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**Learning on the Run:
Traveller Education for
Itinerant Show Children
in Coastal and Western Queensland
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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

*"The ethics and politics of qualitative research. . .[are] a swamp and. . .I have provided no map. Each individual will have to trace his or her own path. This is because there is no consensus **or** unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm, and what the benefits of knowledge are."*

Punch, 1994, p. 94

"Every focus excludes; there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation."

Clifford, 1992, p. 97

4.1 Overview of the chapter

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I demonstrated that the literature on Traveller education is the site of interactions among marginalisation, resistance and transformation, and that those interactions can be traced to a general devaluing of the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy. I also sought to position the thesis as occupying the ‘middle ground’ between the two equally unhelpful and disabling constructions of itinerant people as either an ‘unproblematic othering’ and an ‘unproblematic celebration’. In Chapter Three, I argued that conceptualising itinerancy as involving complex and distinctive relationships between people and spaces provided the foundation of a potentially instructive conceptual framework that combines de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’. These terms in combination explain how it is possible for the show people both to resist and ultimately to transform the marginalisation associated with itinerancy, by moving the old ‘rules of the game’ to the new terrain of a counternarrative about itinerancy and Traveller education. All these concepts have implications for how the study was designed and conducted.

The function of this chapter, therefore, is to outline and justify the study’s research design, by making explicit the relationship between theory and methodology. In it I explore my relationship with the participants in the study, viewed through the lenses of my research focus and conceptual framework. The chapter consists of the following sections:

- marginalisation, resistance and transformation and researching Traveller education

- ‘tactics of consumption’ and researching Traveller education
- ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ and researching Traveller education
- the ethical and political dimensions of the study
- the research design of the study
- the data gathering techniques of the study
- the delimitations and limitations of the study.

I begin in Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 by highlighting the central methodological issues that arise when considering the key theoretical concepts employed throughout the thesis. In other words, while I have emphasised in the previous chapter the way that de Certeau and Bakhtin inform my ‘head work’ or view of the world and research, in this chapter I explore the practical ‘field work’ implications of this ‘head work’. Although theory and practice cannot be separated, while Chapter Three emphasised the kind of analysis to expect, Chapter Four explains how the data for the thesis were collected in a de Certeauian and Bakhtinian style. I follow this with an explicit discussion of how the research was designed.

4.2 Marginalisation, resistance and transformation and researching Traveller education

If show people are routinely marginalised from ‘mainstream’ society on account of their itinerancy, it follows that a research project about Traveller education – about the education of itinerant people – has the potential to perpetuate that marginalisation. This is because the focus of the research is on what makes the people ‘different’ from, and therefore often ‘inferior’ to, others. It is also tied to the unavoidable fact that university research is generally more closely aligned with ‘mainstream’ than with ‘marginal’ education. That such an outcome is unlikely to be the researcher’s explicit intention does nothing to nullify the point that at several points in the research the itinerant people’s difference will be highlighted and emphasised (even though itinerancy is only one of the multiple markers of their identities from which they derive meaning and purpose).

A likely response to this marginalising situation is resistance. Firstly, it is to be expected that show people who are routinely marginalised are liable to approach a research project emanating from an institution that might be construed as complicit in their ongoing discrimination with scepticism, even hostility. Furthermore, it would be understandable if those show people engaged in resistance at the first sign that the project was contributing to their further marginalisation, by ‘closing down’ the range of their responses and even by refusing to continue their participation in the project. Secondly and conversely, the project might be seen as an opportunity to enlist the researcher’s assistance in resisting the show people’s marginalisation. If this

occurred, the project might be considered to be discharging a useful social responsibility; on the other hand, some would argue that the researcher would need to ensure that her or his detachment was retained.

The potential mediator between marginalisation and resistance in the context of the ‘researcher’ – ‘researched’ relationships is transformation. This point recalls Anyanwu’s (1998) definition of ‘transformative research’:

Transformative research is a systematic enquiry into the real conditions which create oppression or hinder self-determination. It produces reflective knowledge which helps people to identify their situation and in doing so, to change such [a] situation for the better. In this regard, transformative research plays the important role of supporting the reflective process that promote positive change. (p. 45)

Just as transformation is conceived in this thesis as breaking down the oppositional binary of marginalisation and resistance, thereby allowing ‘the rules of the game’ to be challenged and overturned, so transformative research can be seen as moving the ‘researcher’ – ‘researched’ relationship out of a formalised set of conventional and routinised interactions into something much more positive and unpredictable, whereby people are genuinely understood as individuals outside the enactments of their ‘roles’. Furthermore, this is a significant element of what I mean when I state that I seek to make the thesis a ‘counternarrative’. By circulating images and understandings of show people gleaned from intensive interactions with them, I hope to contribute to a process of counteracting the negative and inaccurate stereotypes about them already circulating. The transformative dimension of this study therefore assists in the vital process of investigating “the real

conditions which create oppression or hinder self determination”, and “in doing so” helps “to change such [a] situation for the better” (Anyanwu, 1998, p. 45).

As I elaborate in Chapter Eight, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990) captured something of this ‘forward lookingness’ of transformation when she observed:

*Inevitably, a work is always a **form of** tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning **as** ongoing passages to an elsewhere (-within-here). (p. 329)*

That is, provided that the researcher is attentive to these possible “*doors opening onto other closures*”, the transformative potential of a research project can promote productive understandings that might otherwise never have come to fruition.

I contend that, regardless of the research design involved, any study of Traveller education will encounter the eddies and flows around marginalisation, resistance and transformation. These eddies and flows move constantly through the spaces of itinerancy, and will always do so as long as an itinerant lifestyle is inherently devalued in contrast to its more socially acceptable ‘other’. The challenge for the researcher into Traveller education is to explain and justify how her or his research project engages with the connections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation, how the project communicates in a ‘trustworthy’ way the selected aspects of the Travellers’ lives, and how the project proceeds in an ethically responsible and politically responsive manner. My response to this challenge is inextricably linked with

my combination of ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ in the study’s conceptual framework, as I discuss below.

