Facilitating learning: mine, yours and others’ : gaining insight into the facilitation of corporate experiential learning programs through the lenses of personal experience and the learning styles analysis

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Chapter 2. Methods and Methodology: Journey to a Destination

2.1. Introduction

Scientific observation and inquiry, followed by its reporting and publication, is the future of our profession. Whether the methodology is quantitative or qualitative, the necessity of scientific documentation is paramount ... and the expectation is to document results that can be communicated and compared (Bunting, 2003:356).

Despite what may be considered a sensible way to go, I did not do what Bunting suggested. In the beginning, Bunting’s perspective may have been of interest, but as my journey progressed I moved further and further from this position. In my ideal world this PhD would have involved presenting the material using a style that was provocative, challenging and potentially unsettling to the reader. This would have involved suspending with a strict plot as may be commonly expected in a PhD thesis. However earlier drafts of this chapter seemed to be too challenging and unsettling (to me and the reader!) and so I have reverted to a style that is more “exact, precise, pragmatic, and [perhaps] rigorous” (Rosenau, 1992:7), but not clearly representative of the true ‘path’ I followed. This chapter only focuses upon what I eventually did, rather than the long and winding road I have taken, with many experiences of being lost. The journey has revealed to me that while, in theory, it may be okay to have a voice, the difficulty arises as to whether anyone is interested in listening to your ‘true voice’. Thus, ultimately, I write to be ‘heard’ by my limited readership.

As a researcher I open myself up to the criticism directed at the qualitative researcher that they are “journalists, or soft scientists, [whose] work is termed unscientific, or exploratory, or subjective” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b:7). If at the end of this research my work is termed exploratory or subjective and I am labelled a journalist or soft-scientist, then I will wear those labels with pride. I did not seek to ‘prove’ anything, nor did I expect my work to be compared with anyone else’s. I did seek to look at what is held up as ‘truth’ and scientific through different lenses. These lenses included my own individual, subjective experience, and thus to provide some level of critique of that ‘truth’ that may encourage others to question, to reflect upon their own
experience and to bring about whatever change they may deem necessary to their practice. Questions related to the ‘research trinity’ of validity, reliability and generalisability emerge from a psychometric paradigm where a single correct interpretation may be sought that can be generalised to a wider population (Janesick, 2000). Questions of validity and credibility in the context of this thesis “has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible?” (Janesick, 2000:393). No single explanation or interpretation is sought here, nor a grand theory proposed, rather this thesis recognises and emphasises that there are many ways of viewing the world and what is presented here is one person’s view of that world seen through an array of lenses. What has emerged is potentially a blurring of genres and an interweaving of viewpoints that may, from one perspective, appear contradictory (Lincoln and Guba, 2000) but ultimately has provided a multifaceted and rich description of one person’s views and experiences.

The purpose, then, of this chapter is to note the highlights of the journey I have taken which has resulted in arriving at a heuristic research methodology, influenced by postmodernism and constructionism. This methodology has incorporated a range of methods including autoethnography, semiotics, surveys and interviews. The following begins with a description of the methods and then to an exploration of the influencing factors and contexts of the broader methodology (heuristic research), theoretical perspective (postmodernism) and finally to epistemology (leaning towards constructionism).

But first to a reflection and an analogy about the research process.

2.2. The Research Process

As I re-read this section today, 29th May, 2003, it is the 50th Anniversary of the ascent of Mt Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. Hillary reflects upon the difference between his experience with Norgay and the experience of climbers today who benefit from the wisdom of those that have gone before them when he says:

We had to meet all the challenges that arose. That’s not true largely nowadays. Nowadays most of the people who climb are not experienced but are led up by experienced guides and they are most of the time following in the footsteps of other
people. We had to create our own footsteps and overcome problems, so for us it was very special (Hillary quoted in Harvey, 2003:11).

His words have some resonance for me in my PhD journey where, at times, I have followed in the footsteps of others with the guidance of supervisors, but at other times, I have had to face the challenges myself.

2.2.1. Journeying into the Canyon of Research Methods

Canyons are deeply carved narrow valleys explored by people engaged in activities such as walking, li-loing, abseiling and swimming. They are places of rare beauty, where seemingly there may be but one path. However it is possible for the canyon to have several entry and exit points allowing the canyoner to explore that aspect of the canyon that most interests them and to leave the remainder to those before and those that follow. There are risks in exploring only a part of the canyon. One risk is that you may miss the best parts of the canyon, the most beautiful, the most challenging, and/or the most spectacular. Another risk is that by trying to shorten the trip it may be necessary to follow a path that is often more difficult. Some people will choose to make the journey with little or no prior knowledge, and that is the experience of the early explorers of canyons. They have had to feel their way, take the risks and deal with whatever they find. For those that come later there are guidebooks, journal articles and the tall-tales and true from those who have gone before. These may help make the journey simpler and more pleasurable, but in the end it is still necessary for you as the individual to walk that path, to make your own decisions and to experience the place for yourself. There may be times that the journey is simple as you follow the well-worded guide-book, but at other times the guide book may not tell you what you want to know. The journey of the writer may have been different to yours, their objectives may not compare, the weather conditions or group may vary greatly, thus in the end you need to take hold of the journey and begin to explore your own options. To some extent this is similar to the process of exploring research methods that I have experienced.

This journey began sometime in 1999 and did not finish until 2003. Along the way there were many sidetracks, dead ends, geographical embarrassments (i.e. getting lost) and at times, much frustration. While I would have preferred to have everything
‘mapped’ out in the beginning, what happened was a drawn out process with much learning, unlearning and relearning. What follows is a discussion of what I ended up doing, but behind the scenes there are many more stories and reflections on the journey that tell a much richer story – but that may be for another time.

2.2.2. Developing a Research Process

In developing a research process the researcher needs to address a series of questions that help frame and locate the research. These questions help articulate what we understand about knowledge and truth. The key questions focus upon: methods, methodology, theoretical perspectives and epistemology. Crotty’s (1998) description of these four aspects is presented in the following section.

Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis.

Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.

Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.

Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology (Crotty, 1998:3).

Crotty (1998) presents a sample of those four categories as displayed in Table 2-1.

Two examples of the flow that may occur between the four elements from epistemology, to theoretical perspective to methodology and finally to method are:

Constructionism ➔ symbolic interactionism ➔ ethnography ➔ participant observation
Objectivism ➔ positivism ➔ survey research ➔ statistical analysis
While the ideal may be to begin with our epistemological position and then proceed to the theoretical perspective, in reality what tends to happen is that we begin with a problem or a question, as occurred with this study. As Crotty (1998) suggests we then tend to proceed through a range of questions that include the aims and objectives of the research, the strategies (e.g. methodology and methods) to achieve our aims/objectives and then a justification of those strategies (e.g. theoretical perspective and epistemology).
My journey has seen an epistemological and ontological shift (or realignment or even identification) that has seen me move from a more positivist perspective to one that would more appropriately fall within the realms of the critical position as outlined in Allison’s (2000b) adaptation of Lincoln and Guba (2000) in Table 2-2. Perhaps this was a result with my dissatisfaction with attempts at grand narratives and metatheories; perhaps it was a result of a process where I began to validate my own voice more as I have progressed through this study.
While Table 2-1 and Table 2-2 do not easily meld, each has assisted me in seeing the bigger picture, as well as putting some of the smaller pieces together – somewhat like doing a jigsaw puzzle.

2.2.3. Fitting the Pieces Together

With a journey that has ranged widely and has also continued over an extended period of time, it may be helpful to present the key aspects of the thesis and the time at which they occurred.

Figure 2-1 provides an overview of the time frame of the research process and key events from my initial enrolment in an EdD in 1995 (I also completed a Master of Commerce (Human Resource Management) parallel to my enrolment from 1995-1999).

Figure 2-1 Thesis Time Frame

The emphasis upon the period of 1999 onwards is due to the increased rate of progress that occurred during that period, this period also links to a change in job and career direction that was initiated late in 1998 and occurred in the period of May-June, 1999. It was in May 1999 that I left a job I had been in from February 1995 (just prior to my enrolment) and in July 1999 I commenced fulltime work at the University of Wollongong. The significance of this change and the impact it has had on the progress of my thesis mirrors some of the key insights and themes that have emerged from my thesis, such as space and place, as articulated in Chapter 4.

While, at times, the pieces did not seem to fit together to form a coherent whole, along the journey I have been ‘places’, done things and had conversations that have
provided me with a mixture of both useful and distracting moments. What may have made the whole so difficult to see at the beginning was because I was looking at the situation through the wrong ‘lens’. As I changed lenses and began to look at things differently, what was central and what was peripheral changed. Some things seemed essential at the time, but in hindsight, such as the Pilot Study, are less important. Others that seemed unimportant in the beginning became central to the whole, such as my own story. This change of ‘lens’ reflects my paradigm shift from the positivist to the critical.

The structure of the remainder of this chapter will follow the four elements of the research process as suggested by Crotty (1998):

- Methods
- Methodology
- Theoretical Perspective
- Epistemology

2.3. **Methods**

The methods are the specific techniques or procedures used (Crotty, 1998). While some texts may focus upon a divide between qualitative and quantitative research (e.g. Braud and Anderson, 1998; Bunting, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000a; Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Grbich, 1999), Crotty (1998) suggests that “our research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative or quantitative, without this being any way problematic. What would seem to be problematic is any attempt to be at once objectivist and constructionist (or subjectivist)” (Crotty, 1998:15). The distinction happens at the methods level (as can be seen in Table 2-1 and Table 2-2), not at the ‘higher’ levels of theoretical perspectives or epistemology as may be inferred from Table 2-12 (page 86). In the following quote Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provide a broad definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations,
including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b:3).

