CHAPTER 4

Narrative Research Genres

Mediating Stories Into Being

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What narrative research genres are available in narrative inquiry?
- Which narrative genre would interest you most and why?
- Which narrative genre will be most compatible with your research design?

INTRODUCTION

Bryan called me again the other day. This time, he had many ideas. He told me that he had some former clients in mind for his interviews.

Me: What do you want to do with them?

Bryan: (proudly) I want to interview them.

Me: Yes, I know. But I mean, what stories do you want to collect from the interviews?

Bryan: (hesitantly) Well, I want to collect their personal stories about . . . like, what brought them to our counseling center and why they quit coming after the first or second counseling session.

Me: And then?

Bryan: And then . . . I want to see what we can do to keep them coming to the center.

Me: Sounds good. But once stories are collected, how are you going to represent them in your research?

Bryan: What do you mean?

Me: I mean, once stories are collected, you will have to choose a narrative genre in which you retell the stories to the reader. I mean, you could retell the story in a biographical form, which includes oral history or life history, or you could write a *Bildungsroman,* or you could use a literary form, which includes short stories, creative nonfiction, fiction, novel, poetry . . .

Bryan: What? Fiction? *Bildungsroman?* Novel? Is it even possible to write fiction for my dissertation?

Some of you may be wondering how you are going to represent your participant's stories in your work. Just like Bryan, you may not have thought that different narrative research genres are available, including arts-based narratives such as fiction, creative nonfiction, and photographic narratives. This chapter is about narrative research genres (or forms). As you begin to think about your research design, including your research topic, research questions, and literature review, you know (sort of) whose and what kind of stories you would like to tell. Hence, the objective of this chapter is to help you determine ways to represent those stories, focusing on different forms (genres) of narrative research.

Narrative Inquirer as a Midwife

In Chapter 1, we learned that narratives are what make up a story. Narrative inquiry is, then, a storytelling methodology through which we study narratives and stories of experience. Schafer (1981) calls this telling "narrative actions" (p. 31). Through the narrative actions of storytelling, we try to understand human experiences, which in turn helps us to better understand what it means to be human. Then, whose stories are we telling? Our narrative action involves either telling our own stories (autobiographical) or others' stories (biographical), or it could be a combination of both where narrative action takes place in a monologue, dialogue, conversation, discourse, or communication, diachronically and/or synchronically. I would say, then, that narrative research could broadly be characterized as autobiographical or biographical, or both at the same time. Therefore, as part of the narrative research design process, you might first want to think about whether your narrative inquiry is going to be autobiographical or biographical, or both. And then, you might further want to think about the form your final research text will take. This will lead you to a more complex consideration of narrative forms or narrative genres.

Abbott (2002) defines the term *genre* as "a recurrent literary form" (p. 49) that a text belongs to, while a text can combine two or more genres. I would say narrative research genre is a form that a narrative inquiry text can take, which may include autobiography, autoethnography, biographical research, oral history, life story/life history, *Bildungsroman* (a story of personal growth), and arts-based narrative research in which researchers integrate the arts into narrative inquiry, such as literary arts (e.g., short story, fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, drama, etc.) and visual arts (e.g., photography, video art, painting, drawing, etc.). If we follow Abbott's thinking about a genre, we can also combine two or more genres in our narrative work.

Choosing a narrative inquiry genre involves deciding how to retell (represent) stories that you gather. That is, we, as "researcher-storytellers" (Barone, 2007, p. 468) have to put stories (our data) together in a narrative form that best represents our research data. In that sense, the story represented in narrative inquiry, as Abbott (2002) points out, is "always mediated—by a voice, a style of writing, camera angles, actor's interpretations—so that what we call the story is really something that we construct" (p. 20). Then, one of the narrative inquirer's tasks is to mediate stories into being, grounded in ontological (Chapter 1), epistemological (Chapter 2), and methodological (Chapter 3) understandings. A narrative inquirer takes the role of a midwife to mediate stories into being.

During my own narrative inquiry, I felt as if I were acting as a midwife who was trying to deliver stories conceived by my participants. I needed help from Eileithyia (or Ilithyia), the midwife or the goddess of childbirth and labor pains in Greek mythology. I had to have the spirit of Eileithyia in an effort to bring stories into being in my research text. At the intersection between narrative data analysis and my dissertation text, I wrote:

> In constructing the stories, I, as a researcher, played a role of a "midwife" who tried to carefully deliver a story of my protagonist's while maintaining fidelity, the bond between the protagonist and myself. To use the metaphor of a narrative inquirer as a midwife is an attempt to move away from the position of traditional researchers who are "behind [the] backs [of informants] to point out what they could not see, would not do, and could not have said" (Britzman 1995, cited in Lather, 1997, p. 252). The metaphor of midwife signifies the role of the researcher who will work with "what is in the womb" and collaborate with the informants in delivering "healthy, trustworthy" stories. Of course, I also used my own discretion and imagination, as a midwife would do, in reconstructing the protagonist's reality of what I heard and saw. (Kim, 2005, pp. 57–58)

I positioned myself as a midwife who mediated the demands of research with the meaning of personal stories, while staying away from the traditional position of researcher as authority. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also note that "the narrative inquirer undertakes this mediation from beginning to end and embodies these dimensions as best as he or she can in the written narrative" (p. 8). As a "midwife" who would mediate evolving dimensions of narrative inquiry, I also wanted to honor the participants, their voices, their feelings, and experiences. To do so, I had to "step back" from my role as a researcher-storylistener, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write that narrative inquirers:

> must become fully involved, must "fall in love" with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscapes on which they all live. (p. 81)

After leaving the research field and beginning to compose my research text, I had to find ways to remain close to my participants while stepping back from the relationship so that I could see the larger landscape in which my narrative inquiry was situated. Just how to do it was the challenge. It was increasingly complex to go through my narrative data, seek what mattered to my participants, and find their narrative meanings. I had to create a "temporal distance" (Gadamer, 1975/2006, p. 295), a temporary separation between familiarity and strangeness. It was a process that needed "particular kinds of wakefulness" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 21).

Imagining myself as a metaphorical midwife helped me to bring particular kinds of wakefulness to the stories I was mediating. It required me to use my own *phronesis* (wise, ethical judgment), taking into consideration the three dimensions of narrative inquiry: temporality, the personal and social, and the place (see Chapter 3). Being a research midwife meant that I was in "a relational process" (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 600) as I mediated stories to come into being through rhythmic movements from field texts to research texts, back and forth. As a responsible story mediator, I had to think about what form the story would or should take to accomplish such a meaningful task. Again, my ethical, moral responsibility needed to take precedence through the exercise of my *phronesis* (see Chapter 3).

The following discussions will acquaint you with different forms of narrative inquiry from which you can choose for your narrative inquiry. Like Bryan, you might be nicely surprised!

Narrative Research Genres

As you think about how to take the role of a metaphoric midwife, someone who will mediate told stories into being in your narrative inquiry, I first want to note that some of you may wonder if it is necessary to identify a narrative form or genre for your narrative inquiry. For example, you are not interested in researching your own story (autoethnography), somebody else's personal identity development story (*Bildungsroman*), someone's entire life story, or oral history. Moreover, you think that you are not innovative enough to write short stories or fiction, not to mention visual-based narrative inquiry. But you're still interested in your participants' stories of lived experiences that do not necessarily belong to one of these genres. If so, you have a legitimate point. In fact, many narrative inquirers do not categorize their work into one of the narrative genres you will learn in this chapter. Hence, I want you to feel comfortable to say that your work is narrative inquiry although you don't identify its specific narrative genre.

Why, then, do I engage in an understanding of narrative research genres? Catherine Riessman (2013) observes that attention to form (genre) is largely missing from narrative papers, and wonders why so few narrative scholars attend to form, given that narrative study originated in drama. I concur. I think that attention to narrative genres is an important step in the research design process, not only because it is a way to make narrative inquiry distinct from traditional qualitative research, but also because it will guide you clearly as to what types of narrative data you will need to collect. Identifying your narrative research genre lets you stay more attuned to the direction of your data collection and writing.

For our discussion, I divide **narrative inquiry genres** to three areas: autobiographical, biographical, and arts-based. For autobiographical narrative research, we have autobiography and autoethnography. For biographical narrative research, we have *Bildungsroman,* life story/life history, and oral history. And for arts-based narrative research, we have literary-based narrative inquiry (creative nonfiction, fiction, novel, poetry, etc.) and visual-based narrative inquiry (photographic narrative, photovoice, archival photographs, digital storytelling, etc.). (See Figure 4.1.)
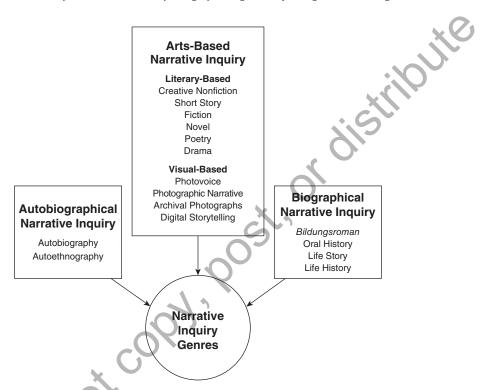

Figure 4.1   Narrative Inquiry Genres

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Maya Angelou, the legendary poet and writer, said, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

Autobiographical narrative inquiry, which includes autobiography and autoethnography, is an inquiry that takes the researcher himself or herself as the subject of research, using the story of the researcher's self. Some of you might think that it is a bit out of kilter to write a story about yourself as research. You ask, "How could my own personal story be research?" In addition, you think, it would be much easier to "talk about" someone other than yourself. True. Talking about your own story, whether it is glorious or sad, is not easy. In fact, it requires

considerable intellectual judgment on your part to avoid being solipsistic, navel gazing, narcissistic, or self-serving. For example, when you read Ronai's (1995) autoethnographic research, which is about her lived experience of child abuse, you weep not because you take a pity on her, but because you realize that it could be anyone's story, perhaps your story, your cousin's story, or your best friend's story. It doesn't remain Ronai's personal story any more. You find yourself revering Ronai for her courage to speak, not for herself but for others, at the expense of her own self. Through the researcher's personal story, you inevitably turn to the broad social problems of child abuse, sexual abuse, and more.