4.3 ‘Tactics of consumption’ and researching Traveller education’

In Chapter Three I noted that commentators have reduced a number of de Certeau’s paired concepts to binary categories. I challenged that reduction, which I argued reflected those commentators’ ambivalence about de Certeau’s conceptualisation of the links between marginalisation and agency. On the other hand, I also asserted that the difficulty of de Certeau’s thinking in changing ‘the rules of the game’ justified my deployment of Bakhtinian ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ beside de Certeau’s notion of ‘tactics of consumption’.

This reminder of de Certeau’s paired concepts is important in this account of the implications of ‘tactics of consumption’ for the design, conduct and reporting of this study. Specifically, de Certeau’s juxtaposition of ‘writing’ and ‘reading’ as a paired category forms the framework for that account. For de Certeau, reading constitutes a set of tactics of consumption that enables readers to resist the marginalising and totalising strategies of textual production – that is, of writing (1984, p. xxi). I interpret this argument as applying to this study in two respects: the ways in which the show people have ‘consumed’/‘read’ the research project; and the ways in which I have ‘produced’/‘written’ that project.

Turning first to 'consumption'/'reading', and following de Certeau's proposition that "*Reading thus introduces an 'art' which is anything but passive*" (1984, p. xxii), I assert that the multiple individuals making up my term 'the show people' (itself a textual practice with significant implications for consumption/production) have engaged in several kinds of 'reading' in regard to the research project on which this thesis reports. They have 'read' my initial contact, usually through a 'third party' such as one of the teachers involved in the education program, a member of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia or another person on the show circuits. They have 'read' the information sheet and the request to sign the consent form with which I furnished them. They have 'read' my verbal explanation of why I was conducting the project and why I wished to tape record the requested interviews. They have 'read' the questions that I posed to them during the interviews. They have 'read' such nonverbal indicators as my appearance, my tone of voice, my facial expression and my handshake. They have 'read' the subsequent reports on my research findings, and the associated publications, sent to the Showmen's Guild. They have also 'read' one another's responses to those same activities and events.

I indicated above my understanding of how 'tactics of consumption' (including 'reading') relate to the intersections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to the spaces of itinerancy. What I wish to emphasise here is that these acts of 'reading' by the show people have in turn consciously and unconsciously influenced my continuing conduct of the research project. That is, the study's 'production'/'writing' has taken account in several ways of how the show people have 'consumed'/'read' it. I elaborate this crucial point below as I seek both to acknowledge the potential

charges against 'production'/'writing' as replicating marginalisation and to demonstrate how I have attempted to avoid those practices and outcomes.

In contrast to the show people's 'consumption'/'reading' of the research project, the relevance of de Certeau's work to the study is that my 'production'/'writing' is potentially the site of marginalisation of the show people's agency. De Certeau (1988) referred to the writing of history contributing to "*replacing the obscurity of the lived body with the expression of 'will to know' or a 'will to dominate' the body*" (p. 6), or to becoming "writing that conquers" because "*It will transform the space of the other into a field of expansion for a system of production*" (de Certeau, 1988, pp. xxv-xxvi). Relatedly, de Certeau (1984) referred to "*the scriptural economy*" (p. 131) and to the "*textual practices*" (p. 80) associated with scholarship. Conley (1988), the English translator of de Certeau's work *The writing of history* (1988), argued that both rhetoric and history "*evinced a 'strategy' that wills to efface, marginalize, or even repress more complicated and ambivalent designs*" than those that they produce (p. x).

Similarly, Rowan (1991) identified universities as being "*inextricably bound up with western society's desire to maintain power over those who are different*" (p. 11); this is a direct warning to a university doctoral candidate and researcher. Furthermore, Rowan (1991) has analysed 'explanation', based as it is "*on a distinction between those who explain and those who are explained*" (p. 6), as a major 'strategy of marginalisation' in de Certeau's terms, on account of its imbrication in efforts to 'capture' (and thereby potentially to essentialise and naturalise) the 'difference' of the objects of study. This is particularly so if that 'difference' becomes equated with 'lack'

(Rowan, 1991, p. 4), as though the people who are 'different' would be 'all right' and no longer 'deviant' if only they could have whatever it is that separates them from the majority or the 'mainstream'. Correspondingly, Spivak (1990) has highlighted explanation's complicity as a marginalising strategy, such as in her observation, "*My explanation cannot remain outside the structure of production of what I criticise*" (p. 384).

My response to these potentials for marginalisation is initially to acknowledge that this thesis and the project on which it reports are textual practices, and are certainly not "*being written out of any objective/scientific perspective*" (Schirato, 1993, p. 283). A corollary of this acknowledgment is that I claim neither to 'speak on behalf' of Queensland show people nor to have created an opportunity for them to 'speak for themselves'. I am fully imbricated in the process of producing this text, in editing the interview transcripts, in selecting quotations to present in this thesis and in presenting my analysis of those quotations. In doing so, however, I have sought to highlight what I have perceived as evidence of the show people's 'tactics of consumption', this intention being the opposite in my view of efforts to 'efface' or 'marginalise' the show people. I have also sought to minimise the prospect of the charge levelled at academic discourses by Rowan (1994) – "*...the strategy, in order to better secure its own authority, must explain 'other' groups in terms which emphasise the strength of the centre*" (p. 26) – being 'brought home' to this study. On the contrary, I have emphasised "*the strength*" of the show people in contesting and changing the power of "*the centre*".

A related strategy, according to Rowan (1991, pp. 8, 11), derives from the tendency to 'exoticise' the 'difference' of the objects of study. In the case of the show people, this could happen relatively easily: the stereotypes surrounding occupational Travellers identified in Chapter Two are centred on show people's constructions as 'strange' and 'exotic' as they travel from town to town. My response is to design the research project in such a way that it will facilitate my capacity to discern and document, rather than cover up and ignore, the show people's multiple signifiers of identity. This requires me to interact with the show people in a variety of settings, to meet and speak with **as** many of them **as** possible and to design and conduct interviews in ways that will allow these multiple signifiers to become apparent and explicit.

A crucial issue for the research design of this study is the interpretation of 'tactics of consumption' being metaphorical rather than empirical (Danaher, 1995, p. 138) and therefore **as** not being amenable to analysis in a thesis such **as** this. I respond to this issue by stating my conviction of the utility of the deployment to several empirical sites of de Certeau's notion of 'tactics of consumption' by several commentators (Balides, 1993; Rowan, 1994; Weinstein, 1994) to justify my claim that de Certeau's restriction of 'tactics' to the metaphorical realm does not invalidate my application of his concept to the empirical site of the Queensland show people's engagement with the education authorities. Not to do so would be to agree with the critics who say that de Certeau's analysis is ultimately static because it cannot accommodate change. For me, the important aspect of 'tactics' is their effects: how the show people *can* use 'tactics' to resist and subvert marginalisation.

