a large roll of paper, and other art supplies scattered on nearby tables. They have an air of concentration about them. I ask what they are doing. They say they are making posters for the Multicultural Fair. It is going to be held that night from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The posters are titled “The Teapot”. One poster has an outline drawing of a large flowered teapot. It is tilted, the spout pouring steamy liquid. There is a sign indicating that tea is available. The other poster has a drawing of a smaller teapot similar to the large one; there are decorations of a large chocolate layer cake and chocolate chip cookies on one side, and a few fortune cookies on the other.

One of the girls asks, “Where have you been, Mrs. Phillion?” I tell them that I have had a cold, and that I am sorry that I have not been able to come for a while. I say that I have missed them. I walk to the back of the room, say hello to Pam, and ask her, “Are you going to the Multicultural Fair tonight?” She says “Yes, it is a command performance; but I will not stay for the whole thing.” I am disappointed.
The Multicultural Fair is one of the highlights of the school’s calendar of community events. Steve, the current principal, initiated the first Multicultural Fair; this is the fourth one held. There had been community activities put on by the school prior to the inauguration of this fair, but this one features dance and music performances by the International Languages groups. People have been planning and preparing for it for months; it was the major topic in a recent Parent’s Advisory Council Meeting and last weeks’ staff meeting. In both meetings they discussed the evening events. There would be tables selling home-baked goods, different kinds of food, plants, and used household goods. Some tables would be for goods that parents had donated to assist in raising funds for the school; other tables would be rented, at a cost of $5, for personal profit. There would be a raffle, games and other events. Most of the money raised would go to support nutritional programs in the school. Teachers could post student work. The performances by International Languages groups were to be the main feature of the evening. I have not heard Pam talk about the Multicultural Fair with her class. Did I miss it while I was sick?

Pam and some students are preparing small packages of cookies wrapped in saran wrap with gold, red, green, or white ribbon around them. They are piling the packages into a large wicker basket. The students tell me they are going to sell tea and cookies at the fair that
night. Other students straggle in and join in preparation of more packages. They ask Pam how much the packages of cookies will cost. Pam asks, “What do you think?” The packages of fortune cookies, chocolate chip cookies, and slices of pound cake pile up in the basket.

Some students are making packages of cookies and cakes; some are colouring posters, some are writing in journals. I hear the hum of what I associate with a productive class. It intensifies and swells; childish voices are raised in excitement. The girls bicker over appropriate colours for the flowers on the teapot. Pam works at her desk. As I move around the room, the students ask me what is going to happen at the Multicultural Fair. They ask me what they are going to do. I ask Pam what the class is going to do. Pam says it is their fair, they can decide what they want to do. George sits at his desk and does a self evaluation to include in his report card. He writes, “LiFE i$ HEL in MiR M______ 2 CLaSS”.

Pam moves to the “teacher’s chair”. The students move to the carpet area. She asks the students how much the packages of cookies and cake should sell for. “What do you think?” Pam asks. They shrilly shout various answers. Pam asks, “What is the purpose of selling tea and cookies at the fair?”. Conversation ripples around the group as different ideas are shared. George sits on the carpet pulling his hair. The group comes to an agreement that they want to make money for
field trips. Pam asks them how much money they think they should make. George mumbles that maybe the teacher wants to keep the money. Pam asks the students, “How will you figure out what to charge for the packages of cookies and cake?” She asks, “How will you know if you have met your goal of raising money?” Leaving the question hanging in the air, and the students sitting on the carpet, Pam goes back to her table.

Puzzled looks and whispers sweep through the group. Questions, answers, ideas, suggestions, swirl around the room. Numbers, shouted out, punctuate the discussion. The hum of voices grows louder. George continues to pull out small tufts of hair. One girl goes to the front of the class and holds up a saran-wrapped package of cookies. She asks, “How much should we sell these cookies for?” The students shout out more numbers. The girl looks over at Pam and tells her that the students said the packages of cookies should be 50 cents, or 75 cents, depending on the kind of package. Pam says, “Yes, but how much did each package cost, and how much profit will you make?” The girl returns to the group and Pam returns to her marking. The conversation continues. Some students begin to put numbers on the board. Gradually, other numbers appear. The students begin to divide and multiply. The recess bell rings, but there is no change in the working rhythm of the class.
Later Pam moves back to the "teacher's chair". She goes through an exercise with each different type of package of cookies. Pam asks, over and over, "What do you think?" The group discusses how much each package of cookies had cost, how many saran-wrapped packages they made from them, and how much they could be sold for to make a profit. Not everyone is in agreement. Some want to charge more money to increase their profit. Some want to charge less to ensure brisk sales. Pam remains quiet during this conversation. She eventually asks, "Well, how much will the packages be?" The students come to an agreement based on how much they cost and how much they want to make.

Some students quickly put the agreed upon prices on the basket of items. Others write in their math journals the steps they went through to come to the cost of each item. They write that they need to calculate how many cookies are in each package, how much the cookies cost, and how much they should sell them for. Others continue work on the posters. George asks, "What are we supposed to be doing?" I wonder why there is no discussion of what I think of as the purpose of the Multicultural Fair--a focus on community connections, a celebration of diversity, a chance to mingle and get to know each other as individuals and as members of different cultural groups. This is math class.
Later in the afternoon we go to the gymnasium where preparations are actively underway for the fair. Some of Pam’s students ask what they should do. Pam tells them, “It is your Multicultural Fair. What do you think you should be doing?” Again, there are puzzled looks, sideways glances at each other, whispered asides. They find the spot where they are to set up “The Teapot”. They have a good location on the stage where everyone will see them. They move tables, chairs, and white plastic benches. They arrange the furniture in a section for seating and a section for buying items. The girls with the posters ask where to put them. Pam asks, “What do you think?” They look around, and gesture towards the back wall of the stage. They have the posters, a possible place to put them, but nothing to put them up with. They disappear. They return with tape. The posters are up, the furniture is arranged. Pam and I and some students bring a teapot, cups, and plates from the staffroom. All the students are busy. There is no sign of George.

Afternoon classes are over, the dismissal bell has rung. “The Teapot” is not complete. Some students decide to stay and work on it. Others say they will return later, before the fair begins. I leave with a group to return to the classroom. On our way back to the classroom we walk through the gymnasium and look at other displays being set up. By the time all the students leave it is about 4:30, 45 minutes after school day is officially over. Pam and I continue preparations. By 5:00 several
students have arrived. They ask, "What should we do?" Pam asks them, "What do you think?"

The food is laid out. The cash register is set up. "The Teapot" looks ready for the evening. Students begin rehearsing their various roles. I am puzzled as to how they know who will do what. Three girls organize a raffle for a book Pam has donated called *The Love Bug*. They discuss what a raffle is, and how to hold one. They cut out small pieces of coloured paper to use for tickets; they plan to sell each ticket for 25 cents. They practice shouting out for people to buy tickets. Later I buy four. One boy "mans" (this gendered word is appropriate for him) the cash register. Later his mother talks to Pam and me. She says her son will be a businessman. Some students plan to sell packages of cookies, others plan to pour tea. Everyone is occupied. The hum of a productive group of people intensifies. There is still no sign of George.

At 5:30 the Multicultural Fair begins. There are two or three kinds of Chinese dancing. There is Vietnamese dancing. The Portuguese group does a song. The Black heritage class does a dance that people in the audience respond to with enthusiasm. "The Teapot" does well; the tea and cookies are popular items; sales are brisk and many people are sitting in chairs, talking. All the raffle tickets are sold. The winner is pleased. Pam is encouraging the students as she jokes with them. She laughs with them, puts her arms around them, and gives them hugs.
Pam also mingles with parents in the gym; I see her in close
conversation with some of the mothers. She dances to the music with
some of the students. George appears with his younger brother; he is
speaking Vietnamese with him. When I ask him about his language
ability, he tells me he can only speak to his brother about simple things.
"We don’t talk about aliens", (one of George’s favourite topics).

When Pam and I discuss the evening; she tells me she is “thrilled”
with what the students have done. She is proud of how the boy at the
cash register handled himself. She is proud of the girls raffling the
*Love Bug*. She is pleased with how the students sold the cookies,
seated the people, poured the tea. Leaving most of the responsibility on
the students’ shoulders to organize it, and having very little rehearsal
time, the students have done an amazing job.

Pam had told me that she was going to be leaving early and would not
stay for the whole fair. We not only stayed for the whole fair, which
went on past the 8:00 deadline, till about 8:30, but stayed and cleaned
up, and finally left the school around 9:00. I was particularly impressed
with three little boys who stayed to the bitter end. They cleaned up,
took out the garbage, mopped the floor, picked up paper and other litter
off the stage, and carried things back to the classroom. Finally, they
removed “The Teapot” posters and brought them to the classroom.
George usually sits off to the side of the classroom, in a desk by himself. He has been there for several months. I am curious as to why, today, he is with a group at a table. As I walk past he asks, "Mrs. Phillion, do you know how to write a poem?" His partner taps a painted pink nail on the page and tells him to get to work. George hurriedly writes in his notebook.

While the students are writing poetry, Pam calls them up one by one to collect money and permission slips for the ballet they are going to attend the next day. Pam tells me that she had been slow in sending out permission slips; they had only gone home the day before. There is a special system for collecting money in the class. Each child has a bankbook. In the bankbook they keep a record of how much money they bring in, how much is required for a particular field trip, and the balance of the account.

Pam tells the students to bring their bankbooks, money, and permission slips to her desk. She says they need to have their bankbooks tallied. They need to record how much money they have, how much to take out of the account for the ballet, and the remaining balance. They are supposed to have done this work prior to class. However, when they come to Pam's desk, many students have not
prepared their bankbooks, although most of them do have money and permission slips. Pam looks around the room and says, “I want to work with students who want to work”.

As students come up, Pam has them go through the calculations in their bankbooks. She works one on one, side by side, elbow to elbow, with each child. I am close by, yet I can not hear all the conversation; Pam’s voice is low, intimate. She seems to weave a math lesson on addition and subtraction into a conversation about their life. She later tells me that these encounters provide an opportunity to get to know what is happening in her students’ lives. She also says that this is an occasion to work with George without him thinking he is receiving special attention. Pam feels that George’s goal is to get attention. Her goal is to work with George individually without making him feel that through something he has done she is singling him out for this individual attention, but that it is a natural part of the class. “The Bankbook” is ideal for this.

