

The research journey: A *Lonely Planet* approach

Noella M Mackenzie

Charles Sturt University

Lorraine M Ling

La Trobe University

In this article the authors discuss the impact of research on a neophyte researcher and the research supervisor. The methodology which is applied throughout this article is autoethnographic narrative. It represents retrospective reflection on the part of the authors and thus to some extent is about retrospective meaning making. It centres upon the identities of the writers as they narrate their story and in that process, develop new voices as the narrative emerges from the “performative aspects of research”. Research in the article is likened to a journey. Within the metaphor of a journey specific theoretical elements are discussed and contribute to an interpretive framework for deepening the understanding of the research process. The elements to be discussed include Giddens’ (1984) concept of the double hermeneutic and also his concept of knowledgeability. Other key elements are interactivity, recognition of identity and reflection. The purpose of this article is to share with other people engaging with the culture of research, “our thoughts, feelings and experiences as a means of understanding the social world or some aspect of it” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.xxii).

Introduction and study context

Throughout this article the process of undertaking a research study is likened to a journey. The journey in this instance is that experienced by the authors as they worked as supervisee and supervisor through the various stages of the supervisee’s doctoral research and thesis writing between 2000 and 2005. The article begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework and methodology applied to the study, followed by an introduction to the metaphor of research as journey. The article then moves into the narratives of both the supervisee and the supervisor and finishes with a brief conclusion.

Theoretical framework and methodology

In this article the authors are retrospectively and reflexively creating meaning and understanding of the journeys they took as they worked together between 2000 and 2005. The relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor is a complex one as they form a community of two (Weiss & McAlpine, 2000). Each brings specific expertise to the relationship: the student or supervisee begins the journey with a naive interest in a topic and over time constructs new knowledge and develops a new voice while the supervisor provides inspiration, knowledge and experience in the research process and the world of academia. A phenomenological approach to research emphasises the individual’s subjective experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) and “seeks the individual’s perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience” (Mertens, 2005, p.240). In this case the authors are learning about themselves and their experiences through the process of writing about

the research journey and using language as a “constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the self” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p.960).

As with much research, methodology emerges throughout the process. This concept of emergent research is described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) as “the logical conclusion to paradigm shifts, major developments in theory, and new conceptions of knowledge and the knowledge building process” (p.xi). The methodology which has emerged in the telling of this story is autoethnographic narrative and describes the journeys of the authors as they engaged in the “performative aspects of research” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.xxii). Autoethnographic research “feature[s] concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self consciousness and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterisation, and plot (Ellis, 2004, p.xix). We have linked the concept of autoethnography with narrative because it is “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p.209). Writing this narrative then for the authors, became the performance which is often referred to when people discuss autoethnography as a method (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The research community of two and its culture from the perspectives of the supervisee and the supervisor formed a shared *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977) or “structure of dispositions” (Nash, 2005, p.603). In this article we have linked our lived experiences as a model of self storying to provide the reader with “a meaningful articulation of human experience” (Alexander, 2005, p.423). The narrative aspect of the methodology we use for this article fits with the autoethnographic approach because

narrative whether oral or written is a distinct form of discourse. Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2005, p.656).

In engaging in a reflection-on-action process and writing this article we have found new voices with which to speak about what we refer to as a research journey. “The co-construction of narratives is a useful tool for studying the lived experiences of individuals who may have different roles and/or perspectives” (Weiss & McAlpine, 2000, p.3, with reference to Florio-Ruane, 1991; Lather, 1994 and Strauch, 1995).

As narrators, then, researchers develop meaning out of, and some sense of order in, the material they study; they develop their own voice(s) as they construct others’ voices and realities... and they write or perform their work for particular audiences (Chase, 2005, p.657).

The research method came out of our ongoing conversations and ‘reflections on action’ in the two years following the completion of the supervisee’s thesis. We chose to each write a narrative of our separate but overlapping journeys and to then identify the common features from these. The metaphor of journey provided the framework and language for the narratives.