My justification for this approach is twofold. Firstly, I concur with Rowan's (1994) assertion that

...it is problematic for a narrative to criticise various political practices if it goes on to suggest the complete and abject failure of any attempt by a marginalised individual or group to challenge the system that produces those practices. (p. 155)

In other words, what is the 'point' of a conceptualisation of 'tactics' that is unable to point to productive change in the material circumstances of the marginalised? Secondly, I cite Danaher's (1995) rationale for his appropriation of Foucault's ideas to his account of Australian histories:

...my intention has been to reconstitute Foucault's project in the interests of constructing a theoretical position which might productively engage in a critique of Australian historiography. I have not attempted to produce a 'faithful' account of Foucault's work, but rather one that has sought to emphasise its utility in analysing the making of a modern community out of its original status as a convict colony, and the historiographic treatment of this process. (p. 229)

For me, my extension of 'tactics of consumption' to an empirical site remains "'faithful'" to de Certeau's commitment to understanding how marginalising and totalising strategies can be and are resisted.

A related issue is the research design implications of the sheer number and scale of possible 'tactics'. That is, recognising that 'tactics' can be as diverse as reading 'against the grain' of a text and actively campaigning for change requires me to allow space in the ways in which I plan and conduct the

research to identify the multiple kinds of responses that are potentially ‘tactics’. Furthermore, in creating that space I must avoid hierarchising and thereby privileging one response over another, for to do so would be to deny the agency of the research participants and construct them as passive objects of study. A vital benefit of this approach to research design is that it allows me to foreground resistance and transformation in my analysis.

Finally, some commentators have highlighted de Certeau’s analysis of ‘stories’ as “*political tactics*” and as “*an ideological move in a long-running political game*” (Schirato, 1993, p. 288), and as “*the stones by which we define ourselves, and what it means to be who we are*” (Buchanan, 1996b, p. 150; see also Ahearne, 1995, p. 25). In this context, de Certeau asked the highly pertinent question about quoting voices in more recent approaches to writing history: “...*who is speaking? to whom?*” (1984, p. 157). Rowan (1991) provided a provocative answer to this rhetorical question:

The explanations [contained in academic discourses] and those who produce them work constantly to ensure that the voice of the ‘other’ is heard by only two groups: those who...are also marginal and those who will not be affected; and in most cases this second group is composed of the people who formulate the explanations in the first place. (pp. 10-11)

When I extrapolate de Certeau’s question (and Rowan’s response to that question) to this study, it means that the show people’s interview transcripts should be understood, not as deliberate efforts to mislead me, but instead as further examples of ‘tactics of consumption’ of the research project. My response needs to be, not oppositional ‘strategies of marginalisation’, but rather efforts to analyse the show people’s understandings of the study and

what those understandings reflect about the show people's resistance and transformation of marginalisation in the spaces of itinerancy. My response needs also to use the interview transcripts as the basis for 'outsidedness' with and 'creative understanding' of the show people, as I elaborate in the next section of this chapter.

I argue, therefore, that de Certeau's notion of 'tactics of consumption' has crucial implications for both the research design of this study and the conduct of research into Traveller education more broadly. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge, not deny the possibility and potential of, the binary categories 'consumption'/'reading' and 'production'/'writing'. Secondly, this acknowledgment means that I need to pay conscious attention to both how the show people 'read' the research project and how I 'write' that project, deliberately eschewing, for example, strategies of explanation and exoticisation in favour of less marginalising and more self-conscious textual practices. Thirdly, my claim that 'tactics of consumption' can function at empirical as well as metaphorical levels needs to find its way explicitly into the data analysis chapters of this thesis. Fourthly, I need to understand the show people's interview transcripts as 'moves in the game' and as efforts at 'self-definition', and crucially as prompting the question "*who is speaking? to whom?*" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 157) to which I must respond. My intended contribution to methodological knowledge consists partly of relating these indispensable implications to the broader conduct of Traveller education research, which in turn involves partly an understanding of relations between 'researcher' and 'researched' in terms of, and as framed by, 'tactics of consumption'.

4.4 ‘Outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ and researching Traveller education

In comparison and in complementarity with de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’, the Bakhtinian notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ are intended in the research design of this study to heighten my identification of the show people’s consumption of the research project while minimising their marginalisation from it. ‘Outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ require that I identify, record and respond to the multiple voices of the research participants, and that I ensure that the study changes as a consequence of what those voices say. This approach requires attending to the show people’s resistance and prospective transformation of their marginalisation as itinerant people occupying several spaces. This approach is also in keeping with my argument in the previous chapter that these analytical resources are indispensable both conceptually and methodologically in the study, by highlighting the political significance of the show people’s actions that make such transformation possible.

For Bakhtin, the utterance can be considered the basic unit of communication (Jones, 1993, p. 252; Schirato & Yell, 1996, pp. 76-79). Utterances, which can be parts of sentences, complete sentences or much larger pieces of text, are distinguished from sentences by their ‘living’ social or interactive dimension: “*An utterance always evaluates; every utterance has ethical import*” (Jones, 1993, p. 252). The methodological significance of the

utterance for this thesis is that it rightly focusses attention on the centrality of what people say and write in the context of with whom, how and why they are communicating. In practical terms, this means that I have not undertaken a formalised discourse analysis of the interview transcripts for this study, but instead I have analysed what the interviewees have said in relation to the study's research questions and focus (marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy) and its organising concepts ('tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding').

Or to put it another way, if de Certeau prompts me to design my study to identify and document, rather than cover up and ignore, the multiple signifiers of identity among Queensland show people, Bakhtin leads me to look for those signifiers specifically in the realm of language – both my own and that of the people whom I interviewed. To that end, the following data analysis chapters report my efforts to explicate the show people's complex and subtle understandings of themselves and others, mediated and revealed through their interactions with me as researcher.