George is working at the table with his new partner. In a recent reshuffling of class groups, George has been paired with a girl who is a “helper”. It had begun the week before when the class had worked through an understanding of how they could be regrouped. Pam proposed suggestions about how this could be done--she could group them, they could go with friends that they liked, or they could have
people who worked placed together, and people who didn’t work placed together. The students had voted on the different options. There were 10 that voted for being placed with people who worked. Later some students told Pam they wanted to change their minds. They did not like the way they had decided to be grouped. Pam told the class that this was a civics lesson; when we vote for something we can not keep changing our minds. She told them to go home that night, think about it, and the next day they would discuss it again.

The following day some students said, “I want to work with students who want to work”. The class decided that they would have groups composed of helpers, and people who needed help. Pam asked the students to raise their hands to identify themselves, and then to start pairing themselves off. One of the most exciting pairings for Pam (and me) is the girl and George. When the reshuffling had begun George had been sitting in his desk off to the side, and had not joined the conversations. The girl had pointed to George and said, “I want to work with him”. At their table was another pair, again a girl who identified herself as a helper and a boy who identified himself as needing help. The four of them now were working together. Pam was impressed with what the students had done. She said, “You know, if we would just stand back, and let children be, and let children do what they can do, they would be so much better off.” She said, “We can learn from them. It is not only that they can learn from us.”
George leaves his group and comes up to Pam’s desk. Pam very carefully goes through the calculations—how much he had in his account, how much he needed for the ballet, how much he had used when he went to see Aladdin and His Magic Lamp, (apparently George’s bankbook is not up to date), and what the final balance should be. When Pam asks George where the money he thinks is missing might be, George responds, “Do you have it?” When Pam asks George a calculation question he answers, “It is a complete mystery to me”. Pam says, “No, it is not a mystery to you, George. I think you know.” George shrugs his shoulders; he stares off, somewhere. Pam says to him, “I want to work with students who want to work.”

Working with George goes very slowly. Pam calls Tara up at the same time. She has George on one side and Tara on the other. While George is puzzling through something, Pam talks to Tara, and vice versa; the rhythm moves back and forth, back and forth. Gradually Pam gets them both to the point where they are working on each other’s subtraction and addition. George suddenly begins to shine. When it comes to Tara’s work, George seems to know the answers. He does not seem to find it a mystery. Pam says to him, “See George, I said you could do it. I knew you could do it. You have got it there (tapping her head). You just say you do not know how to do it.”
Pam continues to work with George and Tara. She also calls up Annette. Annette seems to understand how to calculate her balance. She quickly explains what she has done and returns to her desk. George and Tara continue to do the calculations line by line, discussing it with each other. The process is slow. Pam seems drained. She has worked for over a half hour with George alone, and another half hour with George and Tara together. By the end of the work with Tara, George seems to understand "The Bankbook". He seems to be able to understand when he is not focusing on his own work.

When we were having coffee later, Pam glowed. She said she was so excited she had wanted to throw her arms around George and give him a hug, but she did not. I asked, "Why didn't you, Pam?" She said something stopped her from doing it with George. She would with other students. I said, "Pam, I was here when George wrote a page and a half about dinosaurs. He said he could not stop writing, even for PE. You threw your arms around him and hugged him then". Pam said, "Yes, I felt comfortable then, but I am very careful. If I hug him and it is not real, George will know. It was real then, but it would not have been real this time. The worst thing for George would be to be given an automatic hug that didn’t have true feeling behind it."
Swinging on a Star

The students went in the hall and measured the height and width of the space they had on the bulletin board. They removed the old displays; as they took them off the wall they gave some to me as presents. They discussed where they would place the major pieces of the new mural. The students were joking and laughing; they told me some of the nicknames they had for each other. Several teachers walked by. The teacher next door asked, “Is this what they mean by active learning?” He, too, laughed and went down the hall. The teacher across the hall poked her head out of her door. She assured me she was not disturbed by the noise. She closed her door.

In the classroom, other groups of students drew small scale drawings of where they would place the major pieces they wanted to be on the mural. On large pieces of construction paper, using felt pens, they drew the mule, the girl swinging on the star, the pig, and the fish. Others cut out stars and moonbeams in different sizes. The students were preparing a mural as part of what they had planned to do for a new unit, “Swinging on a Star”.

While the students were working on their small scale drawings and transferring them to larger pieces of paper, Pam was correcting each student’s homework, and calling them to her desk to go over it. Pam
was laughing and joking. One student said that now she was in grade 5. She wanted Miss M_______ to be her grade 6 and grade 7 teacher. Pam replied with her favourite expression, “in your dreams”.

Another group sat on the carpet. Their conversation focused on how they would choreograph and act out the mural the others were creating. The conversation also focused on how the students themselves were interacting in the group. One boy said to two girls, “Why are you having that conversation together? You should be sharing it with the whole group.” Some were raising their hands, and offering opinions. They discussed how to get everyone involved, how to take turns, and how to speak to the whole group, not only the person beside them.

Towards the end of this session they appointed a student to talk to Pam. The student stood up and, over the hum of voices mixed with classical music, said, “Miss M_______ we are ready to tell you our plans.” Pam left her desk, walked over to the group on the carpet, and listened to what they had planned. She listened to the details of who would do what first, who would join in, who would have what role. She listened as they described what they would wear. Pam said, “But what about your bodies? How are you going to move your bodies? Have you thought about that?”
Pam told me that the choreography was important. She said occasionally she could hear one student say to another, “But how are you actually going to do that with your body?” Pam did not want them to make an abstract plan; she wanted them to sing, to dance, to act. The student started to demonstrate “catching moon beams” and “putting them in a jar”, “being dumb as a mule”, “being like a pig”. Pam asked what the rest of them would be doing. They stood up, made an awkward, weaving line, and all began to sing the song, and mimic the gestures of the lead student. They were “Swinging on a Star”. Pam left the group and went back to her desk. From Pam’s initially picking out the tune on the piano in the classroom, to this level of planning and action, had taken a long while.

The week before I had come to the school on a Tuesday and found the students sitting on the carpet. Some were laughing, some talking, some jumping around; a new student was doing gymnastics by himself. Most of the students were looking at Pam sitting in the back at her desk. The entire day I had felt tense and anxious; I felt the students were unhappy and lost. As a teacher, I would have been with the students, suggesting, guiding, directing. I had wondered what was happening with the students, what the purpose of sitting on the carpet was. Pam had not explained to me the purpose of this process. When I had left at the end of the day a couple of students had begged me to come back the next
day. They said, “Help us. We do not know what to do.” (One child had
attached herself to my leg and did not want to let go.)

I had wondered about what was happening to the students off and on
during that week. Had they understood why they were left on their
own to work out a plan of action? Had they figured out what to do?
Were they “Swinging on a Star”? Would Pam explain to me the why
behind what she was doing? Would I be comfortable enough to ask her
about this?

When I arrived in the class the next week Pam began a running
dialogue with me. She told me the students had continued to fool
around on Wednesday, Thursday, and part of Friday morning. On
Friday afternoon, gradually, individually, in pairs, and in small groups,
they had come up to her. They had told her that they were dissatisfied
with not working, and would like to start making a plan of what to do.
Pam had told them, “You know what to do. You have to get the whole
group working.” Pam retold the story of how gradually, individually,
in pairs, and in small groups they had gone to the carpet and begun to
discuss how to “Swing on a Star”.

Pam told me that she had been waiting for the students to take
responsibility for what they were doing. The direction and onus for
doing things did not have to come only from her, but had to come
from them as well. She said she was not here just to teach them content, not here just to teach them the curriculum; she was here to teach them life-long lessons. Pam said that what she wants is for students to take responsibility for their own learning. She felt that this was one of the most important lessons that a student could learn in life. She said that to her this is the meaning of teaching—students learn life lessons, not just curriculum lessons.

Pam said that at first, years ago, this was very hard to do, she could not give it the wait time that it needed for them to do it. She said that she was so nervous that someone would come in and see her doing what they would view as nothing. Now she no longer worries about what people think; in her experience this does work. And there did seem to be something that “worked” on that Monday. The students were planning what had to be done, and they were doing it. Pam knew that the students could “Swing on a Star”.
Summary: Commentary on the Stories

Ming Fang and Rosebud, how did you feel about the tone of the stories? Did you question the somewhat choppy style in which I wrote? That style was purposefully used. My intention was to convey an understanding of the “partial” nature of research, and research understandings. There was no seamless flowing whole to my inquiry, but, rather, an accumulation of flashes of events, bursts of time. In a similar way, the tone of the previous part of my letter (chapter eight) had a flow of thoughts, one often running into the other. The intention was to show that experiences in a classroom also have a fluid quality.

I wonder how you have “read” the four stories? What did you “hear” in the words I have written about Pam, “see” in the pictures I have painted of Pam, “feel” in the interactions I have described of Pam? Did you puzzle, as I did, over the lack of resolution in the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story? Did you wonder, as I did, at why Pam did not discuss multiculturalism in The Teapot? Were you curious, as I was, about George’s life before and after The Bankbook? Were you perplexed, as I was, about what happened while Swinging on a Star? These are some of my puzzles in Pam’s classroom. Insights into these puzzles partially, but only partially, unfolded during the course of the research.

Though there was little to suggest that Pam saw herself as a “multicultural” teacher, I experienced the unfolding events of the four stories as solid, substantial experiences of multiculturalism. As you read the stories were you puzzled by how
they are connected to multicultural teaching and learning? As you read the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story was there any hint that Tara and Annette are Black? The story, for me, at first, was very much about a Black teacher from the Caribbean interacting with two Black students. As you read The Teapot did you know that the students were from different cultures? This story, for me, at first, was very much about a group of immigrant students from Somalia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, China, Nepal, and the Caribbean preparing packages of cookies for a Multicultural Fair; a boy “manning” the cash register being from Bangladesh; girls selling raffle tickets being refugees, ESL and LEP (limited English proficiency) students. In The Bankbook you did learn that George was Vietnamese. The story of his relationship with his partner was, for me, at first, him being Vietnamese, her being Chinese; the puzzle was why a Chinese girl took such an interest in a Vietnamese boy. Did you realize that the students in “Swinging on a Star” were from many different countries and spoke many different languages? The story, for me, at first, was of minority students from different cultures speaking different languages working together in groups with a teacher who is Black and an immigrant. All the stories had this multicultural quality for me. But in telling the stories I wanted to present them as I thought they unfolded in Pam’s teaching life, her classroom narrative; and she appears, hardly, to notice multicultural identifiers, at least not in the way I do.