The metaphor

The use of metaphor as a means to enrich and make concrete, potentially elusive and abstract concepts is powerful (Fairclough, 1992). A metaphor allows for parallels to be found between some known and familiar concepts and more ephemeral or less familiar activity. In this case, we embarked on a journey which offered beginnings and endings, change and renewal, disorientation and displacement which were both epistemological and ontological (Batchelor & Di Napoli, 2006).

The use of journey as a domain term within a metaphor is particularly powerful because it embraces change, as opposed to the more static conception of [research] ... the journey metaphor popularity [can be traced] throughout the twentieth century ... particularly in its sea voyage incantation (Milne, Kearins, & Walton, 2006, p.811)

The metaphor of a journey as applied to the process of undertaking research facilitates an analysis of a variety of facets of research as they impact upon the supervisee and the supervisor. When a journey is being recounted all of those involved will tell the story differently. What follows here traces the journey of the supervisee, who is the traveller and the supervisor who is the travel guide but also travels on her own journey parallel to that of the supervisee. The research participants from the supervisee's doctoral research are referred to in this article only as they impact upon the supervisee's journey.

The researcher (supervisee) as traveller

The experience of the researcher is an example of what Giddens (1984) terms the 'double hermeneutic'. By this I understand that a researcher cannot be part of the context of research without having an impact on that context at the same time as the context is impacting upon the researcher (just as travellers impact the context as well as being impacted by it). In the course of this dialectical relationship, both the context and the researcher are changed.

Critical reflection upon prior experiences, contexts, situations, background and education can lead to what Giddens (1984) calls 'knowledgeability', potentially leading to empowered and transformative action (Giddens, 1984). In this case my understanding of the research topic grew from the study because it allowed for both critical reflections of my own experience as well as the opportunity to share the critical reflections of study participants. An unexpected and unintended outcome of the study was my increased understanding of how the research process has the ability to empower and enable both researchers and research participants. When beginning the research I did not fully appreciate the impact of the choice of paradigm. On reflection, however, it is my perception that it was the choice of an interpretive paradigm, which allowed for the development of a dialectical partnership between myself and the participants which led to the collection of rich data.

The journey described here was not linear. Rather it was a journey which moved forward while allowing opportunities for revisiting 'sights' in a recursive manner although when I

did revisit places I had already been, I did so with different eyes. What follows provides a specific context for my journey which is then described.

My research study was conducted within my own professional experience: I was therefore a 'participant observer' in my study. The education system studied was my work context and the phenomenon being studied was one with which I had recent, personal experience. At times participants' comments resonated with my own experience, 'ringing true', while others made me stop and reflect from the perspective of experiences which were very different from my own. *What I knew* and *who I was* at the start of the journey was very different from *what I knew* and *who I was* at the end.

In the beginning

Before the journey could begin, certain decisions needed to be made in regard to timing, choice and availability of travel guide (supervisor). A supervisor was identified based upon reputation, past dealings and willingness to share or guide my journey. The supervisor advised that the journey should begin with a thorough review of all the literature about the proposed destination based upon the experiences of previous travellers (researchers). She stressed the need to know the destination well before embarking on my own personal exploration. This seemed strange at first as I was keen to get started on my own expedition and could not initially see the importance of such an in-depth review of the explorations of others. The wisdom of this review became clearer however, as I realised that there was much to learn from the combined experiences of other travellers.

Searching the literature was time consuming, sometimes frustrating, sometimes boring and other times exciting. Piles of articles and books and lists of websites began to grow as systems of sorting and summarising developed and were refined or discarded. There were times when the literature enveloped me and confusion reigned, as the possibilities for investigation began to multiply. Some of the literature was hard to read and contained information that held little interest to me and on other occasions it would seem that previous travellers had been inside my head. Occasional calls to my supervisor helped to keep me on track. Despite countless hours of reading, note-taking and much deliberation, it was difficult to make the final decision about the specific focus of the research journey although I now realise that the journey was well underway at this point. Certain records made me re-think the route to be taken, the stops to be made and led to delays. My frustrations were taken to my supervisor, who patiently listened and advised and eventually my journey began in earnest. What to take and what to leave behind involved a great deal of deliberation but the thought of having too much baggage encouraged me to think strategically and to remember that extra items could be collected along the journey if they proved necessary.