A crucial corollary **of** this emphasis on language as the site of identity construction and contestation is the related concept of 'voice'. According to the writers of the glossary to Bakhtin's book *The dialogic imagination: **Four** essays* (1981), voice "...is the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. **A** voice always has a will or desire behind it" (p. **434**). Under de Certeau's scheme, the voices that are most commonly heard are those associated with 'strategies of marginalisation'; voices linked with 'tactics of consumption' are almost always silent, lacking as they do **a** normalised 'speaking position' from which to communicate with authority. This definite

and explicit hierarchy is the antithesis of Bakhtin's vision of utterances, of which a deliberate non-hierarchisation of voices is a non-negotiable pre-requisite.

Clearly Bakhtin's vision behoves me to use every methodological means at my disposal to achieve a non-hierarchisation of voices in my design and reporting of this study. Yet he – and I – recognise(d) the methodological difficulties in attaining this vision. One example must suffice. According to Bakhtin (1981):

...the speech ~~of~~ another, once enclosed in a context, is – no matter how accurately transmitted – always subject to certain semantic changes. The context embracing another's word is responsible ~~for~~ its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great. Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another's utterance accurately quoted. Any sly and ill-disposed polemicist knows very well which dialogizing backdrop he [sic passim] should bring to bear on the accurately quoted words ~~of~~ his opponent, in order to distort their sense. (p. 340)

While I do not consider myself a “sly and ill-disposed polemicist”, nevertheless I concur that striving for communication with the show people at a conceptual level does not necessarily translate automatically into communication at a methodological level. This point helps to justify the ‘place’ of ambivalence in this study: in this case, my own ambivalence about the methodologies of academic research projects. In practical terms, this requires me to evaluate every utterance – both the interview data and my analytical

statements about those data – to ensure, to the extent that I can do so, that the show people’s voices and my voice are heard together.

As part of that process, and as I indicated in Chapter Three and reiterated at the beginning of this chapter, ‘outsidedness’ is a Bakhtinian concept that has great relevance for this study’s conceptual and methodological dimensions. As I noted in Chapter Three, Morson and Emerson (1990), Bakhtin’s first biographers, explained outsidedness in this way: “*When one person faces another, his [sic passim] experience is conditioned by his ‘outsidedness.’ Even in the physical sense, one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself: I can see the world behind your back...*” (p. 53). Although the bases of ‘outsidedness’ could vary considerably, including “*personal, spatial, temporal, national, or any other*” (p. 56), “*outsidedness creates the possibility of dialogue, and dialogue helps to understand a culture in a profound way*” (p. 55).

As a further illustration of outsidedness, a philosopher colleague (Ezra Heymann, personal communication, 23 April 1999) listened carefully to my synthesis of Morson and Emerson’s (1990) explanation of this concept as the ability to see the back of someone else’s head (something that one cannot do oneself, and that highlights the other person’s outsidedness from one), then he responded that a former fiancée used to tell him when he was putting on his ‘winter face’. This statement, which referred to how his countenance looked to others (presumably denoting some combination of introspection, discouragement and pessimism), was one of the philosopher’s chief grounds for sadness at the end of the relationship: that another person would no longer be there to tell him when he was wearing his ‘winter face’.

Thus outsidedness evokes two attributes simultaneously: a certain amount and kind of separation from the other person; and sufficient interest to pay attention to the other person. Methodologically, outsidedness constitutes the basis of my response to a hypothetical objection that a non-show person, who has never himself lived an itinerant lifestyle, cannot possibly attain sufficiently ‘trustworthy’ understanding of an itinerant people for that understanding to be considered ‘reliable’ and ‘valid’. On the contrary, I argue that – provided that I have the sufficient interest referred to above – my separation from the show people enables me to perceive and identify elements of their multiple signifiers of identity of which they are themselves unaware.

This most emphatically does not denote the voyeuristic look of the omniscient ‘expert’, gazing with scientific detachment at human specimens, nor lay any claim to objectivity or neutrality. One reason that it does not do so is that my ‘interested separateness’ is ‘a means to an end’, not an end to itself. That is, my analysis of the show people’s signifiers of identity of which they are unconscious becomes ‘meaningful’ and ‘truthful’ only when I use that analysis to augment my growing comprehension of their situation. In other words, outsidedness is a means to the end of creative understanding (both the show people’s and my own); in this way, I strive to give equal attention and value to the show people’s and my voices.

Similarly, it is helpful to note the evident link between outsidedness and ambivalence, which is a recurring theme in this thesis. I have discerned implicit ambivalence on the show people’s part in their perceptions of the research project – or perhaps more accurately in their status as ‘research subjects’. Our interactions have been irregular and intensive, with months without any contact

being interspersed with data gathering over two or three days. Now that the data gathering has been completed, I have heard indirectly from the show people, such as when someone seeking information about Traveller education contacts me with the words, “The show people suggested that I call you”. I interpret this situation as manifesting the show people’s ambivalence, in the sense that progressively as the show people got to know and trust me they were prepared to identify me to others as someone who would discuss their experiences and aspirations sympathetically – that is, who would respect their agency without adding to their marginalisation. Given that they see themselves as being accustomed to marginalisation, this ambivalence, or willingness to ‘suspend judgment’ until they knew more about my intentions, was a crucial pre-requisite to the conduct of the study. It was also an example of how outsiderness can lead to creative understanding.

In that context, it was helpful that, as I noted in Chapter Three, Bakhtin (1986a) provided the following overview of the links between outsiderness and creative understanding:

*Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important **for** the person who understands to be located outside the object ~~of~~ his **or** her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. **For** one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors **or** photographs can help; **our** real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (p. 7; emphasis in original)*

In the previous chapter, I outlined the analytical utility of creative understanding in helping me to identify the ways in which show people engage in such understanding as a basis of the transformation of their marginalised status. Here it is appropriate to emphasise the methodological significance of creative understanding defined in this way for my enactment of the responsibilities and roles of researcher. That methodological significance is the crucial importance of making the study a genuine exchange of information and ideas. By this I mean that, in addition to requesting show people to respond to my developing analysis of their marginalisation, resistance and transformation, I need to listen and respond to their outsideness and creative understanding in relation to the research project. If I am to participate in practices of mutual comprehension with the show people, I must be open to their explicit and implicit comments on the purposes and conduct of the research project, and I must recognise that they, as much as I, have constructed and carried out the study. This means, for example, that I must seek to hear the show people's voices about topics other than those about which they are ostensibly speaking in the interviews, and strive to relate those voices to my developing answers to the study's research questions.