That is not to say my interests have completely disappeared in this letter to you. The classroom events unfolded as multicultural events for me. I saw these events through a multicultural
perspective that initially focused almost exclusively on cultural and linguistic categories, less so on the people barely visible, at times buried, under the categories. As I retell the stories in this letter, they have been transformed somewhat from stories of multiculturalism to stories of teaching and learning. I continue to explore this developing understanding in the last part of my letter to you (chapter ten).

I was in the classroom, with Pam, for almost two years. That is a long time, isn’t it? I could learn a great deal, couldn’t I? And yet, what did I actually experience? During this inquiry I had an opportunity to only partially experience the play of events, only partially absorb the narrative of the class, only partially think through the puzzles with Pam. As Pam (and others) reminded me on different occasions, I was seldom there to experience anything from beginning to end. I seemed forever to be in the middle of things. I did not fully live in the classroom. I was not fully part of the narrative history of the classroom. I did not fully experience the stories. Rather, I experienced scraps of stolen stickers, tags of teapots, bits of bankbooks, and slivers of swinging stars. Perhaps research knowledge is constructed from scraps, tags, bits, and slivers; perhaps these fragments recreated and patched together from being in the midst of storied life in the classroom are the best that I, or we, can do.
A student in one of Mick’s courses, Audrey Cahill, read chapter six in which I introduce Ms. Multicultural. She wrote me a letter about it afterwards (personal communication, January 31, 1999). “I feel challenged the most when I see that the cultural background of students is not being honored or recognized in some real way in the classroom. When I sense this, the ideal part of me wants to adorn an enlarged ‘M’ on my shirt to show that I am an advocate for the diverse needs of students.”

I was intrigued with the letter, and intrigued with the imagery. Like Superman who runs to the scene of injustice, Ms. Multicultural, an emblazoned “M” on her shirt does the same. This became an interesting image in my mind. I could see her in the classroom scenes after this.

I generally felt as though multiple things were taking place at once in the class. Students would be working in groups at their tables, some would be reciting at the front, others would be working individually with Pam. The telephone might ring, a teacher or parent might come to the door. There were few focused times such as this.
Chapter X

Reflections on Multicultural Teaching and Learning

Learning From Travel, Inquiry and Writing

Ming Fang and Rosebud, this letter has become rather long. I hope you have not grown tired of reading. There is actually much more I would like to have shared with you--Pam’s relationships with parents and former students, her students’ responding to Math and Science as “rewards”, her late day tutorial sessions with two brothers, and other things I have only hinted at here. This section (chapter ten) is the final piece of my letter. Not that the puzzles are solved, not that there is a climax to the overall narrative of this work, but it is time to branch out in new directions, time to envision new puzzles, time to compose new narratives (see chapter eleven).

I have appreciated having your images before me as I have written about Pam, her classroom, her students, and her practice. “Audience” is so often abstract; with both of you in mind, and picturing Pam hovering over my shoulder, the abstract has become real, the writing, I feel, I hope, more authentic. Now I hope you will stay with me as I look at learning from my experiences of being in the midst of Pam’s classroom life.
In the description of the routine in Pam’s class (chapter eight) and the four stories I shared with you (chapter nine) I do know more than what I have revealed; but, I also know that I will never know the full story. It is not the not knowing that bothers me now. It is dawning on me, with a sense of sadness, that I have been in the story for a short while; and that I will no longer, ever, be part of the story in the same way. But I have learned by going back and forth, by dropping in and out of this evolving story. I have learned from being in the heart of classroom life with Pam and her students.

In an earlier part of this work (chapter one) I wrote of the parallels between a journey in a new culture and a narrative inquiry in a classroom. I also wrote of the parallels between travel writing and research writing. I have tried to take you with me on my research journey through my writing of this letter (and my writing in other parts of this work). I wonder how you feel, and what you are thinking, now that you have journeyed with me, albeit for a fleeting moment, for a fleeting glimpse, back into Bay Street School, into Pam’s classroom, Pam’s practice, and Pam’s relationships with her students. This is what I wrote about my travel experiences in chapter one.

Every extended stay in another place, every encounter with another person in another place, puts my values, my beliefs, my ways of thinking, and my every-day way of engaging in life under scrutiny and throws them into question. Encounters with other cultures raise issues of who I am, and what it means to be wife, mother, woman, teacher, learner, Canadian, World Citizen. Encounters with other cultures melt down artificially solid images of what these might mean, and enable me to reconstruct understanding of my positioning in the world. Encounters with other cultures are, for me, more than simply learning experiences at the time they take place. They are learning experiences to be reflected on to understand other experiences, often vastly different experiences, in vastly different times and places. (p. 3 & 4)
My extended stay in Bay Street School, my encounters with Pam and her students, put my values and beliefs about multiculturalism, my ways of thinking about teaching, learning and multicultural education, my ways of engaging in research and life under scrutiny and threw them into question. Encounters in Bay Street School, encounters with Pam and her students, raised issues of who I am as researcher, teacher, learner, person. Encounters in Bay Street School, encounters with Pam and her students, raised issues of the meaning of multiculturalism, and melted down the semi-solidified notions I had appropriated from the research literature. Encounters in Bay Street School, encounters with Pam and her students, caused me to question multicultural and anti-racist literature and policies, to wonder about approaches that appear to be embodied in curriculum materials, to query what it is we are doing in schools.

My experiences in Bay Street School, and with Pam and her students, are experiences I can reflect on, and learn from, for the rest of my life. There is more to explore and write about; my writing is like brushing a broad sweep of water colour across a canvas. In the future I can burrow deeper into my field texts, sharply define details, brightly colour what is now lightly outlined in pencil. For now I reflect on these experiences in relation to the focus of my inquiry. I first briefly sketch the impact of my experiences on my thinking about narrative inquiry in multicultural landscapes (see also chapter six); and, second, in greater depth, the impact of my experiences on my thinking about multicultural teaching and learning.
Learning From Being in the Midst: The Unfolding Story

In Bay Street School I learned to recognize that we are in the midst of an evolving story when we are engaged in research. I, we, never know the story from beginning to end. I, we, never know the complete story. We immerse ourselves in scraps, tags, bits and slivers of stories within stories. We are privy to fragments of stories; we “hear” and “see” those fragments others have chosen to share with us. Then, readers like you are privy to a patched-together, smoothed-over, semi-polished, personal reconstruction of this story. I also now realize that writing is as much the researcher’s attempt to make meaning of these fragments, as it is to communicate this meaning to others. (Geertz, 1995, describes this in his reflections on his anthropological work in two countries over four decades.)

Engaging in a narrative inquiry in a classroom is being in the midst of an unfolding story. The story began once upon a time, long, long, ago; the story will go on into the ever-after, far, far-off future. Places, people, and plots drift, shift, evolve, and transform; the process continues over and over. Bay Street School--a monument to the future one moment, scheduled to be torn down the next; educating “scholars” one moment, educating “problem students” the next; shifting from high enrollment one moment, to low enrollment the next--continues to change (see chapter four). These moments are part of something that is in process, something fluid, forever in between high points and low points.
Characters have pasts I can never fully know, futures I will never be part of. Being in the midst of lives, I have dipped in and out of shifting, twisting story lines. I have observed Pam surrounded by children in her classroom one moment, surrounded by well-wishers at her retirement party the next. I have seen George passively sitting off to the side by himself one moment, actively engaging in bankbook work with Pam and a partner the next. I have heard Tara and Annette in dispute over Sailor Moon stickers one moment, discussing swinging on a star murals the next. I have watched Aisha standing straight for "Oh, Canada" one moment, walking slowly out the room for the last time the next.

But, what have I seen and heard? What have I experienced? I have experienced briefly, fleetingly, sporadically, half-understood stolen sticker incidents, half-witnessed teapot events. I have experienced inklings of past, present, and future lives; inklings of Pam, inklings of George, Tara, Annette, and Aisha. I have experienced intimations of relationships; Pam and George together; Pam, Tara and Annette together; Pam and Aisha together. What will become of Pam and George, Tara and Annette, Aisha and her family? I do not know. I do know that the plots of the stories of their lives will continue to unfold, evolve, grow and change.

"The plots of the stories of their lives will continue to unfold, evolve, grow and change." And the plots of the school stories and the community stories, will continue to unfold, evolve, grow and change. I sense something meaningful in this ostensibly simple idea; something important for understanding research. In life, in
research, in research-life, places and people are always becoming, in transition, in process. In life, in research, in research-life, we are always in the midst of the story of our life and the stories of others’ lives. A difficulty to overcome in research, and in writing about research which often does not recognize the temporally contextualized nature of findings, is the tendency to freeze-frame places, people, and events as though that moment in time, that way of being, is a stand-in for all times, a stand-in for all ways of being.

Freeze-framing, like labeling, may not take into account that in research-life we are always in the midst. Bay Street School—is it a monument to the future, a project school, or a full-service community school? Is it a low socio-economic school or a multicultural school? It is all of them, somehow so much more, and what will it be after? Pam—-is she the teacher who is strict, who has children sit for hours on the carpet, or is she the teacher who is dancing with the students, laughing with the students? Is she an immigrant teacher, or a 15-year veteran of the same school? She is all of them, somehow so much more, and what will she be after? George—is he the boy who is asking what he should do, or is he the boy who can not stop writing, even for PE? Is he challenged, or is he a candidate for enrichment classes (for highly intelligent children)? He is all of that, and somehow so much more; I do not know what he will be after.

We seem to have difficulty coming to terms with the idea that our knowledge is conditional, temporal, situated, fragmented, in transition, in process, in the midst. (An example of this, for me,
is Derek Freeman’s [cited in Grosskurth, 1999] critique of Margaret Mead’s work and how it has caused such controversy. I am not surprised that Freeman found something different about adolescent sexuality in Samoa than Mead did. He visited years later, and used different sources for his information. I am also not surprised that he questions what Mead did while she was there. I also recognize that the controversy is far more complex than the example I have used here.) We search for a definitive truth, some way to say something sure, certain, about some place, some people, or some event, for all time. Is that what our quest for labels and categories is about? Are we trying to say something certain, indisputable, irrefutable?

But what do these labels tell us? If we pin a label to some place or person, some way of being or doing, we may not be recognizing them as being in process; we may be saying they will not grow and change, we may be saying they are incapable of growth and change. “The plots of the stories of their lives will continue to unfold, evolve, grow and change. And the plots of the school stories and the community stories, will continue to unfold, evolve, grow and change.” I sense something meaningful in this ostensibly simple idea; something important for understanding not only research, but also multiculturalism. I explore this in the next part of my letter. As I try to write here I also recognize that I am an embodiment of many of the formalistic/categorical views of the literature.