Detours, delays and discoveries

Once the official research journey had begun it quickly developed a momentum of its own, at times becoming all-consuming. I became quite introverted as it became apparent

that this was truly a solo journey despite support from my supervisor. While there were often others around, they did not fully appreciate my preoccupation with this personal journey. Sometimes people made polite inquiries but they quickly lost interest in my stories as my journey held no significance to them. Some people questioned the need for my journey, suggesting that there were other easier and more interesting ways of travel. I learned to keep my plans and problems to myself as the research journey occurred within the context of my *work* and *family and friends'* journeys. At times it seemed that my supervisor was the only other human being truly interested in my journey.

At one point I was required to abandon the *research journey* for a time as the *work journey* took over. I was not to know that it was this situation that would determine the final destination in regard to the research journey. The time away became a time of reflection as I took stock of my current situation. Once the problem was resolved and I was able to return my focus to my research journey I knew that a major detour was necessary. Already I was changing and the knowledge I had gained from the reading and reflections had transformed my thinking. To make the detour, it was necessary to return to the literature as more information was needed. This new information filled in gaps in my knowledge but also alerted me to a major gap that needed to be filled. Filling that knowledge gap would be the goal of my journey. The information I would collect could help future travellers. The solo journey began again in earnest, but this time with a clearer focus. The changes were discussed with the supervisor who provided enthusiastic support.

After journeying alone again for some time I realised that I needed local knowledge from research participants to help with navigation of *roads less travelled*. Locations and times for meetings with participants were arranged and I carefully planned the questions that would allow the participants to guide me most efficiently. My supervisor had warned me that the participants were not likely to spontaneously offer information. I would need to think through my questions carefully and respect the participants' time and privacy, while ensuring them that any information that they shared would be respected and protected. Each participant added unique pieces of information to my map, some providing similar information and others contradicting their colleagues. Some provided information which led me to question the collective wisdom that I had reviewed prior to starting my journey, while others challenged my thinking and led me to the conclusion that I needed to carefully consider accumulated information before moving on. At times I felt disorientated as the new information displaced existing ideas. At this point the element of cultural sensitivity became apparent. Just as on a journey we need to be sensitive to local culture, customs and values, so a researcher must exhibit similar cultural sensitivity to the locales within which we conduct our research. I was very conscious of the vulnerability of some of the participants as they shared experiences with me that were 'raw' and uncomfortable for them to talk about.

A return to base allowed for a review of the gathered information and a chance to take stock of my journey so far, and future directions and plans. It became apparent that I needed more local information which would require me to ask some different questions and travel different paths. I had gaps in my knowledge which needed to be filled. The more I knew the more I realised I didn't know. I would need to backtrack and explore

further. The elements of reflection and consolidation became even more necessary at this point of the research. As in a journey, we need to take stock of where we have been and what we have seen and done, so we need to similarly reflect as a researcher. As a result of our critical reflection, we gain deep understanding and knowledge which is able to inform future action. The taking of action based upon that reflection constitutes knowledgeability (Giddens, 1984). Hence we are able to consolidate our ideas and move on. However, in moving on we are not drifting aimlessly or grinding on relentlessly. We are able to reflexively monitor our actions on the basis of our knowledgeability, hence taking transformative and empowered action. As a researcher, this is a crucial element in the research journey.

A request for more participants led to an even greater response than previously and the information began pouring in. Some of it built upon the existing database while other participants provided information which filled the gaps in the study that I had identified. The participants also provided perspectives which I had not previously considered and challenged some of my previous knowledge. I discovered that when in the context of a participant it was the participant who held the power. A participant can choose how to filter information: what to include, what to exclude and what to emphasise. I was conscious again that I was a guest in other people's *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977). The participants discussed their context as it intersected with my interests and led me to reflect upon my observations in ways that were new, challenging and sometimes uncomfortable. My *ways of looking* changed as the participants pointed out lesser-known landmarks and harder to get to vistas of which I had been previously unaware. New insights resulted and I realised that my view had been both broadened and focused through interactions with the participants.