So the methodological implications of Bakhtinian outsideness and creative understanding for researching Traveller education can be synthesised as follows. Interested outsideness and creative understanding can function as an 'antidote' to a reductionist rendering of de Certeauian marginalising 'strategies' and resistant 'tactics'. It can operate in this way through productive use of the ambivalence attending the spaces of itinerancy and my own ambivalence about Traveller education research that prompts my openness to the multiple signifiers of the show people's identities manifested

through language, specifically the Bakhtinian notion of the utterance. In these ways, the interview transcripts that are this study's principal data gathering technique can become the basis of ongoing and mutual comprehension between 'the researcher' and 'the researched', and in the process can become the site in which 'strategies' and 'tactics' 'speak' to one another and thereby lead to transformation. A crucial 'sign' whether this possibility is being actualised is the extent to which multiple voices are heard and responded to mutually and non-hierarchically in both this thesis and the study on which it is based. Another, equally vital 'sign' is whether an analysis framed by 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' enables a conception of itinerant people that moves beyond the 'unproblematic othering' and the 'unproblematic celebration' of itinerancy identified in Chapter Two.

4.5 The ethical and political dimensions of the study

The location of the study's research design in the intersections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy, and the design's foundation in de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' and Bakhtin's 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding', posit several crucial issues pertaining to the study's ethical and political dimensions. Rather than emphasising an artificial separateness between these dimensions, I have elected to consider them as related aspects of the considerations and constraints informing and framing my conscious and unconscious decisions about the collection and analysis of the research data. In particular, I argue that the research involves the exercise of ethical responsibilities for both the

interviewer and the interviewees, and that the research is politically charged rather than value neutral. In that context, manoeuvring through and around these potential ethical and political minefields brings to life the three dimensions of itinerancy outlined above, as well as the other participants' and my 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

Despite their emphasis on philosophical and textual, rather than empirical and practical, forms of interaction, both de Certeau and Bakhtin were very well aware of the ethical and political dimensions of their respective studies, and were equally conscious of the complexities and subtleties attending those dimensions. For example, Smith (1996) contended that de Certeau's work, "*like the thought of Michel Foucault, is of the epistemological/ethical orientation*" (p. 19) in philosophical thinking, and that one clear manifestation of that orientation was the "*meticulously conscientious attention to difference*" (p. 20) characteristic of his writing. Similarly, and again by way of illustration, commentators have generally rejected charges that Bakhtin was amoral or unethical on account of his studies of carnival, and have emphasised the ethical responsibility on which several of his concepts were based. For example, according to Emerson (1997):

*(It is worth noting that Bakhtin's vision of outsidedness is wonderfully nonelitist, nonjudgmental, and open to all, whatever **our** gifts **or** inclination. He does not stipulate that we do the other party any positive good, only that we assume an outside position towards that party. Even the laziest and most passive outsider can always help me out by letting me **know** what is happening behind my head; in my laziest, most passive, most testy and unengaged moods I can render outsiders at least that much of a service.) (p. 210)*

The foregoing account suggests that the research practices of de Certeau and Bakhtin are compatible with the tradition identified by Jenkins (1992) as the “*newer conception of ethnographic authority*”, encapsulated in “*a shift from totalizing accounts of social and cultural processes toward partial, particularized, and contingent accounts of specific encounters within and between cultures*” (p. 4). At the same time, I recognise and, given my focus on the ambivalence of itinerant spaces, applaud the ambiguity that this approach to conducting and writing research prompts. In other words, the replacement of an objective, neutral, even omniscient researcher with a human being whose values and cultural capital are fully inscribed in the research process constitutes the beginning, not the end, of the ethical and political issues surrounding research. Thus I can empathise with the feminist poststructuralist writer Patti Lather’s (1994) reference to being/feeling “*Situated, partial, perplexed*” (p. 41). I also endorse Punch’s (1994) vivid metaphor:

The ethics and politics of qualitative research...[are] a swamp and...I have provided no map. Each individual will have to trace his or her own path. This is because there is no consensus or unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm, and what the benefits of knowledge are. (p. 94)

The fact that I am engaged in this study reflects my conviction that these methodological difficulties need to be acknowledged but that they should not lead to inaction or paralysis. “*Situated, partial, perplexed*” I most certainly am, but I am guided and encouraged in the design of this study by my selection of the reference points of my “*map*”: ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ interacting with one another and

with the show people's and my marginalisation, resistance and transformation as I proceed along my "ownpath" through the spaces of itinerancy.

I turn now to illustrate this argument by reference to some of the methodological issues confronting the design of this study, and particularly to their ethical and political dimensions. Several of these issues relate to the risks attendant on planning and conducting research, and demonstrate once more the integral and intricate connections among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in research design. I have referred elsewhere (Danaher, 1998b) to three among several hypothetical interactions between myself and the show people: advocacy (which is also identified by Lather [1992, p. 91]); appropriation; and complicity in perpetuating the show people's purported marginalisation. While I acknowledged the possibility of each interaction and sought to 'defend' myself against each 'charge', the point to emphasise is my recognition of the contingency and fluidity, rather than the finalisability (in Bakhtin's words), of this kind of methodological 'settlement'. That is, the spaces of itinerancy contain the shifting flows and multiple signifiers of the 'researcher' – 'researched' relationship, and each new encounter has to be approached anew from this perspective. (Relatedly, Ahearne [1995] explained how, in de Certeau's analysis of the writings of French mediaeval mystics:

Certeau shows how the writings of the mystics both exacerbate and seek to overcome the gap which separates the human subject ~~from~~ the language he or she speaks. This gap was not effaced by their texts. They were always compelled to begin again. [p. 115])

Some of these flows and signifiers of the 'researcher' – 'researched' relationship are manifested in the practices and procedures commonly associated with obtaining ethical clearance to conduct research. According to

Punch (1994), “*In essence, most concern revolves around issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data*” (p. 89). Evans and Jakupiec (1996) helpfully elaborated these concerns into six “*key issues*” (p. 79) attending the ethical conduct of research in open and distance learning:

...(i) *concern and moral obligation of the researcher to respect privacy and integrity of individuals*, (ii) *power and empowerment of researcher and researched*, (iii) *covertness*, (iv) *using secondary data*, (v) *resolving the conflict between the right of individuals and the right of society to know* and (vi) *informed consent*. (p. 79)

In relation to these “*key issues*”, I have done my utmost to respect the show people’s “*privacy and integrity*” through my textual practice of not ascribing data to individual respondents, and my avoidance of writing about them in ways that could be construed as denigrating or disrespectful. Given my reservations about the emancipatory connotations of the term “*empowerment*”, I prefer to emphasise my recognition of the agency of the show people, while certainly responding to the need to assist research participants “*to give free and informed consent*” (p. 82) to the research project. I have not engaged in “*covert and secret participant observations*” (p. 82), the research participants at all times being aware of my status as a university researcher, and I have collected the data reported in this thesis myself, rather than drawing on other researchers’ data collections. While I acknowledge that there is an enduring tension between the rights of individuals to privacy and the public’s right to know, I draw only on data gleaned from the semi-structured interviews that I conducted and from publicly available documents; if I must state a preference for one or other of these ‘rights’, it is to endorse the research participants’ right for matters that they consider ‘private’ to remain so.

Finally, while I understand that definitions of “*informed consent*” can be “*complicated, problematic and difficult to implement*” (p. 86), I have done my utmost to ensure that the research participants have understood, as comprehensively as possible, the purposes and intended uses of the research project, and that their agreement to participate derives from a tactical and/or creatively understanding perspective.

Evans and Jakupiec (1996) summarised their six “*key issues*” by claiming that

...the two basic principles researchers in open and distance education should follow are: (i) research in open and distance education should not expose individuals to risks of or cause unjustified political, personal, economic, physical, emotional, moral or psychological harm; (ii) researchers in open and distance education ought not to undertake research which violates principles of free informed consent. (p. 91)

I applaud the authors’ efforts to synthesise a field of such patently shifting sands, and I attest that, to the best of my partial and situated knowledge, I have not infringed either of these “*basic principles*” in this study. Furthermore, although, as I signalled above, I **am** uneasy about claiming that my research is necessarily ‘emancipatory’ or ‘empowering’ of the participants, nevertheless I contend that some more limited benefits, ethically grounded and politically understood, might be regarded as accruing to the participants in the study. Specifically, I hope that the research project will give the participants information about the spaces of itinerancy, and how others perceive the show people, that they might find helpful in transforming their ‘tactics of consumption’ into more enduringly productive social change. Similarly, I hope that non-itinerant people’s understandings of show people

will be considerably enhanced through the information presented in this thesis.

Another element of conducting this study, already referred to in the preceding section of this chapter, needs to be considered here for its ethical and political aspects. This element pertains to my position as a non-itinerant person writing a thesis about itinerant people. Earlier I justified this position by drawing on Bakhtin's notion of 'outsidedness', which I argued was a prerequisite to 'creative understanding'. In the context of this discussion of ethics and politics, I feel obliged to point out that I do not infer from that justification that I have greater understanding of show people than an itinerant researcher would have. That is, I agree with Jenkins' (1992) assertion that the "*danger*" of potentially conflating one's perceptions with those of the research participants "*is not substantially lessened by adopting a more traditionally 'objective' stance*" (p. 6). It should be clear that I claim no lund of 'objectivity' in my role as non-itinerant researcher, and that my ambivalent tentativeness about making claims for the 'truthfulness' of my findings is increased rather than decreased by that role. This suggests that being 'reflective' is preferable to claiming to be 'objective', and furthermore that it is appropriate to augment Lather's (1994) reference to researchers feeling "*Situated, partial, perplexed*" (p. 41) cited earlier to read "*Situated, partial, perplexed and self-reflective*".

One further issue in conducting the research for this study needs to be mentioned at this stage. This is the distinctive ethical and political aspects of interviewing children. In total I interviewed eighteen children, varying in age from seven to fourteen. All interviews were conducted with the written consent of the children's parents; most interviews were conducted at the local school

where the Brisbane School of Distance Education teachers were working with the children during that week. As the data analysis chapters indicate, I was ambivalent about recording and reporting the children's voices except as background noises to their parents' comments. This was not intended to deny or diminish the authenticity of their views or their right to have those views heard (Danaher, Hallinan & Rose, 1998; Kiddle, 1999). On the other hand, the circumstances attending data gathering meant that I had a very limited time to establish rapport with children in order to encourage them to move beyond monosyllabic or brief responses, and in many cases I was unable to achieve this. I was conscious of my ethical responsibilities towards these interviewees, as well as of my political position as an adult and a stranger speaking with them in a formal and potentially threatening situation. However, in this matter I was heartened by the fact that many of their parents were by contrast extremely forthcoming and even voluble.

Having dealt with the ethical **and** political dimensions of some features of conducting research into itinerancy, I turn now to analyse the same dimensions of selected practices associated with writing about such research. Here I found Denzin's (1994) identification of four "*Writing Issues:*" "*...the interpretation, or sense-making, representation, legitimation, and desiring phases of moving from field to text to reader*" (p. 503) helpful. "*Sense Making*" refers to "*making decisions about what will be written about, what will be included, how it will be presented, and so on*" (p. 503). I have been guided in this decision making by the deployment of the concepts underpinning the thesis, **as** well as by my developing observations and understandings underpinning the production of related publications.

In relation to “*Representation*”, I acknowledge Denzin’s (1994) points that “*Representation, of course, is always self-presentation*” and that “*The Other who is presented in the text is always a version of the researcher’s self*” (p. 503). Among other things, I take this to refer to my having a much greater interest in resistance and transformation than in marginalisation (although clearly these phenomena are dialectically related), and to my enduring awareness of the ambivalence underlying my relations with others and theirs with me. More broadly, I also endorse Denzin’s awareness that “...even when ‘we’ allow the Other to speak, where we talk about or **for** them, we are taking over their voice”, and his recommendation, supported by a reference to Bakhtin (1986a), that “**A multivoiced as opposed to single-voiced text can partially overcome this issue....**” (p. 503).