The methods used within this thesis are quite diverse and are predominantly qualitative with some use of quantitative techniques in Chapter 5. Even though there is an array of data sources there is no intention to triangulate the data, but rather, as discussed further in 2.3.5, these methods reflect the heuristic research endeavour to acknowledge that whatever “presents itself in the consciousness of the investigator as perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge represented an invitation for further elucidation” (Moustakas, 1990:10). The methods used, drawing upon Crotty (1998) in Table 2-1, include:

- Literature Review (Chapters 3 and 6)
- Autoethnography (Chapter 4)
- Instrumentation (Chapter 5)
- Surveys and Interviews (Chapter 5)
- Semiotics: Reflections on Images (Chapter 6)
- Deconstruction (Chapter 6)

A summary of the methods used, the sources from which the data have been gathered, an indication of where they have been used in conjunction and their location in the thesis structure is presented in Table 2-3. Each aspect is discussed in greater depth in the following sections.
Table 2-3 Data Sources, Sample Sizes and Methods

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<th>Autoethnography Ch 4</th>
<th>Instrumentation Ch 5</th>
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2.3.1. Literature Review, Chapters 3 and 6

a. Two Approaches

In the context of a traditional thesis, the literature review aims to establish the context, the theoretical rationale for the research and to demonstrate that you are aware of the current state of the literature (e.g. Phillips and Pugh, 1994). However, in this thesis, the two literature reviews form an essential part of the research methodology whereby I seek to immerse myself in the topic. As indicated in Table 2-13 (page 93), the literature reviews in Chapters 3 and 6 as well as the autoethnography in Chapter 4, formed part of the immersion process. While the progress from Chapter 3 to 4 sees a narrowing of the focus to a single subject matter, by the time the research has reached Chapter 6 the process has broadened and evolved to draw on a much wider view of the world as reflected in the literature considered, for example urban planning, human geography and organisational aesthetics.

b. A Side Track – The literature on facilitation

As the literature review in Chapter 3 developed I realised that there was an avenue I would like to explore, that of the origins of the writing on facilitation. As discussed in Chapter 6, his process of exploration began with a question to the online outdoor research discussion list {outres) on 8th February, 2000, a discussion group of researchers from around the world. The question was about what the list members considered the best three articles or books on facilitation. Additionally I asked them
what their nationality was as well as for them to explain why they thought these to be the best facilitation articles/books. The intent of these questions was firstly to gain a broader list of articles/books than I was aware of, but secondly I was interested in the influence of North American writings and whether particular countries or regions are more influenced than others.

From the responses gathered I then went to those articles and began to look for the development of the ideas and to begin to trace the history of the thought. From this process one significant writer seemed to come to the fore: Stephen Bacon. So I went to some of his work (Bacon, 1983; Bacon, 1987) as well as back to *outres*.

To *outres* I asked whether people knew of any works that critiqued the work of Bacon, to which there was a resounding silence (13\(^{th}\) April, 2000). I was intrigued. Here was a significant influence to the shape of facilitation writing today and yet there appeared to be no critique of his work. This was made even more significant for me due to Bacon himself acknowledging that his book was “designed as an instructor’s manual for Outward Bound staff members ... however this information may have something to offer a wider audience than the Outward Bound community” (Bacon, 1983:vii). Bacon implied that his book was academically written (Bacon, 1983:ix), however there is scant evidence of its development, theoretical basis, nor the existence of supporting research (this is a somewhat ironical critique given my use of autoethnography). Bacon even admits that his book is “as much a synthetic effort (of the work of Jung, Erickson, Bandler, Grinder and Gordon) as an original one” (Bacon, 1983:ix). Yet the work appears to be very influential, maybe even seminal. In an email to Lee Gillis (Gillis Jr., 2000) I asked if he knew more of the origins of Bacon’s work and from Lee’s reply I was directed, again, to the work of Milton Erickson, a hypnotherapist. This ‘signpost’ to Erickson was confirmed by further conversations about neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

Concurrent to the sidetrack on facilitation was a series of conversations with a friend who was studying NLP. NLP has some common ground with the learning styles model I was using in the areas of sensory modalities, as well as the influences upon the work of Stephen Bacon through authors such as Erickson (Sparks, 2000) and Bandler and Grinder (e.g. Bandler and Grinder, 1979). I was interested in discussing with her what the background to NLP was and to begin to understand the underlying
theories (there's that question again). In brief conversations I began to hear a common name, that of Erickson. It was obvious that I needed to plan a more significant journey along the 'Erickson Track'. What have Erickson's writings got to offer my understanding? In beginning to consider this track a question arises about the appropriateness of the influence of writers such as Erickson, who is drawing on a therapeutic background where people are there because of the 'dysfunction', versus the use of such theories in the context of corporate experiential learning where it is about developing and building on existing 'functional' behaviours. This is a theme explored further by authors such as Moon (1999) and Henry (1999). While this sidetrack would have been interesting to explore it will have to wait for another journey. This sidetrack also influenced my efforts at deconstruction as discussed in 2.3.5.

c. Ethical Considerations of Internet Research

My request to outres may raise questions in some people's minds about the ethics of such an action and whether consent is required to use and report the information gathered as I have done with other data sources in Chapter 6. Answers to these questions may rest upon whether postings to outres "are 'private' or 'public' communications" (Eysenbach and Till, 2001:1104). If outres is a 'private room' then specific consent would be required. However if outres is seen as a 'public space' or a 'social domain' where information posted has similarities to the publication of a letter in a newspaper, then no consent may be required (Bassett and O'Riordan, 2002; DeLorme, Zinkhan and French, 2001; Eysenbach and Till, 2001) or that in the act of willingly contributing material to the discussion group the individual gives implied consent. This may be different where the replies are communicated directly to the person asking the question, rather than via the public forum of the listserve.

Another aspect may be the intent, in the first place, of the person asking the question of a discussion group that is primarily about promoting and supporting research. What is the difference if a question was asked without the prior intent of using the information as data within a research project? Do we have the right or the expectation to go back to the contributors to obtain consent? Are we then raising issues of breaching of privacy? What is the difference between an online discussion and a
discussion over a coffee with a group of friends whose questions and comments may help us better form and direct our research? How do we reference and obtain consent for these casual conversations?

As well as intent, there are also the questions related to the nature of the inquiry. If the inquiry was a focus group or an in-depth interview is the question of ethics and consent different (DeLorme et al., 2001)? How do I view outres? For me it has been a place where I can ask questions, throw around ideas and challenge mine and others' thinking. In exploring these questions I find myself reflecting upon my own participation on outres, a place I have found to be useful in exploring and challenging mine and others' thinking. Where I wished communications to be private I took them out of the outres forum and directed communication to the individual in question. If I was happy for the broader public to view my responses, then I posted them to outres. This is one filter I have used, and I have experienced others using who have communicated with me directly, to help determine my own perception on whether outres is a public space or private room.

The position I have taken on this in the context of my request to outres is that outres is a public space where information gathered is available for use without consent. If people wish their communication to remain private then that should not be communicated via discussion groups such as outres. This position is influenced by the following factors:

- My understanding is that outres is a discussion group that is focused upon the support, development and advancement of outdoor and adventure education research. From my perspective the participation in and/or observation of discussions would appear to be substantially motivated by this focus and that people are posting questions and comments with the intent of developing their ideas and the ideas of others

- Participation in outres, while requiring an initial registration, is voluntary and any individual may choose to participate in a line of discussion or not. The level of participation, visibility and disclosure is determined by the individual contributor, not the person making the request. In fact most people on outres do not actively
participate and may in fact be ‘lurking’ and ‘eavesdropping’ on the ‘conversations’ of others who are more actively involved (DeLorme et al., 2001)

- All communications contributed to outres are electronically recorded and are publicly available, including the names and email addresses of contributors, through the archives (http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/outres.html). The information is not kept private.

- No pseudonyms or fake names appear to be used. Participants on outres freely provide their names and at times include their positions, institutions/organisations, fax and phone numbers. Additionally people will often address other list members in a familiar and friendly way due to previous knowledge, friendships and working relationships between list members.

- Contributor’s names and contact details have been removed in this thesis, only information on gender and nationality has been included.

- The information I gathered, on the articles, from my initial request was summarised and reposted to outres for the information of the whole discussion group.

2.3.2. Autoethnography: A Method, A Way of Life, Chapter 4

I have used autoethnography to tell my story, but I was not writing and reflecting beginning with a ‘tabula rasa’. Rather the tablet already had many notes jotted down over which I placed my experience and then I sought to order what I saw. I was moving my experience forward and moving the literature back, but still having the description of my experience as transparent as possible to allow the literature to be seen. The research, in part, is the life story; the life story is the research. By investigating learning, primarily through the eyes of one, me, I was the subject of that story and I was the narrator/researcher of that story. It is my journey that is being told, complete with sidetracks, bumpy roads, highways, intersections, dead-ends and many experiences of feeling lost. In looking at learning in experiential learning, I do so through a range of learning experiences. Autoethnography is just one.
a. Autoethnographies

An autoethnography is a mixture of the auto (self), the enthno (culture) and the graphy (research/writing), any autoethnography will vary as to the degree of emphasis given to each of these aspects (Banks and Banks, 2000; Ellis and Brochner, 2000). Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe the autoethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis and Brochner, 2000:739), while Banks and Banks (2000) recall Richardson’s definition that it is a “highly personalized, revealing text in which an author tells stories about his or her own lived experience” (Banks and Banks, 2000:234).