On my own again

The journey became solo once more as I ventured on alone, leaving the security of the participants behind, and taking their collective wisdom with me. The various suggestions were synthesised as I made my own way into new places, making personal discoveries along the way. Sometimes the journey became overwhelming as stimulation overload became a reality. When faced with too many choices it can be difficult to decide what to explore in detail and what to pass by with a brief glance. At times the *work, family and friends' journeys* took over and the research journey was pushed into the background. Although this was frustrating, I usually returned to the research journey with renewed focus and the ability to see things differently. A fresh approach allowed me to see things with new eyes, at times in wonder at things that would seem clear and obvious that had previously seemed shrouded in fog. At this stage the element of selectivity was central. On a journey such as this I could not go everywhere and see everything there was to see. I had to make particular selections as to what I was most interested in, or what would benefit me most.

The journey comes to a close: Or does it?

As the journey began to come to an inevitable close I was saddened and excited at the same time: excited about what I had learned on the journey and the opportunity to share my discoveries with others; saddened by the journey's end and the feeling that some roads had been left unexplored. On my return, it was apparent that some who were close to me were relieved that this solo journey had come to an end although they demonstrated pride in my achievements. My supervisor helped me to understand the significance of the journey and the highlights, which were worthy of sharing with a wider audience. A celebration marked the official completion of the journey.

A period of discontent followed as I readjusted to life without the research journey, which had dominated my thinking and being for several years. At times I felt dissatisfied with the final outcomes of my journey as I wondered about the alternate routes I may have taken and the decisions I had made along the way. These frustrations were not shared with others, as it seemed selfish to complain about a wonderful, self-indulgent journey that so few people have the opportunity to experience. I came to the understanding that the journey had been significant and life changing. I realised that although important, the specific outcomes of the journey were less important than the journey itself. New challenges were presented, some of which were a direct result of the research journey. These new challenges provided opportunities for further journeys. I was not the same person I had been at the beginning of my journey. Throughout the journey I had been changing in terms of *what I knew* but also in *who I was*.

When you reach your destination, you are different. The changes that occur are ontological as well as epistemological. They are changes in *who you are* as well as *what you know*. They contribute to shaping your voice for being and becoming, as a person, as well as your voice for knowing (Batchelor & Di Napoli, 2006, pp.13-14)

The role of the supervisor

Webber (2001) undertook a study of research supervision in an Australian University and collected data from students and supervisors. She claims that there was a high degree of consensus between the supervisors and their students about what constituted "the ideal supervisor". Webber quotes one student who claims that

An ideal supervisor is someone who: (1) on a personal level is not judgemental, (2) does not cut off lines of intellectual inquiry simply because they do not accord with his own preferences, (3) does not 'talk down' to you, (4) does not turn consultation into one-way lectures, (5) does not have mood swings – is not a control freak (2001, p.98).

Webber (2001) also claims that

There was enormous confusion about the role of supervisors and what kind of support students could reasonably expect from their supervisor. One person said it was like

playing a game but nobody tells you the rules. They felt that this lack of knowledge disempowered them and made them unsure of the whole process (p.100).

Webber concluded that many of the issues which arise between supervisors and students they supervise stem from the fact that a 'model' of supervision is not discussed or negotiated between supervisee and supervisor initially "nor do they negotiate the nature of the supervisory relationship" (2001, p.102). She also found that supervisors were less satisfied with their performance as supervisors than the students were with supervisors' performance. The need for there to be a clear model of supervision which is negotiated between the supervisee and supervisor was held to be one of the keys to the success of the relationship. The supervisor, as well as the supervisee, embarks on a journey and thus some expectations about that journey need to be negotiated.

The supervisor's journey

When a supervisor takes on the role of 'travel guide' for a student about to undertake the research journey, it is always a unique journey that is planned and followed. No two research journeys are the same and thus the role of a supervisor is partly to acknowledge the uniqueness of this particular journey and assist with some overarching concepts, skill development, suggested approaches and possible travel directions. What a supervisor must recognise is that it is the student's journey and that the student must make the critical decisions about where they want to go and how they want to get there. It is the job of a supervisor to advise and guide the students and to provide them with a number of alternative options from which they need to choose in informed ways.