You, too, may have a compelling story to tell. As Angelou said, you may want to share an untold story that you hold inside you, because autobiographical narrative inquiry helps us travel to the self that illuminates a larger social problem. Below, we will look into two types of autobiographical narrative inquiry: autobiography and autoethnography.

Autobiography

Speaking of Maya Angelou, she wrote seven autobiographies. Rumor has it that Angelou didn't want to write any book, especially an autobiography, because she believed herself to be a poet. It was her prominent Random House editor, Robert Loomis, who persuaded her to write her autobiography. Loomis challenged her by saying (cynically) that to write an autobiography as literature would be almost impossible. Angelou took the challenge, and the result was her first autobiography, titled *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), which brought her international fame (D. Smith, 2007). I mention this because we narrative inquirers encounter a similar challenge. The challenge we face is: writing an autobiography as research would be almost impossible. Really? I hope some of you will accept this challenge.

Although some tend to use the terms *autobiography* and *autoethnography* interchangeably, it will be useful to know the differences between the two. Since autoethnography is a blend of autobiography and ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997), it seems reasonable to say that autoethnography is a genre that encompasses autobiography. In fact, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) write that "autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography" (para. 5). Hence, looking first at the characteristics of autobiography would be helpful.

The eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) wrote one of the most famous autobiographies, *Confessions* (1782). Rousseau provides us a great definition of autobiography. He states:

> I may omit or transpose facts, or make mistakes in dates; but I cannot go wrong about what I have felt, or about what my feelings have led me to do; and these are the chief subjects of my story. The true object of my confessions is to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised to recount, and to write it faithfully I have need of no other memories; it is enough if I enter again into my inner self, as I have done till now. (cited in Gutman, 1988, p. 102)

Rousseau tells us how he used autobiography as a medium for conversing with his self, his soul, and his memory. He reminds us that autobiography is not a chronological, factual story of

what happened in one's life, as one might "omit or transpose facts, or make mistakes in dates"; rather, it is a revelation of one's inner thoughts and feelings about "all the situations" of one's life. Hence, autobiography, from Rousseau's perspective, is the history of the writer's soul that the writer is about to recount.

Autobiography in the field of literature is an umbrella term for "diverse kinds of life narratives that engage historically situated practices of self-representation" (S. Smith & Watson, 2005, p. 357). In particular, it is a narrative construction of identity that discusses how a life came to be what it was, or how a self became what it is, written in retrospect (Martin, 1986). It gives rise to the "I," the self, that is neither hypothetical nor fictional. The autobiographer does not always attempt to describe a self that he or she already knows, but rather, intends to discover one that awaits an act of self-recognition that "will draw all of the past together in the 'I' of the present" (Martin, 1986, p. 76).

Smith and Watson (2005), who engage in theorizing autobiography from the perspective of narrative theory, discuss how an "I" is fragmented and provisional, and has multiple referents that are neither stable nor unified. They caution that autobiographers need to be aware that there are tensions and contradictions in representing an "I" to various audiences. That is, it is sometimes hard to tell if one is fiction or autobiography, as reflected in the title *The Autobiography of My Mother (1996),* written by Jamaica Kincaid.

I find Smith and Watson's discussion fascinating here, as they point out the boundary issues that exist between fictional and nonfictional forms in contemporary autobiographical narratives. For example, one of the questions they address is, "What difference does it make if a writer impersonates someone else or appropriates another's experience in an autobiographical hoax?" (p. 358). They suggest that thinking about the autobiographical as a practice and act rather than as a single genre will blur the polarizing boundary between fiction and nonfiction. In that sense, autobiography is no longer regarded as a monologic retrospective narrative documenting the researcher's (or the writer's) lived past. Is there anything we narrative researchers can learn from this? Probably. I see some possibilities in which a narrative inquirer writes a participant's "auto-biography" as a nonfictional or fictional account in a dialogic retrospective manner.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography[1] is a form of narrative research that seeks to systematically analyze the researcher's personal experience embedded in a larger social and cultural context. The term *auto* (self) is commonly used in the academy when the researcher engages in critical reflections and interpretations of his or her personal experience. The hybrid term *autoethnography* is rooted in anthropological methodology (ethnography) where the fieldwork was the researcher's own life and the lives of others in which the researcher had an active part. This type of ethnographic experience was called both "ethno-sociology" and "auto-ethnography" in anthropology (Tedlock, 1991). Autoethnography as a genre of narrative inquiry, then, refers to a research form that presents critical self-study or an analysis of the experience of the self (Hughes, Pennington, & Markris, 2012). It is a genre of first-person narrative scholarship (Bochner, 2012) based on the premise that understanding the self is "a precondition and a concomitant condition to the understanding of others" (Pinar, cited in Casey, 1995, p. 217).

Writing an autoethnography is an act of self-representation, but the goal is not to indulge your-self by shining a "spotlight" on your life, but to problematize social and cultural norms and prac-tices in light of your personal experience. To reach that goal, then, the acts of self-representation and self-narration have to be historical, cultural, and political, embodied in one's subjectivity. Thus, as Holman Jones (2005) states, autoethnography works to hold "self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis" (p. 764).

Just as qualitative researchers in the human sciences advocated a turn toward narrative inquiry in the 1980s and 1990s, interest in autoethnography in a wide spectrum of disciplines has also increased. The field of communication is a great example, as reflected in Baxter's (1992) statement that "personal narratives are likely to emerge as the distinguishing method of social approaches to personal relationships" (p. 333). Following Baxter, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, who are champions of autoethnography, sponsored a project on personal narrative and autoethnography that became the impetus for the proliferation of autoethnographic research (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). With a strong conviction that there should be a closer connection between the research text and the personal life of the researcher, Bochner and Ellis created a space in which social science texts could be viewed as stories told by the researcher. They called autoethnographies "ethnographic alternatives" that emphasize subjectiv-ity, self-reflexivity, and emotionality, with the goal of connecting social sciences to humanities through storytelling. They encouraged social scientists to turn an ethnographic eye on them-selves and their own lived experiences to interrogate larger issues of society (Bochner, 2012). In so doing, they wanted to present personal, emotional, and visceral narratives as a way to pro-duce meaningful, accessible, and evocative research that would appeal to the readers' capacity to empathize with people. Hence, Ellis (2004) defines *autoethnography* as:

> Research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection . . . [and] claims the conventions of literary writing. (p. xix)

Although reflection is at the heart of autoethnographic storytelling (Bochner, 2012), the auto-ethnographer goes beyond reflection and makes herself or himself a subject for critical analysis. Researchers acknowledge the fact that personal experience influences the research process (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Thus, as the researcher engages in a critical examination of the act of conducting research of the self in relation to others, a distance has to be created between the researcher himself or herself and the self as a research subject. After selecting personal experiences that are part of the research, the autoethnographer writes about them in retrospect. He or she engages in an analysis of personal experiences to interrogate why his or her story is valid and legitimate as a research subject. Mitch Allen advises on this particular point:

> [An autoethnographer must] look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story—and that's nice—but people do that on *Oprah* every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? . . . You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just

frame it as "my story," then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV? (as cited in Ellis et al., 2011, para. 8)

Thus, autoethnographers have to distinguish their approach from simply reflective story-telling by

- Comparing and contrasting personal experiences against the existing research
- Analyzing personal experience in light of theories and literature
- Considering ways others may experience similar experiences
- Illustrating facets of cultural experience embedded in personal experience (Ellis, et al., 2011).

In addition, as Foley (2002) notes, autoethnographers should go beyond valorizing notions of emotion, intuition, and aesthetics as their ground of knowing. Autoethnographers should find ways to use personal experience as a critical examination of class, cultural, racial, and gender struggles from historical, social, and political perspective by creating the "space of dialogue, debate, and change" between the researcher and readers (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 764).

Autoethnography, along with autobiography, values ordinary, connotative language over scientific, denotative language, while relying on the literary language of metaphor, irony, parody, and satire (Foley, 2002). These allow researchers to evoke the richness and complexity of everyday life through personal stories. In this sense, both autobiography and autoethnography integrate literary writing into research, allowing this genre to serve as a precursor to arts-based narrative research, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Some characteristics shared by both autobiography and autoethnography are shown in Table 4.1.

Biographical Narrative Inquiry

Unlike autobiography or autoethnography, biographical narrative inquiry tells stories about others. It includes *Bildungsroman,*[2] life story/life history, or oral history, which share common interests in personal accounts in a manner that respects and values what people have to say (Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Wengraf, 2000). Biographical narrative research explores lived experiences and perspectives that people have of their daily lives, including their past, present, and future, focusing on how they make sense of the meanings they give to the stories they tell (Denzin, 1989). Biographical narrative research has claimed its place in academic research for a long time in various disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, anthropology, and education, to name a few (Merrill & West, 2009). It is increasingly popular, as we see various academic disciplines creating research centers and conferences that are dedicated to researching lives and the stories of people's lives. For instance, Merrill and West introduced the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Programme in the United Kingdom, which has welcomed increasing use of biographical approaches in the study of education, higher education, and lifelong learning.

Table 4.1 Shared Characteristics of Autoethnography and Autobiography

- The text is usually written in the first person, making the researcher one of the objects of research.
- The narrative text highlights generalization within a single case extended over time, different from the traditional focus on generalization across cases.
- The story format of autoethnography is akin to forms of writing associated with the novel or fiction, blurring boundaries between social science and literature.
- The story often discloses hidden details of the private life of a vulnerable self, highlighting emotional experience, to challenge the culturally dominant discourse.
- Relationship experiences are portrayed in episodes that dramatize the motion of connected lives across the curve of time, and thus resist the standard writing practice of portraying a relationship as a snapshot.
- Truths are pursued, but they are emotional, dialogic, and collaborative truths rather than literal truths.
- The text is not intended to be received passively, but rather to be encountered actively, conversed with, and appreciated by the reader.

(Adapted from Bochner, 2012, pp. 158–161)

Biographical work focuses on personal narratives with a premise described by C. Wright Mills: "Man is a social and a historical actor who must be understood, if at all, in close and intricate interplay with social and historical structures" (1959, p. 158). Hence, it is important for us to recognize that personal narratives are never simply "personal." They are crucial entry points or portals for examining one's lived experience in relation to historical, social, and cultural contexts (Chase, 2005, 2011; Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Xu & Connelly, 2010). The focus on personal narrative in biographical narrative research, therefore, is an effort to place people and their humanity at the core of social and human research. In biographical research, as compared with traditional ethnography, participants are treated as active interpreters of their own life experience rather than as mere reporters of their life stories. The aim of biographical research, then, is to understand how the participants construct and interpret their life experience, appreciating participants' genuine accounts and interpretations, which are largely absent from more traditional qualitative approaches. For this reason, Gubrium and Holstein (1995) call biographical work a "new ethnography" where participants are treated as "ethnographers in their own right" (p. 46). Biographical narrative research underscores how individuals' lives are constructed in combination with their interpretations of the social environments where their experiences are embedded.