The great value of autoethnography is the focus of the researcher as the subject, however a criticism of autoethnography is the subjective nature of the researcher as subject with a very real risk that it be called a “narcissistic display of self-absorption” (Banks and Banks, 2000:234) by those who may see truth, validity and generalisability from a different research paradigm. Crotty (1998) refers to the autoethnography in a not too flattering light when he says:

"Instead, a rampant subjectivism seems to be abroad. It can be detected in the turning of phenomenology from a study of phenomena as the immediate objects of experience into a study of experiencing individuals. It is equally detectable in the move taking place in some quarters today to supplant ethnography with an ‘autoethnography’ (Crotty, 1998:48)."

In contrast to Crotty, Grbich (1999) reflects that:

"In auto-ethnographies, the self is both the subject of the study and the narrator. The self is connected to others within the contexts of culture and societal structures in an overlapping and interconnecting fashion. Stories are presented in a creative manner utilising fiction, drama or poetry, and the aim is to engage and involve the reader in the writer’s experiences. The focus of the subjective view is the emotion: the physical and the cognitive within contexts (Grbich, 1999:237)."

In as much as the autoethnography is about the self and the self is as narrator, in the context of this thesis the topic is primarily ‘learning’. At the same time the self, the researcher, the narrator, is learning about a range of topics such as: learning, autoethnographies, research methods, PhDs and, to a certain extent, learning about ways to combine research with ‘having a life’. This story of self is a situated, contextualised story, but as Banks and Banks (2000) suggest, for the writer to clearly
define the context may be limiting the reader. I have provided some level of contextualisation in the introduction and methods chapters, but, as Banks and Banks suggest the “contexts for interpreting and applying an autoethnographic text should be – perhaps can only be – supplied by the readers” (Banks and Banks, 2000:233). The autoethnography is presented as a journal of my thoughts, written as they occur. Each entry is dated, and usually time and place is included. Reflective comments are added, primarily, from my Learning Style Analysis (Dunn and Prashnig, 2000) and at times from other readings and are presented using a different layout to differentiate between my thoughts as they occurred and the reflections and analysis as they have occurred, which could be up to two years later. These reflections provide a lens of interpretation of my experiences, but this interpretation could just as easily be added through a lens of personality styles, behavioural styles, power relations, social context, time of day, aesthetics, space and place – but more of this later in Chapter 6.

While the autoethnography is presented in Chapter 4 and the results of various instrument and surveys are presented primarily in Chapter 5, the reality is that the decision to use the LSA preceded my decision to write an autoethnography. In the end, the LSA has become a lens or a filter through which I have been able to reflect upon my experience as well as a mechanism to gain further insight from a number of other people in classes I have taught and workshops I have presented.

2.3.3. Instrumentation, Chapters 4 and 5:

Instrumentation, while common within a positivist framework, can also be used within research that lies within other frameworks. Spindler and Spindler (1992) suggest that “Instrumentation and quantification are simply procedures employed to extend and reinforce certain kinds of data, interpretations and test hypotheses across samples. Both must be kept in their place. One must avoid their premature or overly extensive use as a security mechanism” (cited in: Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:9). The instrumentation used here, the Learning Style Analysis, was ultimately administered to 73 participants all of whom were postgraduate students (including myself) and was used in conjunction with my autoethnography as well as questionnaires and interviews with different groups.
a. A New Zealand Side Track to the Learning Styles Analysis

Initially I did not have a clear learning style theory or model in mind as I began this journey, it was only a chance encounter at a conference in New Zealand that led me to the Learning Style Analysis (LSA), a model that seemed to fit some of my emerging areas of concern. The choice to use a previously designed learning style instrument has been important in influencing the shape and direction of this research process. In choosing a learning style instrument, or any predetermined instrument at all, raises questions such as:

- Why focus on learning styles at all?
- Why or why not analyse learning styles?
- What benefit is gained or lost as a result of using an instrument such as the LSA?
- What are the perceived benefits gained?
- Is there the potential to head down a track that is irrelevant as a result of focusing on learning styles, and/or by analysing those learning styles using a particular instrument at the exclusion of some other instrument?

Here lies a dilemma!

b. Why ‘Learning Styles’ and the Learning Styles Analysis?

i. Learning Styles

It has been suggested that in focusing upon learning styles the process of seeking to classify them “may be convenient at times, (but) more is often lost than is gained by ignoring the uniqueness of each person’s history and ways of experiencing the world” (Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993:11). The perception of the value of learning styles is limited by the depth and breadth of the learning model adopted. In this case, by using Dunn and Prashnig’s LSA (Appendix 6), the effort was made to use a much broader model of learning styles that took into account a wide variety of perspectives and influences on the individual’s learning experience. While there still exists a risk by
placing focus on one learning style model this may be merely a perceived risk, but risk is part of what adventure is about, so on I went.

In this research situation the risk is a managed risk, and, as with any adventure or outdoor program, risks need to be managed to acceptable levels. The risk, in this instance, is managed by not taking the concept of learning styles, nor the Learning Styles Analysis as prescriptive, descriptive or normative but rather they are used to open up dialogue based upon common language, to explore other possibilities and to potentially see things through new or different ‘lenses’. The intent was not to place people in boxes, or to classify them, but to introduce a subject for discussion and exploration that may be new or different for the participants.

For some participants, it was envisaged, they may never have considered that there may be another way of learning, they may never have reflected upon their own experience as a learner or trainer to see that there may be other possibilities. However as adult learners, their own experience of learning may demonstrate that there is a gap between their lived experience of learning and their lived experience of training.

ii. The Learning Styles Analysis (LSA)

The use of any instrument, including the Learning Style Analysis, is open to challenge as to its reliability, validity and also its appropriateness for the participant group and for the research question. In this instance, as stated above, the LSA is used, not as a way of categorising, but rather as a means of opening the possibility that there may be other ways to learn that are different from the individual experiences and/or knowledge of the participants. As discussed in Chapter 3, Dunn and Dunn’s original form of this learning style model has quite strong validity and reliability (Curry, 1990).

c. Why or why not analyse learning styles?

i. What is the perceived benefit?

In a thesis that incorporates a substantial aspect of honouring my own knowledge and tacit knowing through the autoethnography, it may seem contradictory to choose to use an instrument to analyse other people’s learning styles. Would it be more
consistent to ask people how they believe they learn? Probably or possibly, yet my experience with interviewing students in Pilot Study 1 might suggest that people do not necessarily have the conscious knowledge of learning that is necessary to articulate what is going on for them. The LSA gave me a means of comparing a number of people across a range of criteria. In addition, I was able to explore individuals and groups (e.g. females, males, young, old etc.) from different perspectives and to compare individual responses in surveys and assignments to their LSAs. It also helped to raise questions about learning and to challenge commonly held views on how we might facilitate or teach.

ii. What may be lost as a result?
On the down side of using one particular model is that there may be the potential to suppress the tacit knowledge, intuitive insights and unconscious knowing that people may hold about their learning and the learning of others. By upholding one particular model, the more intuitive types may defer to the ‘proven’ model rather than acknowledging and honouring their own personal experiences and perceptions. One avenue for accounting for this limitation is in my autoethnography, as discussed in 2.3.2, where I write my own thoughts and feelings and then read back over it to see what, if any connections, may exist with my LSA (Dunn and Prashnig, 2000). While I do not approach the experience of learning with a tabula rasa, I am aware that my LSA is in my mind as I have been writing and reflecting upon my own learning experience.

2.3.4. Surveys and Interviews
Surveys, particularly via questionnaires, provide a means by which “the researcher can collect large amounts of data quickly and efficiently … [while an] an interviewer can explain, probe more deeply, and facilitate the uncovering of information that would not be accessible through more superficial methods” (Braud and Anderson, 1998:281). The limitations of the questionnaire is that the ‘sample’ used may be limited, and the richness sought in a research process such as this may be lost. Questionnaires and interviews were used in conjunction with the LSA in two Pilot
Studies in 1999, and then questionnaires were used in conjunction with the conference workshops in 2002.

It may seem contradictory for someone who is seeking to argue from a critical, non-positivist perspective to seemingly succumb to a more typical positivist method. However, as highlighted by Crotty (1998), what is important is the theoretical perspective and epistemological position I am coming from. The methods can be used effectively across a variety of theoretical perspectives and epistemologies. What may also be of value to consider is the weight given to the ‘evidence’ gathered via the different methods. In the end, in this thesis, what is given substantial weight is my experience, not the data gather from questionnaires and LSAs.

Following is a detailed description of the Pilot Studies, the postgraduate subjects in 2001 and 2002 as well as the conference presentations in 2002. These descriptions include demographic details of each group as well as the relevant research designs. The key sections are:

- Trying to Fit Into Those Boxes: Two Pilot Studies;
- Pilot Study 1: MGMT 908, 1999;
- Making Progress: Subjects and Workshops, 2001 and 2002, and
- NRG Interviews, 2002

a. Trying to Fit Into Those Boxes: Two Pilot Studies

The following two descriptions of Pilot Studies that I sought to implement are a reflection of my attempt at meeting that call for finding the ‘gap in the literature’. It reflects my perceived, and maybe misguided, desire for validity and reliability, for making things provable and generalisable within this research. As I look back, it is no wonder I had been bogged down and making little progress. Lots of my energy had been expended trying to prove something in a way that I was not passionate about. I had been trying to fit into someone else’s little box or paradigm, and I didn’t want to
fit! And I didn’t like their box! The insights gained and the ‘results’ obtained from these studies are included in Chapter 5.

While the Pilot Studies may have seemed like a distraction at the time they have ultimately influenced the direction of the research by providing feedback on areas that I did not want go and also giving me some direction as to where I should be putting my efforts. These insights have particularly impacted upon the shape of research with respect to the data gathered from the subjects I taught in 2001 and 2002 and the conference workshops in 2002.

b. Pilot Study 1: MGMT 908, 1999

For there is no learning without exposure, often dangerous, to the other. I will never again know what I am, where I am, from where I’m from, where I’m going, through where to pass (Serres, 1991:8)

As a new lecturer (appointed in July, 1999), I had the opportunity to use one of my classes as a Pilot Study. This was an opportunity to trial interview questions, to design questionnaires and to conduct follow up interviews.