I am Ms. Multicultural.
Yes, I am Ms. Multicultural. Yet I also recognize that I have evolved; I have grown. I see changes in myself, changes that I feel need to be introduced into the multicultural world in which we live. I see these changes reflected in my developing relationship with Pam (detailed in chapter six). During the course of our relationship I slowly, somewhat hesitantly and initially reluctantly, backed away from thinking of her as visible minority, Black, immigrant. When I abandoned the crusade I was on for my Holy Grail, the pre-formed vessel into which I had poured all my hopes, dreams and desires, I began to relate, not to an object, but to a person, to Pam.

When Pam was no longer playing understudy for an abstract “TYPE”, I could behold more aspects of her character, aspects that had been hidden in the shadows of the looming categories. I could see possibilities, whereas before I had seen problems. I also recognize that there is a paradox at work here. I wonder if the categories were as prescriptive as they seemed to be when I applied them, and measured Pam against them, or if that was how I interpreted them. (It becomes complicated thinking about this. My writing may be perceived to be linear, as though there was a direct progression from one kind of thinking to, behold! a more “enlightened” form of thinking. There is no luminous narrative butterfly spreading her wings as she emerges from the confines of a theory cocoon. The thinking I was doing, am doing, folds back in
on itself over and over and over. That is why I say I am still Ms. Multicultural, yet I have grown and changed.)

Time was a factor in developing this awareness. My inquiry in Bay Street School provided opportunities to be with Pam and her students over a long period. Over the course of time, Pam could evolve, grow, and change. She appeared to become far more complex than could be fit into many of the prevalent multicultural categories. While some the literature on Black women teachers was important to me in the beginning of the inquiry, I gradually came to rely on it less. I questioned the lack of complexity in some writing about Black women teachers (e.g. Henry, 1996; Collins, 1991), even though those same researchers called for stories that perplex and confound, stories that recognize complexity. I questioned why Black women teachers' practice was homogenized into a smooth whole (blackwomenteacherspractice), when I found one teacher's practice to be so complex. (I have not read any articles that discuss whitewomenteacherspractice.) I questioned looking at teachers as purveyors of "culturally relevant pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Pam's practice seemed to have some components of this pedagogy, but not all, and they seemed different than described in Ladson-Billing's work. I questioned the thinking behind the move to "empower" minorities so prevalent in the literature (e.g. Cummins, 1989). Pam made me aware that labeling her as unempowered was unacceptable to her. Pam did not want to be labeled, categorized, or judged on the basis of categories others might use to form their judgments. "I'm not Black first," she said, "I'm not a woman first, I'm a human."
Labels have some value, as I discuss in the next section, but they limited my understanding of Pam. When I no longer buried her under the weight of the requirements I perceived as belonging to the categories of immigrant teacher, Black woman teacher, etc., Pam could burst free of the restraints I had placed on her, surface, and become visible. Pam could become herself. (Remember the transformation of Koto Woman?) Pam was not the only one who was freed; I was also freed from theoretical bonds. I could begin to "hear" what she was saying to her students in The Stolen Stickers and The Bankbook; I could begin to "see" what she was doing with her students in The Teapot and Swinging on a Star.

Coming Out of the Shadows

Labels and categories, lines of work, do serve a purpose; they can be meaningful. I learned a great deal from reading many multicultural writers. As I said in an earlier part of my letter, when I was initially struggling with how to see Pam and her practice, you, Rosebud, recommended I read, amongst others, two books, Lisa Delpit's (1995) Other People's Children: Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom, and Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Students. As I read the books I found aspects of Pam's practice reflected in their work. Both writers helped me to develop an awareness that a Black teacher's practice might look different than what I thought I saw in my practice.
Lisa Delpit writes of her early teaching experiences. In her school the White teachers thought of themselves as what she terms “progressive educators”, meaning “they structured learning environments that allowed the children’s intellect to flourish” (p. 13). She thought of herself as one of those teachers, too, rather than seeing herself as being like the older, more traditional, Black women teachers in the school. The “traditional” teachers had strict rules, had students sit in seats, made students practice handwriting, and corrected oral and written grammar. They exhibited their knowledge and authority in the classroom. Delpit followed the “progressive” way of teaching; her White students succeeded, her Black students did not do as well. Over the years Delpit’s teaching shifted to look more like the “traditional” Black teachers in the school.

In her graduate school experiences Delpit learned more innovative methods, such as “process writing” and “whole language”, which were sweeping across classrooms. However, she also heard criticism of these approaches from some Black teachers who felt it did not work as well with their Black students. These teachers felt it was important to teach students the oral and written forms demanded by “the mainstream”, not to continually work with developing fluency they felt the students already possessed. Delpit questioned process writing and whole language approaches as methods that were not necessarily suitable for Black children.

As I read through the essays in Delpit’s book, I began to realize that Pam might have other goals in mind than those I had in mind as I taught minority students. She might have different means of
achieving her goals, too. I also read A. J. Verdelle’s (1996) *The
Good Negress*, a (fictional/autobiographical) account of a young
girl who leaves the South and moves to the North where she
encounters a teacher who insists that she use proper forms of
written and spoken language. This teacher pushes her to the limit
each day, and has high expectations of her; something she had not
experienced in the past, either in her family life or in her
school life. Delpit and Verdelle helped me “see” Pam’s practice in
a new light. Pam seemed rigid to me at first. She would often send
students back to their desks with the words, “This is not your
best. You can do better. You will do better.” I would look at the
work and find it satisfied me. However, I did not know the
children.

In *The Dreamkeepers* (1994) Gloria Ladson-Billings uses her own
experiences of being an African American child in American
schools, and being an African American parent living in an African
American neighborhood, as well as her research, to discuss the
practice of successful teachers of African American students. Her
key term is “culturally relevant pedagogy”; that is “the kind of
teaching that the African American community has identified as
having its children’s best interests at heart. It is about the
kind of teaching that helps students choose academic success” (p.
13). Ladson-Billings also indicates that she hopes her work
extends to teaching students of any race and ethnicity.

I found the insights she gained from reflecting on her experiences
were useful for me to develop an understanding of Pam. Ladson-
Billings tells a story of a teacher she had who did choir in the
school. Everyone was expected to belong. Pam had what I perceived as a similar inclusive attitude towards her students. All students had to participate in activities in the class. ESL students recited poetry, read books, wrote creative pieces. Children who attended “special classes” were expected to participate in all aspects of class life.

As a child Ladson-Billings felt that her teachers were not removed from her and her family, but rather, they had a sense of their dreams and aspirations. She describes the teachers in her study as not being strangers in the community. This was the sense that I began to get with Pam. Pam was embedded in the community. She knew the parents. She knew mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. She knew the family history. A child in her class was not only an individual, but part of a connected family system. There were many other echoes of Pam in the teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy in Ladson-Billings’ study. They stressed developing leadership and decision making skills. They worked on having students learn to think. They did not praise students for work that was not their best.

While I found echoes of what Pam did in the categories used to describe “culturally relevant pedagogy”, Pam never seemed fully to meet all the qualifications necessary to be a teacher with this kind of practice, at least not in the way I was interpreting it. Lisa Delpit’s and Gloria Ladson-Billings’ work had initially helped me understand Pam’s practice, but I had turned them into prescriptions that had to be filled to the letter. When Pam was
measured against the rigid requirements I imposed on her, she often came up short.

To give you a flavour of what I mean I will tell you about Pam’s interactions in the community. Pam did not go out into the community as described in the *Dreamkeepers*. She was not an activist, was not out there on weekends with her students, did not take them to church. I initially tried to stretch Pam to meet this requirement; then when I could not stretch her far enough, I was disappointed and felt she was somehow lacking. With a letting go of the qualifications, again at least as I interpreted them, Pam could shine in her own way. Over time she did seem to be connected to the parents, in particular to many of the mothers. When she would meet a mother, they would talk about not only the child in her class, but the sister she had taught several years before. She would know the names of the six brothers and sisters. She spoke in her low, intimate voice, sometimes with an arm around their shoulders. I slowly realized that being connected to the community could look different in different places, at different times.

I began to think that the *Dreamkeepers* was somewhat narrowly framed. Ladson-Billings presented things as certain. The incredible complexity of what was going on in a classroom like Pam’s was lost in this book with the thin slices and skimpy vignettes from eight different teachers. (I recognize the demands of publication shape the way we write.) I also think a teacher’s practice is more dilemma ridden than the slices that she shows. There is a sense of a phenomenological reduction to the essence of what is culturally relevant pedagogy; this becomes most apparent
in the tables that summarize aspects of the pedagogy. In the distilling from each person’s practice I experienced a sense of discontinuity with what I was seeing in Pam’s class.

This discontinuity caused me to deeply question what I was reading. I realized that categories helped me understand multicultural teaching and learning, but, more or less, in an abstract way. “Culturally relevant pedagogy” could not apply fully in a real situation, in a real classroom, over a long period of time. A classroom like Pam’s is too complex, the students’ situations are too diverse. Being in the midst of life with Pam and her students, I could see that multicultural teaching and learning was more complex than was articulated in theory.

I do see a lot in the work of multicultural writers such as Lisa Delpit and Gloria Ladson-Billings, but in the person, Pam, I see much more. I wonder if from the last two parts of the letter (chapters eight and nine) you have a sense of how I began to feel that Pam’s knowledge was more complex than many of the theories articulated. I also wonder if you have a sense of what I came to feel, of Pam’s knowledge, as I said before, being bound up in children. Pam’s personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) is of children, and children’s lives. Pam pays attention to the details of the life of a child. Pam enters into the flow of a child’s life, into the child’s narrative; she is in the midst of the children’s lives. Pam is, for me, a “natural narrativist”. (Oh, I do seem to love labels, don’t I?).
I did (partially) struggle out of the theoretical restraints I had placed myself under. During my inquiry I did (partially) learn not to impose labels, which I began to see as limitations, on Pam, as I saw she did not put labels, limitations, on her students, their parents, or the community. In my conversations with Pam, in her interactions with other teachers and with parents, Pam did not use labels so frequently found in the literature, (and so much a part of the other teachers’ stories, the school story, and the board story). Pam did not describe the community as low socio-economic; she questioned this stamp being placed on it. She did not describe the school as inner-city; she was disturbed by this notion being engraved on it. Pam did not talk about the students as being at risk, or minorities, or disadvantaged, or poor, or from single-parent families as much of the critical pedagogy literature does (e.g. Darder, 1991). Nor did Pam talk about the children as being their learning disabilities¹. (Once she did ask me if I thought George was autistic.)