With regard to “*Legitimation*”, and to the “*Traditionalfoundationalist topics such as reliability, validity, and generalizability*” (p. 503), I prefer the term ‘trustworthiness’ as a criterion for evaluating the study’s contribution to methodological knowledge. That is, given the ethical and political issues to which I have referred, I understand that a different researcher conducting a similar investigation would collect and analyse data in very different ways, with different outcomes and effects from those of this research project. My expectation is that judgments about the ‘soundness’ and ‘appropriateness’ of this project will focus on the extent to which my applications of ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as my key concepts to the data that I have collected and analysed to answer the study’s research questions ‘make sense’ and are ‘legitimate’ in terms of my research goals, and in terms of whether those research goals afford opportunities to

generate responsive and useful understandings about the show people's educational experiences and opportunities.

Of the four "*Writing Issues*" identified by Denzin (1994), I am most ambivalent about "*Desire*", which "*refers to the writing practices that field-workers deploy*" and that constitute "*The topic...[of] the pleasure of the text*" (p. 504). I agree that "*A vital text is not boring*", that "*It grips the reader (and the writer)*" and that "*A vital text invites readers to engage the author's subject matter*" (p. 504). However, I disagree with the implicit reduction of "*The postmodern sensibility [that] encourages writers to put themselves into their texts*" (p. 504) to whether the writer writes engaging or boring text. Surely "*desire*" transcends this rather banal indicator to go to the heart of the writer's and the reader's subjectivities as informed and stimulated by the text's subject matter. This is why attending to the ethics and politics of conducting and reporting research is so vitally important: to use the juxtaposition of pronouns that I seek to disrupt, this study is intended to engage with how 'I', 'YOU' and 'they' understand the world, our respective places in it and our aspirations for strengthening and/or changing those places.

If the primary impressions conveyed by my discussion of the issues associated with writing about my research project are ambivalence and tentativeness, I shall have succeeded in my aim of emphasising the ethical and political dimensions of this crucial element of the study. In this I take heart from Lather's (1992) rejection of a research methodology that aspires to omniscient objectivity in favour of

...the creation of a more humble scholarship capable of helping us to tell better stories about a world marked by the elusiveness with which it greets our efforts to know it. (p. 95)

For me, awareness of and engagement with this “*elusiveness*”, which reflects ambivalence, de Certollian ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtinian ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, are both pre-requisites and consequences of dealing with the ethical and political dimensions of conducting and writing research into the spaces of itinerancy. At the same time, these principles underpinning the design of this study clearly resonate with broader issues in contemporary theorising around the conduct of research, as well as with more traditional debates in educational research.

4.6 The research design of the study

Bearing in mind all the issues explored to this point and the need to ensure a tight articulation between theory and methodology, I turn now to outline explicitly the major elements of the study’s research design. That design was consciously focussed on integrating the literature review, conceptual framework, data collection and data analysis explicated in this thesis. The design consisted of the following five phases identified in Figure 4.1:

PHASE	ACTIVITY
One	Identification of research problem; phrasing of research questions; review of literature
Two	Data collection (involving interviews with forty-two people as outlined in Figure 4.2 below and document collection)
Three	Preliminary analysis (identification of major themes evident in interviews and documents)
Four	Final analysis (guided by the study's analytical concepts: 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding')
Five	Thesis writing

Figure 4.1: Phases in the study's research design

Inevitably presenting the study's research design in this way suggests that it was far more linear, sequential and straightforward than it actually was. Such a presentation also elides much of the messiness, tentativeness and sheer unease that for me is inextricably involved in designing and conducting educational research. To acknowledge that I encountered some 'false starts', or that I did not approach the thesis writing with maximum efficiency, for example, emphasises that like all human endeavours this study was as much

an emotional journey – with attendant exhilaration, frustration and hope in equal measure – **as** it was an intellectual exercise. More importantly, these acknowledgments underscore the crucial dynamic nature of the project: rather than conforming to the scientific paradigm of the application, modification or rejection of a prescribed hypothesis, the study grew and changed shape in response to the participants’ responses and suggestions, and **as** a result of the application of the theoretical resources outlined in the previous chapter.

4.7 The data gathering techniques of the study

I used two techniques for gathering data in this study: semi-structured interviews and document collection. In keeping with the study’s conceptual framework, those data gathering techniques are conceived **as** sites that the show people can ‘consume’ and use **as** opportunities for ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ with the researcher, in the process revealing their engagements with marginalisation, resistance and transformation in the spaces of itinerancy. That is, like the other elements of the research design explicated in the previous section, the data gathering techniques are fully integrated with the study’s analytical concepts in their goal of collecting information whereby the study’s research questions can be addressed.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The principal data gathering technique used in the study was the semi-structured interview, whereby I used a fairly general interview schedule (which appears **as** Appendix A to this thesis) to guide questions but encouraged respondents to talk at length about other issues as they wished to do so

(thereby distinguishing the technique from both a fully structured interview and an unstructured interview). The preference was for researcher and respondent to engage in an informal conversation, rather than to follow rigidly a prescribed interview format. In that context, Appendix A reflects my particular assumptions, foci and interests, and is not intended to be applicable beyond the confines of this study. Most interviews were carried out at the local school used by the itinerant teachers and their students during show week; a few took place at the local showgrounds. Ethically appropriate procedures were adopted throughout the research, including obtaining formal cooperation from the Queensland Department of Education (subsequently renamed Education Queensland) and the Brisbane School of Distance Education, which initially administered the program studied by the show children, and distributing explanatory information sheets, as well as consent forms to be signed by interviewees.

Figure 4.2 represents the distribution of interviews conducted for the study. In keeping with the ethical considerations canvassed in this chapter, names of interviewees have not been included.

YEAR	LOC- ATION	INTER- VIEWS WITH CHILD- REN	INTER- VIEWS WITH PAR- ENTS	INTER- VIEWS WITH HOME TUT- ORS	INTER- VIEWS WITH TEACH -ERS	INTER- VIEWS WITH ADMIN -IST -RAT -ORS	TOT- AL
1992	Mackay	8	2	1	0	0	11
1993	Bun- daberg	5	5	0	1	0	11
1994	Bun- daberg	2	1	2	0	0	5
1995	Emerald	3	6	0	2	0	11
1995	Brisbane	0	3	0	0	2	2
1996	Rock- hampton	0	3	1	0	0	1
2000	Yep- poon	0	3	0	0	1	1
TOT- AL	-	18	14	4	3	3	<u>42</u>

Figure 4.2: Interviews conducted for the study

The semi-structured interviews were not longitudinal, in that I did not set out deliberately to speak to the same people each year to identify a developmental dimension of their responses to my questions. However, I did note a

definite change in attitude among many parents to the program provided by the Brisbane School of Distance Education, as I elaborate in Chapter Seven.