However, as we briefly alluded to it in Chapter 1, we do not want to romanticize the role of personal narratives. Indeed, it can be "troubling, disturbing, and even harmful to collectives or individuals" (Juzwik, 2010, p. 376). For example, for some participants, telling their stories of traumatic life experience could be "a way of *re-enacting* the suffering over and over" (p. 376).

Hence, Juzwik cautions that researchers should be careful about the "*unintended consequences of telling stories*" (p. 377, italics in original).

Next, I will discuss *Bildungsroman,* life story/life history, and oral history, respectively, as part of biographical narrative research.

Bildungsroman

Bildungsroman[3] is a German term that is a combination of *Bildung* (formation or education) and *Roman* (a story). It is a story of one's *Bildung* that focuses on one's personal growth and identity development. *Bildungsroman* is close to my heart, as it fits well in the field of education in which there are many stories of students who have turned their lives around despite challenges, furthering their personal growth. It is a pedagogical story that projects the human being's resilience and persistence as well as his or her vulnerability. Hence, *Bildungsroman* would be a good genre for a story about a participant who developed into maturity despite or because of tribulations that were experienced by the participant while growing up. I've been fascinated by the concept of *Bildung,* and have explored it elsewhere (Kim, 2011, 2013). As a former teacher, I was interested in the stories of my students' personal growths. Now, as a teacher educator, I have a conviction to promote the concept of *Bildung* for teachers' professional development.

What, then, is *Bildung*? **Bildung** is not a concept that has clear definitions, although we can loosely define it as "formation, cultivation, and education" (Davey, 2006, p. 37). Philosophers have grappled with a variety of obscure meanings of *Bildung,* as it is a rich and complicated term that has a long history with philosophical roots (see Davey, 2006; Gadamer, 1975/2006; Hardin, 1991). *Bildung* originated in the eighteenth-century idealism of Humboldt and Schiller, who identified *Bildung* as the primary goal of humanity. They believed that it was up to humans to develop to their full potential through active engagement with the world around them (Kontje, 1993). For them, passive ripening is not good enough for human beings. That is, *Bildung* is not an inherent concept that people are born with; rather, each individual can develop personally through education and cultivation (Wahlström, 2010). Thus, *Bildung* designates the human way of developing or cultivating one's capacity or oneself (Gadamer, 1975/2006), and it is an identity-shaping activity, making meaning of one's own person (Mortensen, 2002). It also indicates an action by which a person creates a "self" that is held to be valuable (Schneider, 2010). In short, the concept of *Bildung* is concerned with nurturing or fostering the self to become somebody, which goes beyond the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills (Biesta, 2002).[4]

Bildungsroman, thus, is a story of one's *Bildung* that focuses on cultivating and forming one's disposition of mind involving intellectual and moral endeavor. It is a story of developing oneself as part of the journey of becoming. Furthermore, *Bildungsroman* refers to a reflexive story about the self, "one in which the problem of *Bildung,* of personal growth, is enacted in the narrator's discursive self-understanding" (Swales, 1978, p. 4). Roberts (2008) also states that the part of the role of a *Bildungsroman* is "to remind us that we all have a story to tell, and that while we can question and wrestle with what life throws at us, we cannot halt the flow of experience" (p. 252).

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) has been most influential in understanding *Bildungsroman* (Swales, 1978). Dilthey portrayed the *Bildungsroman* in the following manner:

> A regulated development within the life of the individual is observed, each of its stages has its own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage. The dissonances and conflicts of life appear as the necessary growth points through which the individual must pass on his way to maturity and harmony. (cited in Swales, 1978, p. 3)

Thus, *Bildungsroman* addresses not only the inner development but also the complexity and conflicts of human experience, which eventually leads to personal growth and maturation, while valuing the process more than the end. The *Bildungsroman,* therefore, is written "for the sake of the journey, and not for the sake of the happy ending toward which that journey points" (Swales, 1978, p. 34).

Again, Rousseau's *Emile or On Education* (1762/1979) is known to be one of the first *Bildungsroman,* followed by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1795/1824). A more contemporary example written in English would be James Joyces's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1956). However, the German Nobel Laureate Herman Hesse, who is one of my favorite writers, is seen as one of the key figures in the evolution of the German *Bildungsroman* (Roberts, 2008; Swales, 1978). Hesse investigated processes of human growth and development through his literary work, for example, *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), *The Journey to the East* (1932), and *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930). Roberts (2008) argues that *The Glass Bead Game* and *The Journey to the East* provide evidence of Hesse's distinctive contribution to the German tradition of the *Bildungsroman.*

Bildungsroman was not just a German genre. Dunlop (2002) shows us that *Bildungsroman* was also a popular literary form in Britain's Victorian era as a source of the moral and social development of protagonists. For male protagonists, in particular, the moral of the story was usually about how to reconcile the conflict between the man's desire for social aspiration and moral feeling. For female protagonists, however, the main concern was the search for autonomy and self in opposition to social constraints placed upon women as is shown, for example, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Canadian literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye (1990) also notes that the *Bildungsroman* has traditionally been a main genre for Canadian fiction for the last two centuries. He particularly explores *Bildungsroman* that portray narratives of women to trace how female protagonists develop themselves (see Table 4.2 for some features of *Bildungsroman*).

I believe that *Bildungsroman,* informed by philosophy and literature, has a lot to offer to narrative researchers, and deserves a unique status as a genre of narrative research. For example, narrative researchers in education can write a story of students who work toward personal growth, overcoming adverse life experiences. Or, they can write a story about teachers who work toward personal and professional growth by documenting their challenging teaching experiences.

Below, I'd like to present an excerpt of Matto's story as an example of a male student's *Bildungsroman.* Here is my disclaimer: I didn't know I was writing a *Bildungsroman* when I wrote

Table 4.2   Features of *Bildungsroman*

- The idea of an inner or spiritual journey of personal growth;
- The tension between the ideal and the reality;
- The importance of the context in which the protagonist's personal journey takes place;
- The role of enhancing the *Bildung* of the researcher and the reader;
- The importance of questioning, dialogue, and doubt in the personal journey; and
- The elements of striving, uncertainty, complexity, and transformation.

(Adapted from Roberts, 2008)

this. I only wish I had known about *Bildungsroman* at the time! Matto, one of my participants, went through tumultuous life experiences: he participated in a rite of passage as part of his Sioux tradition at the age of eleven; he was a gang member when he was twelve to fourteen years old; and he was suspended from high school numerous times, until he found himself aspiring to be a football player and worked toward graduation.

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Matto's *Bildungsroman:* An Excerpt

Matto was only 11 when he faced the fear of death for the first time. As a part of the Sioux culture into which he was born, he was expected to go through a rite of passage into manhood. Right after his eleventh birthday his grandpa told Matto that it was time. He was to be taken to the forest to stay for a week and survive on his own. He has never forgotten that day when his grandpa hiked with him to the thick forest at the top of a mountain outside Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"Do you know how to use a knife?" Grandpa asked.

"Yeah."

"You're gonna need this," Grandpa handed him a knife.

"Do you know how to use matches?" Grandpa asked again.

"Yeah."

"You're gonna need these too. Use the matches carefully. You will need them for a week." Grandpa handed him a box of matches and a blanket.

Grandpa shook Matto's hand, kissed him on his forehead, and said, "You're a big boy now. You are ready. Good luck, Matto." Then, he promptly turned around and walked slowly back down to the village without ever looking back. Matto watched him until his grandpa became just a speck and finally disappeared from the view.

Left all alone in the wilderness, Matto felt like crying. His mind was suddenly filled with a primordial fear. Looking around, all he could see were the tall trunks of trees reaching skyward and huge rocks scattered here and there with shapes like frightening animals. The forest had an eerie silence, too, except for occasional cries from startled birds. The late afternoon sun began to cover the forest with darkening shadows from the surrounding trees, giving Matto unusual chills for a hot summer.

Matto wished he had somebody to talk to. He was well taught to be a survivor by his elders and buddies, but the fear of being alone in the unknown wilderness where wild, cunning beasts might be hunting for their fresh dinner was quite intimidating and overwhelming. He felt like a small rabbit that would soon to be hunted by a fox. He had thought that the rite of passage would be like going to a haunted house for fun. He used to scorn his peers who were scared to death about having to go through the rite of passage. But now he was being a coward.

Matto slowly began to find his courage and gather himself together. He had to, first, find a safe place to spend the night before it got dark. With a little bit of effort, he discovered a huge, flat rock which jutted out, whose top could be used for sleeping and underneath which could be a shelter that would give him some protection from the possible rainy weather and wild animals. He also picked up some pieces of wood nearby to build a small fire to keep him warm. These activities kept his mind busy and his fear was slowly leaving him. Sitting on the rock's ledge looking out over the fire into the darkness, he felt a sense of safety and even a sense of comfort. "I can do this," he thought to himself. "Yes, I can overcome this fear and loneliness." He was regaining his usual audacity.

His thoughts turned to his grandpa who named him "Matto." "Matto" meant "bear" in the Sioux language, and his grandpa wanted him to be a man who would never be daunted by anything. Matto grinned as he remembered his grandpa one day calling him a grizzly bear. Grandpa was proud of Matto's knowledge about nature, his physical strength which was unusual for such a young age, and his abilities to run fast like the deer of the forest.

Matto sat in front of the fire with his blanket around him and watched the flames from the fire flickering into the night for a long time. He finally lay down on the rock. Totally absorbed in the silence of the night, he started watching the sky. There were so many stars in the sky, it seemed as if they were about to pour down at him. Matto's eyes were searching for the familiar big dipper, the lion and others that he had learned from his grandpa. Stars were good company to Matto. They seemed to be singing a lullaby for him. While he was thinking about food for the next day, sleep took him over without any warning.