The Pilot Study was conducted parallel to Lecturing in a postgraduate class in the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Wollongong. The subject was entitled: MGMT 908 Human Resource Development and the Learning Organisation and as such provided a significant degree of latitude to explore issues relevant to and related to this research area.

i. Participant Selection

In terms of the selection of this class, the selection process was a pragmatic, or opportunistic, decision based upon who was in the class. As an exploratory Pilot Study the opportunity to work with participants who were able to give feedback on the research process as well as potentially gain from the research process was perceived as being mutually beneficial.

Each student was given the information about the research and then given a choice as to their willingness to participate through their signing a form expressing their interest in participation as required by the University Ethics Committee.
ii. Class and Student Profiles

The breakdown of course enrolments of the 25 students is displayed in Table 2-4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number (%)</th>
<th>Degrees Being Studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 (64)</td>
<td>Master of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>Master of Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>Master of Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy (Public Health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>Not indicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gender split is fairly even with 54% females and 46% males with a wide variety of nationalities as presented in Table 2-5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Female Number (%)</th>
<th>Male Number (%)</th>
<th>Total Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not indicated</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age range was 21 to 53 years, with a mean of 30.26 and a standard deviation of 10.38.

iii. Subject Purpose

MGMT 908 is a postgraduate subject offered in Semester 2 within the Department of Management and is a compulsory subject for Human Resource Management majors providing an advanced perspective on the use of Human Resource Development in organisations. (University of Wollongong, 1999)

iv. Process Overview

The research process was chosen both as a result of the subject matter, but also influenced by the shape of the subject. The relationship between the subject matter
and the research area was quite close and thus afforded a unique opportunistic and pragmatic scenario. The process began and was designed to evolve as I moved from a position of not knowing what I did not know, to a more informed position of knowing what I did not know with the ultimate hope being, knowing more than when I started!

At the early stages the process was represented in Figure 2-2, with the solid arrows representing the 'direction of travel', while the dashed arrows represent the forces or influences that one section may have upon future components of the research.

![Figure 2-2 MGMT 908 1999 Proposed Pilot Process](image)

The process reflects the positivist mindset that I was emerging from and thus a tendency towards a: pre-test, experiment, post-test model. The steps in the process and the rationale for each step is as follows:

*Completion of the Learning Styles Analysis (Wk 1)*

The Learning Style Analysis was distributed in class during week 1 with the indication that feedback would be available during the weekend workshop between weeks 7 and 8. This was to provide a common basis of feedback and understanding about learning and for the individuals to gain greater insight into how they learned.

*Individual Presentations (Wks 3 and 4)*

Each student in the class had to give a 5 minute presentation on a positive or significant learning experience they have had in the workplace. This may be a formal,
informal, or serendipitous learning. The main aim was to consider the context in which the learning occurred to provide a variety of examples of learning.

**Participate in a One-on-One Interview (Wks 5 and 6)**

The interviews were scheduled so they fell between the Individual Presentation and the feedback on learning styles to gain insight into how the individual saw or understood learning, both their own and that of others. The initial questions were designed with the intention to elicit information about the participants espoused theory of learning and to contrast that to the theory in action as evidenced by the content of their presentations (Delahaye, 2000). The interviews were to be recorded for later transcribing and for follow-up and feedback from the participants. The participants were informed prior to the commencement of the interview that they would have the opportunity to view the transcripts to provide comment and/or make changes as they considered necessary to ensure the integrity of the content.

All but one of the interviews was conducted in the office of the researcher and focused upon the questions in Table 2-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2-6 MGMT 908, 1999 Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 1: Proposed Interview Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What &amp; how have you been taught about how you should learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. Where have gained this knowledge from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From your own knowledge and experience, what do you think is the “best” way for people to learn in organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In your presentation you described a learning experience, can you please briefly recap that experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. What influenced your choice over any other learning experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Please describe 2 other learning experiences you have had at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If you had your choice how would you create a learning environment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It quickly became clear that the information being gleaned from the interviews did not align with the desired outcomes of the question design. The reasons could be
manifold, however one in particular seemed to prevail, i.e. that of the participants not having been in a situation before where they had to think about how people learned.

*Participate in Sessions (Wk 7)*

These sessions were designed to:

- give feedback on their individual learning styles as well as an overview of Learning Styles Theory

- present information and experience on the use of adventure and experiential learning techniques as well as facilitation and processing skills

The sessions were conducted over a weekend to maximise the opportunity to build on potential learning and to build upon the participant’s exposure to Learning Styles Theory as presented in the first session. The sessions covered:

- Learning Styles Theory as presented with the Learning Styles Analysis
- Experience of Adventure-Based Team Development
- The Theory of Experiential and Adventure-Based Learning
- Presentation and Facilitation Skills
- Peer Feedback

*Present, with a small group, and reflect upon the effectiveness of a Training Session*

To provide a small group environment where issues of learning could be explored at greater depth and to provide a situation where the learning theory could be put into practice.

*Participate in up to 2 further interviews following the completion of the Subject requirements (Up to 2 months later)*

This was to follow-up on any leads generated by the previous process and to explore questions of the possible transfer of learning to work, home or some other environment.
v. Observations following the Initial Interviews

At an early stage in the Pilot Study it was becoming evident that the data being gathered was not of a quantity and quality that was desired, especially from the initial interviews. It was proposed that this could be for a range of reasons such as:

- The questions were not clear
- The location (my office is still a little Spartan to say the least) may have been an inhibiting factor to open and honest conversation
- The participants may not have had the level of knowledge and experience of the subject matter to provide the information sought
- The great possibility of me having ineffective and/or inadequate communication and/or interview skills

In addition to problems identified in the data being gathered, there was the inevitable technological problem with the tape recording of the interviews being of poor quality making the transcribing almost impossible and the value and integrity of the transcripts questionable. To further add to the learning opportunities from this Pilot Study there was a range of information about the individuals which was considered to be of potential value in terms of understanding participant responses and to aid in further research design phases. This information was related to a range of demographic data including age, country of origin, country/ies of education, undergraduate majors etcetera.

As a consequence of the above, a deviation from the initial research design was planned whereby location and recording issues would be addressed and to also provide opportunity to increase the demographic data collected on each individual. To this end a questionnaire was designed (Appendix 1). Broadly, the demographic questions were based upon questions from the Employee Survey of The Illawarra Workplace Industrial Relations Survey 1996 (University of Wollongong, 1996), while the remaining questions were developments from the initial Interview Questions. This questionnaire was to be administered via email in the full knowledge of the possible disadvantages related to being dependent upon a specific technology but also knowing that in resorting to an electronic interview there may a consequent decrease in the
quality and richness of data gathered. In the context of this Pilot Study the limitations of administering the questionnaire in an electronic format were deemed acceptable as the motivation, in part, for the revised research process was a result of the inadequate data gathered in the initial one-on-one interviews from whence more rich data could have been expected.

vi. Results and Insights

The results and insights from this process are presented in Chapter 5, the results highlight that this was probably the wrong group, being asked the wrong questions by a researcher who was heading down, not necessarily a dead end, but a side track that may indicate a case of ‘geographic embarrassment’ (i.e. I was in the wrong place, possibly using the wrong ‘map’ and I was lost). But they are still an experience from which I could learn.

My desire to quantify, analyse, ‘box-ise’ fell flat on its face, but I did have some interesting data from the individuals’ LSAs and insights into what I wouldn’t do next time. What I really needed was people who knew what I was talking about in the first place, or at least understood some basics about learning. My hope was that NRG would provide such a group.


A second Pilot Study was planned to commence before the end of 1999 that would focus on issues and questions raised through the initial Pilot Study. The participants of this group were NRG. NRG is a small group of fellow PhD students mostly from the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Wollongong (The initials, N.R.G. don’t necessarily stand for anything). We have been meeting together for several years providing support, direction and provocation as we individually and collectively travelled our PhD pathways. It was envisaged that this study would focus on two elements:

- The participant selection and their prior knowledge of learning, training and potentially experiential learning
- The interview questions and the depth and quality of answers being elicited
These two elements are obviously closely related.

This second Pilot Study never occurred. While I did survey NRG with the LSA it was a case of square pegs and round holes. There was no clear sense of how they fitted into the research picture. They were not the right people for doing this research, they did not have the practical and theoretical understanding to enable me to gain the relevant feedback I was after. This may seem ironic, but this group, while students and lecturers and/or tutors, were not involved in considering, at a deep level, what is learning? There is a sense that I need people to understand the concepts of learning and different ways people learn in order to gain effective feedback on the questions I want to ask. NRG remains a more useful research feedback mechanism than research subjects, however some of its members will return as participants in interviews nearly three years later.

d. Making Progress: Subjects and Workshops, 2001 and 2002

Progress was made as I was able to build and develop my research direction through a range of subjects I taught in 2001 and 2002 as well as a range of conference workshops I conducted in 2002:

MGMT 908, 946 and EDGP 912/3 are postgraduate subjects offered at the University of Wollongong. They are:

- MGMT 908: Human Resource Development
- MGMT 946: Personal Learning and Development: The Reflective Manager
- EDGP 912/3: Facilitation Techniques in Outdoor Education

The conference workshops were at a South East Asian conference (SEA) with a repeat workshop, and a North American conference (NA), with just one workshop. Each of these was to an audience that predominantly involved experiential learning facilitators.
i. The Subjects

MGMT 908 and MGMT 946 involved me facilitating the learning of others, where I was interested in exploring the students’ responses to the learning experiences. EDGP 912/3, on the other hand, was more focused upon them as facilitators of the learning of others. With these students I was interested in looking at whether they had changes their practice as a result of the LSA and their own learning experiences in this subject.