In the course of supervising a research journey for a student, the supervisor never emerges the same as they were when the relationship began. The double hermeneutic, and the dialectical relationship which have been previously commented upon, are at play in terms of the impact the supervisor has on the research and the impact this particular research journey has upon the supervisor. Some of these journeys are relatively easy going, with travellers who seem to be clear about where they want to go and to have a firm grasp of the way they wish to get there. At other times, the journey is much harder going, with travellers who cannot seem to pin down where it is they want to go and frequently change their minds about how they might want to get there. Often also, the research traveller/student does not have well enough developed skills in specific areas to embark productively on the journey, and a skilled supervisor will see this and support the researcher to develop those skills prior to attempting the journey itself. This might be likened to being fit enough to undertake the journey without falling by the wayside or coming to grief. The last thing a supervisor wants is for a journey to result in an unsatisfactory conclusion where the destination is not reached in a positive way. Both the researcher and the supervisor invest much effort, emotion and commitment in the journey and the destination needs to be worthwhile and exhilarating.

According to our experience throughout this relationship, a good supervisor should be like a travel guide but should also provide some insurance to the student. This insurance comes in the form of experience and understanding of the hazards and pitfalls that can

occur along the way, and also in terms of the best possible roads to take and processes to follow in case of trouble. The student/researcher should be able to trust the supervisor's judgement and to respect it, even though they may suggest going in a slightly different direction from the one the researcher might think he or she wants to take. A supervisor must earn that kind of trust and this takes time and experience which is why supervisors also have to serve an apprenticeship. Less experienced supervisors are usually paired with a more experienced travel guide so they may watch and assist in planning and executing a journey together before embarking on being a fully fledged supervisor in his or her own right. Like all tasks, mentoring is essential in the development of sound, trustworthy supervisors who student/researchers will want to have to direct and support their journey.

At the end of a supervisory journey, there is a real sense of shared exhilaration and fulfilment and a deep sense of excitement for the traveller who has reached the destination safely and successfully and reported back. Of course a supervisor realises that even though this particular journey has ended, it is not the end. Rather it is the beginning and the means to open many more doors and pathways for the traveller. Much is wasted if a traveller reaches the destination and does not capitalise and build on the experiences, skills and knowledge created during the journey. The supervisor can act as a mentor here in providing some guidance for what can follow the initial journey. Sometimes a supervisor will become a fellow traveller and embark on the next part of the journey with the researcher/student.

Keeping up with the latest modes of travel

Part of the role of a supervisor/travel guide, is to be up to date with the latest modes of travel and trends for journeys into research. Thus it is not sufficient to be able to explain only the traditional routes travelled in the past but also to be able to introduce travellers to new and emerging ways to make a research journey. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) point out that "emergent research methods are the logical conclusion to paradigm shifts, major developments in theory, and new conceptions of knowledge and the knowledge-building process" (p.xi). Whilst the supervisor needs to guide the research traveller in the crucial initial decision as to the paradigm within which the journey will occur, the supervisor also needs to be able to provide new ways to approach the travel and new ways to answer the questions which arise along the way as well as those which arouse the curiosity to undertake the journey in the first instance.

Just as in any journey one takes, there will be times in a research journey when one has to take some risks and push some boundaries in order to find new things to see and appreciate. In pushing these boundaries, travellers often discover something which has not been found before, at least in that place and space. They stand on the edge of cliffs in order to see what lies beyond and they climb to the top of mountains to get the overview of the land around. As travellers we can take the conservative, traditional paths and modes of travel and probably have a safe and enjoyable journey. However, it is often when we take a risk and travel down a lesser known path and take an alternate mode of travel that we see sights we could not otherwise have seen and gain experiences we could not

otherwise have had. This can be exhilarating, challenging, dangerous and sometimes frightening, but can push the boundaries of what we previously thought possible. In research the same can be true. We can stay with conservative and traditional paradigms and methods, or we can push the boundaries and try new modes of undertaking research. As Minh-ha (1991) suggests this may push us to the edge where we risk falling off, but potentially allow us to make new discoveries and to be research innovators as we push the traditional research modalities. Pushing boundaries is what travel is about. In linking this to the research journey we ask researchers to step beyond the limits of traditional travel modes and pathways and to explore new directions and perspectives. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) claim that

[t]o work with an emergent method may require the researcher to engage at the borders of traditional methods and sometimes work from a multidisciplinary position. Emergent methods disrupt traditional ways of knowing, such as positivism, in order to create rich new meanings (p.xii).