I recognize that these labels are often used by people who want to help students succeed; however, my point is that Pam did not use those lenses to look at them, and she did not use that language to talk with them, or about them. Pam did not slot the children into categorical boxes that might become life-long prisons with no possibility of escape. In Pam’s classroom children were not left in the shadows of categories, but rather, came out into the light as people with complex, storied lives. In education, a field, perhaps like so many other fields, dominated by labels, Pam has
taught me to peer at what is under the labels. She has taught me to look at life.

In *White Teacher*, Vivian Paley (1979) expresses a similar view about labeling behaviour and intelligence. For Paley, the key to unlocking understanding lies in knowing the students, not in knowing the labels. However, Paley does use cultural descriptors as a means of knowing her students. These descriptors seem to enable her to think about and write about her students. Pam seldom referred to children by cultural descriptors. Pam did not stress culture, or cultural differences (yet she did seem to value these things, at least as I saw at, for example, the Pan festival).

Pam seldom described the children in her class as Vietnamese, Chinese, Portuguese, or any other “ese”. I, on the other hand, did use culturally and linguistically oriented labels. I thought of the children as Rastafarian, Vietnamese, ESL, refugee, immigrant, and other “cultural descriptors” a Ms. Multicultural wants to use. I used those categories to help me understand them. Pam did not do that. A puzzle for me that remains was how Pam appeared to be so knowledgeable about children’s lives, yet so disinterested in cultural descriptors used in the literature, in Board policies, in school programs. It was a dilemma for me because I thought the descriptors were useful. This created a tension between Pam and me, a tension never fully resolved (chapter six).

If Pam did not use descriptors I and others have found to be so useful, how did she look at the children? She stressed treating the students as people with narrative histories. Her work with
them was as individuals, not as members of particular cultural
groups, or language groups, or learning groups, or other groups.
(This is also what some of the multicultural literature calls for,
e.g. Baruth & Manning, 1992, that is to not look at a student as
representing a particular cultural group, but to relate to them as
individuals.) Pam had relationships with George, Tara, Annette and
Aisha.

Why is that? I feel she was able to do this because Pam knew the
children. She was more in the story of their lives than I was. She
told me, for example, about a child, "I met her in the womb". She
told me stories about one child's aunt, another child's
grandmother. She knew brothers and sisters and friends. Pam told
me story after story of the children, their siblings, their
parents. The more you know of a person, the more you can trust
what you know of them as individuals, the less you have to rely on
categories. The less you are in the stories of their lives, the
more you have to rely on the categories.

The more I was in the story, the less I used categories. This is
most apparent in my relationship with Pam where she became Pam,
not the immigrant teacher, or the Black teacher. Cultural and
linguistic categories, however, were important to me in
understanding the children, and remain important to me. They were
my entry into the children's lives. The categories were like
windows I could look through to begin to understand their lives.

As Ms. Multicultural I am unable to give up fully the categories;
and I believe, they do make a difference to lives. As a
narrativist, I recognize that these categories were a way of learning more about the students. (In asking George in *The Teapot* about his ability to speak his native language, I learned about his relationship with his parents.) Pam did not need to look through those windows. Pam could see under labels. Pam was looking beyond culture.

I see these ideas mirrored in the philosophical literature on multiculturalism I have read, in particular the work of Maxine Greene. Maxine Greene (1993) cautions against using what she terms “fixities” that may cause us to look at someone as representative of a group. For her, “Cultural background surely plays a part in shaping identity.” (p. 16); but the personal history and circumstances of the individual also play a part. She calls for “continuous and authentic personal encounters” (p. 13) between people; she looks for the human relationships that develop under the labels.

In Bay Street School, and in Pam’s classroom I see efforts to work with students as members of cultural groups and as individuals. In fostering programs such as the International Languages Program, in developing community events such as the Multicultural Fair, I see that Bay Street School values children’s culture, protects their native languages, takes care of the aspects of identity related to group involvement. Pam values the intricacies of the individual aspects of children’s identities, what makes them special as people that goes beyond cultural and linguistic aspects. For me, both aspects are integral to understanding students in our classes. Both aspects are important to create environments where
children can feel they belong. (See Taylor, 1994, for a discussion of these dual aspects of identity.)

*Summary*

With a narrative view I see that in life, in research, in research-life in a classroom, we are in the midst of an evolving story. Places, people, and plots are continually in transition. In a similar way, with a narrative view I see that multiculturalism is in transition, under development and continually evolving. With a narrative view I believe there is a limitation in our capacity to understand the nature of multicultural teaching and learning, and human relationships in multicultural situations, when formalistic/theoretical approaches are adopted because those theories shine a light on some things brightly, but outside the beam we can not see what is happening. With a narrative view we can see across the theoretical beams. We can see into the humanity of dealing with individuals.
It is my sense that some ground breaking work in understanding various disabilities has been made by people who do not look at the disability so much as they look at the person. I am thinking, primarily, of Oliver Sacks (e.g. 1989) who is making major strides in understanding people with "disabilities", such as deafness, by constructing them in a different way. He enters into the lives of those he studies, admittedly only briefly, and sees how they live in daily interactions. Very often he places himself in situations where he is the one who appears to have a "disability". For example, Sacks has worked with people who have Usher’s Syndrome, that is people who are born deaf, and also progressively lose their sight. They have excellent night vision until the final stage of total blindness. Sacks has placed himself in situations where night vision is of extreme importance, and he is then the one with the disability.
Chapter XI

Narrative Multiculturalism: A Life Long Inquiry

In previous chapters I concentrated on the heart and soul of my inquiry--being in a multicultural school, Bay Street School; being in a classroom in the school; developing a relationship with my participant, Pam, and learning from this relationship; learning about myself, about research, about narrative inquiry, and about multicultural education. In this chapter I move away from the intensity of that experience. I return to a discussion of the context of multiculturalism that I originally began to explore in chapter two where I introduced the term “narrative multiculturalism”, and briefly linked the ideas of narrative and multiculturalism.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore the links between multiculturalism in education and other disciplines, to explore the place of multiculturalism in education, and to continue to explore the potential of a narrative approach to contribute to the ongoing discussion on multiculturalism. I attempt to position my work in this broader context, and to articulate the contribution my work can make to this discussion, one that I see as occurring across cultures, across societies, and across disciplines. I think that my work in one school, in one classroom, with one teacher, has a place in this discussion. I also map out my future program of research, which I feel will be a life-long inquiry. The ideas in this chapter are under development, in transition, somewhat sketchy; I anticipate exploring them throughout my career.
Reflective of this change in focus, the tone of this chapter shifts, perhaps rather dramatically, from the intimate, up-close, personal one of the previous chapters on the classroom, to a more distant one (not an aloof, uncaring, indifferent one, simply one that is less passionate). As a reader you may feel consternation at this somewhat abrupt change in tone; you may feel the thinking and writing is abstract, removed. To mitigate this feeling somewhat, in portions of the chapter where it seems appropriate, I attempt to personalize the discussion by weaving in understandings from my work with Pam. I recognize that this endeavor is not entirely successful. Again, bear with me, as you have in other parts of this work; I have a sense, that however difficult it is to blend this discussion into this work, this broad context is important to explore.

Multiculturalism Across Disciplines

I see my research as broadly linked to evolving discussions about multicultural issues occurring in cultures and societies around the globe, and across disciplines. In political science, multiculturalism in Europe, Canada and the United States is increasingly linked to discussions of global democratization (e.g. Dyer, 1997). In philosophy, multiculturalism is of central concern in debates about developing human potentials in democratic societies (e.g. Nussbaum, 1997), in expanding notions of community (e.g. Greene, 1993), and in understanding the nature of modern day identity (Taylor, 1994). In psychology, the impact of multiculturalism is so strong it has been described as “the fourth
wave", after psychoanalytic, behaviorist, and humanist approaches (Sue, Ivey & Pederson, 1996). In the philosophy of science, the multicultural roots of science are being explored (e.g. Harding, 1998). In women's studies, scholars are examining linguistic and cultural diversity as previously neglected aspects of understanding gender and class issues, women's epistemological and moral perspectives, and the production of knowledge (e.g. Tarule, Golberger, Clinchy & Belenky, 1996). In ethnography, this period of time is called "the sixth moment" (Denzin, 1997), a time defined by a diversity of interpretive epistemologies grounded in the lived experience of previously excluded groups, a time that questions whose knowledge is valid, a time when people studied have their own ideas on how their experiences are to be interpreted, theorized, represented, and disseminated.

**Multiculturalism in Education**

Multiculturalism, the ways that people of different backgrounds live together, and ideas we have about this, have permeated and changed many disciplines; however, perhaps none is as profoundly affected as education. Multiculturalism is said to be the key educational issue of our epoch (Kalantzis & Cope, 1992). Indeed, there is a great deal of interest in multicultural education today, in terms of practice in schools (e.g. Banks & Banks, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Nieto, 1992; Olsen, 1988), as a body of scholarship (Gay, 1995), and as an area of research (Grant & Tate, 1995). In the United States there are significant indicators of the developing importance of multiculturalism. For example, prominent universities have created centres, such as Princeton University’s
Center for Human Values, founded in 1991, to support teaching, research and public discussions of fundamental questions related to diversity that span academic disciplines (Gutmann, 1994). Universities throughout the United States are engaged in preparing teachers and university professors to be multicultural educators; influential professional bodies such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Education Association published policy statements on multicultural education as early as the 1970’s (Gay, 1995). Educational bodies such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA), have made issues of diversity of paramount importance. In 1995, AERA published the first Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (Banks & Banks, 1995), and commissioned a task force to examine diversity in the structure, organization, and membership of AERA (AERA, 1997); and in 1998 the theme of the Annual Meeting was “Diversity and Citizenship in Multicultural Societies”. (See Gay, 1995, p. 27-30, for an elaboration of the impact of multiculturalism on the field of education.) A similar process is happening in Canada. The Canadian Society for the Study of Education Annual Meeting in 1997 focused on diversity and citizenship; in 1998, one of the main areas of focus of the conference program was immigration.