The choice and opportunity to work with these three postgraduate classes as part of my PhD was totally opportunistic (Grbich, 1999). As the research developed and I was presented with these classes to teach, in formats that suited my research agenda, I was more able to effectively weave the subjects into the research and to weave the research around the subjects. Any further follow up of these students would most likely be through the use of convenience sampling (Grbich, 1999) given that the students are all post graduates, some from overseas and interstate. In addition, for most of these courses the students may only be at university for a year or two, so that by the time I may wish to follow them up they may have already graduated and are not easily recontacted. If this study was seeking to establish generalisations regarding the facilitation of learning, then the use of opportunistic and convenience sampling would be problematic, but as an exploration of learning from individual experiences, these techniques provide the most timely, effective and straightforward approach to reaching appropriate co-researchers.

I had initially planned to use MGMT 908: Human Resource Development in 2002 as my ‘spare’ research opportunity. However, with enrolments in post graduate subjects being variable, the administration decided in early March 2002 to cancel the subject, 6 weeks before it was due to start. This put extra emphasis on using the existing sources as effectively as possible to gather the information I needed.

ii. MGMT 908 2001

Two years after my initial Pilot Study with MGMT 908 2001 it looked like this subject may play a more significant component of my research than the 1999 Pilot Study. As with the earlier Pilot Study conducted in 1999 this subject is part of the Master of Commerce program at the University of Wollongong which was offered both in Wollongong or Sydney with two intensives of three days and two days.
Participant Profile

The participants as summarised in Table 2-7 had an age range of 21 years to 49 years, with a mean of 30.60 and a standard deviation of 8.59.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Female Number (%)</th>
<th>Male Number (%)</th>
<th>Total Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldivian</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 (60)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 (40)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design

In addition to the LSA and their assignments, the students also completed 3 surveys: one at the beginning of Intensive #1 looking at their experience of completing the LSA, Survey 2 was completed at the end of Intensive #1 asking questions about the learning experience and any changes they may make as a result of the intensive and Survey 3 was completed at the end of Intensive #2 asking questions about changes they may have made in the previous four weeks as well as anything significant about their learning experiences of Intensive #2 (Appendix 2). It was hoped the results of these surveys would be presented in Chapter 5, but as with the 1999 Pilot Study, the lack of depth of understanding about learning has limited the insight gained and thus they have not been used further.

iii. MGMT 946 2002

As with MGMT 908, MGMT 946: Personal Learning and Development, The Reflective Manager is part of the Master of Strategic Human Resource Management program in the Department of Management at the University of Wollongong. This subject was also delivered over two intensives, the first is three days at the end of
Week 3 and the second is two days at the end of Week 7. There were pre-course readings to do and an assignment due in Week 3.

**Participant Profile**

The participants as summarised in Table 2-8 had an age range of 24 years to 46 years, with a mean of 32.64 and a standard deviation of 9.36.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Female Number (%)</th>
<th>Male Number (%)</th>
<th>Total Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentinean</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laotian</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9 (81.8)</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Design**

As with MGMT 908, 2001 the students in MGMT 946 completed the LSA as part of the class.

**iv. EDGP 912/3 2002**

EDGP 912/3: Facilitation in Outdoor Education is one of three subjects in the Graduate Certificate of Outdoor Education offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong as well as an a subject with the Masters and Doctorate of Education programs. It is offered every two years and draws people from education and non-education backgrounds.

**Participant Profile**

The participants, as summarised in Table 2-9, had an age range of 23 years to 47 years, with a mean of 32.00 and a standard deviation of 7.66.
Table 2-9 Profile of EDGP 912/3, 2002 Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Female Number (%)</th>
<th>Male Number (%)</th>
<th>Total Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>8 (88.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1 (11.2)</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>6 (66.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>10 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Research Design

As with the other, MGMT 908 and MGMT 946 subjects, the research design was woven into the subject. As such, the students had to complete a pre-workshop survey addressing questions about their current practice, the LSA (to be sent in prior to Intensive #1 for processing and distribution during the intensive) and a critical reflection on their current practice in light of the readings suggested.

For EDGP 912/3 two surveys were conducted, Part A prior to the commencement of the program and Part B after the second weekend intensive. At the South East Asian Conference (SEA) and the North American Conference (NA) the questionnaire (Appendix 5) was presented as a single form. The rationale for each question is at the end of Appendix 5.

As with the best intentions of MGMT 908, the data gathered from participants in EDGP 912/3, as presented in Chapter 5, was not as significant as I had hoped due to the relatively limited level of experience in facilitating experiential learning of the participants.

v. Workshop Questionnaire

As a result of being disappointed with quality of data that I was gathering through the surveys in MGMT 908, I sought another avenue for gathering information about professional practice of facilitators of experiential learning. To find these people and to investigate their practice I surveyed participants in the EDGP 912/3 subject as well as in 3 workshops I presented during 2002: one in South East Asia (SEA) where I presented twice and one in North America (NA).

The workshops were conducted the same way at the two conferences, using the same activities, overheads, learning style assessment, structure and timing, however the group sizes varied greatly. In SEA I conducted two workshops back to back, the first
had approximately 30 participants the second 90 participants. In NA there were 42
participants. EDGP 912/3 had essentially the same material, however instead of using
a brief learning style assessment (Appendix 3) I used the full LSA (Appendix 6). The
decision to use a learning style assessment that only covered the three sensory
modalities of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, was a pragmatic decision that was
based upon the limited time available (the workshops were only 90 minutes, the full
LSA takes about 45 minutes to administer plus processing and printing time) and the
lack of pre-enrolments which meant that administering a full LSA beforehand was not
possible. The learning style assessment used in the workshops could be completed in
approximately 15 minutes and used language that was generally accessible to those
speaking English as a second or third language and was used with the permission of
the author (Connor, 2002).

The questionnaire (Appendix 5) asked questions related to: demographic questions,
reflective activities they used, client groups, working environment, average program
length, group size, previous study of learning styles, their preferred learning style and
their interest/preference in activities in which they participated in during the
workshop. The rationale for the questions is presented at the end of Appendix 5.

vi. Workshop Design

An 'Experience': Reflective Activities

The first 20-25 minutes of the workshop involved an ‘experience’ where the
participants chose to sit in a group for which there was an allocated activity. When
they were settled I revealed a question they were to answer using that activity (as
indicated above). After four minutes they would move to another activity before
another question was revealed. The questions, in some senses, were irrelevant, it was
the experience of participating in a range of diverse reflective activities that was the
emphasis. The questions were:

What are your goals for this conference?

- How would you describe the feel/culture of your current work environment?
- How effective is your current professional practice?
• What are your dreams for the future?

• What are your concerns about the future?

It was not intended to provide sufficient time to complete all activities, but rather to offer an opportunity for participants to ‘graze’ or ‘try before you buy’. The participants were then asked, via the survey, to rank how interesting or engaging they found each activity. The activities used at SEA and NA were:

• Avant cards are free postcards available in many coffee shops and the like that are used for advertising. They often have powerful and creative images. Participants were asked to select one card that represented their response to the question

• Newspaper Headlines involved the group creating a mock-up of a front page of a newspaper using flip chart paper and coloured pens. The participants can use words, pictures, colour and creativity.

• Group Journalling consisted of the group creating one journal that combined the experiences of the individual group members. The hope was to provide a space for people to share their views but in a less confronting way than if one was writing a personal journal.

• Feelings Market Place is a commercially available activity that has ‘feeling’ words presented in creative formats on cards. Participants were asked to choose two or three words which they would use in sentence, paragraph or poem to answer the question (Dickson, 2001b). By emphasising the use of short responses was both to help focus those who wish to speak plentifully and also to limit the concerns of others who may not want to express very much.

• Colour My Feelings is an activity I devised as most of the others involved some form of written or spoken words. In this activity the participants used crayons to express their emotions, but without the use of words. Others in the group were then asked to interpret the picture.
Learning Styles Assessment

A short learning styles assessment was then presented that took about 10-12 minutes to complete as discussed in v.

The information given to the participants included that:

This is a simplified version.

This assessment only looks at sensory modalities:

- visual,
- auditory,
- tactile/kinaesthetic

What is your preferred modes of receiving information?

Overheads

Following the ‘experience’ and the Learning Styles Assessment, I then moved into a overhead presentation that outlined the Learning Styles Analysis (summarised in Appendix 4) as well as beginning to direct people’s thinking about how they facilitated.

vii. Participant Profiles

The responses analysed below totalled 76, which included eight responses from EDGP 912/3, 28 from SEA and 40 from NA with 30 (39.5%) being from females and 46 (60.5%) from males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2-10 Workshop Survey Demographic Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 64 people who indicated their years of experience represent a total of 449 years of experience. The 19 different nationalities, as indicated by 73 of the workshop participants from the three different situations, are presented in Table 2-11. The participants indicating their nationalities as ‘Native American’ and ‘Mohawk’ used those specific descriptions themselves and I chose to respect their choices.

Table 2-11 Workshop Survey Nationalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singaporean</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohawk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. **NRG Interviews, 2002**

While members of NRG had formed part of the initial design of my research process, it was only in the latter stages that a series of ‘interviews’ occurred with two members of NRG that focused on issues pertinent to my research. Neither ‘interview’ was deliberately sought, both emerged serendipitously from general conversations about what Lane and Anne were doing in their work or study (names have been changed). As such the interviews were informal and unstructured (Grbich, 1999).