Some of the newer modes of travel available to the researcher/traveller include critical race theory, performative ethnography, auto-ethnography, queer theory, feminism, online ethnography, photographic research to list but a few. To limit the horizons of researchers embarking upon their journey to only the traditional modes of travel potentially stifles their enjoyment and experience of the travel itself. There are many paradigms within which the journey can occur and it is the role of the supervisor travel guide to make these approaches known to the researcher/student and help him or her to design the course and route. This may involve some hard decisions, some risks and perhaps taking the traveller to places he or she did not know existed or did not expect to be able to go. Minh-ha (1991) takes up this concept.

Working right at the limits of several categories and approaches means that one is neither entirely inside or outside. One has to push one's work as far as one can go: to the borderlines, where one never stops, walking on the edges, incurring constantly the risk of falling off one side or the other side of the limit while undoing, redoing, modifying this limit (1991, p.218).

Indeed the use of geographic information systems (GIS) as a tool within the contemporary research context further links this notion of research to a journey across time and space and place. GIS can be used to create what have been referred to as 'Cartographic Narratives' (Kwan, 2006). This sense of place and identity within research takes the travel metaphor to another level and builds upon the researcher's sense of being a changed person by the end of the journey.

The context of travel

In an era of economic rationalism where there is an increasing imperative for the end product of research to be able to be 'commercialised' in some way, or where the 'research' is commissioned by industry, government or other stakeholders, the research journey may be constrained by forces outside of the researchers themselves. The journey which is

planned in such a case must result in a particular outcome with no room left for going anywhere other than the direction that will lead to the desired outcome. If the desired outcome is not reached, the researcher could be replaced by another who will go in the direction he or she is told and will produce the desired outcome. This is the difference between a journey which is prescribed or pre-arranged by someone else and one in which the researcher is deciding on the way taken and mode of travel to be utilised. The pre-planned research journey could be likened to a guided 'package tour' run by a commercial company which has a tight schedule of activities and journeys to be taken in a prescribed order and according to a contained time frame. There may be some "free time" built in where discretionary activities can be undertaken, but ultimately the traveller must return to the set tour and continue to the next prescribed destination with all travellers arriving at the same place at the same time.

This highlights the decisions we take as researchers when we aim for convergent outcomes or divergent outcomes. If our research is so prescribed and directed as to push us towards particular desired outcomes, it is convergent and in fact, may potentially not be research at all. Mertens (2005) makes a distinction between research and other forms of activity such as evaluation.

The relationship between research and evaluation is not simplistic. Much of evaluation can look remarkably like research and vice versa. Both make use of systemic inquiry methods to collect, analyse, interpret and use data to understand, describe, predict, control or empower. Evaluation is more typically associated with the need for information for decision making in a specific setting, and research is more typically associated with generating new knowledge that can be transferred to other settings. (p.2)

In fact, much of the prescribed and funded so-called research we undertake for convergent outcomes which fit the agenda of funding bodies is probably more akin to evaluation than research. Research which does not work towards pre-determined or prescribed outcomes and thus can produce divergent outcomes more in the spirit of what we understand as true research.

Package tours can be enjoyable and can whet the appetite of a new traveller for what is possible and thus as such they can be a good entrée into travel. Likewise a group project or consultancy which has a set of criteria provided by the funding or commissioning body for the project, can be an appropriate way for new researchers to begin their journey. In this way they are able to learn in company with others who have varying levels of expertise and can also work co-operatively rather than in the more isolated and potentially lonely style of the lone researcher. The same sense of autonomy, decision making and ownership is not present on a package tour as there is in one that is individually planned and undertaken but some of the understandings of the concepts and skills of exploration may be acquired and provide the base for more.