Matto was awakened by the early morning sun shining on his face. He could hear the birds singing and felt the excitement of a new day. He was happy that the fear of death was gone and that he had survived his first night alone. His courage had returned. Suddenly he started feeling

very hungry. It was time to hunt for food. He picked up the knife his grandpa gave him and searched for a good stick to make a spear. He learned this from his grandpa a long time ago. He found a little stream not far from where he was. Catching fish with the spear he made was not difficult. The fun part was barbequing them on fire. Matto had not had such a delicious meal in ages. (Source: Kim, 2012, pp. 635–636)

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Life Story/Life History[5]

Life story/life history narrative research, also known as life narratives, the narrative study of lives, and personal history, is a "method of looking at life as a whole and of carrying out an in-depth study of individual lives" (Atkinson, 2012, p. 116). It is a main genre of narrative research used for understanding single lives in detail, and how the individual plays various roles in society. Robert Atkinson, a strong advocate of life story, founded the Center for the Study of Lives (now known as the Life Story Commons) at the University of Southern Maine in 1988 (see http://usm.maine.edu/olli/national/lifestorycenter). Atkinson defines a life story as:

> the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another. (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8)

Grounded in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Atkinson believes that everyone has an important story to tell about his or her life that needs to be acknowledged. Dilthey, whose view we discussed briefly regarding *Bildungsroman*, viewed the individual's experience of life as a fundamental human act of narrative understanding, which should not be discarded at the expense of pursuing scientific knowledge. Dilthey believed that each individual lived experience is unique and particular as it is like no one else's; but at the same time, it is universal because it could be like everyone else's. In this sense, a life story is a way to put one's life as a whole, one's entire lived experience, into story form, presenting an understanding of a life lived from an insider's perspective (Atkinson, 2007; van Manen, 1990).

Now, let's take a look at the historical evolution of life story. Sociologists Bertaux and Kohli (1984) provide an extensive overview of the popularity of life story that was spread all over the world in the 1980s, including European countries such as Germany, Italy, France, and Britain, but also in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and the United States. Particularly in Western Europe, interest in the life story approach has grown quickly, marking a "biographical movement" (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984, p. 221). Such disciplines as linguistics, history, psychology, and anthropology adopted the life story approach to people's lives based on their narratives as a method of data collection (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). For example, sociolinguists analyze the narrative structure that undergirds life stories. Historians are interested in life stories, mainly in the form that is called oral history (on which I will elaborate later). Psychologists

are interested in life stories in hopes that they will reveal theories about human development across the whole life span.

The life story approach is believed to provide rich ground for the formulation of substantive theories for different disciplines, drawing upon a variety of theoretical orientations, including symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, and Marxism. In particular, the life story approach is appealing to sociology, as a life story can reveal the constraining effects of structural relationships, derived from the structuralist standpoint. Any life story is not just a personal story that is isolated or independent from societal influence. Again, following Mills (1959), life story narratives develop simultaneously at several levels: the historical, the societal, and the personal. So, we need to pay attention to the various levels that one's life story reveals, while being sensitive to the historical and social layers that the story bears.

Franco Ferrarotti, an important figure in life story research from Italy (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984), used life stories as a means of getting to know what was happening to a small, traditional town where large industrial projects were being developed shortly after World War II. He made important points about life stories that we should keep in mind: (a) society is historical; (b) each person is both unique and universal, that is, he or she is a "singular universal"; and (c) there are layers of mediations between macro-social processes and personal lives, such as local institutions, families, and peer groups (Ferrarotti, 1981). It is interesting to note that Ferrarotti was able to make these important points only after realizing his tendency to ignore his participants' frequent complaints about the negativities of industrialization. Ferrarotti, who was a strong believer in industrialization, did not realize how his perspective prevented him from paying attention to those complaints until he became self-conscious of his own bias. After self-critical reflexivity, he became sensitive to whatever personal truths were revealed in his research, understanding that they might reflect sociological truths. This kind of sensitivity is one of the many traits that all narrative researchers should nourish.

However, let's not make the mistake of assuming that all personal stories (personal truths) will become social stories (sociological truths). Another important figure in life story, educational researcher William Tierney (1998), posits two approaches to life story or life history. Following Linde (1993), Tierney distinguishes a *portal approach* and a *process approach*. The portal approach to life story uses an individual's story to mirror some reality in which the larger, societal story is embedded. That is, we can use a personal story as a *portal* to understanding the larger society. From this perspective, our goal is to study someone's life in order to gain insight into not simply the participant's personal life but also as an objective account of the way people live (without involving the researcher's subjective interpretation). In the portal approach, our retelling consists of an objective description of our findings with the goal of informing the reader about the social conditions of people gleaned from the life story.

The process approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the personal story itself. Unlike the portal approach, it stays away from the assumption that if we understand one person's life, we

will gain access to the values and norms of the larger society. The process approach focuses on narrative whose meaning needs to be interpreted. Thus our act of retelling is constantly involved in interpretation followed by "thick description" (Geertz, 1983), hoping to provide the reader with some glimpse of narrative experience different from the reader's own. Thus the text itself becomes a central component of the research endeavor, allowing the reader to interpret the text in his or her own way.

Here's a caveat, though, when we use the process approach. If we use the portal approach, we have an easy way out, since we are just recording what was said without much interpretation of the text. But if we use the process approach, we need to think carefully about whose interpretations (or whose voices) are at work in writing a text. Tierney (1998) brings up K. M. Brown's 1991 work *Mama Lola* as an example, to explain how Brown struggled in the writing of the life story of Mama Lola with a text that contained multiple voices: the voice of Mama Lola, Brown's scholarly voice, Brown's personal voice, fictional voices of others, and the voice of Gede, a voodoo spirit (Tierney, 1998). Hence, in the process approach, as we change our role from that of a researcher to that of a writer of someone else's story, we have to be cautious about which perspective we use to interpret the data because different perspectives will lead to different interpretations.

A feminist curriculum scholar and narrative researcher that I admire so much is Petra Munro (now, Petra Munro Hendry). Her work on women teachers' life history narratives, titled *Subject to Fiction* (1998), impacted my own narrative work. Using narrative, she interrogates the nature of the dominant curricular stories we tell, focusing on how teacher (and student) stories can shape and reshape our understanding of the lived experience of schools and teaching. She explains that she was drawn to narrative inquiry and the narrative genre, life history, in particular. According to her, it has potential to "highlight gendered constructions of power, resistance and agency" (p. 7) and its primary goal is to provide an opportunity to "explore not only the effects of social structures on people but to portray the ways in which people themselves create culture" (p. 9). Through the personal voices of three women teachers and their descriptions of their daily lives, she takes the lives of women teachers seriously in order to acknowledge their stories as the way they know themselves, and uses these women's narratives as "a generative space for understanding not only the complexity of women's lives but how women construct a gendered self through narrative" (p. 5). Munro lists the advantages of the life history approach for her study:

- the holistic nature of life history allows for a complete biographical picture
- a life history provides a historical, contextual dimension
- in studying a life history, the dialectical relationship between the self and society can be explored. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Munro states that one of the greatest strengths of life history lies "in its penetration of the subjective reality of the individual; it allows the subject to speak for himself or herself" (p. 9). Munro's work will be further discussed in Chapter 6 as an example of life history. Table 4.3 shows some guidelines for writing a life history.

Table 4.3 Guidelines for Writing a Life History

The researcher needs to:

1. include descriptions of the cultural context in which the storied case study takes place, while attending to the contextual features that give specific meanings to events.

2. attend to the bodily dimension of the protagonist, including the protagonists' personalities and propensities that affect personal goals and life concerns.

3. attend to the importance of relationships between the main character and other people in affecting the actions and goals of the protagonist.

4. concentrate on the choices and actions of the protagonist, which indicate the inner struggles, emotional states, plans, motivations, purposes, and interests.

5. consider the historical continuity of the characters. In considering the protagonist as a biographical being, attention needs to be given to social events that the protagonist and his or her historical cohorts have experienced.

6. mark the beginning point of the story and the point of denouement in the context of time and space.

7. make the story plot plausible and understandable because the story is a reconstruction of a series of events and actions that produced a particular outcome.

8. answer the question, "How is it that this outcome came about; what events and actions contributed to this solution?"

(Adapted from Dollard, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 16–18)

Oral History

You might be wondering, then, what would be the difference between life story/life history and oral history. Atkinson (2007) helps us with that by citing Titon, who provided an important distinction between a life story and an oral history:

> In oral history the balance of power between the informants and historian is in the historian's favor, for he asks the questions, sorts through the accounts for the relevant information, and edits his way toward a coherent whole. . . . But in the life story the balance tips the other way, to the storyteller, while the listener is sympathetic and his responses are encouraging and nondirective. If the conversation is printed, it should ideally be printed verbatim. (p. 233)

This distinction is indeed important to us as it determines our roles as researcher and interviewer. In life stories, the subjective meaning of the storyteller's lived experience is paramount.

Hence, our focus in a life story project resides in addressing the question of "What is the story my storyteller wants to tell me and what meaning does my storyteller give to it?" In oral history, on the other hand, it is the researcher who determines how a story told by an interviewee illuminates particular historical moments of interest to the researcher.

Oral history has been a major means of communication in human history. Collective memories and histories are shared in the oral tradition of passing down stories through the generations. For example, think about the histories of Native American tribes, which have been largely transmitted through the oral tradition. "Oral history is a history built around people" (p. 31), so observes Paul Thompson (2006), a British scholar who played a leading role in the creation of the British Oral History Society and the international oral history movement. Thompson further notes that oral history:

> [a]llows heroes not just from the leaders, but also from the unknown majority of the people. . . . It brings history into, and out of, the community. It helps the less privileged, and especially the old, towards dignity and self-confidence. . . . Equally, oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgment inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for radical transformation of the social meaning of history. (p. 31)

Oral history is a powerful tool for exploring the historical memory of people, including the unknown majority of the people as Thompson notes above. It can show how people make sense of their past, how their past individual or collective lived experiences are connected to the social context, how their past is connected to the present and future, and how they use their past experience to interpret their lives and the world around them. According to anthropologist Elizabeth Tonkin (1992), in oral history, memory becomes an object of investigation as well as the important source of oral history that mediates between the individual and society. In this sense, oral history narratives become social actions that are in a dialogical process between structure and human agency, situated in particular times and places.