The first series of ‘conversations’ occurred with Lane after I had assisted with a postgraduate class she was teaching, where I conducted a few experiential team-building activities during a three-hour period. Lane chose to be a participant during these activities, including while I ‘debriefed’ the activities. These activities and the following reflective processes raised a range of questions for Lane, questions that could not be answered in the time allocated for the class, nor in the ‘place’ in which
we were. Initially the issues emerged over a quick conversation talking about the class. I wanted to explore them further and to tape the conversation, but the opportunity did not arise, so I followed up Lane via email, seeking insights from her perspective about her needs for time and space.

The second series of conversations occurred with Anne. Anne was in town enjoying the snow as well as taking advantage of my place so she could continue working on her thesis during the week she was around. As with Lane, the intent was not to talk about issues relevant to my thesis, yet as we sat in my lounge talking about what Anne was doing with her thesis, themes began to emerge that seemed connected to my areas of interest. As we talked I audiotaped our conversation.

2.3.5. Semiotics: Reflections on Images, Chapter 6

Within the context of the second literature review in Chapter 6 I also endeavoured to look not just at words, but also images, visual images that stood out to me from the texts that I had been reading on facilitation. Strati (2000b:50), writing from the perspective of organisational theory, notes that semiotics “seeks to construe the ‘signs that convey discourse’, from architecture to modes of dress, from visible signs to hidden messages which communicates values”. In this context, the discourse I ‘observed, that I sought to understand more deeply, is the one conveyed via the photographs used in three books related to the facilitation of experiential learning (Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Priest and Gass, 1997; Schoel et al., 1988).

As noted in Chapter 6, what is in the image is as important as what is not in the image (Grbich, 1999). Any image as displayed in a publication is a result of how the photographer has made that image as well as the impact of the author and/or editor regarding how the image is used within the publication. This use will include colours, cropping and location with respect to particular explicit narratives and/or themes. Another aspect of the use of visual images is the interpretation by the viewer/reader whereby “people tend to read the photograph with reference to their own biographies” (Grbich, 1999:146). In selecting the images I have focused upon images from within sections that discuss how to facilitate experiential learning. The reflections upon these images are my own interpretations, which reflect some of my own story and
range of experiences, my biography, as an Australian woman. My frame of reference influences what I ‘see’ and ‘hear’ via these images (Delahaye, 2000).

2.3.6. Deconstruction, Chapter 6

Deconstruction as a method seeks to “disprivilege all received texts and established discourses on behalf of an all-encompassing critical scepticism about knowledge” (Vidich and Lyman, 1998:78). It may also be viewed as a “process that is universally and radically critical, anti-essentialist, and fiercely committed to breaking down traditional antimonies such as reason/emotion, beautiful/ugly, self/other, and the conventional boundaries between established disciplines” (Crotty, 1998:168). In addition, Grbich (1999) describes deconstruction as a “method of analysis that pulls the text apart to reveal and critique its assumptions” (Grbich, 1999:48). Deconstruction, as such, compliments the aim of semiotics of seeking meaning in ‘signs’ and thus, together, providing a richer interpretation and understanding of the dominant discourse.

The direction I took in using deconstruction was to seek out an article that was influential in the development of the theory of facilitation of experiential learning, as I had considered in Chapter 3. As raised in 2.3.1 I requested information from participants of the online outdoor research discussion list (outres) and used their feedback as a mechanism to look at influential articles and authors. By turning to outres I was hoping that I would be able to be directed to a much wider range of material as a result of speaking to facilitators and researchers from around the world, than I would if I had conducted a more traditional literature review from my desk. This led to a range of articles and in particular the work of Priest and Gass and ultimately the choice to focus upon their 1993 article: Five Generations of Facilitated Learning from Adventure Experiences (Priest and Gass, 1993). The choice of article was in part due to the predominance of the work of Priest and Gass within the recommendations from outres (both as author and as references within recommended articles/books) as well as a pragmatic reason – it was only three pages long, which was, as a first time ‘deconstructor’, a length that was ‘digestible’ as well as containing sufficient ‘meaty’ material to get my teeth into. A longer article or even a book would be an interesting project, but may be a thesis in itself. As discussed in Chapter 6, I did
not approach the task lightly, nor with a morbid enthusiasm for pulling something apart. My approach was reasoned and considered and at the completion I sought also to deconstruct my own deconstruction. A criticism that may be levelled at deconstruction is the inability to question something that has its own unstated and alternative logic which, as part of postmodernism, does not seek to reconstruct itself into an alternative view promoting another hegemony (Rosenau, 1992).

However, in light of this Rosenau (1992) suggest a series of guidelines for deconstruction which areas follows. As you read this it is possible to ask whether Rosenau was writing this as a serious set of guidelines or whether she was writing this with tongue-in-cheek – you be the judge!:

- Find an exception to a generalization in the text and push it to the limit so that this generalization appears absurd … use the exception to undermine the principle

- Interpret the arguments in a text being deconstructed in their most extreme form.

- Avoid absolute statements in deconstructing a text, but cultivate a sense of intellectual excitement by making statements that are both startling and sensational.

- Deny the legitimacy of all dichotomies because there are always a few exceptions to any generalization based on bipolar terms …

- Nothing it to be accepted; nothing is to be rejected. It is extremely difficult to criticize a deconstructive argument if no clear viewpoint is expressed.

- Write so as to permit the greatest number of interpretations possible; ambiguity and ambivalence are not to be shunned but rather cultivated …

- Employ new and unusual terminology (Rosenau, 1992:121).

2.4. Methodology: Heuristic Research

The methodology is the strategy or plan of action that shapes the choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). In explaining the methodology I have used, I return first to a discussion of qualitative research where Denzin and Lincoln (2000), provide metaphors that seem to connect with the process that evolved for me, they see the researcher as a bricoleur (or quilt maker) or the user of montage or pentimento (both methods of improvisation). I like these metaphors as they connect with the language and images from the LSA of the
visual, the tactile, the kinaesthetic and the auditory, and more specifically my learning style that emphasises the visual and the kinaesthetic. There is the sense of the creative, the new, and the possibility of weaving together materials not normally seen in the one place, of contrast, colour and texture and sound; all very visceral language.

The qualitative researcher as *bricoleur* or maker of quilts uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand. ... Montage and pentimento, like jazz, which is improvisation, create the sense that images, sounds, and understandings are blending together, overlapping, forming a composite, a new creation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b:4).

I felt like my intuition was validated by these lines. I liked the idea of an eclectic array of methods, with multiple perspectives and with the potential to conflict and/or cause a strange confluence. But what will hold it together? What will provide the ‘backing’ that the quilter uses to help hold together the finished design? Crotty (1998) comments on the image of the *bricoleur* and suggests that:

... the image of researcher –as- *bricoleur* highlights the researcher’s need to pay sustained attention to the objects of research ... Research in constructivist vein, research in the mode of the *bricoleur*, requires that we not remain straitjacketed by the conventional meanings we have been taught to associate with the object. Instead, such research invited us to approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. It is an invitation to reinterpretation (Crotty, 1998:51).

Heuristic research, something that I had never heard of as I began this research, looked as if it could provide the ‘backing’ to the diverse range of methods used by me, as the *bricoleur*, as presented in the previous section.

### 2.4.1. Heuristic Research: Holding it all together

It is of interest to me that as I continued along this journey I constantly have been looking for ‘the one’. The right way, the correct way, the best way; it is if I had this perception that there will be one way that will be perfect, yet, cognitively I acknowledge that there could be many paths to the same end. So why is my instinct to be chasing the one correct way? Is this about learning style or is it more about personality? As this journey has continued I have arrived at a place I did not even know existed, a place called Heuristic Research. As a bricoleur I ask the questions: “what will hold it together? What will provide the ‘backing’ that the quilter uses to help hold together the finished design?”. At this point heuristic research seemed to
provide that basis of connection, to be that backing. The word heuristic comes from the Greek word ἑυρίσκειν (heuriskein) meaning to discover or to find. This word is also the origin of the word eureka (Moustakas, 1990).

The book on heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) was sitting around for sometime before I started to read it. I trawled through a bit of a chapter or two several months before, but the connections were not there. I nearly tripped over the book as I left it in my path so many times, hoping that at some stage I would pick it up and read it. Finally, the ducks must have aligned, or the wind was blowing in the right direction, or I ate the right thing, for eventually, I picked up a book on heuristic research and started reading, and it made sense! It took some time, but I think I found a methodology that, intuitively, I have been doing for the past, too many, years. Up until this point, I felt as if I have been trying to force square pegs into round holes. Nothing seemed to fit. But heuristic methodology appeared to provide the right ‘shape’ for what I have been doing and what I still needed to do. As discussed in Chapter 4, the concept of being in a time and place to ‘receive’ the learning has been important to me throughout. Just because the learning is on offer does not mean the learner will take it.

**a. What is Heuristic Research?**

Heuristic research is a methodology that refers to a process “of internal search through which ones discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process” (Moustakas, 1990:9). Moustakas further describes heuristic research as:

... a way of being informed, a way of knowing. Whatever presents it self in the consciousness of the investigator as perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge represents an invitation for further elucidation ... self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration (Moustakas, 1990:10-11).

In contrast to phenomenology, heuristic research requires that the researcher have “had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990:14). For Braud (1998), heuristic research fits into a category of research that is seeking answers to questions related to understanding of the
experience. Within this group, as summarised in Table 2-12, would also include narrative, case studies and organic approaches (Braud, 1998:38). While the reader may infer from the table that certain methods only apply for particular research questions, Braud says that “many of the methods can be used in multiple ways and can be tailored to suit more than one type of question or concern” (Braud, 1998:36) which supports Crotty’s (1998) concern over the quantitative/qualitative divide. Crotty (1998) says:

Our research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative or quantitative, without this being any way problematic. What would seem to be problematic is any attempt to be at once objectivist and constructionist (or subjectivist). ... To avoid such discomfort, we will need to be consistently objectivist and consistently constructionist (or subjectivist) (Crotty, 1998:15).