Multiculturalism permeates all levels of education, from primary school to graduate school (Kalantzis & Cope, 1992). Many American universities have established cross-disciplinary courses on multiculturalism to fulfill undergraduate degree requirements. (See Nussbaum, 1997, for a rationale for the reform of liberal arts education; much of the reform centering on including
previously excluded voices of women and minorities from the syllabi of university courses.) In Canada, many faculties of education have integrated multicultural courses into programs (Masemann & Mock, 1987). Provinces in Canada have created commissions (e.g. Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994) which have multicultural education as a mandate. Boards of education have developed multicultural/anti-racist policies (e.g. Ontario, 1992). This rethinking at the policy level is taking place in response to changes in societies, in particular in response to changing student demographics, most evident in urban areas where teachers teach in increasingly diverse schools (Dentler & Hafner, 1997; Moodley, 1995).

Challenges and Potentials of Multicultural Research

There is a recognition that multiculturalism is important in all levels of education. There is also increasing recognition that there is a need for more research into multiculturalism (Grant & Tate, 1995). We face many challenges in doing multicultural research. One challenge is finding the time necessary to develop understandings of multiculturalism; we may be in too much of a hurry to find quick, ready-made solutions to our concerns. Kalantzis and Cope (1992), in discussing multiculturalism in education, referred to academics as “impatient”, wanting “solutions right away, without giving academe time to debate and develop them thoroughly” (p. B3). We need to take time at the social, political, institutional, and personal levels to research, discuss, and reflect on multicultural issues. I have a sense that long-term inquiries, such as the one I engaged in with Pam at Bay 241
Street School, can contribute to an in-depth understanding of multiculturalism.

Another major challenge we face is that multicultural educational research is lodged, perhaps mired, in common, taken-for-granted ways of thinking, often hidden behind labels; and it is in need of, and is in active search of, new ways of thinking about these issues (Phillion, in press). This insight was impressed upon me in my work, as discussed in chapter six, where I referred to myself, somewhat ironically, as Ms. Multicultural, a term I used to acknowledge my taking-for-granted existing multicultural ways of thinking. That is not to say that I disregard the work that has been done in the field; my sense is that I need to continue to build on work already undertaken to further develop understandings of multiculturalism.

However, I feel there is a need for new ways to look at these issues. Others, as well, have recognized the need to nurture new methods, and new forms of representation, more appropriate to the multicultural phenomena studied. Gloria Ladson-Billings, (e.g. 1994), has developed the use of videos played back to research participants in focus groups to create a group analysis of practice; a method based on her philosophical and epistemological position. Ming Fang He (1998), developed a composite auto/biographical method to portray the complexity of moving between cultures. For me, narrative inquiry, while not new, has untapped potential for the study of multicultural phenomena, and has untapped potential to increase understanding of multiculturalism.
Multiculturalism is a major educational challenge of the twenty-first century. But, to see multiculturalism only as a challenge may be to perceive it as a problem, something that needs to be "fixed". Multiculturalism is more than that. Research on multiculturalism has potential to provide opportunities to inform practice, to enhance understandings of school reform, and to develop possibilities to enrich societies by furthering discourse on democracy (see Banks & Banks, 1995, for an elaboration of these ideas). The field of education also has the potential to create new understandings of multiculturalism that could impact on other fields (see Glazer, 1997, for a discussion of how education is leading the way in discussions of multiculturalism).

Formalistic and Narrative Approaches to Multiculturalism

Narrative inquiry is an approach that focuses on contextualized, historicized, placed studies of experience (for examples of this work, see Conle, 1993; He, 1998). I feel that narrative inquiry shows promise for contributing to the evolving discussion on multiculturalism by opening up new perspectives on both phenomena, and on methods used to study phenomena.

Why would I say this? For me, narrative inquiry opens up new perspectives because of fundamental differences in the approach taken in narrative to understanding the phenomenon under study. An important distinction between narrative inquiry and many other forms of inquiry is that for narrative inquirers, experience, not theory and its formal set of terms, is the starting point of
inquiry. My narrative inquiry with Pam in Bay Street School, a temporal, contextual, experiential, situated study can be contrasted with what Clandinin & Connelly (in progress) call "formalism".

Formalists say that the facts of the case, the experiences one claims to have, or the data collected by empiricist researchers, have little bearing on their claims. A person, they argue, can never see themselves as they are since they are always something else; specifically, they are whatever social structure, ideology, theory or framework is at work in the inquiry.

Some of the leading work in multiculturalism, and some of the major strides in understanding the nature of multiculturalism, have been made by people working in the formalist tradition (e.g. Banks 1993; Ogbu 1978). Though it is an over-statement, in general, many multicultural researchers tend to work with pre-existing typologies of diversity, and use them as categories which they fit over peoples’ experiences. Berlak (in press), for example, in a study of her own anti-racist teaching, derived a set of categories from a specific Holocaust theory, and applied the terms “witnessing”, “bearing witness”, and “becoming witnesses” to categorize teacher and student behaviour.

There are researchers and educators who are moving in the direction of understanding personal experience, as narrative inquirers do. Some qualitative studies have focused on understandings of participants’ school experiences. Feuerverger (1997) examined the experiences of international language teachers (teachers who teach languages other then English or French). "New" ethnographers researching experiences of cultural groups to which
they are, at least partially, insiders (e.g. Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996) have developed an awareness of multiculturalism that takes into account perspectives of parents of their children’s experiences in schools. Teachers writing autobiographically about their multicultural practices have examined their own experiences (e.g. Paley, 1979; Solnicki, 1992). Life history researchers (e.g. Thiessen, Bascia, & Goodson, 1996) have looked at the experiences of immigrant teachers in schools. Researchers searching for cross-cultural understandings (e.g. Bateson, 1994; Delpit, 1995) have also contributed insights into understanding personal experience.

Other work has examined the historical and social context of multiculturalism. Banks’ (1996) recent edited volume of studies exploring the historical roots of multiculturalism, how history and socialization interact in communities, and personal aspects of multiculturalism provides an historical, temporal, perspective on multiculturalism that contextualizes in ways that narrative inquirers also attempt to do.

Other elements of a narrative inquiry--relational, experiential aspects--are most vividly present in autobiographical literature written by immigrants of their experiences in societies and schools (e.g. Hoffman, 1989; Kingston, 1975); in novels written about the experience of being Black in society and school (e.g. Morrison, 1970, 1977, 1987; Verdelle, 1996); and in some experimental work on cross-cultural experiences (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987). However, very little explicitly narrative work has been done in multiculturalism.
While my primary focus was on understanding experience, at different stages of my inquiry I attempted to apply theories from the research literature to Pam and her practice (see chapter ten). I had come into the inquiry with a certain belief in theories I had read about prior to the inquiry. (I also recognize that I had viewed these theories as "prescriptions" when they may have been more open than that.) They were further reinforced when I worked with newly immigrated teachers, teachers I did not observe in their classrooms. Even though I had thought of myself as a narrative inquirer, I had neglected to use my own experiences, particularly those in travel and teaching, to help me understand multiculturalism. In my inquiry in Bay Street School with Pam I had my reified theoretical notions of multiculturalism shattered (see chapter six and ten); in the shattering I came to see that people do not fit comfortably into pre-made theoretical categories, categories that can sabotage the diversity and complexity of someone's experiences.

Pam always seemed to spill over the parameters of the categories prescribed by the theory. She always seemed to fulfill some aspects, but not to fulfill others of what constituted the particular theory (e.g. culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings, 1994; Black teacher as role model, Graham, 1987; immigrant teacher as empathetic to minorities, Su, 1996a). At times I felt frustrated. Some theories seemed to be like checklists (Ladson-Billings, 1994, actually does have charts that seem to be like lists) that denoted the proper way to teach, the
proper way to be an immigrant, or a Black, or a woman. As I "measured" Pam against the checklists, she often did not "fit". (Like the guests at Procrustes' Inn, when she was placed on the bed of theory she was either too "tall", and would have to have her legs cut off to fit, or she came up too "short", and would have to be stretched.) Yet, I recognized there was much more going on in her practice than could be measured by the theory. Applying these theories omitted the subtle, complex, every-day, on-going quality of the way multiculturalism was lived out, expressed, and addressed in the classroom and in Pam's life. It is in the multicultural life going on in classrooms across Canada, and around the world, that we can find insights that can contribute to developing new understandings of multiculturalism.

In my inquiry as I learned that Pam's practice was too complex to fit into a theory, I searched for new ways to think about, talk about, and write about multiculturalism. I wanted to honor Pam, as a person with a complex, nuanced life, as a teacher with a complex, thoughtful practice; not depict her as a typical representative of pre-established categories. In my inquiry I found that Pam herself did not subscribe to labeling and categorizing her students according to current theories, or psychological models; rather, she responded to students as complex human beings with personal narrative histories, with life experiences, with futures. As I slowly learned that Pam did not categorize students, so I slowly learned that her experiences were too complex for me to categorize. These understandings did not come easily; they were achieved through extensive time with Pam, informal "running dialogues" and discussions focused on co-
developed understandings of her experiences. Unraveling these understandings is also not a one-time thing. (My field texts are computerized and indexed; I shall return to them as a context for understanding my future work as well.)

Narrative Multiculturalism

With a narrative multicultural approach I focused on experience, rather than theory, as the starting point of the inquiry. Narrative multiculturalism, of course, has theoretical roots (see chapter two for details). My work derives sustenance from Dewey’s (1938) theories of educational experience, Schwab’s (in Westbury & Wolcoff, 1978) fluid inquiry, and Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990, in press) narrative inquiries. These theories are part of the story of the inquiry. My experiences are also part of the story. My work is embedded in, grows from, and flourishes with, the multicultural life I lead and the lives of people in multicultural societies. My work is rooted in my personal experiences, my travel and teaching, and my research experiences.

My experiences of Bay Street School and my relationship with Pam are a major part of the story of the inquiry. I came to understand my time in the school as time spent in the midst of an unfolding story. Bay Street School was in process; Pam was in process; and her students were in process. My understanding of Pam and Pam’s work was informed by theoretical and experiential narrative roots. The term I am currently exploring in an attempt to portray this experiential, fluid, evolving notion of multiculturalism is narrative multiculturalism.
Narrative multiculturalism is both phenomenon and method. In my narrative multicultural research, I connected my experiences as researcher to the people, places and phenomena I studied. I slowly recognized the complexity, continuity, history and situatedness of experience, and explored alternative ways of researching, interpreting, and representing this enmeshment in multicultural lives. For me, narrative multiculturalism is a person-centered, experiential, reflective approach, one that opens up possibilities for understanding little explored in existing literature in educational research, possibilities founded in the experiences of those people studied, derived from the contexts in which they live and learn, and entangled with the lives of those engaged in the research. I see narrative multiculturalism as thriving on relationships, and learning from being in the relationships. I see narrative multiculturalism as also involving aesthetic and emotional realms of understanding.