'Blue skies' research has been described as pure science, exploratory, innovative, curiosity-driven and fundamental, in contrast with goal-driven research (Ziman, 2000, p.22). The luxury of being able to engage in 'blue-skies' research is becoming rarer, except for those

people whose journey is truly theirs and results in an outcome which is uniquely theirs. This article is about such a research journey and highlights the benefits and immeasurable value of travelling along this path whenever it is possible, and of thus being in control of the destination one reaches and the roads taken to get there.

In describing the kind of research which the authors of the well known *Lonely Planet Guides* for various countries and destinations undertake, it is claimed that “the most memorable travel experiences are often those that are unexpected, and the finest discoveries are those you make yourself” (Wilson & Nebesky, 2001). This *Lonely Planet* approach to the research journey is sound and the journey described here has the hallmarks of a memorable travel experience for both the traveller and the travel guide.

A successful journey

The use of the metaphor of a journey has facilitated the fleshing out of an interpretive framework within which to discuss key elements of research and its impact on those who undertake it and those who may guide it. Elements of a successful research journey have been identified here as: interactivity; cultural sensitivity; reflection and consolidation; knowledgeability and reflexivity; selectivity; changed persona; pushing modalities; convergent and divergent outcomes. The purpose of using the metaphor of a journey is to stress the fact that whilst the outcome is important, the life changing, mind changing part is the process of the research and the writing itself. It is a unique journey experienced differently by every research supervisee and supervisor. Most positive travel experiences serve to whet our appetites for further travel and in many instances, the more we travel the more we want to travel. Likewise a successful research journey will whet our appetites for further research and in this way the door is opened to the world of research and the many destinations and directions which that can involve.

References

- Alexander, B. K. (2005). Performance ethnography: The re-enacting and inciting of culture. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp.411-441). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Batchelor, D., & Di Napoli, R. (2006). The doctoral journey: Perspectives. *Educate*, 6(1), 13-24. <http://www.educatejournal.org/index.php?journal=educate&page=article&op=viewFile&path%5B%5D=90&path%5B%5D=88>
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, Mass.: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: SAGE.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp.651-662). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: The methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek: Altamirra Press.

- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2003). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed., pp.199-258). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. London: Polity.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *Constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structurism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (Eds.) (2006). *Emergent methods in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Kwan, M. P. (2006). Feminist visualisation: Re-envisioning GIS as a method in feminist geographic research In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Emergent methods in social research* (pp.131-163). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Milne, M.J., Kearins, K., & Walton, S. (2006). Creating adventures in wonderland: The journey metaphor and environmental sustainability. *Organization*, 13(6), 801-839.
- Minh-ha, T. T. (1991). *Framer framed*. New York: Routledge.
- Nash, R. (2005). The cognitive habitus: Its place in a realist account of inequality/difference. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(5), 599-612.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Webber, R. (2001). Bungee jumping and supervision of higher degree students. *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 42(2), 89-104.
- Weiss, J., & McAlpine, L. (2000). Mostly true confessions: Joint meaning-making about the thesis journey. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 30(1), 1-26.
- Wilson, N., & Nebesky, R. (2001). *Czech and Slovak Republics*. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.
- Ziman, J. (2000). *Real science: What it is and what it means*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dr Noella Mackenzie is currently working as Literacy lecturer at the Murray School of Education, Charles Sturt University. Prior to 2004 Noella worked as a classroom teacher and senior education officer. Noella's areas of research include early literacy development; education professionals reading and using research; teacher morale; and the impact of extrinsic teaching excellence awards on teachers.
Email: nmackenzie@csu.edu.au

Professor Lorraine Ling is Dean of Education and Executive Director of the Bendigo Campus, LaTrobe University. Lorraine joined La Trobe in 1985 following a career as a teacher in both government and non-government school systems. Lorraine's areas of academic expertise lie in teacher education, professional development of teachers, values education, educational administration and leadership and educational policy construction.