Thomson (2007) provides a substantive discussion about the history of oral history, which describes the evolution of the oral history research tradition since World War II, when oral history became popular internationally. The growing significance of personal testimony in political and legal practices, the increasing use of interviewing and memory in interdisciplinary research, and an increasing interest in relationship between history and memory all influenced changes in oral history. In the 1960s, early oral history projects focused on the formerly undocumented or poorly recorded lived experiences of working-class people, women, or people of color, fostered by politically committed social historians in Britain and around the world. In the late 1970s, oral history researchers had to work on establishing the legitimacy of personal memory and its subjectivity in response to criticisms that personal histories include bias and are not objective. During the 1980s, a transformation in the role of the oral historian as interviewer took place, as interviewers became increasingly reflexive about the relationships formed with their interviewees. They became more conscious of how they were affected by their interviews and how the interviewee, in turn, affected the interview relationship, thus affecting the data generated, the interpretative process, and the product. Another significant feature of oral history in

the 1980s was its interdisciplinarity (Yow, 1997). Theoretical and methodological developments on narratives in other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary studies, folklore studies, linguistics, communication, and cultural studies enriched the practice of oral history, and oral historians themselves have made substantial contributions to those developments in qualitative narrative research (Yow, 1997).

We are currently in the middle of the digital revolution in oral history (and in other areas of narrative inquiry), which began in the late 1990s and early 2000s. New technologies such as e-mail, the Internet, webcams, digital recording, and qualitative software are transforming the ways in which we record, preserve, interpret, share, store, and present oral histories. For example, Frisch (2006) argues that digitization of sound and image is challenging the current reliance on text-bound transcription and how the notion of documentary as product is "displaced by a notion of documentary as process, that is, as an ongoing, contextually contingent, fluid construction of meaning" (p. 113).

Through all of these changes in its development, oral history continues to offer an alternative way of knowing and accessing historical truths.

Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry[6]

Some of you might feel strange or even uncomfortable about writing creative nonfiction, fiction, or poetry as part of your research product. "Can this really be research?" you wonder. You also wonder if your advisor would approve of such arts-based work for your dissertation. Moreover, you have committee members who have shiny careers in "scientific" research. You have a hunch that they will not approve your proposal simply because they believe that the arts, or arts-based research, do not belong in the scientific community. If this is the case, bear with me. You might actually be surprised to know how arts-based narrative inquiry is changing the landscape of the qualitative research arena and narrative research in particular.

The Origin of Genre Blurring

Heated debates about the place of nonacademic forms of writing, namely, art as research, or arts-based research, seem to be old stories now. For example, there were debates at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) almost two decades ago (see Eisner, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Saks, 1996) where opponents argued that narrative inquiry cannot be a legitimate methodology because it has a tendency to be art rather than research, and because it is based on talent, intuition, or clinical experience (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). However, the integration of two genres, art and research or art into research, can be traced back to the anthropologist-storyteller Clifford Geertz, who helped to legitimate the phenomenon of "genre blurring" (Geertz, 1980, p. 165) in the 1970s. Remember Denzin and Lincoln's eight historical moments in qualitative research that we discussed in Chapter 1? The third moment was "blurred

genres" (1970–1986) in which social scientists began to realize that they did not need to imitate physicists or other empirical scientists to create social theory. Instead, they started drawing more from the humanities, "looking less for the sort of thing that connects planets and pendulums and more for the sort that connects chrysanthemums and swords" (p. 165). Geertz calls this culture shift of genre blurring "the refiguration of social thought" (p. 165), whose aim is not the manipulation of human behavior, but an understanding of human and social phenomena with recourse to literary analogies and symbols. This genre blurring has led to an effort to dissolve the art-science dichotomy in the social research development known as *the moment of blurred genres* in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Spurred by this moment, qualitative social scientists increasingly became interested in exploring the possibilities of combining scientific research with artistic design elements that are more evocative, enabling readers to vicariously experience the lives of people through their stories. Such writings might include forms of writing more commonly associated with the literary arts, fiction or poetry, interweaving facts (events that are believed to have occurred), facticities (descriptions of how those facts were lived and experienced), and fiction (a link between the facts and facticities) (Denzin, 1989).

Here is an example of such a shift. Pat Shipman, a paleoanthropologist who deciphers the fossil evidence of the evolution and origin of humankind, writes that she quit field and laboratory research in paleoanthropology in order to undertake a new role as a "scientific translator" (Shipman, 2001, p. 82). To her, uncommunicated scientific discoveries are a waste with the potential danger of leaving the public uninformed and misinformed. As she believes that there is an urgent need for scientific translators who are fluent in both the language and the practice of science, she takes on a new role to communicate her field's discoveries to the nonscientist public. Her new role as a "scientific translator," she continues, has increasingly sharpened her sensitivity to the complex connections and interactions that contribute to scientific discovery, rather than minimizing her love of science. As a result, she has come to realize even more forcefully that a straightforward recounting of the "facts" is inadequate. Shipman writes:

> Quite simply, science cannot be conveyed as a chronological list of dates and discoveries, theories and experiments; nor do such events incrementally build a cold, objective edifice of knowledge. Scientists are emotional, proud, stubborn, intuitive—Everything, in fact, except dispassionate and objective. Scholars bleed for their discoveries: they fight, risk, and sacrifice. It is the heat of the scientists' passionate conviction that forges shimmering truths out of the dross of dull evidence. (p. 82)

This passage portrays a counter-image of scientists, who are typically considered dry, cold, and distanced from their feelings in order to maintain objectivity. Shipman's seemingly personal sentiment has been verified by Eisner and Powell's study. Eisner and Powell (2002) interviewed 20 social scientists about their research process as well as their research products to explore the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the work of researchers. Contrary to the popular belief that scientists have little to do with emotions and aesthetics, they found out that social scientists frequently engage in artistic modes of thought and aesthetic forms of experience, involving emotional qualities in the research process. They summarize, "the work of science provides an

arena for aesthetic forms of experience. Aesthetic experience can be secured in the use of the tools of the trade, in shaping one's thoughts, and exploring one's ideas" (p. 150).

Increasingly, social scientists accept and employ poetic and literary modes of expression in their research, and Ivan Brady (1991) has termed this growing number of social scientists as "artful scientists." Hence, such disciplines as anthropology, journalism, sociology, and education have opened up spaces for arts-based research (see Bochner & Ellis, 2003).

Eisner and Barone's Arts-Based Research

The late Elliot Eisner and Tom Barone, who studied with Eisner, are the main figures in the process of legitimizing arts-based research in academia over the past two decades, particularly in the field of education. They not only vehemently advocate the use of the arts in social science research, but also promote narrative inquiry as a form of arts-based research, seeking more evocative and aesthetic qualities in narrative. They began to refer to research that exhibited a number of aesthetic design elements (see below) in the research and process as *arts-based research.* Barone and Eisner (2012) define arts-based research as a "process that uses the expressive qualities of form to convey meaning" (p. xii).

When narrative inquiry uses the arts, mainly literary and visual art, such as short story, fiction, novel, poem, photography, and video, it becomes what I call *arts-based narrative inquiry.* In **arts-based narrative inquiry**, the arts accompany narratives to convey the meaning of the stories told and retold. Hence, the ways of creating art are incorporated into the whole process of conducting narrative inquiry, including ways of thinking, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and producing a project. To use art as a mode of narrative inquiry is to move toward a research paradigm in which ideas are as important as forms, the viewer's perceptions as important as the artist-researcher's intentions, and the language and emotions of art as important as its aesthetic qualities (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). Empathy is a necessary condition for understanding meaning in human life, and the arts elicit empathic understanding because of their evocative and compelling nature. In arts-based narrative inquiry, researchers write stories that are presented in a literary art form as a research product, for example, a work of ethnographic fictional writing (Leavy, 2013; Richardson, 1994), creative nonfiction (Barone, 2001), short stories (Ceglowski, 1997), poetry (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Faulkner, 2009; Sullivan, 2000), visual ethnography (Bach, 2007), novels (Dunlop, 1999), and ethnodramas (Mattingly, 2007; Saldaña, 2005).

Barone and Eisner (1997) discuss seven features of arts-based research, namely literary-based narrative inquiry, which include: (1) *the creation of a virtual reality;* (2) *the presence of ambiguity;* (3) *the use of expressive language;* (4) *the use of contextualized and vernacular language;* (5) *the promotion of empathy;* (6) *personal signature of the researcher/writer;* and (7) *the presence of aesthetic form* (for further discussion, see Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2012; also see Chapter 3 of this book). It is not necessary to exhibit every one of these features in your narrative work because your research is not going to be characterized as full-fledged art. But, the more art-like features your narrative work exhibits, the more rich and engaging its character

can be. Created in this way, your narrative work can be "emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving" (Leavy, 2009, p. 12), appealing to a wider audience. Eisner (2008) says that if the arts are about anything, they are about emotion, and emotion has to do with the ways in which we feel, and most importantly with compassion. Our capacity to feel compassion is a "way of discovering our humanity" (p. 10).

With this understanding of what arts-based narrative inquiry can do, we can justify our use of arts-based narrative inquiry to our committee and to our colleagues in the social and human sciences. Some of you are attracted to arts-based narrative inquiry, but you have some reservations, wondering, "Am I qualified to conduct arts-based narrative inquiry?" Your concern is legitimate, as Mello (2007) asks, "Is it necessary to be an artist to produce art in narrative inquiry?" (p. 220). Similarly, Barone and Eisner (2012) ask:

> Can anyone who so desires do arts-based research? Is arts based research solely a domain of those who are already formally trained in an area of the arts? Should anyone, whether formally trained or not, be encouraged to do arts-based research? (p. 56)

The answers to all these questions are a simple YES with three conditions: "dedication, practice, and guidance" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 57). And, I might add, persistence.

Below, I will discuss two main types of *arts-based narrative inquiry:* literary-based narrative inquiry (creative nonfiction, short story, fiction, and novel) and visual-based narrative inquiry that uses visuals (namely, photographs and/or drawings) as a way of storytelling. For those of you who are interested in incorporating any other particular form of the arts into your narrative inquiry, such as poetry, drama, performance, dance, or music, I provide suggested readings on arts-based research (e.g., Cole & Knowles, 2008) for your reference.