I am not alone in my attempts to break away from a fixed theoretical position on multiculturalism. My work links to work on multicultural identity which describes identity, not as fixed, not as stable, but rather, as fluid, evolving (He, 1998). My work links to other work, often in non-education fields, where there have been concerted efforts to move away from a fixed stance, and from the use of pre-established categories, to turn to more reflective, self-conscious research practices (e.g. Clifford, 1986; Denzin, 1997). Many pre-determined categories formerly used to explain peoples’ experiences are being discarded, as there is an increasing recognition that these categories have been derived,
not from those studied, or with those studied, but imposed by those who are doing the studying (Clifford, 1986). I am not alone in seeing research as a relationship, or in my efforts to illuminate the position of the researcher, (e.g. Cole & Knowles, 1993). Nor am I alone in trying to create texts that attempt to represent these aspects of research (Clifford, 1988).

It is my hope that in reading my work that you have developed at least a partial understanding of what narrative multiculturalism means to me. I can make no definitive statements about narrative multiculturalism at this time. This term is under exploration. Like narrative inquiry, like multiculturalism, I see the term as expansive, as open, as generative. For me, narrative multiculturalism is more than the sum of its parts; it is also about possibilities, possibilities of how we can inquire into experiences in our lives, of how we can understand and make meaning of experiences in our lives, of how we can live our lives. For me, narrative multiculturalism is ultimately about possibilities for cultivating human potentials in our diversifying, globalizing, democratizing societies. As a kind of creed, narrative multiculturalism recognizes and affirms differences, yet searches for similarities, thrives on passion, develops compassion, builds empathy, aims at cultivating humanity and developing world citizens, with goals of social justice and equity for a hopeful future.
A Life Long Inquiry

Narrative "endings" seem to be different than in many other forms of research. At one point someone suggested that I needed to bring "closure" to my work. My sense was then, and is now, that for me, closure is not a term I would use in a narrative inquiry. It is more as though there are pauses in the inquiry; there are connections in narrative inquiry like spaces between breaths. I feel I have only begun to scratch the surface of understanding in this inquiry; that I have barely had time to begin to explore the potential of narrative ways of understanding multiculturalism. I am puzzled by more now than when the inquiry began. I am still searching for, reaching for, a narrative way of expressing the encompassing, inclusive ways Maxine Greene (e.g. 1993) writes about multiculturalism.

I have only begun to understand the meaning of what it will be like to have a research program that uses narrative to understand multiculturalism. In the next section I explore my developing research program through a discussion of aspects of multiculturalism I have begun to investigate. I see my future research program as branching in two major directions. The first is a continuation of the work I began in Bay Street School with Pam. In this branch of my research I will continue a focus on people leading multicultural lives in educational settings. In the other branch I will focus on the historical and political contexts of multiculturalism in Canada and the United States (and perhaps relate them to an international context). In this aspect of my research I will examine multicultural and other related policies.
at the federal, provincial, and board levels. I will examine the history of multiculturalism, a task I began in chapter four with an examination of the history of Bay Street School. I plan to use the policy and historical contexts to shed light on the community, school, and classroom; and the school, community, and classroom to shed light on the policy and historical contexts. In this way, one branch of my future research program will inform the other branch.

One Branch of My Future Inquiry:

Continuing the Intimacy

In my future work I want to contextualize multiculturalism narratively, that is to look at it in terms of temporality, place, and interaction. I want to examine the history of the neighbourhood in which my research school is embedded. I want to explore the idea of landscape in multiculturalism more fully than I have done in this work. This might involve, for example, an examination of architecture (something I briefly explored in my walks around the community). I hope for a more intimate, up-close examination of the everyday experiences of my participants; I want to be more a part of the life of what I am researching. This would involve living in the community, shopping in the same places, engaging in many of the same activities. I hope for increased ties with Bay Street School, or another multicultural school. I am not sure how to do that given time constraints. I also hope for increased ties with the community, which would involve research based on community interests and concerns. I believe community issues are practical issues. For example, in parent-teacher interviews with Pam I heard parents focus on why their children do
not read well, or why their math skills are low, or why English takes so long to learn.

A focus on interests arising from community concerns would involve working closely with parents and parent groups. If I were to remain in Bay Street School, this could be facilitated by relationships I have established. This could also mean research with students, something I began at the Masters level, and remain passionate about doing. Recently there is more interest in working with students to understand multicultural issues, more awareness of what we can learn from students (e.g. McKay & Wong, 1996; Nieto, 1994; Thiessen, Campbell, Jacka & Varma, 1998). This would involve different kinds of permissions from boards of education, which might be difficult to negotiate.

I recognize that working with community concerns might move my focus even further away from the more narrowly culturally defined sense of multiculturalism with which I began my inquiry, to look at even broader aspects of education of immigrant children. John Davies, a former Director of the Toronto Board of Education, said the major concern facing educators in Toronto (and elsewhere--in looking at literature from the United States people have articulated similar concerns) is the question, "Why is it that socio-economic status is related to school performance, and what can we do to change this situation?" (fieldnotes, May 26b, 1998)
Another Branch of My Future Inquiry:

*History is a River That Flows Through the Living*

To situate my future work in the study and practice of multicultural education, I will also need to investigate the broader context of multiculturalism in Canada, the United States, and perhaps, other contexts. Whereas multiculturalism has arisen from different historical roots, different governmental orientations, and addresses somewhat different concerns in Canada than the United States, both in the past and currently, there are also related issues under discussion in both countries. To understand these issues today, I will have to look at the history of multiculturalism.

Why is it important to understand the history of multiculturalism? I partially resonate with the statement "History is a river that flows underneath the living" (Davis, cited in Renzetti, 1998). Perhaps, from a narrative perspective, I could say, "History is a river that flows through the living". The histories of multiculturalism in Canada and the United States affect our policies and practices of multiculturalism today. Histories of multiculturalism affect how we think about, research, write about, and envision it. In the United States "the melting pot" has been a dominant social narrative (Glazer, 1997); in Canada it has been "the cultural mosaic" (Moodley, 1995). We live inside these grand social narratives. I would like to understand these social narratives, the rivers in which we find ourselves.
There are many different positions within the multicultural debate that I will need to explore to begin to understand the narrative history of multiculturalism in the United States. I have begun by examining two perspectives. One is Nathan Glazer’s view in We are all multiculturalists now (1997). For Glazer, Blacks are the driving force of multiculturalism in the United States today. To simplify his position, and put it in my own terms, it as though Glazer operates from a deficit perspective—because of what he has determined to be the adverse circumstances of Blacks, we have multicultural education in its various guises, in increasing areas of curriculum, and in increasing geographic areas (pp. 1-21). Glazer did not engage in research on multiculturalism, nor is there any sense in his work that multiculturalism is about how people live their lives. Rather it seems that, for Glazer, multiculturalism is an abstract theoretical concept, a term to draw on to make broad generalizations about education in the United States today.

In contrast to Glazer’s perspective James Banks takes what I call an activist perspective. In his work on the roots of multiculturalism Banks (1996) employs a conception of multicultural knowledge as intricately tied to social commitment and action designed to further human freedom and justice. For Banks and other educators (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1996), Blacks with this perspective have been the driving force in the creation of multicultural education as it is in the United States today. With this standpoint as the basis for the argument sustained throughout much of his edited volume (1996), he and other authors (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1996) trace the origins of multicultural
education today linking them predominantly to scholarly and activist progenitors in Black history.

Both perspectives, the deficit perspective articulated by Glazer (1997), and the activist perspective articulated by Banks (1996), attribute the increasing prominence of multiculturalism in the United States to Blacks. It is as though part of the story is told by Glazer (1997) and part is told by Banks (1996). As I see it there are some similarities in the perspectives; the puzzle lies in how the narrative histories of the differing viewpoints have evolved. I leave this as a puzzle, and recognize it as part of the complex discourse on multiculturalism today.

Multiculturalism in Canada has arisen from similar roots and in response to similar issues as in the United States. It is interesting to think of two countries, Canada and the United States, side by side, with overlapping histories of mass immigration and overlapping interests in educating populations, yet with different histories of relationships to immigrants, different attitudes towards preservation of "home" languages, and the resulting different expressions of multiculturalism.

I have used the chapter by Kogila Moodley in the Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (Banks & Banks, 1995) to begin to trace the narrative history of Canadian multiculturalism. In examining multiculturalism Moodley found “Canada is one of the few democratic societies that has addressed the issue of cultural and linguistic pluralism, incorporated it into its national identity, and formulated it as a formal state policy of multiculturalism”
As I understand her argument, the roots of the cultural mosaic perspective, and hence the roots of multiculturalism in Canada, can be traced to the federal policy on multiculturalism, the Canadian Multicultural Act of 1971. This policy was the result of the previous policies that conferred equal status on English and French as official languages in Canada. The 1971 policy extended the preservation of cultures to all groups in Canada. For Moodley, it is the preservation of ethnic and linguistic diversity that is the driving force in multiculturalism in Canada today.

To further develop a context for understanding multiculturalism in Canada, I realize it will also be essential to develop an understanding of the policies in play at the federal (e.g. immigration policies) and provincial (e.g. educational policies) levels. These government policies filter down to boards of education where policies (e.g. Ontario, 1992) that directly impact on the classroom are created. It is my sense that my future program of research will have to reach into this context.

It is also my sense that where I want to be is in the schools and in the classrooms where the policies take life. I want to work in intimate connection, and develop relationships with teachers, students and parents. I want to be part of the day-to-day life of the community in which I work.
Summary

It is my hope that my work in Bay Street School, with Pam and her students, contributes to the evolving conversation on multiculturalism; a conversation that continues to grow across disciplines, across countries, around the globe. It is my hope that narrative methods will contribute to developing new perspectives on understanding the experiences of people living multicultural lives. Finally, it is my hope that the coalescence of narrative and multiculturalism may bring to life multicultural landscapes, and multicultural teaching and learning.
Portions of this chapter are in press in an article for Curriculum Inquiry.
Epilogue

**Narrative-Multiculturalism-Love-Hope**

Narrative is a method that is compatible with who I am, how I live and learn, how I make sense of my experiences, others' experiences, and the world.