For Braud (1998), within the context of transpersonal research, the cluster under ‘Experience’ enables the researcher to “gain the greatest appreciation of experiences themselves and of the ways in which the actual ‘experiencers’ perceive and interpret their experiences and the events in their lives” (Braud, 1998:41). These methods enable the researcher to study limited experiences at great depth gaining ‘thick’, rich and deep descriptions – this is central to the form of this thesis. The heuristic research process is not limited to the ‘real experiences’ as the research “may also be entranced by visions, images, and dreams” (Moustakas, 1990:11).

A perceived limit of the heuristic research process is that there are no universal answers, no understandings of interrelationships nor specific outcomes, no grand narratives, only a deeper understanding of the personal experience, that may, in the end, provide a new perspective for others to explore by valuing their own individual experience.

Through the search for deeper levels of understanding, heuristic research enables many voices to be heard whether that be the researcher, previous researchers or co-researchers/participants. Braud (1998) also suggests that other ‘voices’ may be heard through the use of “different modes of knowing and of expressing one’s knowing” (Braud, 1998:47). Almost anything goes in terms of seeking perspectives on the experience. In the context of this research the different modes have included the use of autoethnography, deconstruction, the use of visual images as well as the more mainstream: surveys, interviews and LSAs. The role of ‘tacit’ knowledge is also
honoured and acknowledged: the “intuitive and body-based knowings that are difficult to put into words” (Braud, 1998:47). While acknowledging the depth of understanding and description that is achieved through the Heuristic research method, Braud identifies some limitations of the heuristic research that would be enhanced through the use of action research to look at consequence as well as the application of feminist methods that may lead to some levels of social change.

Table 2-12 Conventional Disciplined Inquiry Methods That Closely Match Four Major Types of Research Questions

Please see print copy for image


b. Strengths and Weaknesses of Heuristic Research

Braud and Anderson (1998) suggest that the strengths of heuristic research rest with its acknowledgement of both the personal and tacit knowledge of the researcher as well as providing opportunity for exploring the experience through other research methods, creative sources and personal experience of others. By providing an unlimited opportunity to explore the experience in an in-depth way, the process can be time consuming and potentially lead ‘no where’, if new theories or conceptualisation is where you want to get to. The lack of specific outcomes around social change or
political action are further limitations of the heuristic research process cited by Braud and Anderson.

c. Phases of Heuristic Research

Moustakas (1990) outlines the six phases or stages of heuristic research which have similarities with the stages of creative expression (Braud, 1998). There is no time frame applied to this process, with each phase taking as long as it needs to take. Of interest is the parallels that exist between the heuristic research process and various forms of the experiential learning cycle as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3. While I can see the connection, my process has not been tightly structured around the heuristic research process, but rather the heuristic research process explains that iterative intuitive journey that I have been following. The six phases expanded by Moustakas are:

- Initial engagement
- Immersion
- Incubation
- Illumination
- Explication
- Creative Synthesis

i. Initial Engagement

Moustakas (1990) suggests that the heuristic journey begins “with something that has called .. from within ... life experience” (Moustakas, 1990:13). The initial engagement is the process of the researcher discovering the “intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, and compelling implication” (Moustakas, 1990:27). This process is outlined in the Preface and Introduction where I explain my interest in this topic, an interest triggered by my own dissatisfaction with what I experienced as a participant in experiential learning, in what I read and through various experiences as
a facilitator of experiential learning. This passion continued to be fed as I presented my ideas and thoughts to colleagues and workshop participants in various conferences and trainings from 1995 onwards. But always I faced the challenge of knowing that I was not published, I was a very small voice in a medium pond, questioning the big fish in the large oceans. I had to take it further. The discovering of the specific question, for me, has been a long process, however, I have been able to spend time defining the key terms relevant to the question and the area that I was exploring. This process of definition and deep question and exploration of theories is pursued through the literature review in Chapter 3.

ii. Immersion

As I read what immersion, the second stage, was about I realised that, essentially, the combination of the extensive literature review in Chapter 3 and my autoethnography relating my experience as a learner in Chapter 4, connected with Moustakas’s definition of immersion:

Once the question is discovered and its terms defined and clarified, the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping and even dream states ... Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion ... spontaneous self-dialogues and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension (Moustakas, 1990:28).

The literature review, in Chapter 3, began as a fairly traditional process – looking for that ‘gap’ in the literature in order to locate my research. But as I got further and further into the literature the more and more I wanted to immerse myself in it and to follow a wide range of diversions and leads. The literature review in Chapter 3 follows the dominant paradigms of North American experiential learning literature as well as exploring literature related to learning and learning styles. This literature review was always intended to be an extended ‘immersion’ into the literature and, as it has evolved, has become an iterative process of delving in, going away (to intuitively allow some incubation and illumination) and a returning to the literature again and again. In Chapter 6, as my interests have developed and evolved, I have taken the literature review further with an effort at deconstruction of the material both in terms of addressing the images in the literature as well as deconstructing the very words and ideas conveyed in an article by two of the more dominant North American
writers: Priest and Gass. This latter literature review in Chapter 6 also takes the themes, such as space and place, that have evolved in Chapters 4 and 5 and seeks to extend the literature considered into areas not normally considered within the context of experiential learning. These areas include human geography, organisational aesthetics, and also other perspectives on learning and the embodiment of knowledge including a discussion on tacit knowledge.

My autoethnography in Chapter 4 includes comments, 'ramblings' and inspiration from nature, art, life, experience and reading. My thoughts are recorded for a period of a little more than 12 months, taking no specific form, other than to record my thoughts and feelings in a diary format that generally indicates the date, time and place that the reflections occur. At times, throughout this process, I have gone back and looked at the emerging themes and sought to make connections with the Learning Styles Analysis, as a key 'lens' in this research and other literature and experiences that may come to mind and across my desk.

iii. Incubation

Following immersion, the heuristic process allows for the third stage, a period of incubation, where the tacit dimension, intuition and the insights from the immersion are allowed to 'percolate' (like brewing good coffee), and the creative process are allowed to grow (Moustakas, 1990). To date I have not always been as effective in consciously creating time and space for this to occur. Drives to and from work (a trip of about 4.5 hours each way) has, opportunistically, created some sense of space, but more may be needed. Seeking and finding that time just 'to be' is important, but as I have immersed myself in the literature and eventually in the experience of learning and facilitating learning, I have intuitively sought those times where the ideas and insights could percolate within me. Ironically, the themes of time and space also emerge from my own experiences and the experiences of fellow NRG members as we reflect upon our needs for learning. My natural tendency to not want to force the learning, but to give it space to occur, aligns with the sense of incubation.
iv. Illumination

The fourth stage, the illumination is like the light turning on! With immersion and incubation, new insights and reflections may lead to new understandings. This follows the period of incubation, when the connections are made and the insights occur. For me, the process of illumination has occurred at times I have not had control over. Moments of insight have occurred while driving, skiing, walking and other activities that have had nothing to do with the research. They have been times where I have not been totally focused on the current task and may even be times where I am thinking about things, but then suddenly a thought will emerge, a statement, an idea and whole streams of ideas may suddenly come together, as I have indicated in my notes on this chapter on 11/2/01 and 14/1/02. The process or phases of heuristic research have not been as linear as this outline suggests. The process seems to reflect a series of jumps, trips, falls backward, steps sideways and leaps of faith. At times it has been linear, but at others it seems to have included spirals (up and down), zigzags and u-turns.

v. Explication

Moustakas (1990) suggests that the fifth stage, the explication process, involves “focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure” (Moustakas, 1990:31) where the researcher takes and continues the process of focusing on their own judgements, feelings, and insights. Of interest in Moustakas’ work is the emphasis placed upon creating an ‘inward space’, a place of reflection and indwelling. Further understanding is gained through conversations with others about the insights and illuminations. In the context of this research, this has occurred through a range of forums including co-facilitating the subject EDGP 912/3: Facilitation Techniques in Outdoor Education (Feb-Jun, 2002, Australia), and presentations at the conferences in Europe, South East Asia (SEA) and North America (NA). These four forums provide opportunity for me to practice what I research, to share my insights, to receive feedback, to rework my thoughts and understandings and to share them again. There is an advantage in being able to present in each of these forums as it gives me access to audiences from at least four continents, with people coming from a range of traditions and cultures, thus enabling a pseudo process of validation and further enquiry. In three of these forums (EDGP 912/3, SEA and NA) I also used the
Workshop Survey, as presented previously, to gather data on people’s current practice. It was not possible to use the survey in Europe as the context of presenting a paper and allowing for discussion in a 20 minute time frame did not lend itself to in-depth conversation, while for other two conferences I conducted 90 minute workshops.

A change was made to the final question of the survey for these workshops as a result of the data gathered from EDGP 912/3 as well as the question put to the listserv about the people’s favourite articles. The new question related to the three most influential books or articles that have impacted the people’s professional practice. This was intended to gather a further sense of the influence of North American, positivist and pragmatic writings throughout the world – it was interesting that there was a limited response to this question.

vi. Creative Synthesis

As I read the material on the final stage, the creative synthesis I am both inspired and fearful. Moustakas says that:

The creative synthesis can only be achieved through tacit and intuitive powers ... This usually takes the form of a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form. (Moustakas, 1990,31-2).