Literary-Based Narrative Inquiry

The adoption of literary writing in qualitative research is not new. In Chapter 3, we discussed that it was two decades ago when Laurel Richardson (1994) called for writing as a method of inquiry as well as a method of knowing. She advocated for experimental genres that deploy literary devices, calling them "alternative forms of representation" or "evocative representations" (p. 521). She encouraged qualitative researchers to "experiment" with their research materials, using imagination to meet the literary criteria of coherence and verisimilitude.

Creative Nonfiction and Short Story

For **literary-based narrative inquiry**, I think we can begin with creative nonfiction because it is a rather gradual introduction of an imaginative approach to the reporting of narrative data. We might use creative and imaginative techniques to represent the collected facts and information more interesting and more accessible. For example, in a typical journal report in traditional

journalism, you would report factual information in an objective manner where your personal feelings should not enter into the writing of the report. However, in creative nonfiction, you would present factual information using the tools of the fiction writer, while maintaining fidelity to fact and, at the same time, openly communicating the writer's subjectivity or personal feelings about the topic (Caulley, 2008). Creative nonfiction uses an imaginative approach to reporting that requires the skills of a storyteller and the research ability of a fact-finding reporter in order to write about facts in ways that bring the reader to an empathic understanding (Cheney, 2001; Gutkind, 2008). Feminist sociologist and fiction writer Patricia Leavy (2015) notes that creative nonfiction has changed the landscape of academic writing and brought the tools of literary fiction into the researcher's purview.

Creative nonfiction grew out of the so-called New Journalism that was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. New Journalism had a preference for reporters who used evocative and metaphorical description, aiming for an impressionistic reconstruction of actual events, thus defying the entrenched notion of the reporter as a detached and objective recorder of events (Barone, 2008). More specifically, according to Talese (1992), New Journalism is not fiction, although it reads like fiction. Talese writes:

> It is, or should be, as reliable as the most reliable reportage, although it seeks a larger truth than is possible through the mere accumulation of verifiable facts, the use of direct quotations, and adherence to the rigid organizational style of the older form. The new journalism allows, demands in fact, a more imaginative approach to reporting, and it permits the writer to inject himself into the narrative, if he wishes, as many writers do, or to assume the role of a detached observer, as other writers do, including myself. (as cited in Cheney, 2001, p. 3)

Using this creative nonfiction genre as a model for reporting qualitative research, and narrative inquiry in particular, has proliferated in academia and been welcomed by the public since the early 1990s (Caulley, 2008; Schneider, 1997). Qualitative researchers have come to believe that fictional accounts can sometimes portray a research phenomenon more clearly than do the standard representations of qualitative data (Tierney, 1998). The fictionalization of research data provides researchers with the opportunity to work with raw data in order to speak to the heart of the reader's social consciousness, while providing the protection of anonymity to the research participants (Clough, 2002). Barone and Eisner (2012) also justify the use of fictive writing in social science research by problematizing the dichotomous relationship between fantasy and fact that has been prevalent in the Western world. According to them, all activities of human cognition and behavior contain a fictive element, and a synthesis of fact and fiction is indeed apparent in any creation of a work of art. Their belief is that social science can be fictional with the power to disrupt the commonplace and to suggest new ways of thinking, or new possibilities. It is indeed a fascinating idea to straddle the two elements of fact and fiction in a creation of our narrative research work!

Coupled with the features of arts-based narrative inquiry espoused by Barone and Eisner (1997), I think it would be helpful to have some guidelines for writing creative nonfiction; they are in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4   Guidelines for Writing Creative Nonfiction

1. Open with text that is vivid and vital.

2. Capture a subject to hook the reader.

3. Use scenes (vignettes, episodes, and so forth) as a way of creating a verisimilitude.

4. Use realistic details (written in the field notes or in a personal research journal) to conjure emotions and images in the reader.

5. Show, don't tell.

6. Avoid the killer be's (am, is, was, to be, had been) and use the active voice.

7. Capture conversation to enhance action and characterization.

8. Choose an appropriate writing style with word choices, syntax, and tone.

9. Use metaphors and similes to make text rich.

10. Use a list of single words (litany) or short phrases (prose rhythm) to create and leave the impression of a person, place, or thing.

(Adapted from Caulley, 2008)

Fiction and Novel

Ethnographers embraced this literary fictional writing trend in the name of *fictional ethnography* as Rinehart (1998) termed it. Ethnographic narrative researchers came to believe that fiction and fictional devices might in fact be more effective in conveying certain aspects of lived experience, both to academics and the public, than the so-called scientific language (Rinehart, 1998). They began to realize how limiting it was to place one's stories of the lived experience within an existing traditional paradigm that, more often than not, obscured possible alternative interpretations or alternative theoretical engagements. Thus, they turned to fiction as a means of working through or restructuring their ideas, finding the explicit use of fiction more adequate, effective, and evocative (Frank, 2000; Diversi, 1998; Leavy, 2013; Rinehart, 1998).

Fictional ethnography, according to Rinehart (1998), combines the goals of academic ethnography and fiction, using a variety of fictional methods, ranging from point of view to internal monologue to flash-forward and back. Using raw data that we have collected, we can create a work of fiction as a final research product, relying on our intuition, imagination, and creativity, and guided by logical thinking to write an effective story that appeals to the reader. In so doing, we try to get at both the cognitive and affective truth of the lived experience. An affective feel of the lived experience—verisimilitude—is what we are after here, since the complexity of lived experience might not always be possible to convey in a theoretical explanation (Diversi, 1998). Thus, in fictional ethnography, exact recordings of words said are less important than what the

teller meant to say. What is paramount is believability. Believability leads to issues of representation, making us think about how well we can represent the lived experience of self and others in a believable way.

How, then, do we make our work of fictional narrative inquiry scholarly and academic? One good example of a fictional narrative that we can emulate is Katherine Frank's "The Management of Hunger" (2000) in the field of anthropology (see Chapter 9 for an excerpt). In her article, Frank first presents her "ethnographically grounded fiction" (p. 481), and then provides a traditional analysis of the story, including a review of the literature and a discussion. Her fiction is about an encounter in a strip club. Frank explains that the characters in her short fiction are composites and constructions consisting of bits and pieces of herself, of the people she has known in her research settings (strip clubs in a large southern U.S. city), and of her fantasies of them. Frank continues that the story is indeed based on her experiences working in strip clubs and is written as part of an attempt to think through complicated relationships that form between dancers and their customers. Furthermore, Frank believes that descriptions of the experience will provide readers who are unfamiliar with this kind of venue or relationship with vicarious experience, which will, in turn, help them discern some of the multiple meanings of the story. Frank claims that her fictional account, which originated from her ethnographic research, presents ongoing emotional relationships between dancers and their regular customers that are commonplace. However, it is not that Frank intends to advocate that her field of anthropology should change its conceptual and methodological approach to a literary enterprise by using fiction. Rather, she uses fictional techniques to evoke a mood, conversation, or setting, derived from fact. Her belief is that it is ethical for the researcher to explicitly state which part is fiction in an academic text. Clough (2002) also echoes this sentiment by saying that he does not "argue that all research should be reported through fictionalized narrative" (p. 9).

In the field of education as well, to write fiction or a novel for a thesis or a dissertation has already been justified and legitimated (Kilbourn, 1999). I first read a dissertation that was written in the novel genre in a graduate coursework, Narrative Inquiry, in 2002, taught by my professor, Tom Barone. What Barone had us read was Rishma Dunlop's *Boundary Bay* (1999), which is known to be the first novel to be accepted as a doctoral dissertation by a Faculty of Education in Canada. It was such an eye-opening experience for me as well as for the rest of my classmates. Writing a novel as dissertation? It was a kind of culture shock for all of us, almost like a Copernican revolution! Dunlop explained that her novel/dissertation began with a narrative inquiry with the purpose of exploring the lived experiences in the first years of teaching and the transition from teacher education training into the classroom. She collected data with traditional qualitative data collection methods of semi-structured interviews (with a group of five volunteer participants among newly graduated teachers from a teacher education program). After realizing that the stories collected over a period of two and a half years revealed some compelling stories about the personal, emotional, and intellectual impact of teachers' lives at multiple levels, Dunlop wanted to tell these stories in the form of fiction, a novel that could represent teachers' stories in powerful, evocative ways, opening up new epistemological and methodological possibilities. For her, fiction writing became a form of inquiry that enabled her to enact and perform theoretical evocations through narrative form. Of course, it was not easy to get it approved by

her dissertation committee. Dunlop portrayed the struggle through the story of Evelyn, a character that she created:

> Evelyn remembers struggling with her doctoral dissertation, wanting to intertwine texts of poetry and journals into the text, wanting the power and eloquence of creative work. Arguments with her supervisor about the requirements of a dissertation and what constitutes research. "You cannot excel at both scholarly writing and creative writing. You must choose." Evelyn refuses to choose. She knows this refusal to demarcate, the blurring of genres, marks her in the academy. She does not care. She wants her writing to be plump with blood and bread. (Dunlop, 1999, p. 40)

Dunlop (2001, 2002) further argues that the novel can be a vehicle for an investigation of human life in dissertation research because it provides a deep understanding of human experiences, enabling research participants, researchers, and readers to move into emotional and psychological realms and helping them see things anew. The novel, she argues, provides a more widely accessible form that can extend research findings to a large interdisciplinary discourse community, providing opportunities for multiple perspectives and multiple readings.

Visual-Based Narrative Inquiry

To collect photographs is to collect the world.

—Susan Sontag (1977, p. 3)

The use of visual materials in the study of stories characterizes a growing field in narrative scholarship (Bell, 2013) that I categorize as **visual-based narrative inquiry**. Visual-based narrative inquiry is storytelling research that uses visual methods such as images, photographs, drawings, paintings, collages, cartoons, films, video, signs, symbols, and other visual technology. The marriage between the visual and the narrative is not new, either; the visual method has long been adopted as a way to collect social science data in anthropology and sociology by some of the early pioneers like Bateson and Mead (Riessman, 2008). Photographs have been an integral part of these disciplines since their beginnings, but they were not taken seriously in the social science until the 1960s. New social researchers began to work with professional photographers or filmmakers engaging in social science research, calling for a "visual literacy" especially sensitive to issues of class, race, and gender (Becker, 2004). In fact, visual anthropology and visual sociology are leading sub-disciplines in the development of visual research (Pink, 2004; Weber, 2008). Thus, the use of visual data in narrative inquiry is promising, as it will broaden the field of narrative inquiry to encompass visual images to share the lived experiences of our participants.