Narrative is down to earth, of the world, of life.

Narrative is how people talk about their every-day experiences, and share their experiences with others.

Narrative is personal, intimate; relationships are the heart of the process, fuel the inquiry, and inspire the writing.

In my narrative inquiry I was drawn into a relationship with Bay Street School, and with Pam and her students. Being drawn in I lost my sense of distance, felt connected. Connections are at the heart of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is of the world, of the lives and work of people.

Multiculturalism is about the relationships we have with others, from those in the same room, to those across the globe.

Multiculturalism is about our increasing connections to each other in this world; it is about how we can live together, and learn from living together. It is about schools like Bay Street School, and about teachers like Pam.
Multiculturalism is about Aisha and George,
Tara and Annette.
It is about
being open to these children.

Multiculturalism is about the hope
we have that these children
will become all they can be.
Multiculturalism is
about the hope we have
for our schools,
our cities,
our countries,
our world,
our futures.

Narrative and multiculturalism
embed me in people’s lives;
together they provide
a way of viewing the world,
and my relationship to people in the world.

Narrative multiculturalism is
person-centered,
experiential,
reflective.
It opens up new possibilities
for understanding;
possibilities
founded in the experiences
of those studied,
derived from the contexts
in which they live and learn,
entangled with the lives
of those engaged in the research.

Narrative multiculturalism is
about understanding
the daily experiences of people
in this world,
in schools,
in classrooms.
It is about immersion
in the lives and experiences of people,
learning from this immersion,
and learning from all life experiences.

Narrative multiculturalism
thrives on relationships,
and learning from being in the relationships.
Narrative multiculturalism
involves aesthetic and
emotional realms of understanding.
My writing reflects
a narrative multicultural approach.
It reflects time spent in Bay Street School,
relationships with Pam and her students,
and the sense of belonging and connection
I felt to the school,
and to people in the school.

Bay Street School, where you belong.
I felt I belonged in this inquiry.
I felt connected in this inquiry.
I felt I had relationships in this inquiry.
This feeling of being in relationship,
learning from relationship,
infused my inquiry.

I felt friendship
with the community,
the school,
the people in the school,
the parents,
and especially Pam and students in her class.

I felt respect
for the community,
the school,
the people in the school,
the parents,
and Pam and students in her class.

I felt compassion
and empathy.
I felt love.
I felt hope.
I continue to feel love and hope.

Engaging in this narrative multicultural inquiry developed
friendship,
respect,
compassion,
love,
and hope
for communities,
schools,
teachers,
parents,
students.

Friendship,
respect,
compassion,
love,
and hope
shaped my responses to situations and interactions,
shaped my writing,
shaped me as a person,
and will shape my future.
Appendix 1 A
York University

- Correspondence
- Fieldnotes
- Interviews
- Journals
- Letters/Participants
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Appendix I B

Bay Street School

- Correspondence
- Field Visit Summary
- Fieldnote Indexing
- Fieldnotes
- Interviews
- Journals
- Miscellaneous
- Reflective Writing
- Theoretical Memos
Bay Street Correspondance

12 items, 228.9 MB available

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Bay Street Theoretical Memos

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Appendix II

Board Archival Material

The board archives contain a wide variety of materials on Bay Street School. This material is mainly housed in two large folders and one centennial document. In addition, there are general enrollment, attendance, and other records for each school in general documents. Board meeting minutes are also available, indexed to indicate topic and occasionally school.

A) Board Centennial Document: This document “Centennial Story: Board of Education for the City of Toronto, 1850-1950” was created to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the board of education. It was prepared by the staff of the Board, under the direction of E. A. Hardy. The Honorable M. Cochrane was the editor. Toronto, Ont.: Thomas Nelson & Sons (Canada) Ltd. It contains letters from former students, teachers, and administrators who were in the school at different time periods. It also contains replications of photographs taken at different time periods.

B) There are two folders on Bay Street School. One includes excerpts from the diary of the first principal. The entire diary is available from the Toronto Reference Library. There are also excerpts from board meetings that dealt with the school and program implementation in the school. There is a document entitled “I remember when”, edited by John Webster and Wilma Burton, compiled to celebrate the centennial of the school. The folders
contain a variety of newspaper clippings that focus on events in the school, or general educational issues using the school as an example. There are clippings from newsletters about new policies and new programs being implemented in the school. There is also a set of blueprints of the original school building. There is information on the additions made to the school, and alterations to the structure of the building. There are photographs of the school from different time periods, mainly from its earlier days, and photographs of former teachers and students. There is also a collection of assorted other memorabilia. There are documents such as menus from the "Old Boys Club", and lists of awards in the school. There are several documents from the time period when I did my research, including middle school yearbooks, and school philosophy statements.

C) There is a variety of other information available about the school not housed in the two folders and centennial document. This information is in general documents such as school attendance records, board meeting minutes. The museum next to the archives also has board memorabilia.
Appendix III

Project Archival Material

The project archives contain a wide variety of materials on Bay Street School. This material is housed in filing cabinets in the OISE project office. There is additional material in Jean Clandinin’s Centre in Edmonton. Some of this material is duplicates of Board archival material, some is duplicates of materials gathered by the librarian at Bay Street School.

Archiving System

Choice and Deliberation Project

Bay Street Materials

First Level of Organization:

Bay Street School General (green)
Computers (blue)
Science (yellow)
Language (red)
Race Relations (pink)

Second Level of Organization:

Chronological according to date and project
Third Level of Organization:

Ministry of Education and School Board
School
Publications

Fourth Level of Organization:

Ministry of Education and School Board
-policy documents

School
-policy documents
- reports
- booklets
-correspondence
-participants
-workshops

Publications
-proposals
-reports
-booklets/pamphlets
-conference/workshops
Bay Street Files

BAY STREET FILES
FILING CABINET (1)

P.P.K. Project Misc
Micks/Jean’s Files on Phil, etc.

----------------------------------------
Bay Street School - Notices/Minutes of Committee Meetings
04/81 - 06/83

----------------------------------------
Bay Street Curriculum Project
Project Officers’ Report
09/81 - 06/82

----------------------------------------
Project Meeting Minutes
Modes of Knowing Work in Science: A Case Study in Science Education

----------------------------------------
Computers - Bay Street

Bay Street Computers
- Survey on computers
- 1 file Computer - general information
- Personal Practical Knowledge Research Team.
- Master Copies of Bay Street School: Project
- School Philosophy & Direction
- Computers at Bay Street - Students
- Computers at Bay Street - Staff

----------------------------------------
Ministry of Education
Computer Information

----------------------------------------
Computer Correspondence 1985
Computer Interview 1986

----------------------------------------
Bay Street School
Literature Articles
Bay Street School - Daily Notes from Principal #1
05/81 - 11/83
Bay Street School - Daily Notes from Principal #2
11/86-06/87

----------------------------------------
Bay Street School - Study Groups Workshop Materials
04/81 - 06/87
Bay Street School - Notices from TTF, Bd. Of Ed., others.
05/81 - 11/86

----------------------------------------
Bay Street School - Social Activities
05/81 - 05/87
Bay Street School - Film Discussion Sheets

Bay Street Correspondence
  1984 Correspondence
  1985 Correspondence

References - Bay Street

Pseudonym List
  Classroom Studies of Teachers' Personal Knowledge: A Symposium

Bay Street General Information

Bay Street School
  List of Students

Bay Street:
  • Language Development Documents
  • Handouts
  • PPK/Studies of Schooling Handouts

Bay Street - School Report

Bay Street Report 1986

School Interviews 1985

ABC Assessment
  Appraisal for a Better Curriculum

NIE - (Computer Notes)

Philosophy for Children
  World Council for Curriculum & Instruction Newsletter

Winter '83 Reading Course

PPK at Bay Street
  Practical Knowledge

Negotiation of Entry

Bay Street Workshop 1983

R&D Projects - OISE
  05/81 - 04/82

Royal Commission on Declining School Enrollment in Ontario

291
Secondary School Principal Plans for declining enrollments: Strategies & tactics

Ritual Papers

Mudpie Magazine RP #3

Science Fiction - Book List

NIE
  Project Meetings #1
  Project Meetings #2 (empty)

Ontario Education Research Council
  A Conceptualization of the Interface Between Teachers' Practical Knowledge and Theoretical Knowledge in Effecting Board Policy 1980

- Final Week
- 25 - 12/2 '80 (5 copies
- Portrayal

Word Processing Systems

Bay Street Files

BAY STREET FILES
FILING CABINET (2)

Toronto Board
  Proposal and Negotiation of Entry

Project Correspondence
  - Letters P.P.I.
  - NIE Project Correspondence

Bay Street Updated papers
Bay Street 1986 Correspondence

Bay St. School/Context II/II
  - Toronto Board Teacher Evaluation
  - ERIC Fiche of Bay St. Paper #ED222 978
  - Project School Reports
  - Bay Street Handouts - Class
  - Bay Street School - School Procedures/Organization 06/81-06/87

Bay Street - Handouts '86/T
Committee Handouts Staffing etc.
Staff development
Language development
Science Challenge
Science Olympics
Affirmative Action & Race Relations
Mathematics Guidelines
Curriculum Guideline. Mathematics Intermediate & Senior Divisions
Enrollment & Staffing scheduling

School Environment
Mailbox handouts - school procedures & organization
Staff handouts (selected)
Science Workshop 86/87

Case Study - Bay Street - General
Case Study Bay Street
Case Study Bay Street
Case Study Bay Street

Policy Environment
Ministry of Ontario - Provincial Policy Guidelines
Metro Toronto Board Policies

Policy Environment
1975 Every Student Survey. Student’s Background & It’s Relationship to Program Placement
SCORE (School and Community Organizing to Revitalize Education)

Summary of Binder Contents

Reform - Transfer
Memos & Minutes
Computer Printouts & Account

Reform 1068
Computer Files
Zyindex

Bibliography for 1068
Articles for 1068 A-G
Articles for 1068 H-M
Articles for 1068 N-Z
Folk Models
Oral History
• fieldnotes & diskette index
• A-G
• H-M
• N-Z
• Computer Search on Folk

IEA/SSIS Final Report, 1990
Science (SSHRC (IEA/SSIS) Final Report Originals. Volume 1: Overview

IEA/SSIS Final Report, 1990

IEA/SSIS Final Report, 1990

IEA/SSIS Final Report, 1990
References


301


Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs: Washington, DC.