It is the final aspect of the research, the pulling together of the quilt, the final stage for the bricoleur. The creative synthesis reflects the “researcher’s personal knowledge, tacit awareness, intuition, and understanding of meanings and essences of the experience” (Braud and Anderson, 1998:198). This provides great possibility to ‘walk my research’ and to implement activities and generate products that touch different learning styles and emphasise the use of right-hand side of the brain, the creative side. This is inspiring, but I also feel fearful as I consider putting, what I consider, my lack of creative side on the line.
Chapter 7 is the revelation and the result of the creative synthesis. Continuing with the theme of the What?, So What?, Now What?, the creative synthesis draws together the insights I have gained as well as incorporating the more traditional recommendations one may expect from a dissertation and is triggered by the stepping stone of the broader consideration of literature in Chapter 6 and the explication process, particularly at SEA and NA. It is the signpost for the future, the suggestions for future research, ideas for enhancing mine and others' learning and questions that may continue to be asked, but left unanswered. To encourage this process I deliberately sought to create some space for myself by having a few days away in the Cottesloe Beach Hotel (Figure 2-3) overlooking the Indian Ocean. I think I need more!

vii. Validation

As heuristic research is a personal journey involving diverse methods, the process of validation, in its simplest form, is for the researcher to return to the data and confirm their own findings. Where there have been co-researchers or others who have participated in the research, the validation may involve sending material to those people for their comments and amendments to the observations or conclusions. This process does not endeavour to make grand claims about universal truth, rather “themes and essences of experience” (Moustakas, 1990:32), in this case, primarily personal experience, has been explored. Table 2-13 cross-references the phases of the heuristic research process with the chapters in this thesis.
2.5. **Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance behind the methodology chosen and is an attempt to explain the context for the process and the grounds of its logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical perspective helps us state more clearly what the assumptions are that we bring to the methodology. Moustakas (1990) suggests that the development of heuristic research was influenced by writers such as Maslow on self-actualising, Jourard on self-disclosure, Polanyi on personal knowledge and Buber on dialogue. Further, Moustakas notes that the heuristic research process is indelibly linked to the internal frame of reference of the researcher, a situation that may leave some observers in a quandry:

Heuristic processes relate back to the internal frame of reference. Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena – whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others – its medium or base is the internal frame of reference ... Our behaviour will sometimes appear to be irrational when viewed from outside, when observed from an external frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990:26).

As I am the medium or base of this thesis, as researcher, and at times subject, the theoretical perspectives that influence the methodology and methods are also the theoretical perspectives that influence who I am. Heuristic research, as implemented in this thesis, is influenced, as I am influenced, primarily, but not exclusively, by the theoretical perspectives of postmodernism.
2.5.1. Postmodernism

Postmodernity may be distinguished as a particular historical stage, with postmodernity being:

... a thoroughgoing rejection of what modernism stands for and an overturning of the foundations on which it rests ... Where modernism purports to base itself on generalised, indubitable truths about the things really are, postmodernism abandons the entire epistemological basis for any such claims to truth. Instead espousing clarity, ambiguity, relativity, fragmentation, particularity and discontinuity (Crotty, 1998:185).

Further, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that “Postmodern, cultural studies feminists merge their work with the postmodern, ethnographic turn in anthropology .. while exploring autoethnography and other new forms of writings ... This tradition draws on the critical and constructivist paradigms, especially in commitment to relativism” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:188-89). While the postmodernists reject what modernism stands for, Rosenau (1992) criticises the postmodernists’ lack of self-criticism and ‘self-deconstruction’ when she suggests that “post-modernism devalues any pretensions to theory building. But an anti-theory position is itself a theoretical position” (Rosenau, 1992:176).

Postmodernism is not one single approach, rather there are multiple ‘postmodernisms’ and extremes of postmodernism that would include sceptical postmodernism, inspired by Heidegger and Nietzsche, which is the ‘dark-side’ of postmodernism with its focus on “fragmentation, disintegration, malaise, meaninglessness, a vagueness or even absence of moral parameters and societal chaos” (Rosenau, 1992:15). On the other hand is the affirmative postmodernists who “have a more hopeful, optimistic view of the post-modern age” (Rosenau, 1992:15). Just as there are variations of postmodernism along the lines of the sceptics versus the affirmatives, there are also variations within the sceptics and affirmatives that would range from extreme to moderate.

What is adopted here is not what may be considered a radical postmodernism, such as within the sceptical postmodernists, but rather a constructivist or revisionary postmodernism which, as Griffin (1988) explains, seeks to contribute to a new worldview. This view of postmodernism
... seeks to overcome the modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview (cited in: Braud and Anderson, 1998:252)

The attempt primarily seems to be about ensuring that we do not throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. Some may still criticise this form of postmodernism, however this approach may address Rosenau’s (1992) concerns that postmodernism may be overwhelmed by its own excesses. Methods such as autoethnography and deconstruction are significantly influenced by the theoretical perspective of postmodernism (which include the affirmatives and some sceptical post-modernists who agree with a constructivist theory of reality (Rosenau, 1992)) and as such by the epistemology of the critical and constructivist paradigms.

2.6. Epistemology

The researcher as bricoleur operates with a world-view that is defined by a paradigm that establishes a basic set of beliefs that guide a person’s actions. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that a paradigm “encompasses three elements: epistemology, ontology, and methodology” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:185). The focus here is upon the epistemological context of this research. Epistemology, comes from the Greek word ἐπιστήμη (episteme) meaning knowledge and “is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998:3) or as Wolfe (1982) suggests, “epistemology has traditionally been defined as the study of the possibility and nature of knowledge. Additionally, knowledge was seen to have intimate connections with notions such as belief (knowledge was regarded as a kind of belief), justification and truth” (Wolfe, 1982:14).

In Table 2-1 three key epistemological positions were suggested, they were objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. In contrasting three main epistemologies, Crotty suggests that:

Objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness... Constructionism – rejects this view of human knowledge. There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the
Crotty (1998) suggests that constructionism and constructivism are often used interchangeably and seeks to distinguish between the two when he says:

Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them. Constructionism, to the contrary, denies that this is what actually happens, at least in the first instance. Instead, each of us is introduced directly to a whole world of meaning. The *melange* of cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provides us with meanings. These meanings we are taught and we learn in a complex and subtle process of enculturation (Crotty, 1998:79).

Epistemologically I struggle between almost wanting on one hand an objective truth, but when presented with statements that suggest that there are single objective truths, I question, argue and explore the underlying assumptions and influences of the creation of those ‘truths’. Thus, practically, I believe I tend towards the critical/subjective end of an epistemological spectrum, at the very least, and a constructivist at the most, while ideally I would be at the positivist end of the spectrum (I think because I perceive the positivist’s life to be so much more simple, when objective truths surround you, rather than a continuous process of questioning and re-evaluating). This epistemological confusion may in itself be very postmodern in that I do not sit well within any particular category of epistemology, but seem to have a more situated or contextual epistemology. This may be helpful to avoid Crotty’s (1998) concerns about consistently being a constructionist:

If we seek to be consistently constructionist, we will put all understandings, scientific and non-scientific alike, on the very same footing. They are all constructions. None is objective or absolute or truly generalisable. Scientific knowledge is just a particular form of constructed knowledge designed to serve particular purposes ... Constructionists may indeed make use of quantitative methods, but their constructionism makes a difference ... what a piece of quantitative research looks like when it is informed by a constructionist epistemology ... makes a big difference to the truth claims proffered ... all the more so as one moves towards subjectivism rather than constructionism. No longer is there talk of objectivity, or validity, or generalisability (Crotty, 1998:16).

As suggested, I do not situate myself within any one epistemological category, rather I have tendencies towards some categories more so depending upon the content and/or situation. When considering the theory and practice of facilitation, as within this thesis, my epistemological position is more closely aligned to the
subjectivist/constructionist end of the spectrum, but when it comes to other areas of my life, my faith, my belief I would not locate myself at such an extreme end of the spectrum.

2.7. Reflections on the Journey

_The distance is nothing, it is only the first step that is difficult_,
_Marie Anne du Deffand, 1763_

It would seem to make sense to know what the methods and methodology are before one sets out. It’s a bit like setting out on an expedition without a destination in mind, maybe it is more like the early explorers who had no specific detail of their destination, just ideas, dreams and gut instinct. Yet when I say that I will not know the question until I finish, the methodology has also been a journey of exploration. I began with thoughts of surveys, questionnaires and control groups which would enable me to crunch a few numbers I wandered around the various paths of qualitative research, I journeyed through the deep valleys of phenomenology, searching for direction and an appreciation of the big picture, but parts of it do not resonate with my thoughts and feelings. I have dipped my toe into the cool, refreshing waters of autoethnography finding some refreshment and focus in what it helps me to achieve. I have toyed with ideas of my methodology being a phenomenological autoethnography, but I delved into another valley named heuristic research. Heuristic research was not what I was looking for, it came up as I was looking for something else. But as I began to read it was beginning to make some sense and to resonate with my intuitive processes to date.

As I began this chapter, I began with an analogy of descending into a canyon, the thoughts and feelings that come to mind at this end of the chapter are of climbing out of a heavily forested valley where we have been immersed in the experience of walking, nature, navigation and working together. As we climb out of the valley we reach the edge of an escarpment at the end of the day from where the future journey is normally laid out before us, but today the cloud inhibits our view. As day ends we take some time alone, to reflect, and let our thoughts and feelings incubate and percolate wondering where the journey goes. Our thoughts are not obscured by what we see, but dwell in where we have come from. As we prepare dinner, the clouds lift
to reveal a full moon rising. The illumination is like that full moon over the escarpment, lighting the way, but with a muted light, that will reveal only some things, but not all. The explication is the journey in the morning, in bright sunshine. The road is clear, the direction known. We will have time to look back over where we have come, to recall our journey through the valley and that night, to celebrate through songs, poems and plays, what our experiences have been and what they mean to us in our own creative synthesis.

This experience ends, but the journey continues.