Photographic Narrative

I turn to Conceptualism, or Conceptual Art, to explain the marriage between the visual and the narrative in social and human science research. In Conceptual Art, and Conceptual Photography in particular, narratives are an explicit part of the artwork's content, tightly

connected to the image. Hence, there is a natural affinity between the two. The idea behind photographic narrative is quite interesting; it deserves some discussion here as a way to inform visual-based narrative inquiry, which is interdisciplinary in its nature. I am grateful to Lucy Soutter, a photographer, art historian, and feminist, for an incisive discussion of **photographic narrative** or narrative photography, which was derived from Conceptual Photography.

Soutter (2000) wrote an article from a feminist perspective that criticizes a particular strand of contemporary photography, which she terms "panty photography" (p. 9), that refers to quasi-narrative art photographs of half-dressed young women. She discusses the role of photographic narrative, which was a prevalent trend in the photography of the 1990s, for example, multi-image serial narratives. According to her, narrative photography is the core of Conceptual Photography in which a photographic work is driven by a narrative that conceptualizes the image. In Conceptual Photography, the artist's ideas are considered more important than photography itself, and photography is only used to convey the artist's ideas, just as various materials serve that purpose in Conceptual Art. In other words, conceptual photographers use photography in new and unexpected ways that prioritize ideas over the art form of photography. In Conceptual Photography, therefore, photography is merely a medium that presents the artist's idea or an illustration of a story that the artist wants to tell. Therefore, stories are told alongside the artwork with a descriptive title. These stories include the activities that constitute the idea of the artwork done by the artist, or intentions or experiences that are related to the creation of the artwork (see Soutter, 1999, for the historical development of Conceptual Photography). Borrowing from the literature and Roland Barthes's terminology of narrative in particular, Soutter points out how a still image can evoke a narrative, or a story, leading to photographic narrative or narrative photography, rather than merely recording whatever the camera captures. Soutter contends, however, that without supplementary narrative, stories in photographs might never come to fruition except in the imagination. The role of photographic narrative, thus, is to connect the image and the text; and narrative becomes an explicit part of the photograph's content, a bonus to the visual information that is provided in the picture.

The importance of photographic narrative is further illustrated in *Storytellers: A Photographer's Guide to Developing Themes and Creating Stories With Pictures* (Foster, 2012). Although Foster does not mention Soutter's photographic narrative in the book, his visual storytelling concept seems closely related. A Texas-based professional photographer, Jared Foster, speaks of the value of visual storytelling and how to go about producing powerful stories through photographs. He reminds readers that what separates a serious photographer from the stereotypical tourist photographer is the photographer's ability to collect images in a way that tells a story and offers a greater understanding of what he or she sees in a particular time and space. He emphasizes that photographers are visual storytellers who record life's dynamics, nuances, ambiguities, and emotions, all presented in the images. For his book, Foster interviewed professional photographers who had inspired him to become a visual storyteller. One of his inspirations is Jim Richardson, a photojournalist working for the National Geographic Society, living in a small rural town, Lindsborg, Kansas, not far from where I live. In the interview, Richardson makes an insightful remark on photographic narrative:

that whole narrative, that whole story, is what drives a huge piece of what is happening in our world. Similarly, you always have to assume that when people look at a photograph, they're going to take a story away from it—whether you intend for them to or not. (Foster, 2012, n.p.)

Coincidentally, I had an opportunity to attend a talk by Richardson, given as part of the Agronomy Seminar Series at Kansas State University on December 14, 2013. The talk was about his work undertaken on assignment for the National Geographic Society, photographing soils of the world and including images of soil erosion, restoration, and other human interventions, and plant roots. He wanted to create a photographic narrative or a visual story that would make viewers, who may never have appreciated soil before, pause and think. The pictures he shared with the audience during his talk were profound and metaphorical, as they symbolize environments that are indispensable to human survival and prosperity. The photographic narratives that he showed the audience deepened my appreciation of soils in a way that I had never considered before. I was deeply touched by his visual stories; they made me pause and rethink, indeed. With Richardson's permission, I share his visual storytelling of the soils and roots.

Jim Richardson's Visual Storytelling

1. Soils: The Roots of Life

©Jim Richardson

Image 4.1   Kansas Prairie Soil Profile.

(Continued)

(Continued)

My challenge photographing this story paralleled the greater challenge faced by all humans: to understand that this humble stuff beneath our feet is the very stuff that makes life on earth what it is. The power of soil to formulate the building blocks of life is (there is no other word that is sufficient) miraculous. What a gift!

2. Roots: The Prairie Survivors

While working on the Soils story for National Geographic we developed the technology for photographing the incredible prairie roots that Jerry Glover has been growing at the Land Institute in Salina. The plants you see here are from nine to sixteen feet long from top to bottom. They survive in the dry prairie lands because they dig deep for water and nutrients. They are remarkable beings, beautiful and worthy of our admiration.
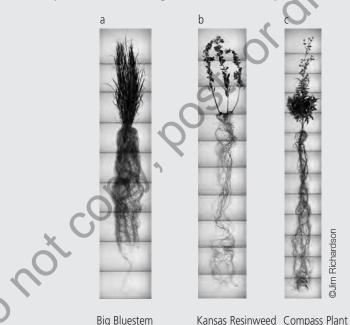
a   b   c

Big Bluestem   Kansas Resinweed   Compass Plant

©Jim Richardson

Image 4.2   Roots: The Prairie Survivors.

Richardson's narratives and images shed fresh light on familiar features of the natural environment we may have taken for granted. Richardson shares his tactic as a visual storyteller, which seems to be in line with his research tactic: He first has a focused topic to explore. For example, in his images he explores how soil has been exploited by human development and how soil is fundamental from an ecological perspective. Before he gets to the images of how soil has been

ruined, he focuses on the importance of soil and its organic relationship to plants, a relationship that serves as an analogy for the relationship of soil to the life of human beings. As we observe the images that Richardson took, we understand the compelling story that he wants to convey.

I think there are so many things that we narrative inquirers can learn from visual storytellers such as Soutter and Richardson. Can we consider collecting visual images to tell a story? Can we create photographic narratives to convey the meaning of the lived experience of our participants? Can we enhance the meaning of our written texts by providing visual images? The answers are all positive. I see many possibilities inherent in the visual-based narrative inquiry.

Photovoice

More and more contemporary narrative scholars use visual-based narrative inquiry, which is a partnership of words and images depicting the social texture of the everyday life of people and places. Participants' lived experiences are represented and reflected in visual images to provide vicarious experiences for readers. This multimodal storytelling adds another layer of meaning to narrative inquiry, namely a different "angle of vision" (Bach, 2007, p. 282). When both ways (narrative and visual) are used in combination, they can convey an idea that neither could convey alone, keeping the truthfulness of the stories intact (Johnson, 2004). Just like verbal narrative, visual narrative captures the specificity of social phenomena while illuminating the general in the particular, which allows us to explore the relationship between the two (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004).

In visual-based narrative inquiry, we use images as "texts" to be interpreted. Therefore, attention should be paid not only to how and why the images were produced, but also to how they might be read by different audiences. In other words, we have to understand that the term *visual* is not just about an image or object in and of itself but is more concerned with the perception of and the meanings attributed to it, which requires interpretation by the researcher and the viewer (Soutter, 2000). In addition, we have to remember that the images themselves provide no proof for any one of the interpretations over another. It should be noted that although a picture is worth a thousand words and some say that images "speak for themselves," Riessman (2008) insists that narrative researchers must write about the images, as the written texts can provide information that cannot be gleaned from the image alone. I concur. In visual-based narrative inquiry, written narrative should accompany the visual data.

To take another example of visual-based narrative inquiry, education researcher Bach (2007) uses photographs as a way of sharing lived experience and to make meaning of participants' experiences visually. She begins her visual narrative inquiry by photographing her own storied life to portray the particularities of an autobiographical narrative perspective. And she meets with participants individually and speaks about the ethical issues of working with cameras, discussing the possibilities of composing photographs, collecting photographs, and conversing with/through/about photographs before providing participants with cameras and camerawork tasks. She usually selects participants who are active in their subcultures. She asks them to take pictures as a way to compose their lives through photography and a way to convey what matters to them. Participants take photographs of their lives over a short time span of a week or two and tell stories about those photographs over time. This method is

called **Photovoice**, "a strategy that relies on informants to produce images" (Bell, 2013, p. 145). These photographs are made *with* participants as well as *of* them. The photographs that participants take represent the "diverse relationships possible among people, cameras, and images" (Bach, 2007, p. 285). She then studies the photographs and constructs a "field text" about possible meanings before she invites the participant to speak about the photographs of his or her choice. This process of working together is repeated several times. Bach advises that it is important that the researcher remains open and flexible to the inquiry during the recursive process, knowing that there will be shifts and changes. She states:

> I am mindful of my intentions, knowing that they will shift, and that they are negotiated within the narrative inquiry space, depending on what my position is on the landscape and who I am in relation to the participant, the program, and the audience. (p. 285)

Archival Photographs

Another way to do visual-based narrative inquiry is to work with archival photographs (Bell, 2002, 2006; Caswell, 2012). A former graduate student, Heather Caswell, on whose committee I served, worked with archival photographs in the Library of Congress. Caswell (2012) examined photographs taken in American classrooms during the first half of the twentieth century, to explore perspectives about the context of school, pedagogy, and teacher-student relationships during those years. Her semiotic analysis provides rich discussions of what we can learn about education through visual images by considering the social and historical contexts of the images.

Sociologist Susan Bell (2002), to take another example, used thought-provoking autobiographical photographs of British feminist Jo Spence (1934–1992), who took photos of herself to document her experiences of breast cancer from the time of her diagnosis in 1982 until the time of her death in 1992. In her study, Bell makes a case for how the study of illness narratives can go beyond oral and textual accounts by the incorporation of visual elements, which in turn can enhance the understandings of people's experience of illness. Below is an example of an autobiographical photograph taken by Spence (Image 4.3), Spence's description of the photograph, and an excerpt of Bell's analysis of Spence's visual and written texts.