With regard to linking this data gathering technique with the study's conceptual framework, it was crucial that interviews were conducted in ways that facilitated the exercise of the participants' resistance and transformation rather than replicated their marginalisation through restricting their 'voices' to passive responses to questions in which I was interested but that had no relevance to them. So interviewees had to feel sufficiently comfortable in talking to me that they would discuss issues of genuine concern and moment to them. Those issues in turn 'fed into' my developing focus on the show people's marginalisation, resistance and transformation as research questions of direct significance to their lives, rather than as *apriori* impositions on the study's research design.

4.7.2 Document collection

Although interviews were the major technique of data collection employed in the study, use was made also of a small number of background policy documents and relevant literature. These documents related mainly to the Brisbane School of Distance Education's organisational structure and the particular program investigated in the present study, as well as some information about the proposed separate school for the show children. These documents were collected with the permission of the participants at appropriate times during the study.

Again relating this data gathering technique to the study's conceptual framework, I worked hard to respect the confidentiality and where appropriate preserve the anonymity of sources in cases where show people and educators

provided me with copies of documents. This approach to data gathering enabled me to collect sufficient information while being 'true' to the ethical and political principles outlined in this chapter and being consistent with the study's conceptual framework, the aim being to make the project 'true' to the principle of 'transformative research' (Anyanwu, 1998) rather than the source of further marginalisation of the participants.

4.8 The delimitations and limitations of the study

This study is a number of things; it is not a number of other things. In particular, it is delimited in two crucial respects. Firstly, it is not a formal evaluation of the educational program selected for study. The intention is not to provide policy makers and program planners with detailed or systematic feedback about the initiative that they have created. Rather, the focus is on the show people's 'consumption' of the program and their 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' with the individuals responsible for its implementation on the Queensland show circuits. This does not deny, of course, that the research might well have important implications for educators' reflections on the merit or otherwise of particular educational initiatives **as** a consequence of the study's highlighting of significant aspects of the subjectivity of the categories 'student', 'parent' and 'teacher'.

Secondly, the study makes no claims about the replicability of its techniques or the generalisability of its findings. Although the final chapter suggests possible future avenues of research that might confirm, refine or disconfirm emerging theories, the researcher acknowledges the pervasive and

enduring influence of context and circumstance, and cautions against policy makers, program planners or others who would seek to use the findings to support their claims about other, unrelated educational initiatives. Nevertheless, the framework that I have developed, and the kind of analysis that I have undertaken, could potentially be taken into other educational contexts, suggesting that the framework might be transferable even if the research is not replicable.

The study is limited as well as delimited in a number of ways. Firstly, as I acknowledged in Chapter Two, the literature review has concentrated on Australian shows but not on British fairs or American carnivals. Similarly, it has dwelt on the Australian and European literature on Traveller education, to the exclusion of North American studies of ‘migrant’ education (Mexican fruit pickers in southern states) and other occupational Travellers on that continent.

Secondly, the number of interviews able to be conducted during the study is lower than I would otherwise have desired. The mitigating circumstances were the necessity to adjust to the show people’s busy schedule during show week, and the fact that the interviews that were conducted yielded a large number of productive data.

Thirdly, I do not presume that any method – including the one used in this study – can ever be totally inclusive and representative of the ‘realities’ of social life. As the anthropologist James Clifford (1992, p. 97) has pointed out: *“Every focus excludes; there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation”*. Given the communication strategies operating on the show circuits, it was considerably easier for me to meet and interview people from the ‘upper echelons’ of the coastal and western Queensland

show circuits. Another undoubted factor was my status as a university researcher; while many of my interviewees were highly articulate, it is probable that I was never introduced to others with less familiarity with formal education. For these reasons, I acknowledge that this study reports the views of members of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia far more readily than those of 'workers', 'itinerants' and 'horsey people'. This does not mean that the findings are invalidated; it does suggest that the range of voices heard in this thesis is smaller than I would like to be the case.

4.9 Review of the chapter

My intention in this chapter has been to outline the research design of the study, and in the process to explicate and justify the link between the study's conceptual framework and that design. This process has served to focus attention on the connections among the marginalising, resistant and transformative dimensions of the spaces of itinerancy and the sequence of propositions that links de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' and Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

The chapter began with an account of the conceptual and methodological links among marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to researching Traveller education. I highlighted my own ambivalence about any research project's potential capacity to perpetuate itinerant people's marginalisation and deny their resistance and transformation, even while a researcher might seek to contribute to transforming that marginalisation and celebrating their resistance. I used that ambivalence as a justification for focussing on de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', which I argued was significant for drawing attention to two binary categories:

‘consumption’/‘reading’ and ‘production’/‘writing’. I contended that these binary categories have crucial implications for my relations with the show people and for the ‘trustworthiness’ of my analysis of their words in the interview transcripts. This led to a discussion of Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as a useful framework for analysing both my interactions with the show people and their relationships with the staff members of the Brisbane School of Distance Education. The point here is that ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ help to make the ambivalence of the spaces of itinerancy potentially productive and transformative, rather than automatically replicating the marginalisation associated with itinerancy, by highlighting the political significance of the show people’s actions and moves, including their interactions with me.

The next section of the chapter was my consideration of the ethical and political dimensions of the study’s research design. I asserted the ethical responsibility and the political situatedness of the study, and portrayed my traversing of the “swamp” that makes up “*The ethics and politics of qualitative research*” (Punch, 1994, p. 94) as confirming my ongoing ambivalence and my use of the study’s conceptual framework as the ‘map’ guiding my actions in both conducting the interviews and writing about the interview data.

I reported the data gathering techniques of the study, which included semi-structured interviews with forty-two people and an analysis of documents associated with the show children’s education program. Finally, I explained how the study is delimited and limited in particular ways beyond my control.

Having explained how the study's research design both derives from and feeds into its conceptual framework, I have set the scene for reporting my understanding of 'learning on the run' for the Queensland show children. That understanding will be communicated through my responses to the study's three research questions, beginning with the show people's experiences of marginalisation.