> Passing through the hands of the medical orthodoxy can be terrifying when you have breast cancer. I determined to document for myself what was happening to me. Not to be merely the object of their medical discourse but to be the active subject of my own investigation. Here whilst a mammogram is being done I have persuaded the radiographer to take a picture for me. She was rather unhappy about it, but felt it was preferable to my holding the camera out at arm's length and doing a self portrait. (Spence, 1988, p. 153, cited in Bell, 2002, p. 15)

And, here is Bell's own interpretation of the image:

> The words and images in this photograph bear witness to Spence's interruption of a routine medical event. For adult women—especially those over the age of 40 or those whose bodies

Image 4.3 Mammogram

have developed mysterious "lumps"—it also evokes a recognizable story: breast cancer is a common disease. Mammograms detect malignancies. Thus women over the age of 40 should have regular mammograms. In addition, it suggests to me a particular story in progress: Jo Spence is having a mammogram. What will be the outcome? (Bell, 2002, p. 17)

As you can see, the potential of using visual images in narrative inquiry is enormous. Although the use of images in qualitative research is not new, bringing visuals into narrative inquiry has been understudied (Bach, 2007). Johnson (2004) also posits that there has been very little systematic analysis of how the visual text of narrative inquiry can be utilized to produce alternative meanings. To further motivate you, I want to provide a list of values that visual images hold for our research (see Table 4.5 on the next page).

Digital Storytelling

With the advancement of today's digital technology, I would say that the future of narrative inquiry is wide open and more promising than ever. Nowadays, it is much easier and more convenient to collect narrative data using mobile devices, such as smartphones, iPads, or tablets. It is not necessarily "easier" for me, who is not as tech-savvy as you are, but I am sure it is certainly true for

Table 4.5 Why Use Visual Images in Research

1. Images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into-words.

2. Images can make us pay attention to things in new ways.

3. Images are likely to be memorable.

4. Images can be used to communicate more holistically, incorporating multiple layers, and evoking stories or questions.

5. Images can enhance empathic understanding and generalizability.

6. Through metaphor and symbol, artistic images can carry theory elegantly and eloquently.

7. Images encourage embodied knowledge.

8. Images can be more accessible than most forms of academic discourse.

9. Images can facilitate reflexivity in research design.

10. Images provoke action for social justice.

(Adapted from Weber, 2008, pp. 44–46)

many of you who are digital natives. Indeed, today's technological advancements have influenced what and how we choose to conduct narrative inquiry, therefore, I would be remiss if I didn't bring up digital storytelling, an emerging method for narrative research that you have probably heard of.

The **digital storytelling** method refers to a three- to five-minute visual narrative that synthesizes photo images, artwork, video, audio recordings of voice and music, and text to create compelling accounts of lived experience (A. Gubrium, 2009). It is a newly emerging narrative research genre that uses a variety of digital technologies to document first-person narratives. Digital storytelling is used in community-based participatory research to increase community members' participation in research on local health issues, as their concerns and interests have been typically excluded or placed at the bottom of institutional priorities (A. Gubrium, 2009; Lambert, 2006). It is also used to preserve and promote indigenous oral wisdom as a way to overcome the limits of interview-based narrative research (Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2012). Willox et al. (2012) state:

> We believe that digital storytelling opens up some exciting and innovative new terrain for conducting and sharing narrative research, particularly within indigenous communities. As a method, it not only addresses the conceptual and practical issues and limitations associated with narrative research but it also works to alter, reverse, and/or disrupt the power dynamics often inherent in the research process and in the very roles of the "researcher" and "researched." The stories created, and the voices and lived experiences within, are an important, rich, and powerful source of data that have not been written, prestructured, or altered by the researcher. (p. 141)

The key here is that the stories created are not "altered by the researcher." Hence, one of the merits of digital storytelling resides in that it presents the stories initiated and created by the participants from their perspectives without the researcher's interruption.

This, then, means that digital storytelling involves immersive training and workshops for research participants who are not familiar with the use of technologies, which could be a challenge for some individual researchers who do not have the means to offer such workshops. According to Gubrium (2009), in fact, the digital storytelling process was originally codified by the Center for Digital Storytelling (www.storycenter.org), where experts in digital storytelling train participants to produce their own digital stories, which includes digital story elements, crafting the script of their stories, a tutorial on working with a digital image-editing software program such as Adobe Photoshop Elements, and other technical elements of digital storytelling, such as creating storyboards and recording voice-overs. I do not intend to discourage you from taking an interest in digital storytelling by pointing out this challenge because I have students who present their final papers by making short movies without much training, similar to the digital storytelling method. My point, though, is that although digital storytelling seems to be a cutting-edge method, we should carefully consider what is entailed in carrying out such a method before we employ it.

As you see, today's technology offers many possibilities for expanding the scope of narrative inquiry. However, we should also be aware of some concerns that are particularly pertinent to visual-based narrative inquiry that involve ethics (confidentiality) and legal copyright. Dissemination of visual data can become problematic when reviewed by courts using outdated laws and ethics committees with limited knowledge of visual methods. As mentioned above, visual methods can reveal important information that text or word-based methods cannot. Hence, Prosser (2011) advises that it is critical to know enough about the moral rights of participants and their culture, society, or community through research to "make sound sensitive moral decisions" (p. 493). (See Chapter 3 for more discussion about ethical issues.)

Conclusion: Blurring Genres

In this chapter, we have discussed narrative research genres or forms, including autobiography, autoethnography, biographical research, *Bildungsroman,* life story/life history, oral history, literary-based narrative inquiry, and visual-based narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011).[7] These narrative research genres are possible ways for the narrative inquirer to mediate stories into being. Hence, the role of the narrative inquirer as a metaphorical midwife is strongly suggested here. These narrative research genres, however, should be viewed as a means, not as an end. They are the means with which you mediate stories so that the meanings of the stories will be conveyed in ways that engage the reader.

After reading this chapter, I hope you now sense, even if vaguely, which genre of narrative inquiry appeals to you. But, this attraction to a certain narrative form should not be weighed in isolation. You must consider all factors, from the purpose of your research, research questions, participants, and kind of stories you would like to collect, to data collection methods and implications. You may wish to blur narrative research genres, integrating multiple forms into your narrative inquiry. As you see, writing stories, and by this I mean, writing *compelling* stories that will affect the reader (so that your research makes a difference) requires your imagination, empathy, passion, and compassion. As we deal with stories of our participants, those stories that breathe our participants' past, present, and future, our approach to narrative inquiry should also be as organic, living, fluid, and flexible as possible, because stories will not produce a fixed formula that we can apply uniformly.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In what ways does each narrative research genre address your research interests?
- Which narrative genre would you choose for your own research and why?
- How would you justify and convince your committee members of the value of your selected narrative research genre?

ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to these three different classical music pieces: Paganini's *Caprice 24,* Brahms's *Paganini Variations,* and Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.* Try to feel how one main theme can be represented in various forms. And then, try to imagine how your narrative inquiry can be represented in variations.

2. Try to write your own short autobiography.

3. Create two different imaginary groups: one that represents your doctoral committee who are positivists; and the other that advocates multiple forms of narrative inquiry. Create a mock proposal defense for your arts-based narrative inquiry.

SUGGESTED READINGS

FOR ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS

American Life History Collection (Library of Congress): http://www.loc.gov/collection/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/#overview

FOR DRAMA

Norris, J. (2000). Drama as research: Realizing the potential of drama in education as a research methodology. *Youth Theatre Journal,* 14, 40–51.
Saldaña, J. (Ed.). (2005). *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

FOR POETRY

Faulkner, S. (2009). *Poetry as method: Reporting research through verse.* Walnut Creek, CA. Left Coast Press.

FOR CREATIVE NONFICTION

Miller, B. & Paola, S. (2004). *Tell it slant: Writing and shaping creative nonfiction.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

For Fiction

Leavy, P. (2013). *Fiction as research practice: Short stories, novellas, and novels.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

For Arts-Based Narrative Dissertation

Jacobs, D. (2008). *The authentic dissertation: Alternative ways of knowing, research and representation.* London, UK, and New York, NY: Routledge.

Knowles, G., & Cole, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

For Visual Inquiry

Foster, J. (2012). *Storytellers: A photographer's guide to developing themes and creating stories with pictures.* Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Luttrell, W. (2010). "A camera is a big responsibility": A lens for analyzing children's visual voices. *Visual Studies. 25,* 224–237.

Margolis, E., & Pauwels, L. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of visual research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Notes

1. Note that autoethnography has its own offshoots, such as evocative autoethnography (Bochner, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Ronai, 1995), analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), performative autoethnography (Spry, 2001), interpretive autoethnography (Denzin, 2014), and critical autoethnography (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). See also *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (2006), volume 35, issue 4, for more discussion on different types of autoethnography.
2. *Bildungsroman* can be autobiographical if the researcher focuses on the personal growth and development of the researcher's self.
3. Technically, *Bildungsroman* is a literary genre that is part of the novel, a central form of fiction. However, I treat it as a separate narrative research genre because of its strong philosophical orientation, uniquely different from other narrative genres I discuss in this chapter.
4. See Kim (2013) for a more thorough discussion of the concept of *Bildung*.
5. Rosenthal (1993) defines life history as "the lived through life" and life story as "the narrated life as related in a conversation or written in an actual present-time" (p. 59). However, I observe researchers use these two terms interchangeably without any specific distinction, which I follow here.
6. I want to draw a distinction between arts-based narrative inquiry (ABNI) and arts-based research (ABR). ABR is another offshoot of qualitative research that uses the arts as the process and the product of their inquiry. It includes literary writing, poetry, music, performance (drama), dance, visual art, film, and other artistic mediums (Leavy, 2009). In this book, I focus on arts-based narrative inquiry (ABNI) that incorporates the arts into narrative inquiry including literary-based narrative inquiry and visual-based narrative inquiry.
7. For other approaches to narrative genres or forms, see Chase (2011).

Chapter Topics

- Narrative Thinking
- Interview Logistics
  - o *Informed Consent*
  - o *Confidentiality*
  - o *Sampling and Saturation*
  - o *Trust and Rapport*
- Types of Qualitative Interview
- Narrative Interviewing
  - o *Life Story Interview/Biographical Interview*
  - o *Narrative Interview Phases*
  - o *Narrative Interview Questions*
  - o *Two-Sentence Format Technique*

- Fieldwork
  - o *Gaining Access to the Research Field*
  - o *The Art of Observation—Also Known as Attention*
  - o *Observer's Paradox*
- Artifacts: Cabinets of Curiosities or Cabinets of Wonder
- Visual Data
- (Digital) Archival Data
- Conclusion: Excavating Stories as Data

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